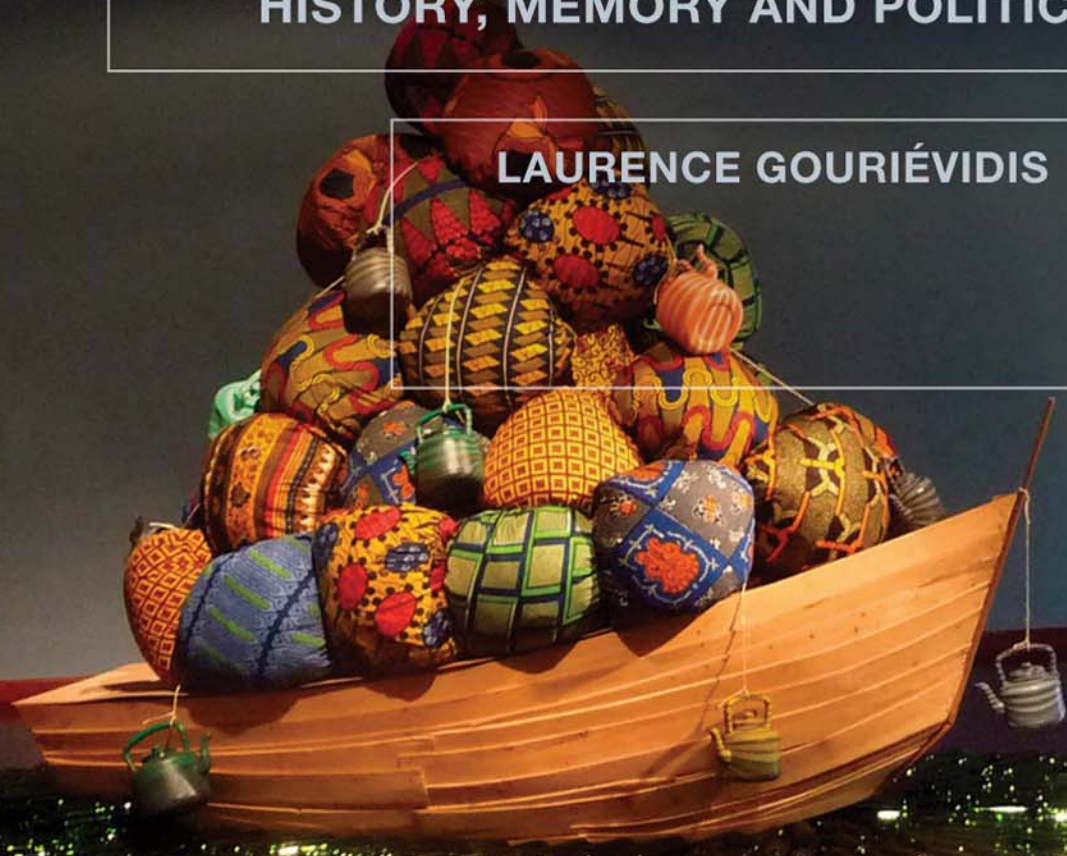


# MUSEUMS AND MIGRATION

HISTORY, MEMORY AND POLITICS

LAURENCE GOURIÉVIDIS



MUSEUM MEANINGS

# MUSEUMS AND MIGRATION

Recent decades have seen migration history and issues increasingly featured in museums. *Museums and Migration* explores the ways in which museum spaces – local, regional and national – have engaged with the history of migration, including internal migration, emigration and immigration. It presents the latest innovative research from academics and museum practitioners and offers a comparative perspective on a global scale bringing to light geo- and socio-political specificities. It includes an extensive range of international contributions from Europe, Asia and South America as well as settler societies such as Canada and Australia.

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**Laurence Gouriévidis** is a senior lecturer in Modern British History at Blaise Pascal University, Clermont-Ferrand, France. Her research interests concentrate on the interaction between history and memory, exploring the way societies and individuals construct their past and their heritage. She has written on museums and heritage with a particular focus on Scotland and the Scottish diaspora and is the author of *The Dynamics of Heritage: History, Memory and the Highland Clearances* (2010).

# MUSEUM MEANINGS

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# MUSEUMS AND MIGRATION

History, Memory and Politics

*Edited by  
Laurence Gouriévidis*

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Laurence Gouriévidis  
November 2013

# 1

## REPRESENTING MIGRATION IN MUSEUMS

### History, diversity and the politics of memory

*Laurence Gouriévidis*

The destiny of migrations is intercontinental: again and again space and time, geography and history, geopolitics and comparative cultural history are made to intersect.<sup>1</sup>

(Ricoeur 2000a: 15)

Migration is no longer, in the phrase coined by Noiriel (2004: 17), a '*non lieu de mémoire*'.<sup>2</sup> Public sites increasingly harbour the memories of migrants in their diversity and specificity, making audible and visible versions of the past that had been occluded or simply neglected. If the integration of migration history in museum spaces and narratives is an increasingly notable feature of the international museum landscape, it also raises a host of questions. Some are linked with museums' intimacy with processes of identity construction and memorialization of the past, the changing nature of museums in society, and the changes which have affected the societies that produce them, one of which is their ever more diverse character. In an age of globalization, intensifying human movements and flows, multifaceted transnational networks, along with cheaper and fast-evolving means of communication, museums are encouraged to reflect the socio-cultural implications of such changes and the increasingly plural face of the populations composing modern states. Museums, their locations, constituencies, origins and contents are revealing of museological thinking and practices as well as the advance of scientific knowledge – for instance, historiographical orientations and developments. They also disclose societal changes, social processes, policy developments and models, as well as political priorities – at local, national and international levels.

Whilst museums, particularly since the 1980s, have been theorized through the prism of different disciplinary practices and approaches, the representation of migration in museums in particular has recently become the locus of a fast-growing body of research and critical enquiry. That research in the domain should, in some cases, be sanctioned and sponsored by supranational structures and organizations, most notably the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)<sup>3</sup> and the European Union,<sup>4</sup> often with a view to promoting 'an acceptance of culture-in-difference' (Bennett 2006: 66) and tolerance, testifies to the strong belief, in the political sphere, that public culture, and museums in



particular, can effect change at a social level in the face of socio-cultural mutations often twinned with the emergence of antagonisms – frequent signs of ‘colonial fracture’ (Bancel *et al.* 2010). Ethnic and racial tensions or overt conflicts are recurrently capturing media headlines,<sup>5</sup> as are the debates and legislation changes regarding the award of citizenship rights – tests and ceremonies – alongside measures passed at the national or international level to control and regulate immigration. If an *idea* of immigration is wielded as a powerful instrumental weapon in political discourse – not exclusively by right-wing groups and parties fanning a sense of panic at times of economic insecurity – migration as a *process* is a fundamental feature of the post-modern and post-colonial world, and one whose implications historians and social scientists are currently unravelling.

In this introductory chapter, I shall examine some of the issues which have been addressed in the museum literature exploring such developments and their contexts.<sup>6</sup> Those selected frame the chapters featured in this volume and structure my presentation. Following a short discussion of the ways in which heritage has variously embraced the pluralization of society, I will concentrate on three main, closely interrelated, issues: the impact of public discourses and policies related to diversity on the way museums engage with migration and its history, in particular examining the resilience of the national paradigm; the role of museums used as agents of social change; and, finally, the memorial function of museums seen as mediators of recognition. Whilst examples of museological developments throughout the world will be featured and those presented in this volume introduced, special attention will also be paid to the French case, which is not covered in the remainder of this book.

## Heritage, museums and the making of plural identities

One key function that the past performs, through its use in heritage sites and venues, is the production of a sense of belonging and collective identity through the representation of place (Ashworth *et al.* 2007: 1). Heritage is not an existing place, an artefact or an intangible element but, in the words of Smith (2006: 3), ‘a constitutive cultural process’, constitutive of meaning, values, shared memories and experiences, and ultimately social identity. It is the process of moulding and negotiating social, cultural and moral values which takes place when decisions are made and actions taken to commemorate and interpret selected events, figures or processes; to preserve material or immaterial features; in short to define what must be transmitted and imparted. It is a ‘discursive practice shaped by specific circumstances’ (Littler 2005: 1) as the meaning and significance of selected aspects of the past and narratives are reconsidered, redefined or re-endorsed according to present ends and needs. Heritage is an activity; it is ‘doing’ and ‘making’ rather than ‘being’ and reflects present concerns, anxieties and ideals. Some of these are brought to the fore when it is made to translate the increasing cultural diversity of contemporary societies – when ‘pluralising pasts’ (Ashworth *et al.* 2007) is the goal.

Heritage also often serves to ‘shap[e] socio-cultural place-identities to support state structures’ (Ashworth 1994: 13), mirroring particular ideologies or policy orientations. Just as it has long been used by authorities and elites as a tool to serve and legitimize ideological purposes and programmes, it has also – and increasingly so in the 1980s and 1990s – been resorted to by social actors such as minority groups to contest, challenge or reposition (de-centre) dominant interpretations and as a means of gaining recognition. One critical aspect brought to light in heritage literature is the notion of ‘dissonance’ intimately linked

with present-day uses and interpretations of the past (Turnbridge and Ashworth 1996) and seen as ‘a condition of the construction of pluralist, multi-cultural societies based on inclusiveness and variable-sum conceptualizations of power’ (Ashworth and Graham 2005: 6). Through heritage, the conflicting claims, aspirations, histories, memories and expectations of diverse communities meet and compete.

‘Museum frictions’ is the expression coined by Karp *et al.* (2006: 9) to describe this museological ‘moment’. It evokes not only the often tense and discordant relations that museums in the transnational and global age generate, but also their own condition or predicament as, with new practices, methodologies and theoretical frames, they strive to articulate the multiple visions of disparate communities and individuals – a mosaic of criss-crossing destinies – whilst adhering to democratic ideals and conveying a unified narrative of shared experiences. The moment is fraught with anticipation and challenges, and the grammar used to describe it in heritage and museum literature is one which recurrently underlines the complexity of multi-vocality, multi-layering and fragmentation (Macdonald 2003: 1) – a complexity which may well be heightened in the case of national museums whose task had long been to act as a centripetal force and erase difference.<sup>7</sup>

Unlike their nineteenth-century counterparts dedicated to buttressing Enlightenment and modernist classification and order and projecting grand national and imperial narratives, museums are now seen as places of contest, where master narratives can be unsettled and questioned and where alternative viewpoints can be projected.<sup>8</sup> Yet they ‘remain powerful and subtle authors and authorities whose cultural accounts are not easily dislodged’ (Macdonald and Fyfe 1996: 4). As a result, museums come in many guises – in terms of scale, subject, content, methodology, and source of funding, to cite but a few of their distinctive traits – and their missions and functions are as diverse as their creators and audiences. They can be

temples of civilization, sites for the creation of citizens, forums for debate, settings for cultural interchange and negotiation of values, engines of economic renewal and revenue generation, imposed colonialist enterprises, havens of elitist distinction and discrimination, and places of empowerment and recognition.

*(Kratz and Karp 2006: 1)*

This list neatly encapsulates the shifts which the museum world has witnessed and is currently undergoing. If the present character of museums has to be linked with the history of their own development and that of museological practices and thinking,<sup>9</sup> they are also spaces ‘inscribed with dominant discursive practice’ (Message 2006: 18) and with the stamp of wider socio-political relations and societal variations with their own history.

## **Museums, diversity and public discourses**

Undergirding the orientations and work of museums – and, more widely, heritage – are the actions and policies of the states in which they are located. The political and administrative structures as well as the political cultures and doctrines that condition their existence and development stem from the different historical routes that national states have followed. It is a truism to speak of the instrumental role that national museums have played in the construction of unified and homogeneous national imaginaries, in projecting shared values and in the forging of citizenship with its cohort of rights and duties, notably through their

showcasing of supporting scientific material evidence (Bennett 1995, Macdonald 2003, Aronsson 2012: 68–9). Closely meshed with unifying agendas was the erection of boundaries exclusive of ‘others’, reflected through collecting policies linked to the display and interpretation of material culture. This process of ‘othering’ differed according to geopolitical situations and national trajectories, but it is inseparable from the emergence, shaping and reshaping of nation-states. It is also inseparable from the experiences of colonialism and decolonization, resulting in hierarchical and alienating categorization, and later in their reappraisal (Healy and Witcomb 2006, Amundsen and Nyblom 2007, Aronsson and Nyblom 2008).

Changes in political configurations and state boundaries consequent on annexations, unions, Home Rule, autonomy, dis-unions and independence are commonly associated with mental re-mapping. These breaks also implicate (re)definitions of citizenship, influencing group categorization and feelings of belonging, difference or exclusion. Goodnow and Akman’s volume (2008) offers compelling examples of the ways in which the museum world in Scandinavian countries has responded, over time, to such socio-political shifts in its representations of indigenous peoples, national minorities and more recent migrants. It ends on analyses unravelling the links between cultural heritage and national identity, underlining the critical role of museums. Throughout, museums are shown to be operating as mobilizing tools for nascent or rising nationalisms and for the integration, within the national narrative, first of regional differences – internal to nation-states – and more recently of cultural diversity related to immigration. There are parallels between the changing cultural and political perception and the exhibition of such indigenous groups as the Sámi in Scandinavia (Goodnow and Akman 2008) and the Ainu in Japan, long eclipsed in the national heritage by settler narratives (see [Chapter 15](#)).

Given the potency of museums’ messages, discourses on cultural diversity, when set against aspirations for autonomy or even separatism that tend to heighten and politicize cultural distinctiveness, often have to be fused with competing agendas in migration exhibitions. The case of Spanish regional museums highlights their function ‘as emblems and engines driving Spain into democracy’ (Holo 2000: 12), following years of relentless centralization and dictatorship under Franco, but also as powerful agents in the formation and development of regional identities. In Catalonia, where the promotion of a Catalan identity had long been suppressed and where separatism is a burning issue, Van Geert ([Chapter 12](#)) argues that, since the 1980s, museums have appeared as crucial tools in the construction of ‘Catalanness’, yet in the face of significant historical waves of in-migration from other parts of Spain and abroad, they have not been used to the same degree and in the same fashion in the promotion of pluralism and tolerance. In the case of devolved Wales,<sup>10</sup> Giudici ([Chapter 13](#)) probes the extent to which the Welsh policy of inclusion has been integrated in memorializing strategies, inclusive of museums and memorials, through a focus on the Italian migrant community. In the Republic of Ireland, where independence from the United Kingdom was achieved in the early twentieth century, Croke’s essay ([Chapter 11](#)) – which contrasts the Republic with Northern Ireland – shows that the inclusion of artefacts and stories emblematic of immigration in recent exhibitions marks a symbolic shift in the representation of a ‘mono-cultural past’ and long-standing discourse on identity and belonging. North of the border, where devolution is intertwined with the peace process, museums’ discourse of inclusiveness increasingly marries sectarian and racist concerns, as shown by Croke and Bigand ([Chapter 8](#)).

National ideologies weigh heavy on museums and, when the promotion of cultural diversity enters national discourses, in museum spaces it often means collisions with older systems of classification and collecting practices, and with a murky inheritance of fiction, prejudice or silence with respect to indigenous populations and minority groups. Reformulating national narratives along more inclusive lines which encompass cultural differences and hybridity means that '[t]he nation becomes something that is not so easily mapped as it transcends its own frontiers and creates new ones inside its political limits' (Lleras 2008: 293). In Central and South America, cultural constructions have long borne the imprint of taxonomies lingering on from European colonization. Lleras (2008) has shown how, in Colombia's National Museum, they filter through stereotypical representations of Afrocolombians that are not so easily dispelled. In Argentina, they still condition the invisibility of Latino immigrants brushed out of a narrative that gives pride of place to European populations at the National Immigration Museum in Buenos Aires, inaugurated in 2001 (Blickstein 2011: 96–106). Glas (Chapter 10), focusing on the case of migrants from the countryside to the Bolivian city of Sucre, looks at how identity and hybridization of culture are addressed in four very different heritage institutions in Sucre, underlining their influence in processes of social recognition. As Lanz (Chapter 2) also demonstrates in this volume, in distinctive locality and circumscribed places, such as cities, it might be easier to undertake successful experiments promoting alternative expressions of belonging (see also Chapters 5, 7, 12 and 14).

Much has been published on the effects of cultural diversity and social inclusion discourses and policies on museums' representations of migration in settler countries such as Canada, Australia, the United States and New Zealand (Ashley 2005, Williams 2006, Rabinovitch 2007, Ang 2009), leading to exhibitions experimenting with multi-vocality and the layering of viewpoints, inclusive of minority and indigenous self-representations. For instance, the multicultural agenda pursued by the Australian government in the 1970s and 1980s is adduced to explain changes in public culture, resulting in the founding of two migration museums in Adelaide (established 1986) and Melbourne (established 1998) and greatly influencing the shape and development of the exhibitions of the National Museum of Australia (2001) (McShane 2001, Szekeres 2002, Message 2009a, Trinca and Wehner 2006, Witcomb 2009). In this volume, Hutchison and Witcomb (Chapter 14) choose to explore the ways in which changes in Australian public policy have, over time, affected the nature and curatorial strategies of migration exhibitions, identifying two core approaches: history and culture. Meanwhile, Message (Chapter 3) considers how those changes have impacted on museums' engagement with such issues as racism by analysing the recent *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* exhibition in Melbourne.

In settler countries where immigration lies at the very heart of national identity, it has been incorporated into the national narrative along with a recentring of aboriginal voices, a process described by Ohliger (2010: 22) as the 'nationalization of immigration history' that he warns 'can only serve as role model for Europe or the various European nation-states to a very limited degree' as they draw their founding myths from different sources.<sup>11</sup> However, in Europe, in the broader nationalization of migration history, emigration has been far less problematic and conflicting than immigration (see Chapters 5, 8 and 11), and museums – local, regional and national – located in nations with heavy emigration flows have long engaged with the phenomena of out-migration and settlement abroad, often foregrounding the contributions of expatriates to their new homelands without necessarily revisiting colonial visions (Gouriévidis 2010: 79–88). In European history emigration is a striking feature and

emigratory flows could be considerable, not least when famine struck or when new territories were secured and colonies developed – the two dovetailed in the British case. However, during the second half of the nineteenth century, whilst many European nations (such as Italy, Germany and the United Kingdom) were witnessing heavy emigration, France was an exception: ‘a country of immigrants in a continent of emigrants’ (Blanc-Chaléard 2001: 9).<sup>12</sup>

In many European countries, diversity discourses have led to the reappraisal of ethnographic collections whose intellectual and political underpinnings were unequal power relations. They are now frequently revisited, reinterpreted or relocated in the light of post-colonial approaches and new conceptual models, as in France, where the reorganization of national museum collections has been aptly described as a game of ‘musical chairs’ (Grognet 2007: 29). This reorganization shattered the paradigm that had buttressed the exhibitions in Parisian ‘civilization’ museums since the 1930s, and erected a hermetic boundary between the heritage and identity of the self – metropolitan French – and those of others. Under President Chirac’s impetus, a museum dedicated to the arts and cultures of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas was established in 1995 in Paris (Musée du Quai Branly), bringing together the collections found in the Musée National des Arts Africains et Océaniens and those of the ethnological section of the Musée de l’Homme. If it sacralized and aestheticized the notion of ‘otherness’, this move also set in motion a process of rethinking national collections – both existing and forthcoming – and national self-image. The Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration (CNHI) in Paris, inaugurated in October 2007, was one outcome; the other was the Musée des Civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM) in the Mediterranean port of Marseille, opened in June 2013 (when the city was European Capital of Culture). Both museums epitomize France’s repositioning of her cultural and memorial<sup>13</sup> policies, and her attempt to reframe national identity as ‘transcultural’ rather than ‘bounded and coherent’ (Macdonald 2003). As the first *national* immigration museum in the European museumscape, the CNHI has been the object of much academic interest and it is worth briefly examining its case in relation to French cultural and social policies.<sup>14</sup>

In 2003, the French Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin (2004: 5), envisaged the CNHI as a means of ‘giving a new lease of life to the French Republican model of integration’, and of rekindling national cohesion.<sup>15</sup> The museum’s website echoes his words, presenting the museum as a ‘major element of social and republican cohesion’, adding that it must rise to the challenge of inscribing the history of immigration within the national narrative, making it an integral part of the national heritage and ‘immigration into a legitimate cultural theme’.<sup>16</sup> Its task was to alter the perception of ‘immigrants’, a term invariably used to refer to populations originating from former French colonies – notably North and sub-Saharan Africa – in the social imaginary, and to create a broader perspective encompassing all immigrant groups (Toubon 2004: 7 and 2007: 8–9, Murphy 2007: 70). The CNHI, however, as a cultural and memorial site, cannot be interpreted as the hallmark of a significant shift in French social policies related to issues of identity and nationality. In fact, by the time it was inaugurated, President Sarkozy – who failed to attend the opening – was in power, heading an administration whose policy orientation was symbolized by the creation of a new flagship department – the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development – eloquently shortened in common parlance to ‘Immigration and National Identity’. It underscored a return to traditional French Republican values and a tougher approach to immigration, in particular illegal immigration (*Le Monde* 2009), in a move partly meant to

win over some of the far-right electorate. The lack of political endorsement at the time of the museum's opening, and its illegal but peaceful occupation by some 500 undocumented workers backed by the CGT (one of the French union confederations) between October 2010 and January 2011,<sup>17</sup> give weight to the conclusions put forward by Stevens (2008: 68). She underlined the 'nebulous relations between politics and culture', adding that 'whilst [museums] may appeal to policy makers as a (relatively) cheap and highly visible fix, the diversity of actors they engage means their ideological destination is hard if not impossible fully to determine'. Initial intents do not prefigure later uses and perceptions (by visitors, members of civil society, museum actors and new heads of state or governments). The museum's occupation ostensibly turned it, at least for a while, from an instrument with which the French state hoped to promote a reformist agenda into a site of contest for members of civil society. Yet, reflecting on those events, which the museum documented, the museum's director deplored the general lack of media attention and more specifically the minimal attention that was paid to the undocumented migrants themselves, perpetuating the sense of their 'invisibility' in French society and politics (Gruson 2011: 20–1).

Whilst the CNHI was a museum without objects or an initial collection (Lafont–Couturier 2007), and still envisions itself as a work in progress, dedicated to collecting tangible and intangible traces of the history of immigration rather than to a 'collection',<sup>18</sup> Marseille's MuCEM illustrates more strikingly France's turn in museological and memorial policy orientation – with geographical and cultural decentring lying at the heart of the project. Importantly, the MuCEM is largely erected on the ashes of the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires (MNATP), opened in Paris in 1937 and closed in 2005.<sup>19</sup> The MNATP had focused on the ethnological research of French rural and folk culture with a



**FIGURE 1.1** The Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration (Paris) occupied by undocumented workers, October 2010. Photo Laurence Gouriévidis

cross-sectional display of French regional diversity, and spearheaded a network of regional museums. In its heyday, it had stood as a landmark in French museology, linked with the work of Georges Henri Rivière, whose name is associated with pioneering museographical and museological concepts that transformed the French museum and heritage landscape, such as the ecomuseum movement (Poulot 1994). The MuCEM intends to mark a rupture from the nostalgic and strictly French metropolitan gaze of its forebear and articulate a new approach to ‘the dialectics of identity and alterity, of the local and the global’, characteristic of the modern digital age (Suzzarelli 2013: 9). With a focus on the Mediterranean and European worlds and no longer solely on the French nation, French culture and identity are to be understood from a dialogical and intercultural perspective, with the museum capturing ideas of intersection and exchange. In the words of Frédéric Mitterrand, former Minister for Culture and Communication, who laid the foundation stone of the building in 2009, it stands for

a new approach to our shared history, a novel way of constructing our memory ... It follows in the footsteps of Popular Arts and Traditions, which it will both maintain and transform through its openness to the diverse Mediterranean and European worlds with which our national memory will be set in a dialogical relation.

(Mitterrand 2009)

The CNHI and the MuCEM both strive to articulate transcultural identities and introduce multiple perspectives, without necessarily breaking away from the national paradigm and, in the case of CNHI, the ideal of Republican integration.

They also epitomize a trend found in many European member states, where museum collections or remits are being rethought to reflect the changes unleashed by the globalization and internationalization of cultures. A similar reassessment of the national museumscape in the mid-1990s in Sweden led to the opening, in 2004, of Gothenburg’s Museum of World Culture (MWC), whose collection stemmed from former ethnographic and archaeological displays. Interdisciplinarity, dialogue and multi-vocality are its core values, condensed in the expression ‘glocality’ (Lagerkvist 2008: 90–1). The ideological foundation of the MWC is said to stem from UNESCO’s 2001 *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* and previous policy documents on the issue (Sandhal 2006; Lagerkvist 2008: 92). The discourses surrounding museums that engage with migration are indeed often threaded with global and supranational policy statements. Global cultural policies, such as those advanced by UNESCO, have impacted on museums’ reorientation towards social inclusion and diversity; the notion of cultural diversity had long been debated (it was presented as early as the 1982 *Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies*<sup>20</sup>) before it was enshrined in UNESCO’s 2001 *Universal Declaration* and 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*.

Similarly, and understandably, given its origins and *raison d’être*, the European Union has also played a crucial role in promoting intercultural dialogue and cultural projects that reach beyond nation-statism. Its influence on museum development and exhibitions can be related to a variety of actions and incentives, as demonstrated in many of the chapters in this volume. Cultural diversity has been advocated in policy documents such as the 1995 *Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*. Work on Scandinavian museums has shown its significance on the countries that ratified it and how this translated in the

museum sphere, raising the issues of recategorization, collecting and interpretation that were alluded to above (Niemi 2008, Aarekol 2008, Silvéen 2008).<sup>21</sup> Beyond policy documents, the promotion of themed years singling out focus issues is tied in with transnational, national and local initiatives, often giving rise to temporary or more permanent exhibitions. Following EU enlargement, 2008 was chosen as the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue and was aimed at ‘increasing mutual understanding, exploring the benefits of cultural diversity, fostering active European citizenship and a sense of European belonging’.<sup>22</sup> Many exhibitions were produced on that theme, as Van Geert highlights with respect to Barcelona (Chapter 12). Themed and commemorative years are occasions for venues to reaffirm established discourses on identity, belonging and shared values, but also, and importantly, to revisit these topics from new perspectives and challenge existing models. In particular, temporary exhibitions can turn into innovative and stimulating experiments in museological and museographical terms, a point illustrated by many of the contributors to this volume (see also Poehls 2011: 338). Critically, Europe acts as an enabling mechanism, offering funding opportunities for cultural projects from a variety of sources. Structural fund programmes, for instance, offer a range of instruments and can promote culture as a tool for local and regional development. One of them, PEACE III, which ran from 2007 to 2013 and aimed to promote peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border region, was used by the Mid-Antrim Museums Service to fund a variety of projects related in the main to indigenous, but also to ethnic minority, groups (Chapter 11). The European Social Fund, whose purposes are job creation and a more inclusive society, has assisted several of the MWC’s projects in Gothenburg, such as its exhibition on the global human trafficking industry and its work with migrants from the Horn of Africa who face obstacles in the labour market (Lagerkvist 2008: 95, 97–8). The availability of financial support from socio-economic funds for cultural projects actively engaging with social issues and combating prejudice speaks volumes about the acknowledged significance in the public sphere of culture and more specifically museums as vehicles for change and ‘places of leadership’ (Lohman 2008: xxxv).

## Museums as agents of social change

Museums’ influence in the promotion of a more tolerant, equitable and inclusive society, as ‘engines of social transformation’ (Bennett 2006: 57), is widely accepted. This societal role is imbued with the notion of social responsibility (Sandell 2002), a concept which relates to their more traditional remit – to educate and inform through their collections and their interpretation – and their perceived status as sources of authority – as sites of meaning-making and validation. As already seen when engaging with the history of migration and the representation of minority groups, museums are inevitably implicated in ‘issues of power, inequality and access to resources’ (Small 2011: 119) through the narratives they construct. Whilst this has meant methodological changes, such as reassessing collections from a post-colonial standpoint so as to correct misrepresentations, and formulating new collecting strategies, it has also raised questions of practice, museum staffing, audience development and participation, access and positioning (Hooper–Greenhill 1997). In many cases, the museum profession has led the way in instigating change and envisaging new agendas and approaches – at times in contrast to governmental policy. This impetus also closely intermeshed with a force for change originating ‘from below’ – from social groups actively wishing to enter museum narratives and spaces.



The socially engaged museum does not simply aim to reflect society and its diverse character, but actively seeks to transform ways of thinking and perceptions of others, with a view to confronting prejudice, provoking dialogue and debate and fostering understanding. Inclusiveness is applied to audiences and the need to reach out and appeal to a new public, such as ethnic minorities, through the reframing of narratives, through the organization of activities and events occurring in tandem with exhibitions, and through community consultation, cooperation and participation. In Britain, *The Peopling of London* exhibition, which ran from November 1993 to May 1994 at the Museum of London, has been hailed as a forerunner of this type of exhibition. It was devised to illustrate new practices and approaches, and has served as a template for other museums (Merriman 1997). Running through the literature exploring museums' dealings with migration history are the central importance placed on the targeted individuals' input and the need for museums to adopt mechanisms and working practices that enable consultation and negotiation with various communities. This may involve collaboration with minority groups in devising an exhibition, appointment of temporary or permanent curatorial staff with ethnic minority backgrounds, partnership with organizations working with the focus groups, and the implementation of educational activities, workshops and outreach programmes (Hooper-Greenhill 1997, Goodnow 2008, Skartveit and Goodnow 2010; see also [Chapter 7](#), this volume). Several of the chapters in this volume present the personal experiences of practitioners and activists, who critically examine the methods employed by the institutions where they worked to promote ideals of participation, inclusion and engagement ([Chapters 4, 5 and 6](#)). Broadly strategies adopted differ according to museums' constituencies, objectives, means, and national museological traditions. In Australia, where the community approach was favoured, the Migration Museum in Adelaide opted for a community-access gallery – The Forum (Szekeres 2002: 147–8).<sup>23</sup> In France, where community, when linked with migrant groups, is equated with communitarianism (Rautenberg 2007) – a highly contentious notion connoting cultural alienation (*repli sur soi*) and contradicting the Republican ideal – the CNHI, whose purpose it is to engage with civil society, did not develop a dedicated community exhibition space. Instead, it has placed a network of partners – from immigrant associations and firms to public institutions and administrations, national and international, public and private – ‘at the very heart of the project’ (Arquez-Roth 2007: 86), making it a ‘federating place for initiatives, cooperation, diffusion and innovation’.<sup>24</sup>

Such museums become sites where groups long absent or misrepresented in museum narratives are made visible and audible, where their viewpoints and experiences are brought to light and enter museums' collections of archives and objects. The process mirrors what, since the 1960s, historians writing social history sought to achieve when they first addressed the history of the ‘common people’ – those who had been hidden from history because of class, gender, race or age (Tosh 1996: 7–10, 96–102). In both cases, the recourse to oral history, to the voice of the people, is fundamental as it gives ‘social history a human face’ (Tosh 1996: 211), and compensates for the lack of records. Whilst the use of oral evidence has had a crucial influence on the development of immigration and Black history (Thompson 1988: 98–99), oral testimonies and personal experiences are privileged museographical approaches in exhibitions tackling immigration, and many chapters in this volume speak of their importance as a strategy for inclusion, whilst also analysing the challenges they present (in particular [Chapter 6](#), as well as [Chapters 5, 7 and 11](#)). If oral history was envisaged as a ‘democratic alternative, challenging the monopoly of an academic elite’ (Tosh 1996: 212),

many historians researching immigration also understood their role in terms of civic engagement and action; such is the case of French historian Gérard Noiriel, who envisages his scientific contribution not simply in pedagogical terms, but as a means 'to help citizens and governments better fulfil their roles' and to posit different ways of problematizing social issues from those propounded by the press and sectors of the establishment (Noiriel 2004: 20). He long campaigned for a site – a *lieu de mémoire* – dedicated to this aspect of the national past, enabling 'the breakdown of stereotypes, in such a way as to retrieve the reality and infinite diversity of people often obscured by administrative categories and public discourses' (Noiriel 2007: 16). His resignation from the Historical Committee of the CNHI in 2007 (along with seven other historians) marked his opposition to the newly formed Ministry of Immigration and National Identity, whose appellation and purpose, in his view, could only reinforce existing stereotypes (Poinsot *et al.* 2007: 100, Coroller 2007).

In the journey to democratization, participation and empowerment are seen as closely entwined. Just as the socio-political implication of oral history was that the groups concerned became part of the production process which acted as a means for them to repossess and affirm their collective identity, the same was true of the work undertaken with marginalized groups by museums (Nightingale and Swallow 2003; [Chapter 10](#), this volume). The contributions of socially excluded or disadvantaged groups to decision-making and production processes, allowing them the opportunity for self-representation in public spaces, have the potential not only to be empowering for such individuals, but also to alter prevailing images and discourses, such as those of a racist and xenophobic cast that are peddled and trivialized in the press. Exhibitions involving the participation of refugees and displaced persons are a case in point (Goodnow 2008, Skartveit and Goodnow 2010).<sup>25</sup> Sandell (2007: 102) takes the view that, since museums stand as 'resources' which can be enlisted to deploy interpretive strategies that challenge prejudices, they should consider doing so 'in ways which privilege a particular and unequivocal moral standpoint, one based on concepts of social justice', and jettison positions of neutrality and objectivity.<sup>26</sup> Aware of the critiques levelled against such an approach, he argues that all museums signify specific moral stances (Sandell 2007: 196). Message's research ([Chapter 3](#)) has also shown that museums as venues for debate and protest can assist reform movements. Underpinning the critiques of the positionality of museums lie two closely intertwined factors: governments' long-standing use of museums for ideological purposes; and the deeply politicized and polarizing issues associated with immigration as a generalized, non-specific and blurred notion, connoting immigration quotas, citizenship rights, legalization of undocumented migrants, the status and rights of refugees, to name but a few. The reformist agendas of twenty-first-century museums – based on principles of equity, human rights and democracy – are viewed by some as just as moralistic as the nationalistic programmes of their predecessors, particularly when they respond to guidelines and policies issued by government bodies; and heritage and museum studies, along with the museum profession, are tasked with fully exploring the ideological bases of contemporary endeavours and their implications for minority groups, power relations and the perception of difference (Klein 2008: 155–60).

More specifically, notwithstanding its usefulness and relevance, concerns have been voiced with respect to the emphasis and use, in public policy and museum practice, of the protean and complex notion of 'community', which, as a socio-cultural construct, requires critical assessment (Karp *et al.* 1992, Crooke 2007, Watson 2007). In museum and cultural studies literature, Britain – particularly since New Labour came to power in 1997 – often

exemplifies the governmental policy orientation that places the onus for social change, such as social inclusion, tolerance and reciprocal respect, on the cultural sphere (Message 2009b, Black 2010) and makes community engagement and participation an imperative for local museums, linked with funding support and opportunities (Crooke 2007: 41–63). The nature and effectiveness of such an orientation, as well as its funding mechanisms, have been challenged by a report commissioned by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, *Whose Cake is it Anyway?* (Lynch 2011). This study argues that, in spite of laudable efforts in many large organizations, the development of communitarian strategies remained peripheral to their core work; community partners felt that they were still cast in the role of passive beneficiaries or products rather than active participants, a situation described as ‘empowerment-lite’ (Lynch 2011). In this volume, Bernadette Lynch (Chapter 4) furthers her argument, challenging museums to eschew consensus and relinquish their ‘coercive cultural authority’ in order to become genuine places of contest and ‘creative struggle’. Interestingly, her report also concluded that community agency was more easily implemented by smaller organizations that were clearly embedded in their local communities (Lynch 2011). Much of the museum and heritage studies literature has long stressed this point.

One of the central innovative aspects that the new museological movement ushered in was to address community needs, moving museums’ focus from objects to social issues and encouraging a participatory approach to museum work (Harrison 2005), in particular through small-scale local initiatives. Whilst in France the deafening silence of social and history museums with respect to immigration was reportedly filled by the creation of a national institution, it had been sporadically broken, mainly in the 1990s, by the trickle of a few pioneering temporary local exhibitions, often organized in collaboration with immigrant associations (Joly 2007: 70–2). Among them were those run by the ecomuseum at Val de Bièvre, situated in the southern Parisian suburb of Fresnes<sup>27</sup> (Wasserman 1998), and Grenoble’s Musée Dauphinois (MD)<sup>28</sup> in the French Alps (Stevens 2007, Duclos 2006). Others were organized by museums focusing on the industrial development of particular localities (Joly 2007). Many of these museums drew their inspiration from the shift in museological approach attributed to the emergence of eco-museology<sup>29</sup> from the 1960s, with which Hugues de Varine, director of ICOM from 1964 to 1970, associates community museums throughout the world. Eco (or community) museology – often subsumed into ‘new museology’ – was the symmetrical development within the museum sector of societal movements seeking to recast society and politics. They comprised, for instance, struggles for the recognition of civil rights, for democracy in Latin America and the Iberian peninsula, and for national recognition in newly independent colonies. In de Varine’s words, the eco or community museum is identified with a clearly defined territory and

must begin as, and remain, an expression of the community, an endogenous product, to be recognized by the community as its own property and instrument ... [It] must at the same time remain open to the rest of the world in order to be able to receive selected useful inputs from outside and to be a tool for adapting the community and its culture(s) to a changing world.

*(Varine 2006: 228)*

Democracy and the empowerment of local communities feature prominently in the list of criteria defining these museums, as do the innovative use of and attitude towards sites and

multidisciplinarity (Boylan 1992b, Corsane *et al.* 2007: 102). Central to one of the Bolivian projects examined by Glas (Chapter 10) is the notion of ‘ethno-development’, whose ultimate objective is community empowerment and control through the preservation and commercialization of traditional skills. In the eco or new museum movement, participative museology and grass-roots initiatives are given pride of place and are used as tools to foster self-confidence and development. Ashley (Chapter 9) analyses two examples of ‘self-made’ immigrant museums in Canada and concludes that the process of production itself provided the communities with valuable ‘cultural toolkits’ as regards identity, citizenship and belonging, even though different versions of citizenship were expressed.

The issue of recognition in the public sphere can also be addressed from a memorial perspective.

### Museums, memory and recognition

Museums as *lieux de mémoire*<sup>30</sup> are ‘not *what* is remembered, but *sites* where memory is at work; not tradition itself but its laboratory’ (Nora 1997a: 18). The word ‘laboratory’ conveys the contingency of their existence dependent on favourable contexts and pressing needs; the process of adaptation and reassessment which they may undergo over time; and the fact that the ‘experiments’ they conduct may founder or even backfire, as well as raise hopes or objections.

*Lieux de mémoire* are *lieux* (sites) ‘in three senses of the word – material, symbolic and functional but simultaneously and only to varying degrees ... The three aspects always coexist’ (Nora 1997b: 37). This volume contains numerous examples of the diversity of material forms that migrant *lieux de mémoire* can take (Chapters 9, 13 and 15) and museums themselves can inhabit reinvented or reconfigured sites, one striking example being the CNHI, which is contentiously housed in a building that was erected for the 1931 Colonial Exhibition and was the former location of the defunct Musée National des Arts Africains et Océaniens. Choosing a site that embodied the apex of French colonialism was read, by post-colonial historians, as blatant exploitation of a memorial site to serve political ends (Bancel and Blanchard 2007). As previously highlighted, the changing functional role of museums from pedagogical tools to socially empowering is attested by the increase in the number of projects emanating from civil society. Nonetheless, one of their permanent and crucially significant functions has been to forge a sense of belonging among human groups. As specialized institutions that articulate and shape collective or cultural memory (Miztal 2003: 19, Erl 2010), they crystallize ideas of origin and historical journeys, projecting and transmitting socially shared representations of the past and fostering cohesion and togetherness. Through their choice and unpacking of foundational events, dates and processes, they are markers of collective identity, contributing to its formation and reformulation (McLean 2005). In this respect, as symbolic sites, they are important instruments in the process of recognition, a process on which social respect (*estime sociale*; Ricoeur 2004: 294–6) is founded and which power relations underlie (Ricoeur 2004: 311, Radstone 2005: 145).

Recognition is closely bound up with the perceived role of museums as spaces of authority that confer legitimacy on and endorse selected versions of the past. It frequently underpins the avowed aims associated with museums that engage with migrant voices, be they local or national, particularly in their varied uses and recentring of minority visions – the recognition of difference. It might manifest the will of a state – the ultimate recognizing authority – to

inscribe migrant or minority memories in a master narrative and incorporate them in a common national imaginary. Alternatively, it might express the desire of diverse communities to achieve validation and social valorization by giving their forgotten, suppressed or distorted memories visibility in the public arena. As *lieux de mémoire*, museums are implicated in the recovery, rehabilitation and legitimization of social groups, and the dissemination of their image and status with the view, in many cases, of eventually strengthening the social fabric. Yet, in the case of once marginalized memories, the resulting effects may well be the emergence or resurgence of tensions and discord, symptomatic of lingering social malaise. As Hodgkin and Radstone (2005: 132) commented: ‘the belonging that comes through shared and recognised personal and public memory is complex and fragmentary, and subject to change’. Unsurprisingly, as they are media of recognition, museums are prominent catalysts in memory wars.

The study of their symbolic and recognizing function is threaded with fundamental questions surrounding the social foundations of memory work, questions first advanced by M. Halbwachs (1997) in his pioneering analysis of the social frameworks of memory and, since the 1980s, explored and reconfigured by scholars working in the broad and multi-disciplinary field of memory studies. They involve looking at the social actors who are implicated or consulted, such as memory brokers, who, according to Noiriel (2004: 19), speak in the names of the groups to which they belong and give homogeneity to the disparate memories of each member. Recurrently, studies underline the necessity to consider the complexity of social relations and to factor in issues and divisions internal to minority groups, such as gender, age and class, alongside external factors relating to similar groups or society at large. Such social issues also pertain to the structural and organizational environment of museums, for instance the place assigned to and taken by migrant communities and individuals conditioning the privileged narrative strategies (Lagerkvist 2008, Møller and Einarsen 2008; see also [Chapter 9](#), this volume). As pointed out by Torres (2011: 19), the place conferred to and taken by migrants in museum production conditions whether their contribution has a long-lasting effect and becomes institutional. This distinction is drawn from Assman’s use of Halbwachs’s concept of ‘collective memory’; ‘cultural memory’, formalized and stabilized through institutions of preservation is distinguished from ‘communicative memory’, more diffuse, with limited time depth and span, and based on interaction (Assman 2010). Another aspect concerns the modes of articulation through which discourses or narratives of and about the past are produced, reused or recast, alongside those they provoke. Not only do factual content or data require unpicking, but so does the manner in which they are communicated. This could involve emphasis on personal testimonies or witnessing and use of oral history; focus on policies or political history; and use of symbolic, mythical or religious images – recognizable and evocative tropes – such as exodus or rebirth. Memories, once publicly projected, might trigger a new awareness, fire the imagination or generate conflict, particularly since memory work is intimately linked with the *present* interests and objectives of the social groups involved and is heavily predicated on power relations and levels of agency. In some cases exhibitions reproduce racialized social relations, reflecting long-ingrained issues of power, and prevent any break from past memorial and narrative strategies (Chivallon 2008).

If, according to Chaumont and Pourtois (1999: 3), the specificity of the contemporary social sphere is that recognition occupies centre stage and has become the foremost objective of group mobilization, it follows that the very nature of recognition related to museum work

needs to be scrutinized. French museums, notably the early exhibitions at the Musée Dauphinois (Grenoble) and the more recent CNHI, have recurrently featured in arguments dissecting the process (Dufoix 2005, Cohen 2007, Stevens 2007). Such terms as ‘truth’, ‘reparation’, ‘debt’ and ‘justice’, all pertaining to the fields of ethics and social justice, saturate the discourse surrounding the CNHI and similar endeavours. The mission statement of the CNHI is used by Dufoix (2005: 142–7) to test what he identifies as the ‘eight Rs’ – eight dimensions in the politics of recognition, either granted or requested: repentance, reparation, rebalancing, restitution, requalification, recollection, reconstitution and reconciliation. Five of these may, in my view, directly apply to museums.<sup>31</sup>

- Rebalancing involves the endorsement of social policies aimed at redressing continuing discrimination (i.e. positive discrimination). Although Dufoix’s definition mainly hints at the social sphere, cultural policies can also be part of the process, as evidenced in the case of the Kanak, the indigenous inhabitants of the Pacific island of New Caledonia – one of France’s overseas territories. Both the agency created in 1989 for the development of Kanak culture and the Tjibaou Cultural Centre opened in Nouméa, the island’s capital, in 1998 were meant to achieve ‘cultural rebalancing’ (*Ethnologie française* 1999: 437, Message 2006: 159–60). They followed from the Matignon Agreements (1988) and a period of often violent confrontation between Kanak and Caldoche (settlers).
- Requalification concerns the past and social actors and entails redefining past events as traumatic and some groups as victims or guilty parties. The cases of the rehabilitation of indigenous voices in museums in multicultural societies and national minorities in Scandinavian countries and Japan (see [Chapter 15](#)) come to mind, as does the case of the Harkis<sup>32</sup> (Baussant 2006: 172).
- Recollection centres on the formal act of remembering the past. Museums are akin to sites of commemoration where selected past events and people may well become sacralized. Centenary exhibitions, such as those celebrating the abolition of slavery, constitute critical occasions for enhanced historical research, state apologies and collective remembrance.<sup>33</sup>
- Reconstitution relates to the writing of history or providing access to the past through historical or historiographical knowledge.<sup>34</sup>
- Finally, recognition has a bearing on reconciliation in that it influences the future relations between groups who might differ on the meaning of the past, and yet share the same social space. In post-conflict situations, museums can play a crucial role mediating between communities, as Crooke’s research (2007 and [Chapter 11](#), this volume) has shown.

The planned CNHI responded to ‘a duty of justice and recognition’ (Toubon 2004: 149)<sup>35</sup> and combined the dimensions outlined above:

The centre must be a place of truth and reparation. A place of truth: no history can develop in the long term without the support of the rule of law ... A place of reparation: the history of immigration does not start after the Revolution. France, from its origin, gathered several nations. Truth consoles, repairs humiliations.

(Toubon 2004: 189)

Central to its project, in Cohen’s view (2007: 403), was ‘the elaboration of an ethics of recognition’ seeking to help migrants and their descendants to regain their dignity, do them

justice and heal moral wounds. In acknowledging the memory of discrimination, the museum uses this past to put forward a vision for the future in the hope that its work might contribute towards a better and more equitable society. Similarly, Jean-Claude Duclos (2006), former director of the Musée Dauphinois, emphasizes the centrality of recognition of past suffering in the museological experience developed by the museum, one which gives pride of place to oral testimonies and personal memories and was deemed best suited to groups such as migrants from the Maghreb region, for whom, in contrast to previously exhibited groups, material artefacts were not relevant memory carriers (Duclos 2006: 22). The Musée Dauphinois also centres on affect through the evocation of sensory experiences and, in some cases, the use of olfactory stimuli to convey a sense of place and elicit emotional responses in visitors – empathy and often malaise or compassion (Pico 2007). Witcomb (2013) has analysed how affect can prompt historical understanding or lead to questions and a desire to discover more. Duclos (2006: 25) concludes that if these exhibitions, notably those focusing on migrants from the Maghreb region (*Pour que la Vie Continue – D’Isère et du Maghreb*, 1999–2001) and returning settlers from colonial Algeria (*Français d’Isère et d’Algérie*, 2003–4), brought memory conflicts to a head – at times brutally – the preparatory work, surrounding programme of events and actual museography all contributed to creating a dialogic and intersecting space and initiated the grieving process.<sup>36</sup> Stevens (2007: 37), in her study of these exhibitions, reached a similar conclusion. She linked differing modes of reception to the differing forms of recognition at stake, pointed out that groups seeking recognition did not necessarily wish to be recognized as ‘victims’, and stressed the need to take into account the response(s) of audiences – a critical component of the process of recognition. This process also has to be envisaged in the longer term, as it may occur through stages (Stevens 2007: 37). In Duclos’s view (2006: 25), the experience could also generate a sense of closure. He cites the case of Greek migrants,<sup>37</sup> many of whom originated from Asia Minor and were forcibly expelled from the city of Smyrna following the 1923 convention. During the preparatory phase of the exhibition, future projects were contemplated by participants (films, publications, and so on), yet none materialized: ‘memory had been heard, the need for history satisfied, the page could be turned’ (Duclos 2006: 25). Similarly, in her work with refugees, Lynch (2011) underlines the importance for participants of ‘giving testimony’, a motivation which she fears might not be shared by curators.

Whilst museums are used to combat prejudice and reverse misrepresentation, as *lieux de mémoire* and media of recognition, they are also tasked with the responsibility of healing deeply etched social wounds or reducing and attenuating social cleavages. As the above examples show, the tensions that surface around migration memories are frequent signs of a post-colonial fault line, and colonization and slavery have been identified as two of the four major sources of memorial conflicts or ‘memory wars’ world-wide. The other two – ‘the end of dictatorships’ and ‘the Holocaust, genocides and massacres’ (Blanchard and Veyrat-Masson 2008b: 16) – also imply population movements, either forced or voluntary. Through recollection, reconstitution and requalification, heavy baggage can be verbalized and acknowledged in the narratives featured in migration exhibitions, and reconciliation frequently stands out as the cornerstone buttressing the museum projects engaging with migration. According to Ricoeur (2000b: 645), recognition is key to a soothed memory which arises ‘in some favourable circumstances, such as the permission granted by another to remember, or better still, the help accorded by another to share a memory’.

## Structure of the book

This volume presents the multifaceted forms, objectives and challenges that exhibitions staged by museums engaging with the history of migration can offer. In the book's structure, the global examples featured are not organized in terms of historical experience – that is settler countries as opposed to non-settler countries – as the aim was to highlight similarities and contrasts with respect to practice, weight of public policies and discourses, as well as museological and museographical developments. After a first section introducing issues and challenges (Chapters 2–4), the chapters are grouped into two main themes. Part 2 (Chapters 5–10) considers how and to what effect a range of museum spaces and types have engaged with issues of diversity, citizenship and belonging through migrant narratives. Part 3 (Chapters 11–15) focuses more closely on how national narratives have accommodated migration history.

Overall, the book combines articles that foreground the practical experiences of members of the museum profession with academic analyses focusing on a wide range of geo- and socio-political issues. It aims to inform thinking and practice for museums concerned with narratives of migration and more widely offers reflections on the memorialization of migration in contemporary societies.

## Notes

- 1 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the French are my own.
- 2 Noiriél, who was amongst the first historians to address the history of immigration in France, was commenting on the French situation (see also Candau 1996: 101). In this respect, the French case has recurrently been contrasted to that of the United States both in historiographical and memorial terms (Noiriél 1988: 19–26, Green 2007).
- 3 See the *Museums and Diversity* series, details available at [www.museumstudies.uib.no/index.php/publications-section.html](http://www.museumstudies.uib.no/index.php/publications-section.html) (accessed 9 July 2013). Much of the work undertaken by museums addressing migration is embedded in UNESCO's policy documents and statements regarding cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. The Migration Museum Network, which was formally set up in 2006 under its auspices and that of the International Organization for Migration, identified three key functions of such museums: acknowledging the contribution made by migrants to their host societies; fostering their inclusion and integration within nation-states; and building awareness of their experiences and promoting empathy amongst the wider public. See [www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/projects/unesco-iom-migration-museums-initiative/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/projects/unesco-iom-migration-museums-initiative/) (accessed 9 July 2013). The same view motivates the International Council of Museums (ICOM), one of the NGOs closely associated with UNESCO (Vinson 2007).
- 4 The European Commission has funded a number of humanities research projects related to issues of identity formation within Europe through successive Framework Programmes (FP). Two might be singled out, both part of the seventh FP: *EuNaMus – European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen* (2010–13) and *MeLa\* – European Museums and Libraries in/of the Age of Migration* (2011–15) (Aronsson 2012, European Commission 2012, Lanz and Postiglione 2012). Lanz and Cimoli (Chapters 2 and 5, this volume) are involved in the MeLa\* FP.
- 5 The promotion and development of cultural projects, or their redefinition, have often been triggered by socio-political events associated with social exclusion or mounting racism, for instance the refugee crisis in Australia in 2001 (see Chapter 14, this volume), the *banlieues* riots in the north-east of Paris in 2005, and the recurring attacks on immigrants in Italy in 2008.
- 6 'Migration' is used in its most comprehensive definition: from migration internal to states or continents to international and transcontinental migration, from recent migratory flows to historic moves, from legal to undocumented migrants and refugees, from voluntary to forced migration, although distinctions are outlined whenever necessary.
- 7 The predicament is captured in McShane (2001). See also McLean (2005: 1); on the *Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration* as a project see Viet (2005).



- 8 In this respect, the notion of ‘contact zone’ has been a useful model for practitioners and in the research of many scholars working on museums engaging with migration (see [Chapters 4, 6, 7, 9 and 10](#), this volume). First developed by Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel and Transculturation* to depict ‘the space in which people geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations’ (cited in Clifford 1999: 438), it was expanded by Clifford beyond colonial encounters ‘to include relations within the same state, region, city’ and to describe ‘social’ rather than ‘geographic’ distances (Clifford 1999: 445).
- 9 For analyses of the historical development of museums, see Aronsson (2012: 68–70) regarding national institutions; for analyses of the ‘new museology’, see Vergo (1989), Ross (2004) and Message (2006).
- 10 In Britain, devolution describes the transfer of some powers from central government (Westminster) to regionally elected assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Devolution Acts were passed in 1998.
- 11 Ohliger draws on Baur’s comparative study (2009) of three museums in ‘classical countries of immigration’ – Ellis Island Museum in New York (1990), Pier 21 Museum in Halifax, Nova Scotia (1999), and the Immigration Museum in Melbourne.
- 12 See also Noiriel 2002: 8.
- 13 In French political and academic discourse, memory is a potent notion (see Blanchard and Veyrat-Masson 2008a, Michel 2010) and the gestation of the CNHI occurred in the context of intensifying memorial conflicts.
- 14 For details on the genesis of the CNHI, see, for instance, Green (2007) and Stevens (2008, 2010). *Hommes et Migrations* (2007, issue 1267) was entirely devoted to the CNHI whilst *Museum International* (2007, issue 59 (1–2)), *Hommes et Migrations* (2011, issue 1293) and *Human Architecture* (2011, issue 9 (4)) all feature articles on the CNHI and more broadly on museums and migration.
- 15 Although issues of social exclusion and racism had been smouldering since the 1980s, the socio-political context of the new millennium acted as a wake-up call to the political class (left and right) and gave a strong fillip to the project. In particular, the 2002 presidential elections saw the far-right candidate, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who had stood on his usual anti-immigrant ticket and defensive identity politics, overtake the Socialist candidate and reach the final round.
- 16 [www.histoire-immigration.fr/la-cite/le-projet-de-la-citeLeprojet](http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/la-cite/le-projet-de-la-citeLeprojet) (accessed 20 March 2013).
- 17 Undocumented workers were demonstrating against governmental procrastination in implementing legislation regularizing their status; the event was carefully recorded by the CNHI. On the occupation of the museum, see Gruson (2011: 20–1) and Torres (2011: 20).
- 18 [www.histoire-immigration.fr/la-cite/le-projet-de-la-citeLeprojet](http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/la-cite/le-projet-de-la-citeLeprojet) (accessed 20 March 2013).
- 19 The MNATP had been built from the collections of the Museum of Ethnography, created in 1879. Details from MuCEM website: [www.mucem.org/en/leprojet](http://www.mucem.org/en/leprojet) (accessed 22 March 2013).
- 20 See [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org).
- 21 Incidentally, France, in keeping with its unifying Republican ideal, was not among the signatories of this convention.
- 22 [www.ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/the-story-of-the-european-year-of-intercultural-dialogue\\_en.htm](http://www.ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/the-story-of-the-european-year-of-intercultural-dialogue_en.htm) (accessed 26 March 2013).
- 23 See also the strategy adopted by the Immigration Museum in Melbourne (Sebastian 2007: 155–8). Message summarizes the failings of the community approach in this volume ([Chapter 3](#)).
- 24 [www.histoire-immigration.fr/la-cite/le-reseau](http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/la-cite/le-reseau) (accessed 20 March 2013). See also Innocenti (2012: 111–19) on this aspect.
- 25 See in particular the article by Jones (2010: xi–xxiv) analysing *Belonging: Voices of London’s Refugees*, which ran from October 2006 to February 2007. See also [www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Get-involved/Collaborative-projects/Belonging/](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Get-involved/Collaborative-projects/Belonging/) (accessed 23 April 2013).
- 26 See also Viv Szekeres (2002).
- 27 Exhibitions held: *Rassemblement: un siècle d’immigration en Ile-de-France* (1993), *Paroles de femmes tunisiennes* (1998), *Insaisissables voyageurs – tsiganes* (2000), and most recently *Pieds-noirs ici, la tête ailleurs* (2012–13), on returning settlers from colonized Algeria.
- 28 Corato-Grenoble (1989) on Italian migration, *Des Grecs de Grenoble* (1993), *D’Isère et d’Arménie* (1997–8), *Pour que la Vie Continue – D’Isère et du Maghreb* (1999–2001), *Français d’Isère et d’Algérie* (2003–4), and most recently *Un Air d’Italie* (2011–13).
- 29 For a definition and analysis of ecomuseology, see Boylan (1992a, 1992b) and Davis (1999, 2008).
- 30 See Ertl and Nünning (2010) for a discussion of the concept.

- 31 Definitions of the other three are: repentance (public apology from those responsible for discrimination or trauma); reparation (financial payment for prejudices incurred); restitution (political or judicial recognition of acts of despoilment).
- 32 Algerians who fought in the French army during the war leading to Algeria's independence.
- 33 See Lynch (Chapter 4, this volume) for a critique of Britain's commemoration of the abolition of the slave trade in museums, which failed to address its implications in contemporary racism.
- 34 The French word *reconnaissance* (recognition) contains *connaissance*, meaning knowledge. *Reconnaissance* hence also militates against *méconnaissance* (lack of awareness) of the past. See Ricoeur (2004) for an analysis of the polysemy of the word and its implications.
- 35 See also Poinso (2008).
- 36 Memories of the migration from Algeria are shot through with those of the war of independence and are deeply fractured. They are carried by diverse groups and individuals, including: Algerian migrants; Harkis; Pieds-Noirs (returning settlers not all of whom were originally from France); members of pro-independence groups in Algeria and France; members of groups in favour of keeping Algeria French; conscripts; and so on.
- 37 *Des Grecs de Grenoble*, 1993.

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## **PART 1**

# Museums and migration history

Issues and challenges



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# 2

## CITY MUSEUMS IN A TRANSCULTURAL EUROPE

*Francesca Lanz*

While the need for social cohesion seems as acute as ever in the city, coexistence cannot be built on illusions of sameness, of homogeneity or easy harmony. It has to be grounded in an acceptance of difference, disagreement, conflict, different world views, and on people's active participation and willingness to get involved directly with each other.

(Sandahl 2012: 92)

### **Contemporary museums in 'an age of migrations'**

According to Eurostat 2012 statistics, there were 48.9 million foreign-born residents in the European Union in 2011, 32.4 million of whom were born outside the EU, and 16.5 million of whom were born in another member state<sup>1</sup> (Eurostat 2012). This means that currently about 9.7 per cent of the total population of Europe is 'migrant', born in a country different from the one in which they reside, having moved there for socio-political or economic reasons as well as for study, business or other personal motives.<sup>2</sup>

Migration actually may be seen not only as a matter related to individual people and to forced movements of populations, but as a complex condition of our contemporary society, and a crucial component in the economic, cultural and social growth of Europe. We live in an age characterized by intensive migration flows, accelerated mobility, and fluid circulation of information, cultures, ideas and goods; an epoch moulded by the proliferation of the internet and mass media and by the change in scale produced by space-shrinking technologies and new means of transport (Appadurai 1996; Chambers 1996; Castells 1996–8; Sassen 1991, 2007; Welsch 1999; Macdonald 2003). Many theorists argue that the centrality of the nation-state and the related idea of a unique and stable national identity is always more questionable and less relevant in such a framework. While it is every day increasingly evident that 'globalization is not the story of cultural homogenization' (Appadurai 1996: 11), contemporary life is more and more characterized by a high degree of cultural encounters and cross-fertilizations: a 'migrating modernity', as Ian Chambers defines it, that is multiple and heterogeneous (Chambers 2012), in which 'the identities of the past are becoming

increasingly irrelevant and ... new identities, and new identity formations, are being created' (Macdonald 2003: 1). As the philosopher Wolfgang Welsch pointed out over ten years ago, the traditional description of cultures based on the ideas of 'inner homogenization' and 'outer separation' is today clearly both descriptively and normatively inappropriate:

Cultures de facto no longer have the insinuated form of homogeneity and separateness. They have instead assumed a new form, which is to be called *transcultural* insofar that it *passes through* classical cultural boundaries. Cultural conditions today are largely characterized by mixes and permeations.

(Welsch 1999: 196)

Changes in population flows and demography, the impact of new media, the consequent layerization, complexification and fragmentation of societies and identities and, perhaps more importantly, the recognition of the centrality of such changes to the human experience of life and society challenge both cultural and political practices and actors at national, supranational and local levels, including museums.

Museums – most obviously a Western invention, institutions whose emergence is strictly bound up with the emergence of the nation-state, and places historically implicated in identity work (Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Bennett 1995; Basso Peressut 2005) – are nowadays facing new pressing issues that ensue from this 'age of migrations', and which entail a deep reflection on their role, mission, communication approaches and narratives<sup>3</sup> (Pröslér 1996; Macdonald 2003; Karp *et al.* 2006; Rectanus 2006; Watson 2007; Knell *et al.* 2010; Ferrara 2012; Noak 2013). While, in the last ten years in Europe, the number of migration museums has increased considerably (Baur 2009, 2010; Cimoli 2013) – creating, it may be argued, a 'new museum type' in the wake of similar examples overseas – many mainstream European museums are beginning to consider ways of tackling and questioning matters related to current migration flows, to open up as spaces for dialogue and confrontation, and including new – and usually underrepresented – voices. A rising number of temporary exhibitions focusing on the relationship between migration and identity in history and the present are being promoted (Poehls 2011), as well as new educational activities, projects, collecting and curatorial practices, with the twin aims of involving migrants and of fostering dialogue and reflections on issues such as migration, cultural difference and identity.

Altogether this situation is triggering a slow yet relevant change (Basso Peressut, Lanz and Postiglione 2013), which is affecting several museums despite their principal focus, structure and mission. City museums in particular seem to be amongst the most influenced (Whitehead, Eckersley and Mason 2012; Lanz 2013; Jones *et al.* 2012), so much so that their very role, approaches and tools are being reconsidered towards what may be identified as the development of a new model of the city museum. By understanding migration in a broader sense and as a crucial component of contemporary cultural conditions, some pioneering European city museums have started to look at, represent and consider the people living in the city and the city's places in a new and more multilateral manner. Through the presentation of the experiences carried out by several city museums, this chapter aims to outline the ongoing change affecting them, and explore the potential of these museums in the reconfiguration and promotion of a new multifaceted sense of belonging and identity in Europe.

## A 'second generation' of city museums

The modern city is a city of contradictions ... it houses many *ethnes*, many cultures, and classes, many religions. This modern city is too fragmentary, too full of contrast and strife: it must therefore have many faces not one.

(Rykwert 2000: 7)

The birth of city museums in Europe can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century when the largest cities, involved in the urban, economic and social transformations of the time, attempted to preserve documents, stories and memories from the past. City museums were conceived as repositories of civic treasures, places where the history of the city should be conserved; their collections were meant to represent the city's history and celebrate its glorious past. From the second half of the nineteenth century this museum type spread throughout Europe and many city museums were established.<sup>4</sup> In the last fifteen years, after a period of more or less total immobility, city museums have been evolving to the extent that their definition is nowadays neither unified nor fixed (Postula 2012; Bertuglia and Montaldo 2003; Galla 1995). The definition of a city museum, in fact, is not related to the collection it conserves – that can be very heterogeneous and include several different kinds of objects<sup>5</sup> – nor to the ownership of its collections, or its funding sources, which may be municipal as well as national or private.<sup>6</sup> They were usually identified with historical museums, but today this is often not the case for many new and renewed city museums, whose mission and purpose are being developed beyond their traditional role, towards a more active social involvement within the contemporary city and its communities.

From the end of the 1990s attention was focused increasingly on city museums (UNESCO 1995; Fleming 1996; Kavanagh and Frostick 1998; Bertuglia and Montaldo 2003; MacDonald 2006; Kistemaker 2006; Aymonino and Tolic 2007; Jones, MacDonald and McIntyre 2008; Calabi, Marini and Travaglini 2008; Jones *et al.* 2012). As David Fleming pointed out, this interest was not only theoretical or speculative, but also a response to new emerging urgencies which were 'part ideological, part economic, driven by perceived social and educational needs' (Fleming 1996: 132). The debate as it has developed so far in the field of city museums has been investigating and promoting the idea that they should and could play an important role in a very complex and changing urban scenario, influenced by the new economic and cultural opportunities offered by globalization and the establishment of the European Union and by the current phenomenon of migration, not only in registering these urban changes, but also by acting as cultural tools capable of influencing and driving them (Fleming 1996; Lohman 2006; Kistemaker 2006; Galla 1995).

Since that time the mission and *raison d'être* of city museums have been questioned and reconsidered, and their role redefined from one of merely preserving and displaying the city's glorious past to representing and interpreting the city's present, as well as imagining and debating its future. Nowadays, however, the cities they have to relate to are neither monolithic nor unitary, and their identities are strictly bound up with the identities of a variety of subjects coming from abroad, who live and experience the city with their intellectual and cultural differences, with different expectations and aims, on long-term as well as temporary bases. City museums are thus faced with the challenge of representing a city, its history and identity from multiple perspectives, taking in plural voices, allowing alternative interpretations, and including in the story those who have traditionally been excluded.

## Exhibiting migration in European city museums

In the last ten years a growing number of new or renewed city museums have been opening around Europe, and several existing city museums are widening their activities, reorganizing their collections, redesigning their exhibitions. All of this is extending the process of rethought that started in the 1990s, and suggests that the current socio-cultural urban context and this theoretical debate are ultimately encouraging a transformation of this museum type. In this process, migration and cultural diversity are recurrent areas of reflection for the museums and are ever more frequently addressed in several ways – as the focus of temporary events and exhibitions, as a topic within the museum's permanent display, or even as a perspective for its very rethought.



**FIGURE 2.1** *Becoming a Copenhagener*, Museum of Copenhagen, November 2010–December 2013. View of the sections ‘Cosmopolitan Copenhagen’ and ‘Urban Communities’, June 2012. Photo Francesca Lanz

First of all, issues such as migration, history and identity are frequently at the core of temporary programmes and activities aimed at involving local communities, migrants and youngsters, and furthering mutual awareness between them and the city in which they live. These projects are often implemented through participative curatorial practices committed to sharing the museum's authority with its communities, and occasionally developed in partnership with other cities' cultural institutions or even through international networking (Betti 2012; Lanz 2014). Temporary exhibitions in particular, as means for museums to experiment with new curatorial practices, approaches and communication strategies, are frequently a favoured tool. As Kerstin Poehls points out, 'temporary exhibitions are and are also expected to be more courageous when it comes to a provocative thesis or metaphor – as they are points of departure for trends and wider processes of societal (self-) understanding' (Poehls 2011: 338).<sup>7</sup>

Amongst the many noteworthy experiments, the projects recently developed by the Museum of Copenhagen represent a prime example, most notably *Becoming a Copenhagener* (Sandahl 2011, 2012). It is a semi-temporary exhibition,<sup>8</sup> originally planned to last for two years, from November 2010 to December 2012, but at the time of writing extended for another year because of its relevance and its success in representing the museum's new approach. The Museum of Copenhagen was established at the turn of the twentieth century, and its collections, knowledge and communication have been traditionally focused upon the city's development and the life of its citizens, documenting the history of Copenhagen from the twelfth century. In recent years, however, the museum has been undergoing major changes, seeking to reposition and redefine its role within the contemporary urban context and to become more relevant to the life of Copenhagen's citizens (Selmer 2006; Sandahl 2012). It is thus reorienting its strategies and approaches, and promoting practices and projects aimed at fostering dialogue among citizens and the museum's participation in 'contemporary discourse on the ever-changing nature of the city and its inherent plurality' (from the museum website).<sup>9</sup> 'In the discourses of museums', says Jette Sandahl (2011), the museum director,

identity is most often linked to received interpretation of history and the past, but in real life, people seem to be less interested in where they come from, and more concerned with what is to become of them. In that context identity can be seen more in terms of choices, more in terms of where people want to go, who they want to be, as a striving, as hope for the future.

*Becoming a Copenhagener* focuses on immigration to Copenhagen, presenting this process as the catalyst and precondition for the city's growth and change, and interprets the current practices of migration and globalization against the background of the city's history and traditions. The design of the exhibition has been developed by an in-house team and it has been conceived as an object-based exhibition. The objects on display mainly come from the museum's collection – which was enlarged with the acquisition of some new objects relating to the contemporary city, and migration in particular – complemented by temporary loans from some immigrant citizens, pictures, videos and some artworks. Finally, there are several labels and panels, which contribute effectively to make the exhibition's point.

The exhibition is structured into four sections – 'Arrivals', 'Wanted-Unwanted', 'Cosmopolitan Copenhagen' and 'Urban Communities' – as an attempt to develop the topic

thematically rather than simply follow a chronological approach. An intermediate section, arranged in the form of a timeline punctuated by major historical thresholds and reporting related data and figures, depicts the history of the physical, economic and social development of the city in relation to the diverse immigration flows to Copenhagen over time. The exhibition design is very basic; it consists mainly of simple, square, wooden display cases painted white, which contain most of the objects,<sup>10</sup> support pictures or video projections, and contribute to the organization of the interior spaces by turning into benches or small walls – though the articulation they provide is not always effective in relation to the visit path and the exhibition contents. The task of conveying the exhibition's messages is entrusted mainly to the objects themselves and to the panels, and notable curatorial work has been carried out in choosing and reinterpreting the objects of the museum's collections and exploring how they could give new responses to new questions. The general lack of a coordinated graphic and spatial project working with and on the objects results in an ineffective overall exhibition design, and does not contribute to getting the visitors physically and emotionally involved in the visit experience, or in orienting them within the multiple and rich contents of the exhibition; nor does it contribute to explain the exhibition's multiple layers which would empower its communicative ability. Hence some messages may be partially hidden or difficult to grasp.

Nevertheless, several outstanding aspects characterize this exhibition. They include the implementation of a semi-permanent model – which benefits from the advantages of both a traditional permanent display and a temporary project, and allows the museum to deal flexibly with some very contemporary topics by remaining open to different interpretations, points of view and frequent updates – and the attempt, while focusing on migration, to address a discourse about 'who the Copenhageners are' and their identity, presenting the status of being a 'Copenhagener' as something different from being a 'Dane', as a matter of choice and an open process of becoming, rather than a closed or legal category.

In some other city museums, alongside temporary initiatives – and seldom as a result of them – migration is included in the permanent display, sometimes as a stand-alone gallery,<sup>11</sup> sometimes as a topic embedded in the main story, either parenthetically or as part of the thread.

The Amsterdam Museum, for instance, underwent a significant reorganization in 2000 when the new permanent exhibition on the contemporary city was opened. Since 1985 the museum had been exploring the topic of migration and the city's multiculturalism through several exhibitions, and this led to the decision to include these elements in the new permanent display. For example, some of the displays focus on the lives of guest workers who came to Amsterdam after the Second World War, such as Turkish and Italian immigrants; others pertain to more recent events, such as the murder of the filmmaker Theo Van Gogh by an Islamic fundamentalist, exploring 'the limits of tolerance and the possible fallacy of peaceful multicultural integration' (Whitehead, Eckersley and Mason 2012). In the Amsterdam Museum migration is not a main topic, as Annemarie de Wildt, the curator, recently pointed out, but it plays a role within the story told by the museum, while temporary exhibitions and outreach projects are constantly developed with the aim of problematizing the history of the city, highlighting some contemporary issues and focusing on Amsterdam's diversity (de Wildt 2012). Examples are the series of events organized by the Amsterdam Museum between April and August 2012 called *400 Years: Netherlands–Turkey*, which celebrated the close economic and diplomatic ties between the two countries over the last four centuries, and the exhibition



**FIGURE 2.2** *My Town: A Celebration of Diversity*, Amsterdam Museum, 29 June 2012–1 February 2013. View of the artwork by Barbara Broekman exhibited in the Schuttersgallerij of the Amsterdam Museum. Photo Richard de Bruijn. Courtesy of Amsterdam Museum



*My Town: A Celebration of Diversity*. The latter is intended to draw attention in the public debate away from the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ discussion by showing that there is no ‘them’ and that all nationalities together in Amsterdam represent a diverse and versatile world which should be celebrated. The exhibition is based on an artwork made by the textile artist Barbara Broekman, who has researched the nationalities of Amsterdammers and the textiles of their countries of origin for ten years. She brought a variety of characteristic details from clothing, carpets, flags and tablecloths together in a 40 metre long Axminster woven carpet runner that represents all the 179 nationalities that live in Amsterdam. This artwork is currently on display at the Schuttersgallerij of the Amsterdam Museum, and visitors are free to walk on it as well as view it.<sup>12</sup>

The Museum of London, for its part, was relaunched in 2010 with the opening of the new ‘Galleries of Modern London’ (Lanz 2013; Ross 2013). These new galleries – designed by an in-house team led by the museum director, Jack Lohman – are organized in three chronological sections<sup>13</sup> that depict the story of London from 1666 to the present day. Passing through the new ‘City Gallery’, they culminate in the ‘Sackler Hall’, a hybrid multifunctional open space, equipped with a bank of computer pods offering more information about the objects on display and in store, a café, relaxing booths, an area hosting changing temporary exhibitions on London’s creativity, and a 45-metre LED screen loop displaying



**FIGURE 2.3** Galleries of Modern London, entrance panel, Museum of London, September 2012. Photo Francesca Lanz

information and video artwork on contemporary London commissioned every two years by the museum in partnership with Film London.

Along the galleries a wide range of heterogeneous objects – including movies, music, interviews, clothes and much more – accompanied by detailed explanatory labels, interactive devices and immersive spaces tell London's more recent history up to the present, and aim to stimulate debate about its future. At the entrance to the galleries a panel states:

Two themes run through our story ... For the past 300 years, London's fortunes have been tied up with people, goods and ideas from overseas. This story is about London's relationship with the rest of the world ... People are at the centre of the story. Through London's past people have shaped the city's fortunes and in turn have been changed themselves. Like any great city, London never stands still. Its buildings rise and fall. Its character evolves. The choices Londoners made in the past affect us all today – just as our choices will help shape London's future.

Such an introduction declares that the museum is not displaying *the history* of London but *one possible interpretation* of it, in the light of the contemporary city, and looking towards its future, placing London's people at the core of it: the museum stands on the story it *chooses* to tell.

Migration is a central topic of this story and it is embedded – sometimes explicitly, other times deductively – into the entire narrative, both reinterpreting historical objects in a new light, and including new objects recently acquired by the museum with the aim of collecting and representing London's cultural diversity. Considerable effort has been made to avoid grouping together or categorizing London's inhabitants according to ethnic groups, revisiting the idea of migration as a widespread movement of people, which thus enlarges the definition of London's 'imagined community' to all those who live in the city and contribute to its development, regardless of whether they are foreign-born, temporary residents or the long-term settled. Personal objects are seldom displayed, and only ever when their single story has a broader and wider meaning within the whole story. London's contemporary, multifarious identity and its distinctive features are described as being the result of the encounters of different cultures, lifestyles, religions, sexual habits, languages and fashions, resulting from the migration of people to and within London throughout history as well as today. The galleries present cultural diversity as part of the city's wealth, enriching its cultural, social and economic life, and they ultimately promote, with clear political implications, a positive view of migrants and migration.<sup>14</sup>

Another example is provided by the MAS – Museum aan de Stroom (Museum on the River) – in Antwerp, designed by the Dutch architects Neutelings Riedijk and opened in May 2011 (Beyers 2008; Montanari 2013). The museum brings together the collections of the Maritime Museum, the Ethnographic Museum and the Ethnological Museum with the challenge – as Leen Beyers, head of research at MAS, declared – to rethink 'which meanings these collections and the museum project itself might have ... for the city itself ... a city highly culturally diverse due to older and recent immigration and a city where migration and diversity is often contested in political and public debates' with the aim to 'stimulate balanced dialogues with regard to who "we" are and who "they" are' (Beyers 2008). The history of the city of Antwerp is presented in relation to a world-wide frame of reference, as a story of exchanges and encounters, fostered by the commercial trades and the cultural dynamism that characterize it. The narration is structured into four thematic permanent exhibitions –

‘Display of Power’, ‘Metropolis’, ‘World Port’ and ‘Life and Death’ – with the support of major and minor temporary exhibitions. The relationship with ‘the others’, their contribution to the city’s development, and the diffusion of the city’s culture beyond its borders thanks to migration, commerce and constant exchanges are recurring references along the museum’s different sections. Migration is addressed by MAS in relation to the city’s history, but also in relation to its present, both in the museum’s permanent display, as a cross-cutting theme, and in temporary exhibitions and outreach projects.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the stories about migration in MAS in the future should be related through intra- and extra-mural connections with the Red Star Line museum – the emigration history museum due to open in Antwerp at the end of 2013 (Cimoli 2013) – to create cross-references between the histories of immigration and emigration.

### People, places, belonging

The approach to migration, cultural diversity and current multicultural societies varies from case to case, not only in relation to the museum’s and its curators’ choices and their understanding of their social role, but also in relation to the museum’s context, the city and its historical, socio-cultural and political development and reality. Nevertheless, it seems possible to identify some commonalities. Either in temporary exhibition or in permanent display, migration and cultural diversity are often seen through the lens of history or through the mediation of contemporary art, which can help curators to propose and stimulate alternative interpretations of the topics being treated, and at the same time to deal with some difficult aspects by presenting them through different perspectives.<sup>16</sup> Migration is usually presented as a movement of ideas and people, whose experiences, skills and backgrounds have enriched the city’s economy, identity and culture through time. In many cases this is done by highlighting successful personal stories of migrants as examples of the current ethnic and social diversity of the city, using pictures, personal items, audio and video recordings; focusing on particular groups – such as guest workers or refugees or a particular city’s ethnic group; or tracing the history of the physical, economic and social development of the city in relation to the various immigration flows over time.

However, if altogether a city museum can today be effectively defined as ‘a museum *about* and *in* the city ... connected both with the strategy of the city and with its citizens’ – as Steven Thielemans defined it in 2000 (cited in Kistemaker 2006: 5)<sup>17</sup> – due consideration must also be given to its relationships not only with the shifting and multiple identities of the city’s inhabitants but also with the city’s places that are today changing faster and more deeply than ever before, influencing one another. As Doreen Massey (1991: 28) acknowledged, ‘if it is now recognized that people have multiple identities, then the same point can be made in relation to places’, which can be conceptualized ‘in terms of the social relations which they tie together’, as ‘processes’ themselves. Several scholars (e.g. Mason, Whitehead and Graham 2012) have already highlighted the role and the representation of places in museums in shaping people’s personal identity and providing a setting for collective memory. The city places are, after all, the very roots of a city museum that is ultimately a museum about the people who live in them and the lives and events that go on there; places, in their physical reality and in the comprehensive definition of ‘processes’, might become a powerful starting point for the museum itself to represent the city and its history enriched by multiple perspectives, and for it to foster a dialogue with and within different urban communities.



**FIGURE 2.4** *Ortsgespräche. Stadt–Migration–Geschichte. Vom Halleschen Zum Frankfurter Tor* [Local Chats. City–Migration–History: From Hallesches to Frankfurter Tor], Museum of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, January 2012. Photo Studio Kaiser Matthies. Courtesy of Frauke Miera and Lorraine Bluche

This is clear, for example, in the new permanent exhibition of the district museum of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, opened in January 2012: *Ortsgespräche. Stadt–Migration–Geschichte. Vom Halleschen Zum Frankfurter Tor* [Local Chats. City–Migration–History: From Hallesches to Frankfurter Tor] curated by Frauke Miera and Lorraine Bluche. The exhibition, in depicting this part of Berlin, understands migration as an integral part of its history and identity and not as a separate history.

The idea was to tell the history of a city district as the history of all its inhabitants, as a history of migrants, their descendants, locals and the recently immigrated, as an inclusive and multi-perspective city history ... [creating] a space in which the recollections of migrants, their descendants and locals are interwoven with each other – complementing, contradicting or presented side by side.

*(Miera and Bluche 2013)*

The exhibition extends over two floors: on the first floor six places are presented in detail in their historical depth, focusing on the more recent history and presenting the different perspectives of inhabitants. On the second level the main exhibition section consists of a floor map of the neighbourhood upon which visitors may walk. Some particular places have been highlighted on the map; they have been chosen because of their ability to show the linking of urban development and migration processes, since ‘different experiences and perceptions, common characteristics, conflicts and change come together [there]’ (Miera and Bluche

2013). They structure the elements of the exhibition and its collection, which employs an extensive audio archive.<sup>18</sup> Focusing on a specific place or following the routes of the interviewees, visitors can listen to different stories by people from diverse ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds<sup>19</sup> who recount their memories of the various places of the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg neighbourhood and describe them from their own viewpoints. In such a way this exhibition offers a multifaceted and potentially open-ended picture of the area, its history and its identity, and ultimately describes the whole city of Berlin through migrations, experimenting with places and their representation to portray multiple cultures and stimulate a reflection on the new identities that ensue from encountering them.

### City museums and the promotion of a new idea of citizenship

All the above examples are quite innovative experiences, which, even while they are heterogeneous and somewhat tentative, represent a very important shift in both the role of city museums and their narratives and communicative approaches. It is undoubtedly difficult to set up shared strategies or policies, and, obviously, different cultures, histories and museological models (not to mention budget constraints) generate different kinds of museums. This is especially true in the case of city museums, which are now facing an important evolution of their historical and consolidated model towards a new one – currently in the process of being defined – and are moreover deeply influenced by their very subject, the city, which is fast changing.

However, it is undeniable that, even though their approaches and purposes may differ, the majority of the new and renewed city museums around Europe are shifting their focus from urban history to social history and the contemporary city, struggling to become more relevant to the city and its citizens, and adopting a more open approach to storytelling and historical narration. Ever more frequently they find themselves dealing with contemporary and sometimes difficult topics, aiming to contribute to fostering dialogue between the various ethnic, religious, social and generational groups of the city, and representing those who have been traditionally excluded and nowadays account for an important part of the city's inhabitants in the attempt to promote a more tolerant, open attitude and social harmony for the city's future. In doing so, in a context where the nation-state seems to be weakening and the emergence of new questions and issues brings into question the historically consolidated idea of a single unitary 'identity', city museums are also reconsidering their understanding of civic social identity – even challenging approaches and purposes – and eventually furthering a notion of 'citizenship' that is not based on legal or bureaucratic rationale, on ethnic origin or on place of birth. Against an official view of 'citizenship' that defines it as 'the particular legal bond between an individual and his or her State, acquired by birth or naturalization, either by declaration, choice, marriage or other means under national legislation',<sup>20</sup> they see it as a multifaceted sense of belonging and participation, an open category, a sense of entrenchment, civic connoisseurship, identification and active participation in and with the public space.

Welsch's concept of 'transculturality' seems especially appropriate to European culture today: as he points out, such a conception of culture and identity is not only descriptively adequate but also politically and socially responsible thanks to its inherent potential to promote and nurture a more tolerant and open civic society. In 1999 Welsch concluded his essay on transculturality with a reflection on people's need to 'distinguish themselves from one another and know themselves to be well accommodated in a specific identity' since they

don't want 'just to be universal or global'. He continued: 'This desire is legitimate, and forms in which it can be satisfied without danger are to be determined' (Welsch 1999: 210). Those promoted by these city museums nowadays are a possibility.

City museums are mostly understood as local museums, but the process of rethinking that they are currently undergoing involves reflections that fall beyond the local sphere, while many of the issues they tackle have a distinct local relevance but at the same time a wider transnational – European or even broader – scope. Due to their local roots, community engagement, closer links with places and people, and potential ability to establish privileged and enduring relationships with the communities and other cultural actors settled in the urban territory, they might become spaces where encounters and dialogue between different identities take place, where mutual influences between the local and the global emerge, and where discussions about potential frictions materialize. In this way they can contribute, even more than other institutions or agencies, to the reconfiguration and dissemination of a new, multifaceted sense of belonging and identity and civic coexistence in a *transcultural* Europe.

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## Notes

- 1 According to the same data, in 2011 there were 33.3 million 'foreign citizens' resident in the twenty-seven member states of the European Union, 6.6 per cent of the total population, nearly two-thirds of whom were citizens of non-EU countries. The number of 'foreigners' depends not only on the international migration, but also on demographic factors: for example, the citizenship of second-generation migrants in most member states is determined by that of their parents rather than by their place of birth. Furthermore, the number of 'foreigners' is affected by the number of citizenship acquisitions, as persons who acquire citizenship in a member state are no longer counted as 'foreigners' of that country, but if they were born abroad, they remain among the 'foreign-born' population.
- 2 Since 1992, net migration has continued to be the main component of population growth in the EU's twenty-seven member states, accounting for 63.2 per cent of the population increase during 2010 (net migration is the difference between immigration to and emigration from a given area during the year: see [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Glossary:Migration](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Migration)).
- 3 These reflections are at the core of the MeLa\* Project, a four-year interdisciplinary research project funded by the European Commission under the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities Programme (FP7th) in 2011. MeLa\*, *European Museums in an Age of Migrations*, adopting the notion of 'migration' as a paradigm of the contemporary global and multicultural world, seeks to reflect on the role of museums in the twenty-first century in Europe. Focusing on the transformation of museums, meaning cultural spaces and processes as well as physical places, the main objective of the MeLa\* Project is to identify innovative museum practices that reflect the challenges posed by an age characterized by intensive migration flows; accelerated mobility; fluid circulation of information, cultures, ideas and goods; and the political, economic and cultural process of creation and consolidation of the European Union. As people, objects, knowledge and information move at increasingly high rates, a sharper awareness of an inclusive European identity is necessary to facilitate

- mutual understanding and social cohesion: MeLa\* investigates museums and their role in building this identity (Basso Peressut and Pozzi 2012).
- 4 Such as the museums of London, the Guildhall Museum, founded in 1826, and the London Museum, founded in 1911, the Musée Carnavalet in Paris, whose project dates back to 1860 and was inaugurated in 1875, the Historical Museum of the City of Vienna, which opened in 1887, the Helsinki City Museum, which was set up in 1911, or the Amsterdam Historical Museum, which opened in 1926.
  - 5 City museums' collections usually include very heterogeneous objects, some strictly related to the city's identity and history, and others more diverse, gathered according to the collecting strategies and the socio-political context of the time, including archaeological finds, photos, historical artworks, garments, furniture, paintings, objects of material culture, and private collections and memorabilia, as well as new, recently acquired objects such as digital content, contemporary works of art, audio, video, and much more.
  - 6 As an example, the Liverpool Museum, opened in 2011, is a national museum; the Palazzo Pepoli, the city history museum of Bologna (Italy), which also opened in 2011, is a private museum run by a bank foundation; the Museum of Copenhagen is owned by the Municipality of Copenhagen, with the Copenhagen City Council being its main subsidy provider, although it also receives state subsidy from the Heritage Agency of Denmark. In Italy the majority of the museums are owned by the municipalities: in Milan, for example, currently there are fourteen civic museums, including natural science, archaeology and modern art museums, none of which is a city museum.
  - 7 Temporary exhibitions, moreover, are flexible both in terms of content and communication strategies, and thanks to their relatively short duration they can help to obviate the risk of the rapid obsolescence of the museum's message when dealing with very contemporary topics. Even though the problems of archiving such events can make them less effective in the long term, and their message can be lost and/or forgotten more quickly – especially when they have no impact on the museum's permanent display and message – temporary exhibitions and other semi-permanent initiatives are nowadays a promising and fundamental field for contemporary museums. They not only constitute a source of income and attract visitors, but can be used as research tools, allowing curators to explore new topics and investigate new approaches and practices, and giving designers opportunities to experiment with innovative communication and exhibition solutions.
  - 8 The Museum of Copenhagen is gradually replacing the former permanent chronological galleries with shorter-term thematic and issue-oriented exhibitions.
  - 9 Examples include: 'As I Am – lgbt in cph' – the history of Copenhagen's gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and transvestite population; 'Collecting Nørrebro' – an on-site participative local project aimed at collecting new and alternative stories from the everyday life of the contemporary neighbourhood of Nørrebro; and the cutting-edge project 'the WALL', a 2-metre long interactive multimedia installation consisting of four multi-touch plasma screens, which will travel around the city over four years as a communication tool for the museum, to widen accessibility to the museum's archive about the city's history, and as an experimental tool to collect material about the contemporary city while fostering participation and dialogue (Sandahl *et al.* 2011).
  - 10 Some display cases are filled with the objects, which are crowded and not always easily visible, partly because of the depth of the cabinets; for the same reason some of the labels are difficult to read, as they are positioned too far from the visitors' gaze.
  - 11 Examples are the 'MeM – memoria e migrazioni' section of the Galata Museo del Mare in Genoa (Cimoli 2013) and the forthcoming 'Gallery of Modern Tyneside' at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Little 2013). These stand-alone galleries have much in common, in terms of communication strategies, narratives and approaches, with many new migration museums.
  - 12 <http://www.amsterdammuseum.nl/en/my-town-0>; <http://www.barbarabroekman.nl/4-organised%20by%20BB/mytownexhibitions.html>.
  - 13 The Galleries of Modern London include the 'Expanding City' gallery (1666–1850s); the 'People's City' gallery (1850s–1940s) and the 'World City' gallery (1950s–today).
  - 14 This approach is the result of a process of reflection on the identity and history of the city that started in the 1990s. It is marked by some major milestones: the temporary exhibitions *Peopling of London* (1992) and *Belonging: Voices of London's Refugees* (2003); the symposium 'Reflecting Cities' held at the Museum of London in 1993; and several programmes focused on 'diversity strategies' carried out in the 2000s, such as 'London Voices' (2001–4) and the 'Reassessing What We Collect' project (Ross 2006). This same approach and its development inform most of the activities carried out by the Museum of London and its venue at Docklands.

- 15 The MAS revises the settings and the objects selected annually, partly in relation to a collection turnover project, and regularly implements minor temporary installations within the permanent ones.
- 16 A telling example is the display on the Roma settlements in the exhibition *Becoming a Copenhagener*, where the contested issue of the Roma presence in the city is presented through historical and recent pictures, a video and newspaper articles framing the issue in a historical perspective, as a topic that has long been debated, as a historical episode of racism and persecution and as a current matter of discussion.
- 17 Such a definition omits many museums located in the city, owned and managed by the municipality, but where the focus is not the city itself. On the other hand, it covers other museums, such as neighbourhood museums – e.g. the Kreuzberg Museum and the Museum Neukölln in Berlin – whose activities and contents are strictly related to an important part of the city's identity. Hence, in a way, it enlarges and blurs the boundaries of the field, allowing the inclusion of museums that focus on an urban region or a metropolitan area – such as the Ruhrlandmuseum – as well as other museums that do not call themselves 'city museums', but which are about their host city, its socio-cultural development and its identity – such as the Galata Museo del Mare (Sea Museum) in Genoa or the MAS in Antwerp.
- 18 Both the choice of the city places to be included in the exhibition and the collecting process connected with the implementation of the exhibition itself have been based on a highly participative approach, involving inhabitants, volunteers and local communities. The audio archive of the district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg is being created to offer place-related multiple perspectives on the everyday history of the district. Altogether 150 stories focusing on about 120 places in Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg had been collected, transcribed and translated at the time of writing.
- 19 In this regard, the curators declared:

while choosing interview partners – migrants and non-migrants – we consciously took care to illustrate not only a large range of local people, but also to allow people whose voices are not usually heard in a museum to have a chance to speak. So beyond the apparent norm those who speak here include the illegalised or undocumented, children, youngsters, old people, one deaf person, homosexuals and of course people with the most varied migrational backgrounds.  
(Miera and Bluche 2013)

- 20 From the Eurostat Glossary: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Glossary:Citizenship](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Glossary:Citizenship).

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# 3

## RETURNING TO RACISM

### New challenges for museums and citizenship

*Kylie Message*

While political elites have become particularly adept at avoiding the use of the category 'race', supplanting it with de-racialized terms such as 'culture', there are nonetheless occasions when 'race' is worth the risk in allowing a political speaker to conjure fear inducing imagery and causal inference in ways that advance a political project.

*(Augoustinos and Every 2010: 254)*

*Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* is a permanent exhibition which opened at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne on 9 May 2011.<sup>1</sup> One representative story in the exhibition is told by Nguyen Hong Duc, one of 200 children airlifted from Vietnam to Australia during 'Operation Babylift' in 1975. Renamed Dominic, he was raised on a farm in South Australia by the Golding family. The exhibition shows an entry permit belonging to Dominic, who says: 'I was a four-month-old orphan when I was given this permit in 1975. Bundled up, I was handed to strangers in Melbourne. This new family gave me a new home, name and a better future. But I'll never find my first mother and father. It's as though the passport erased a family to create a family.' This is one of the many stories included in the exhibition that focuses on how cultural heritage, languages, beliefs and family connections influence self-perceptions and the perceptions we have of other people – perceptions that can, the exhibition text advises, lead to 'discovery, confusion, prejudice and understanding'. *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* comprises stories, such as Dominic's, which can be understood as being about identity, culture, race and the way people communicate to maintain or challenge the categories and experiences that sit behind these terms. As well as being linguistic terms, words such as 'identity', 'culture', 'race' – as well as other keywords in the exhibition: 'belonging', 'community', 'diversity', 'politics' and 'prejudice' – exist in everyday society as labels; that is, they are badges that we 'wear' or apply to others.

The exhibition is divided conceptually into three broad sections: 'First Impressions', 'People Like Us' and 'People Like Them'. Its main conceptual framework is structured around the pairing of ideas about identity and belonging. The exhibition shows that identity is typically understood as being associated with individuals and personal subjectivity, while

belonging is often perceived as arising from and being about community. However, it also asks visitors to consider these terms as not being bound by rigid dichotomies or definitions, but to focus instead on the relationships between them. Focusing attention on the ‘spectrum’ of processes by which identity, identification and belonging are formed or damaged, the exhibition asks visitors to consider ways in which (individual) identity and belonging (to community or nation) complement and undercut each other. In addition to providing a context for the exhibition, this framework effectively constitutes the ‘terms of engagement’ or ‘ground rules’ that visitors will adopt when they enter the space. Not only will visitors engage from the heart and with integrity and self-reflection; they will be challenged to articulate and examine their own responses, perceptions and prejudices.

The expectation that visitors will respond from the heart to the exhibition is made clear throughout but is perhaps most acute in the opening display. Visitors are met by a human-scaled video artwork by Lynette Wallworth that presents a series of different groups – some are family groupings while others are identifiable as schoolmates or as belonging to some other community or interest group. Some groups welcome visitors openly while others stand aggressively or defensively in their pose and facial expressions. Wallworth explains that the video work was intended to reflect the nuances of social inclusion or exclusion and associated feelings of belonging or alienation: ‘We have the means via the smallest gesture to include or exclude and to signal whether someone is an outsider or not. We defend invisible territories or we give ground, and all without a word being uttered.’ Visitors are passive in the face of this orientation video. The only options available to them are to react and reflect silently, to express their feelings to fellow visitors, or to leave the exhibition; there is no point in talking



**FIGURE 3.1** ‘First Impressions’ section, *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* exhibition, Immigration Museum. Photo Benjamin Healley. Courtesy of Museum Victoria

back to a video wall. As visitors pass this display and progress through the exhibition, however, they are encouraged, then invited, then, finally, expected to articulate their perceptions and positions on certain issues. A transition occurs through a process of education whereby visitors start by being subjected and voiceless in the first display to gaining agency and the authority to communicate their views. In the final part of the exhibition, visitors are explicitly tasked with the responsibility of putting their reactions into words.

As this overview shows, the exhibition's central concerns are with processes of social action as well as relationship building, breakdown and mending, and it conveys the critical message that efforts to combat racism require a multifaceted process that is increasingly intertwined with efforts to address the tensions of diversity (Putnam 2007). This means that beyond the role played by the overarching concepts of identity and belonging, other important themes exist in the exhibition, including racism and questions about how the museum has sought to relate to the changing social context and climate of multiculturalism within which it operates. Indeed, my main intention in writing this chapter has been to explore and analyse the context, intent, processes and outcomes of the curators' decision to reintroduce racism to public debate. I have sought to understand how the exhibition has framed specific data about Australians' perceptions and experiences of racism, and if and how it has acted 'to combat racism and its pernicious effects today' (Golding 2009: 2).<sup>2</sup> My analysis of the exhibition occurs through an 'anti-racist praxis' that positions the exhibition within and reflects upon a wider field of 'media texts' and public debate that has, in recent years, done much to disguise and normalize racism within a nationalist discourse. In the final instance I argue that the exhibition exists as a political project, and that an 'anti-racist' praxis influences and permeates all elements of the design and content of *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours*.

The chapter is structured into two sections, each of which includes a series of component parts that together build my overarching analysis. The first section defines racism and addresses a number of ways to understand and analyse the language of diversity, racism and nationalism, both within *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* and more broadly within the public sector. This part culminates with a discourse analysis of the exhibition. The second section moves beyond the language of racism to look at the context within which it occurs. Building on the idea that multiculturalism exists as a 'lived experience', I explore the broader political debate about multiculturalism in Australia before addressing it as a social policy instrument. The chapter concludes by bringing together the preceding discussions about (socio-political) context and (exhibition) content to address the relationship between museums and citizenship and community building.

## Language

### *Defining racism*

In my experience there can be a perception amongst people that racism is a binary – you are racist, or you are not racist – and that people who are racist are really racist and hold attitudes like apartheid South Africa. In reality, racism is more of a spectrum ... We live in a society that is racist (or to put it another way, which privileges some races over others) and it is practically impossible not to pick up some racist thinking as a result.

*(Anonymous response to online survey, Australian Human Rights Commission 2012: 21)*



**FIGURE 3.2** ‘Welcome’ installation, Lynette Wallworth, *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* exhibition, Immigration Museum. Photo Jon Augier. Courtesy of Museum Victoria

This section has two starting points. The first is an acknowledgement that museums can provide an opportunity to talk across ‘race lines’ (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012: 13). The second is the word ‘racism’. I argue that the exhibition at the heart of this chapter, *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours*, shows that the possibility of talking across boundaries or differences exists in museums located at the intersection of the public/community sector, the public policy/government sector, and the education sector (schools and universities), as well as other spheres (including the media and corporate sectors). The exhibition also demonstrates the point that exhibitions or museums that aim to engage audiences in critical thinking about the role of stereotypes in society, or which seek to produce critical engagement with key contemporary issues around race, migration, colonization and multiculturalism, highlight, amongst other things, various sectors’ different understandings and definitions of terminology and concepts. Central amongst these is ‘racism’, which is defined, for example, by academic researchers Gabrielle Berman and Yin Paradies (2008: 228) as ‘that which maintains or exacerbates inequality of opportunities among ethnoracial groups’. Racism, these authors suggest, can ‘be expressed through stereotypes (racist beliefs), prejudice (racist emotions/affect) or discrimination (racist behaviors and practices)’.

While academic definitions of ‘racism’ are likely to emphasize prejudice, power, ideology, stereotypes, domination, disparities and/or unequal treatment, alternative perceptions or understandings of the term can be seen in textual analysis of media reports of race- or ethnic- or class-based clashes globally. I aim, in this section, as well as in the chapter more broadly, to bring together public debates about racism, policy transformations in the field of multiculturalism, and an exploration of the way that museums have reflected and contributed to changes occurring in these fields in the last half-century.

### ***Approaching racism: methods for analysis***

Although there is no cut-and-dried definition of racism that will be palatable to everyone, even a preliminary attempt (such as is provided here) can be useful for those seeking to understand how racism works in society. In order to move from definitions to understanding we need to identify methods for analysing racism, and despite deploying differing approaches to quantitative and qualitative research methods, social science-based policy and cultural studies-type humanities researchers contribute a range of pathways for understanding and better explaining the processes and manifestations of racism. Museum studies researchers, who typically draw research techniques and strategies from both fields and often work to diminish the authority of the ‘line’ that usually separates theory and practice, have, for example, argued for an extended application of their interdisciplinary practices and an integration of structural/institutional and everyday inter- and intra-personal levels of discourse analysis to achieve this goal (Sandell 2007: 41, Golding 2009). This approach builds on the premise that everyday experiences of racism occur on structural (macro) levels as well as on the micro levels of the street, workplace or playground, and researchers typically endeavour to investigate the ways in which individuals – as actors within a power structure – represent and reproduce racist attitudes through their use of language. ‘Individuals’ here extends beyond members of the general public to include opinion-makers such as journalists, media commentators and politicians; a point which also shows the impossibility of drawing any clear distinction or separation between macro and micro levels.

Western societies have typically privileged the rights of the individual over the group, and acts of group or collective identity (particularly when undertaken by a minority) are often viewed by the dominant majority with suspicion on the basis that group rights conflict with, and have the potential to undermine, the unitary political community (Augoustinos *et al.* 2002). A unitary political community is achieved by contracting individuals to the state, where, in exchange for being socially and morally responsible, they are granted rights to political agency that include the right to vote and to stand for office, and access to legal support. The priority given in this system to individuals means that it is not uncommon for arguments and existing attitudes over group/community versus individual/personal rights to fuel disputes about citizenship rights and responsibilities, particularly when these concepts are tied to understandings about nationhood. Animated public engagements with issues or accusations of racism often arise from such disputes. In a regime framed by this set of perceptions, multiculturalism becomes, to quote Ang (2009: 17), ‘a divisive ideology that encouraged migrants to maintain their cultural separateness rather than integrating into the Australian mainstream. Its emphasis on difference and diversity flew in the face of the desire for cohesive and unified nationhood.’

The overlap that exists across the actions that occur in macro and micro levels also goes some way to show the extent to which media texts (and museums, as a form of media text) are not only influential or persuasive, but often explicitly directive or purposeful. Van Dijk (1993: 30) explains this process by observing that the major functions of discourse about minorities are persuasive; that is, ‘speakers aim to influence the minds of their listeners or readers in such a way that the opinions or attitudes of the audience either become or remain close(r) to those of the speakers or writer’. Purposive speech may also work to justify or legitimate certain attitudes expressed or actions taken by the speaker or writer. Although discourse analysis approaches have correctly been criticized for their tendency to assume passivity and acquiescence on the part of audiences, conceived as prone subjects, it is also important to recognize that a fuller attention to both micro levels – in relation to everyday racism, for example – can result in richer understandings and analysis of agency across the interpersonal actions and relationships that contribute to any social environment.

Some context for my study of a museum exhibition about racism can be provided by progressing a critical discourse analysis approach in relation to media reports of a recent study conducted by researchers from the University of Western Australia into the likelihood that people who decorated their cars with Australian national flags for Australia Day were less positive about Australia’s ethnic diversity than ‘non-flag flyers’.<sup>3</sup> The study showed that the general Australian public – at least those who respond to opinion pieces and participate in talk-back radio sessions championed by notably conservative radio personalities Alan Jones<sup>4</sup> and the newspaper commentator Andrew Bolt<sup>5</sup> – exhibited a different understanding of the word ‘racist’ than the definition used by the academics who conducted the study (Fozdar 2012). Some readers animated by the media’s commentary about the research were offended because they understood the term to be synonymous with ‘Nazism’, even though that association had not been made by the research (Fozdar 2012). A contributor to the CrusaderRabbit for Liberty blog made the following observations about the media’s coverage of the ‘Flags on cars for Australia Day’ study:

Politicians, academics and the left in general want it to be a crime to love your country and it’s [*sic*] traditional values. Human rights and multiculturalism spells the death of the



west as we know it. Ever notice how ‘nationalism’ is often equated with nazism or fascism as well as racism ... It’s simply another ploy to silence free speech so they can impose their undemocratic version of society on us. Genuine western nationalism is the only guarantor of freedom that we have.

*(Kowtow 2012)*

Protest about what academics might today call ‘cultural’ (as opposed to ‘biological’) racism was also apparent in the controversy generated by the *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* exhibition. Not long after the exhibition opened, curators discovered that an anti-Muslim blog site, the Australian Islamic Monitor, had identified the exhibition as a site for debate. The exhibition’s lead curator, Moya McFadzean, suggested that the museum may have attracted this attention because of pre-launch media coverage relating to one of the exhibition elements about Shanaaz Copeland, a South African-born fashion designer who produces hijab in Australian Rules football colours for young Muslim women to wear while playing AFL or when supporting their football team. A post on the Australian Islamic Monitor blog titled ‘The day I learned that I am a racist bigot’ could, speculated the writer, have been equally appropriately called ‘How to instill self hatred in Australian children’ or ‘The indoctrination of innocent young minds’ or ‘I am white, therefore I am a racist’. A subsequent contributor added this comment:

What a load of dangerous garbage – anti-white racist (probably the most common form of racism in the world) propaganda – this stinking museum is full of. It’s devised by some hate-filled jerks to twist the minds of young Western children and try to fill them with the old, ‘black-armband’ view of history and fill them with self-loathing. I know I am proud of our Western, decent, liberal, democratic way of life.

*(Quoted in McFadzean 2012)*

This reaction provides an extreme response to the exhibition’s invitation for visitors to engage with broad questions about citizenship, belonging, acceptance and identity – that is, who we are, who others think we are, and what it means to belong and not belong in Australia. Like Kowtow’s remonstrance against (the media’s characterization of) the ‘Flags on cars for Australia Day’ study, this reaction to the exhibition represents a more extreme opinion than those that were generally evident in the ‘letters to the editor’ type comments and contributions received by mainstream media forums. However, both responses are typical of protests against an ‘anti-racist’ praxis (Berman and Paradies 2008) that has been heavily employed throughout the exhibition and which is itself sometimes associated with the negative stereotype of ‘political correctness gone mad’. The speaker quoted by McFadzean fits Van Dijk’s explanation (1992: 90):

The person who accuses the other as racist is in turn accused of inverted racism against whites, as oversensitive and exaggerating, as intolerant and generally as ‘seeing racism where there is none’ ... Moreover, such accusations are seen to impose taboos, prevent free speech and a ‘true’ or ‘honest’ assessment of the ethnic situation. In other words, denials of racism often turn counter-accusations of intolerant and intolerable anti-racism.

### ***'I'm not racist, but ... ': understanding anti-anti-racism***

An 'anti-anti-racist' discourse will enable a speaker to position him- or herself actively as part of a commonsense majority ('I know I am proud of our Western, decent, liberal, democratic way of life') in order to suggest that it is not they, but politically correct ideologues, who are the problem. Not only are anti-racist critics depicted as being out of touch with the majority, but they are represented as people who discriminate against a majority white population and undermine the liberal principles of free speech. Although clichéd, statements such as 'everybody should be treated equally', 'minority opinion should not carry more weight than majority opinion' and 'everybody can succeed if they try hard enough' (Augoustinos *et al.* 2002: 109) are likely to be features of anti-anti-racist public discourse. Researchers have identified these phrases as frequent examples of modern or covert racism that work to close down critical engagement and reflection (Van Dijk 1992, Augoustinos *et al.* 2002, Augoustinos and Every 2010) on the grounds that they typically appear as so much common sense that they cannot be questioned.

The strategy of appealing to the 'commonsense majority' is apparent in Kowtow's claim that 'Politicians, academics and the left in general want it to be a crime to love your country', a statement which works on the assumption that no rational-thinking person would argue against the values of national pride, free speech and democracy. Here, the 'moral majority' becomes the arbiter of tolerance toward cultural difference, which is accepted so long as that difference does not exceed the dominant group's tolerance. Covert, or indirect, racism is also generated by expressions that appear to say something about a speaker, but which actually present a negative view of the person or group being discussed. The blame is typically laid with the other person or group because they have made the speaker feel uncomfortable in some way.

*Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* challenges the validity of moral majority discourse as employed by broadcasters like Jones and Bolt, and (possibly at its peril) returns the term 'racism' to public discourse in order to engage critically with Augoustinos and Every's observation – apparent also in Kowtow's statement – that 'the category of nation is increasingly taking over from race in legitimating oppressive practices toward minority groups and, indeed, as a means by which to sanitize and deracialize racist discourses' (Augoustinos and Every 2007: 133). The exhibition's invitation to visitors to share their own stories, affirm their own identities and defend their experiences of diversity and racism in our community occurs through the extended reach of the museum's online and community-based programmes and resources.

Attention to community feedback was identified as critical to the exhibition curators' commitment to attempts to 'promote creative and positive attitudinal change' about the difficult topic of racism (McFadzean 2012). Perhaps, unsurprisingly, this aim appears to have been met – at least if the comments made by visitors in the museum and online are to be considered exclusively. Comments added to the 'Taking a Stand' postcards, which asked visitors to complete the sentence 'I confront prejudice by ... ', included: '... asking people, what makes you say that, when they make prejudiced statements' (Sam Perkins, age 16, Geelong); '... talking about equal opportunity law, and letting people know racist jokes are not funny' (Cilla, age 35, Melbourne); '... our grandchildren are part ghanaian and aussie. Great' (Helen Sandy, age 70, Templestowe); '... remembering to challenge and question my own assumptions and actions' (Zoe, age 24).<sup>6</sup>

TripAdvisor, a website that allows tourists to post reviews, provides a broader set of responses to the exhibition and the museum in general.<sup>7</sup> Categorized according to reviewers' assessments ('poor', 'average', 'very good', 'excellent'), analysis of the reviews clearly shows that negative assessments were articulated in language that focused on how the exhibition made the visitor *feel*, whereas positive reviews were more likely to make less emotive and more politically engaged comments. For example, responses categorized under 'poor' or 'average' include (my emphasis):

- '*Mixed feelings* about this place.' (Reviewed 11 May 2012 by mx52nho, age 35–49-year-old man from Liverpool, United Kingdom.)
- '*I do not feel good* with the exhibition on the first floor, which is 'Identity: yours, mine and ours'. The short video *made me feel* all immigrants come to Australia because their own countries are full of disasters, and Australia is the only peace land in the earth. *This made me feel bad* and it's not true.' (Reviewed 7 March 2011 by Ryu0208, an 18–24-year-old woman from Melbourne, Australia.)
- 'The video with the stories of the immigrants although it is well made and moving, *when you re-think about it, it makes you feel frustrated.*' (Reviewed 18 August 2012 by elinaDxxx, a 25–34-year-old woman from Melbourne, Australia.)
- '*I left sad.*' (Reviewed 2 January 2012 by Aliciacch, a woman from Perth, Australia.)

Responses categorized under 'very good' or 'excellent' include:

- 'Informative and fair treatment of a difficult topic.' (Reviewed 18 May 2012 by underock, a 25–34-year-old man from Seattle, Washington, USA.)
- 'It makes you think ...' (Reviewed 28 April 2012 by copey, a 50–64-year-old man from Edinburgh, UK.)
- 'Museum of Shame.' (Reviewed 11 April 2012 by Ted J, a 65-plus-year-old man from Perth, Australia.)
- 'Pauline Hanson and her fans should have a look at this place to get an idea of why people risk their lives to come to Australia.' (Reviewed 29 January 2012 by Brissy girl, Brisbane, Australia.)
- 'There is a section on level 2 that gets you thinking about yourself as an Aussie and the direction society is taking today.' (Reviewed 17 September 2012 by markcwhistler, Melbourne, Australia.)

The exhibition is most didactic in a display called 'Who's Next Door?', a confronting multimedia programme that asks visitors to experience a racist incident (that occurs on public transport) through the eyes of everyone involved.<sup>8</sup> 'How would you react?' asks the wall-text. In the small space of the interactive tram environment, museum visitors are transformed into witnesses of a social injustice, and are asked to be accountable for their reactions to the racist incident. The exhibition's social justice agenda is also clearly expressed in the text panel, which explains: 'When you take action, you can influence the behaviours of others and feel better about yourself. You can also contribute to making prejudice unacceptable. Silence can be interpreted as approval.' 'Who's Next Door?' exemplifies the exhibition's ideological commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for ethnoracial groups in accord with its aim to demonstrate an anti-racist agenda of equity (Berman and Paradies 2008: 15).



**FIGURE 3.3** ‘Who’s Next Door?’ tram installation, *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* exhibition, Immigration Museum. Photo Benjamin Healley. Courtesy of Museum Victoria

The *purposeful* educational mandate of this display (which advises audiences how to behave in certain situations) is mediated – and possibly even counteracted – however, by elements of the display that remind visitors about the museum’s own role, function and authority as a location or site that can enable the articulation of views across various ‘lines’. Multi-vovality occurs in the display, for example, because the interactive exhibit gives equal attention to the thoughts of each of the commuters on the tram who are participating in the racist incident. In addition to representing the differing attitudes of individuals, the display illustrates the museum’s ability to speak across macro/structural and micro/everyday and interpersonal ‘lines’. In so doing, it effectively represents the ‘everyday racism’ that Essed (1991: 2) defines as being that which ‘connects structural forces of racism with routine situations in everyday life’ and ‘links ideological dimensions of racism with daily attitudes of it in everyday life’. The impact of this display is indicated by a comment left by a visitor that ‘I confront prejudice by using public transport’ (Kj, age 43, Melbourne).

## Context

### *Museums as sites of dissent*

The idea that museums could be (or have ever been) neutral or apolitical has long gone. The extreme responses to *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* and the ‘Flags on cars for Australia Day’ study show that museums are increasingly recognized as venues for debate, and that the contestation they represent or attract can itself contribute to social and political protest and reform movements (Message 2013a). This argument supports Goodnow’s (2008: 148) observation that ‘all representations invite dissent’. It also contributes to her proposition that any attempt to explore dissent, be it racist or anti-racist, requires analysis of ‘the forms it takes, its timing, its sources, and its effectiveness: aspects influenced by the initial framing and the actions taken in its name’. My approach in this chapter has followed on from my intention to investigate dissent, which I hope can help inform improved understanding about the ways that museums can also function as an expression of dissent – against macro/institutional structures or micro/everyday racisms. To do this I have explored a range of evidence bases, including online blogs and forums which, even though they are not typically used by museum studies scholars, provide bread-and-butter datasets for discourse analysts, the value of which is articulated by Augoustinos and Every (2010: 255):

Indeed, given the increasing salience of contentious debates in the media around issues pertaining to race, immigration and ethnicity ... we have a wealth of publicly available data from which we can draw to analyze the finer details of how speakers orient and attend to these issues in everyday informal and formal talk.

Increasing acceptance of the political engagement and social activism of museums has resulted, at least in part, from the interest of museums themselves in representing, contributing to, or engaging with the ‘rights revolution’ that has occurred since the International Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948. With this acceptance has come increasing recognition that museums can play a role in building understanding about social protest and reform movements (such as the civil rights movement) as well as more singular issues of contemporary debate (such as, for example, the ‘Flags on cars for Australia Day’ study).

Priorities associated with human and civil rights have very significantly influenced museum practice and theory as well as the types of museum that have been established over the last forty years. Whereas community and local museums and collections have represented cultural identities over generations, theme-specific museums – such as museums of migration, slavery, the Holocaust or civil rights – and identity-focused, ‘ethnic’ museums (for example, Chinese museums such as the Golden Dragon Museum in Bendigo, Australia) and, internationally, ‘agenda’ museums (including the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the proposed Smithsonian Latino Museum, all in the USA) proliferated in the 1970s and 1980s, principally in response to increasing social attention to the politics of identity and recognition.<sup>9</sup> These new museums have been developed with an unashamedly educational mandate, and unlike community museums which were usually used by and for members of a particular community (and tended to be inward-focused), they aim to engage with a broader public for whom their cultural practices were unfamiliar. Typically ‘ethnic’ and/or issue-based, these museums have often been aligned with strategies by minority groups to demand recognition in and access to public, often nationally symbolic, spaces. As such, they both represent and extend the attention to collective or group rights and public reform actions that are characteristic of this era.

### ***Phases in policy development***

Identity- and issue-based museums engage with questions and challenges around rights in ways that have tended to reflect public policy phases. This is evident in *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours*, which functions as an educational tool aligned with the Australian Human Rights Commission’s attempt to fight racism by naming it and putting it on the national agenda (McFadzean 2012, Szoke 2012). In the post-Declaration of Human Rights era in Australia (as in much of the Western world), public policy phases (related to immigration and cultural diversity) started with a period of *biological racism* formalized when the Immigration Restriction Act became one of the first pieces of legislation passed by the new Australian Parliament in 1901. Often referred to as the ‘White Australia Policy’, this legislation effectively banned Asian migration, and was progressively dismantled between 1949 and 1973.<sup>10</sup> From the early 1970s through the 1980s, the dominant public policy framework was *multiculturalism*, which recognized difference as otherness (defined in opposition to a white Anglo-Australian norm) (Australian Ethnic Affairs Council 1977, Australian Council on Population and Ethnic Affairs 1982, Office of Multicultural Affairs 1989). UNESCO defines multiculturalism as three separate but interconnected phenomena:

First, multiculturalism can be seen as a description of the demographic make-up of modern states. Second, multiculturalism can be conceived as a set of norms or principles that uphold the right of all individuals to equal access and ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life. Finally, multiculturalism can be seen as a government strategy. While the first definition describes a situation, the second articulates the values and rights related to this situation, and the third describes its implementation in policy and practice.

(Inglis 2007)

In the multicultural era, the word ‘racism’ was recognized and utilized but generally deflected in favour of languages that emphasized celebrations of difference and processes that provided services that enabled migrants to maintain cultural links with their ‘homelands’ as well as full integration (rather than assimilation) with the white Anglo-Australian norm (Message 2009b). Multiculturalism was transformed into *social inclusion* through policies associated with the UK Labour Party policy (‘the New Left’) in the 1990s that sought to encourage questions about the relationships between culture, national or post-national practices of citizenship, and levels of civic participation (and civic ‘agency’) in democratic societies (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1999, National Multicultural Advisory Council 1999).

Influenced also by the global events of the late twentieth century (including the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the events at Tiananmen Square; all widely interpreted as attempts to progress reconnection between governments, institutions and diverse constituent communities; Gaonkar 2002), social inclusion was adapted as a framework by countries including Australia and New Zealand through the 1990s and 2000s (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2003, Message 2007). This era correlates with the start of the ‘born free’ generation in South Africa, following the disestablishment of the racist apartheid policies (Bennett 2012b). Instead of replicating the emphasis (in multicultural countries) on difference, this era was signified by its commitment to a ‘colour-blind’ ideology and a discourse of tolerance. Policies of the period were also influenced by a pervasive ‘cultural turn’ that spread across academic thinking at this time, extending what Lentin (2005; in Berman and Paradies 2008: 220) called a ‘shift towards culture as opposed to race, with the outcome being the evolution of a state of “racelessness”’. Aspirational policies based on ideologies of a ‘colour-blind’ or ‘raceless’ society cannot be entirely problem-free, however, because they ‘obviate the anti-racist efforts that are a necessary precondition for securing the rights of all members of a society’ (Berman and Paradies 2008: 220). In Australia at this time, the trend was to present all differences as being of equal value, and as constituting no impediment to unity (‘everybody can succeed if they try hard enough’; Augoustinos *et al.* 2002: 109). Also occurring through this period from the 1980s (in the USA) and later (in Australia and elsewhere) was a period of ‘culture wars’ or ‘history wars’ that was essentially a backlash against perceptions of equal or ‘special’ group rights, particularly in the fields of education (school curriculum and historical ‘truth’) and social services (Luke 2002, Augoustinos *et al.* 2002).

The next era may actually be a sub-phase of the social inclusion period because the shift occurred primarily in respect to the language used, whereby the phrase ‘cultural diversity’ became the preferred terminology to address difference (Message 2007, 2009b). Although the ideal of interpersonal tolerance was maintained throughout this period, government rhetoric was altered to reflect the attitude that ‘actually we are not all the same (which implies there is something wrong with being different), but we are all different’ (Bennett 2012b). The increasing recognition of difference drew attention to the issues and challenges that needed to be overcome if equity were to be achieved. However, the confusion over the reach and parameters (if not the purpose) of multiculturalism (as an adequate umbrella term for all policy developments since the 1970s) in addressing disadvantage and combating racism contributed to a marginalization of anti-racism measures through this period (Berman and Paradies 2008). This process had gained momentum through the culture wars debates that had polarized and fractured the cultural, educational and, to some extent, social sectors in the USA, Australia and other parts of the world. The series of security incidents played out on

both local and global stages during this period, including the 9/11 attacks in the US (global) and the Tampa incident and Cronulla riots in Australia (local) (Message 2009b), added to confusion about the meaning and implications of multiculturalism and fostered reluctance on the part of Australian federal governments to create controversy by explicitly naming or identifying racism (Babacan 2006). While racism was strenuously denied as a motivation for policy-making at this time, proclamations about the ‘failure’ of multiculturalism featured prominently in government discourses across Europe (notably in the UK, but also in France and elsewhere).<sup>11</sup> It was in response to this situation that Ang (2009) wrote an article, ‘Beyond multiculturalism: A journey to nowhere?’ A backlash period following fears about terrorism and the national debates about asylum-seekers (in Australia at least) provided a transition into the current era in which cultural racism has become an important concept and narrative.

The Australian government’s interest in bringing the term ‘racism’ explicitly back into mainstream public dialogue was signalled in 2007 when it was identified by the recently elected Labor government as an element of its social inclusion strategies (Gillard and Wong 2007, Gillard and Macklin 2009). A high-profile public campaign, ‘Racism: It Stops with Me’,<sup>12</sup> was launched in 2012 in association with a new National Anti-racism Strategy by the Australian Human Rights Commission that focuses on building close partnerships with individuals and organizations from all parts of the Australian community (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012). The strategy’s three main goals are to achieve: (a) recognition amongst more Australians that racism continues to be a serious issue in our community; (b) the involvement of more Australians in practical actions to tackle racism, wherever they see it; and (c) increased awareness by individuals about how to access the resources they need to address racism, to access legal protections and, where necessary, to obtain redress. As illustrated by its key question, ‘How does racism make you feel?’, the strategy solicits empathy at an individual level but demands action from ‘you’ as a socially aware and responsible member of a group (be it a sporting group, school, or whatever). The changes emerging in government policy at this time are motivated by recognition that the three dominant and interconnected forms of racism – institutional, interpersonal and systemic – need to be tackled across government, community and interpersonal relationships and frameworks. The changes also act on recognition expressed in community consultation that ‘tolerance’ discourses have become synonymous with punitive processes for dealing with problems of difference/exclusion such as antisocial behaviour and the refusal to participate in norms of a common citizenship (Bennett 2012b).

The National Anti-racism Strategy was designed to address the causes as well as the symptoms of racism in Australia, and to build on groundwork provided by a new Australian government policy, ‘The People of Australia – Australia’s Multicultural Policy’, launched in February 2011 (Australian Government 2011). It acknowledges as insufficient previous initiatives that have addressed only the symptoms of racism, arguing that this approach can both feed a backlash and continue or extend the structural inequalities endemic within earlier policy phases. The new strategy also responds to a sense that the absence of the word ‘racism’ from the policy sphere and public debate has meant that members of the public have no reason to understand their behaviour or attitudes as being racist (or not). This suggestion, increasingly made by academics and some policy-makers, has been supported by an escalating trend of anti-anti-racism statements apparent in the media and public sphere. Often manifested in ‘I’m no racist, but ...’ (Innes 2011) types of comments, and associated with a



conviction that an overly engineered political correctness has led to an overzealous anti-racism that has become a significant social problem,<sup>13</sup> this anti-intellectual sentiment is apparent in the extreme responses to *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* and the media's reporting of the 'Flags on cars for Australia Day' research. The 'I'm not racist but ...' statement functions as a persuasive discursive disclaimer intended to distance a speaker from any charge of prejudice and solicit a feeling of agreement (or community) with the listener while also conveying negative views about a minority group. It exists as a form of active disengagement which might be understood as registering a discomfort on the part of the speaker that may in turn indicate a feeling of being challenged or confused by the exhibition content.

In describing her understanding of the potential that museums have to talk or enable talk across a range of what we might call 'differencing lines' (keeping in mind Tony Bennett's (2005: 535) argument that museums function as 'differencing machines'), Golding (2009: 2) has argued that we need to be attuned to

the way in which the meaning of certain pernicious ideas about 'other' peoples and their cultures, which appear to be based on obvious factual evidence can change when they are questioned in between locations, at the frontiers of traditional disciplinary boundaries, and beyond the confines of institutional spaces.

The renewed attention being paid to racism in the public/community sector and public policy/government sector reflects a commitment to this process of looking anew, and has



**FIGURE 3.4** 'Where We Come From' case, *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* exhibition, Immigration Museum. Photo Jon Augier. Courtesy of Museum Victoria

been reflected in attempts by museums to engage in and encourage better frameworks for understanding social justice issues and the battle against racism in any form (including anti-racism). The history of the transformation of museum methodologies within the various, increasingly interdisciplinary, themed or identity-specialized museums that have been developed over the past half-century or so is also implicitly evident in *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours*, which adopts different modes in different display elements. In its final form, the exhibition also provides an example of the increasing openness and responsiveness of museums to prompts from social science researchers in fields including psychology and sociology, where the emergence of new methodologies for engaging with racism is being extensively reported (Paradies 2012). These historical and contemporary elements combine to generate an attempt to transgress traditional rationales for collecting (where, for example, the material culture of indigenous peoples was categorized as ‘ethnography’ and the productions of Western peoples as ‘national history’ or ‘fine art’). The effect is an exhibition that is engaged in contemporary debate but also presents a reflective approach to understanding the nineteenth-century public museum’s pedagogic aims of universal education as well as the ideologies of imperialism and social Darwinism to which museums are intimately connected and from which their collections were made *sensible*.

Reflection on the museum’s own role in the normalization of racism has occurred primarily in *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* through a process of repositioning collections that has sought to set up a double gaze whereby objects are used to show both unconstructed national stereotypes and post-national narratives (Mason 2012). This happens in two ways, first through the physical design of the space, where the confronting tram incident is followed with displays about seemingly harmless stereotypes in everyday products and advertising, where, to quote the wall-text, “‘black’ faces sell chocolates, coffee and biscuits. ‘Oriental’ faces sell rice and crackers. Advertising jingles use comical characters and ‘funny’ accents to sell everything from pasta sauce to washing machines.’ Second, material culture that may have been previously categorized as either ethnographic or traditional folk-life (for example, traditional costumes or dolls<sup>14</sup>) has been placed alongside ephemera and items from contemporary culture (including a black ‘hoodie’ jacket decorated by Kat Clarke, a young Wotjobaluk woman from western Victoria<sup>15</sup>), or addressed in relation to archival speeches on paper or film (the exhibition presents nationally significant addresses by politicians and then asks visitors to reflect on how these speeches made them feel<sup>16</sup>) to build strong narratives about the lives of people represented in text or video formats.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Trends in museum transformation***

An overview of the process of social transformation since the ratification of the Declaration of Human Rights shows that each policy era has correlated with a particular museological approach to representing cultural difference. The biological racism era can, for example, be characterized by the national museum model established in the nineteenth century that was closely aligned with the colonial enterprise. The multicultural policy era is aligned to and characterized by the development of migration and immigration museums, and increased support of ethnic-specific community museums. Support for these museums developed out of the ‘politics of recognition’ underpinning the 1960s and 1970s civil rights movements’ demands for a distinctly new way of ‘doing politics’, and from recognition of diverse group identities by public institutions (Taylor 1994, Sandell 2007).

Ethnic-specific museums usually emphasize celebration over racism through collections and narratives featuring positive but still limited stereotypes of lifestyle, food or costume. Although they present a voice for a marginalized community, they reflect the shortcomings of multicultural policies and programmes which avoid addressing racism directly. Although the community exhibition genre (such as the 2007 ‘community focus’ exhibition at Te Papa Tongarewa, *The Scots in New Zealand*<sup>18</sup>) that grew out of these museums sought to represent migration experiences directly by showcasing positive profiles of various communities from their own perspectives (often through a collaborative curatorial model), this approach has also been problematic for reflecting a presumption that all communities are equally positioned within society (equal time and similar approaches will be applied to each exhibition developed). In addition, the genre suggests that personal identity and individual agency can be subsumed by or reduced to an essentialized cultural image that correlates to an ethnic (or other) group identity. The autonomy of the group here overrides personal identity, which restricts the extent to which a person can ever act as an individual (either within this frame, or in order to counter the dominant representation). The final criticism of this approach is that it represents multiculturalism as a mosaic that focuses on ethnic groups as discrete units and precludes any representation of the exchange, influence and cross-cultural encounters that really produce multicultural societies (Witcomb 2009: 49). Not only does it often present cultural groups as homogeneous (whereby individuals are community members first and foremost), it can represent cultural groups as discrete or even isolated autonomous units with little communication across various ‘lines’ of difference. This approach to representation therefore cannot easily accommodate claims that each person in society has or can have a variety of communal allegiances.

While the community exhibition approach was intended to empower migrant groups by providing visibility and a voice, it has in some cases reinforced negative stereotypes of difference – for example, that migrants do not care to engage in good citizenship practices because their overriding loyalties remain with the country that they left to make a home in Australia. Although this approach emphasizes the heterogeneity of different groups, it often does not adequately account for the heterogeneity within communities which are themselves variously defined as individuals choose to identify as members of multiple communities and groups. Heterogeneity and diversity later became key features of exhibitions associated with museums adopting social inclusion and cultural diversity ideals or policies, including the Victoria and Albert Museum (which established an Equality and Diversity Unit<sup>19</sup>), the Manchester Museum (through exhibitions and collections development programmes that sought collaboration from migrant communities in the local area<sup>20</sup>), and Te Papa Tongarewa (through National Services Te Paerangi outreach programmes<sup>21</sup>), as well as exhibitions including *Australian Journeys* at the National Museum of Australia, and *Human Trafficking* at the Museum of World Cultures in Gothenburg, Sweden. Implicit within these exhibitions was the assertion (*contra* the position of mosaic exhibitions from the multicultural period) that cultures are not distinct, self-contained wholes, but extensions and expressions of life that have long interacted and influenced one another through war, imperialism, trade and migration. *Australian Journeys* and the Museum of World Cultures, for example, share an emphasis on human rights, and promote positive feelings about people feeling at home across cultures and the idea that people in many parts of the world live within cultures that are already transnational, cosmopolitan and characterized by cultural hybridity. The exhibitions also focus on the exploration of shared cultures (be they European, tribal, cosmopolitan)

rather than national cultures, possibly in order to come to terms with the colonial pasts of many European nations as well as contemporary ideas about social justice. This recent phase of museum transformation has attracted criticism on the grounds that it constitutes a 'depoliticised representation of cultural diversity, shaped by a virtually unhindered mobility in which Australia's cosmopolitan connections seem limitless and unproblematic' (Ang 2009: 20).

Concerned with 'community' as it refers to a broader national polity as well as minority or other specialized groups, a question that is raised and apparent at various points of *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* is 'How does racism affect the community?' This question emphasizes the cost of racism both to individuals and to broader projects of community-building. The concern reflects comments in the National Anti-racism Strategy's (Australian Human Rights Commission 2012: 11) report about its consultation process: 'There was a common view shared that being part of a team can be the "glue that holds us together".' However, the exhibition does more than illustrate the cultural capital and other benefits that can arise from joining a local club or other interest group. It also demonstrates a commitment to engaging audiences in the constantly changing debates about cultural diversity in this country; these are debates which do not just occur at the macro/structural levels of government policy-making, but which draw from all spheres of the public as well as our personal lives and interactions as individuals.

## Conclusion

This chapter has considered some of the ways in which changing debates, discourses and approaches toward understanding the language and experience of racism have influenced the development (as well as the consumption) of the *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* exhibition at the Immigration Museum in Melbourne. Although ostensibly a chapter about museums and multiculturalism, I have argued that any attempt to understand changing museum practice in Australia must consider transformations in social policy development through the same period and that this cannot happen if racism is removed from the frame. Indeed, despite the frequent marginalization of racism from political discourse, racism (be it structural or covert/informal) exists as a constitutive form of discourse that must be recognized and grappled with publicly. I identified *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* as the main case study for this chapter because of the centrality of racism to the exhibition, and because of the exemplary way that it has approached and embodied a series of conceptual and pragmatic transformations in various policy sectors and in museums themselves, which have typically had authority as a state apparatus over ways that 'difference' has been understood and accepted (or not). I have contextualized the exhibition against an overview of the way museums have responded in the last half-century to changing policy positions about multiculturalism and the public debate which has flowed from that as part of an attempt to understand the return to racism that has played out in the public sphere and media, as well as policy sectors.

*Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* can, in the final instance, be understood as presenting racism as a lens through which visitors can revisit the creeping issue of 'multiculturalism fatigue' in order to start afresh conversations about identity and belonging across lines of race, place and perception. Positive, negative and uncertain visitor responses to the exhibition provide the beginnings of this conversation in a new climate, where racism has returned to the national agenda.

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## Notes

- 1 Online exhibition: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 2 Current data is available from the Challenging Racism Project, which surveyed more than 12,500 people nationwide from 2001 to 2008 and found that 12 per cent of Australians agree that they are personally prejudiced against other cultures, 41 per cent believe that Australia is weakened by people of different cultural origins sticking to their old ways, and 84 per cent believe there is racial prejudice in Australia. About one-sixth of Australians experience racism in their everyday lives. See Dunn *et al.* (2011) and the Challenging Racism Project website: [http://www.uws.edu.au/ssap/school\\_of\\_social\\_sciences\\_and\\_psychology/research/challenging\\_racism](http://www.uws.edu.au/ssap/school_of_social_sciences_and_psychology/research/challenging_racism) (accessed 31 August 2012).

3

Professor Fozdar said the study revealed flag-flyers were significantly less positive about Australia’s ethnic diversity than ‘non-flag flyers’ but that the attitude is not shared by all Australians. ‘The fact that there were significant differences doesn’t mean that everybody who flies the flag feels negative towards minorities but it means that a larger proportion of them did compared with people that weren’t flying flags,’ she said. Professor Fozdar said many people ignored her findings that the majority of both flag-flyers and non-flag flyers, interviewed by her research team, felt positive about Australia’s ethnic diversity. ‘But that’s not what gets picked up by people,’ she said.

(Pari 2012)

- 4 The New South Wales Administrative Decisions Tribunal upheld a complaint of racial vilification against Jones and radio station 2GB on the grounds that:

His comments about ‘Lebanese males in their vast numbers’ hating Australia and raping, pillaging and plundering the country, about a ‘national security’ crisis, and about the undermining of Australian culture by ‘vermin’ were reckless hyperbole calculated to agitate and excite his audience without providing them with much in the way of solid information.

See Administrative Decisions Tribunal NSW (2009), AAP (2009).

- 5 In 2011 Bolt and the *Herald Sun* were found by the Federal Court to have contravened section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. They had been sued over blog posts titled ‘It’s so hip to be black’, ‘White is the new black’ and ‘White fellas in the black’ that suggested ‘fair-skinned people’ of diverse ancestry chose Aboriginal racial identity for the purposes of political and career clout. See Federal Court of Australia (2011), Callanan (2011), Kissane (2010) and Quinn (2011).
- 6 Electronic postcards: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/> (accessed 31 August 2012).

- 7 As at 8 October 2012, the Immigration Museum had attracted 225 reviews, the majority of which do not explicitly mention the *Identity* exhibition but present an overall impression of the museum experience. See: [http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction\\_Review-g255100-d257176-Reviews-Immigration\\_Museum-Melbourne\\_Victoria.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction_Review-g255100-d257176-Reviews-Immigration_Museum-Melbourne_Victoria.html) (accessed 8 October 2012).
- 8 Online exhibition component: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-them/whos-next-door/what-can-i-do/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 9 Agenda museums are built out of and promote direct engagement between culture and politics, often functioning across various grassroots and formal stages and platforms (Message 2013a: 37).
- 10 For detailed analysis of policy phases, see Message (2009b) and Message (2013b). *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* represents the period of biological racism through archival sources pertaining to the passage of the White Australia legislation in 1901, quoting figureheads such as Reverend James Black Roland, member of the House of Representatives, who said: 'Let us keep before us the noble ideal of a white Australia, a snow-white Australia if you will. Let us be pure and spotless.' See <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-them/the-white-picket-fence/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 11 Then Leader of the Opposition David Cameron (2007) remarked that: 'The doctrine of multiculturalism has undermined our nation's sense of cohesiveness because it emphasizes what divides us rather than what brings us together.'
- 12 Online campaign: <http://itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 13 The extent of the backlash against political correctness was nowhere more apparent than in an address delivered by Australia's conservative Prime Minister John Howard shortly after his 1996 election victory, when he stated, 'we are not a Government beholden to political correctness' (Howard 1996).
- 14 For example, a Hi-Lo marionette puppet (*circa* 1954) that has a face which has been painted with angled almond-shaped eyes and a thin moustache, to give him the appearance of a Chinese man. The display uses the object to play on stereotypes. Online at: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/favourite-objects/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 15 Kat Clarke's hoodie 'is an expression of the different groups she belongs to – friends, peers and Wotjobaluk. She printed her hoodie with the western Victorian Wergaia language words wek (lives), wurra (loves) and murrin (laughs) to express her pride and pleasure in who she is.' Online at: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/favourite-objects/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 16 A display called 'Politics of Prejudice through History and Recent Political Speeches' includes key addresses given at various times by national leaders, such as John Howard's 2001 federal election speech (targeting asylum seekers with negative language) and Kevin Rudd's 2008 apology to the Stolen Generations. See <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-them/the-white-picket-fence/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 17 One of the most popular exhibition elements is a video interview with Nazeem Hussain and Aamer Rahman, stand-up comedians who have collaborated as 'Fear of a Brown Planet' since 2008. Speaking about the under-representation of diversity in the Australian media, they comment, 'I don't think Australians realize that what we export creates an image of what we are overseas. All our major cultural exports are totally white. People don't actually know really how diverse ... how diverse Australia actually is.' See interview at: <http://museumvictoria.com.au/immigrationmuseum/discoverycentre/identity/people-like-me/expressing-ourselves/humour/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 18 Online exhibition: <http://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/exhibitions/thescots/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 19 V&A strategies for access, inclusion and diversity can be seen online at: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/v/v-and-a-strategies-for-access,-inclusion-and-diversity/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 20 For example, the Collective Conversations project that made films about people's encounters with objects from the museum's collections. Online at: <http://www.museum.manchester.ac.uk/community/collectiveconversations/> (accessed 31 August 2012).
- 21 National Services Te Paerangi works in partnership with museums, galleries and *iwi* (tribes) in New Zealand, offering a range of practical and strategic programmes aimed at strengthening the sector. Online at: <http://www.tepapa.govt.nz/nationalservices/Pages/NationalServices.aspx> (accessed 31 August 2012).

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# 4

## 'WHOSE CAKE IS IT ANYWAY?'

### Museums, civil society and the changing reality of public engagement

*Bernadette Lynch*

A Chinese woman stood at the far end of a room in a museum in London and asked why the museum wanted to engage communities. She said, 'What's it for? What is it you want to do to me?' This pointed question was posed against a backdrop of change in museums in the UK and elsewhere, with pressure to shift from the museum as essentially collections-focused to the museum as ostensibly a 'public-service institution'.

It is important to understand all that silently conditions our perceptions in museum practice, all that frequently presents invisible obstacles to any real and effective engagement to participation in museums, no matter how committed we may be. It seems to me that there is an imperative to make such processes visible, in order to illuminate the relational complexities within the messy and often contradictory work of public participation in museums.

In fact, minority publics bring a host of unanticipated reasons (unanticipated by the museum) for wanting to be present or to participate in the museum, from wanting to talk about themselves – with all the complexity of their experience – the loneliness, anger, frustration – and sometimes resignation – that this evokes. Working with refugee women at a museum in Manchester, the author experienced refugee women, through a process of object-handling and storytelling, tentatively at first, expressing what it felt like to be uprooted from a nomadic existence to living an uncertain life, six floors up in a tower block in Moss Side, Manchester. From time to time their frustration was focused on the museum itself, by means of the cathartic experience of speaking through museum objects.

But first, for purposes of working definitions, the problematic notion of 'community', so conveniently defined and delimited by socio-cultural policy (and, in a continuance of their classificatory role, museums), in this context refers to 'minority publics' – those key target 'communities' on the receiving end of government social diversity, inclusion and cohesion programmes. These minority publics are referred to throughout with the caveat that, just as with collections, museums 'create' these notions of fixed, homogeneous communities. As Stuart Hall puts it, 'Museums do not simply issue objective descriptions or form logical assemblages; they generate representations and attribute meaning and value in line with certain perspectives or classificatory schemas which are historically specific' (Hall 1997: 4).

The minority publics that find themselves the focal point of government social inclusion and participation policy for museums in the UK include perceived ‘problem’ communities, such as refugees and asylum seekers. In the case of refugees, in which people have undergone terrifyingly dramatic, life-altering situations, such as the experience of the refugee women with whom the author collaborated at the Manchester Museum (emerging as they did from a war zone), the stories told to themselves no longer hold an appearance of continuity, the illusion of life’s ‘progress’ to which most of us cling. ‘Regular life’ was thus clearly severed, blown apart. What is the purpose of their engagement with the museum, when clearly, for them, sometimes the telling of the narrative in the museum is itself a form of resistance – of struggle?

Yet, the museum’s agenda, which too often oversimplifies people’s motivations for being there, with the effect that they are subtly coerced to be part of the museum’s ‘social improvement’ agenda, while placing them (particularly vulnerable people, such as refugees) in the role of passive beneficiaries, even when ostensibly offering opportunities for collaboration and co-production. One external participant in a so-called ‘co-produced’ exhibition on racism called *Myths about Race* at the Manchester Museum referred to the museum’s apparent lack of comprehension of the immediacy of these complex issues as ‘legacies of prejudice’ (Lynch and Alberti 2010).

### **Institutional resistance to public engagement and participation**

Despite decades of investment in public programming (including engagement and participation) in UK museums, more recently, there is evidence of a growing backlash, with economic pressures allowing many museums to slip back into their comfort zones, with talk of refocusing on what is deemed ‘core’ – collections-based – work. Nonetheless, the demand for public accountability is not going away. In the UK, the public sector is increasingly committed to, and actively engaged in, soliciting public input on public services – in health, education, housing and social services, for example – through engagement boards, or representation on project boards. Involving communities in more direct collaborations has increased in museums in the light of global expectations for a greater degree of public participation and deliberation in civil society as whole (as exemplified by the massive growth of social media).

In the UK, under pressure from central government funding bodies and local authorities, the engagement process in museums has been expanding, with expectations that museums include large-scale consultation on their capital development projects as well as public input on re-displays of collections and the co-development of policies and strategies for practice. Involving communities in the active role of the museum within the regeneration and development of its local area has become a key factor in the funding of museums in recent years. Sustainable community strategies are proposing more embedded partnerships. Thus, depending upon the individual museum response to such demands, the perception of the relationship with the public is quickly or gradually, enthusiastically or extremely reluctantly, shifting from ‘users and choosers to makers and shapers’ (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001).

Museums are thus increasingly under pressure to deliver on opportunities for public participation. But, as we shall see, there is institutional resistance; in many cases tensions and contradictions can be seen to run throughout these collaborative processes, while unanswered questions render those tensions especially urgent. Here are some such questions:

- In a museum's commitment to creating invited spaces, does its staff set the boundaries and guide the outcomes?
- Is the museum promoting dialogue that faces these tensions, or do museum staff members habitually avoid conflict?
- When there is a high-visibility 'product' at stake – an exhibition or a piece of published research – does the museum's cultural authority prevail, overpowering participant input even while making claims for 'co-production'?
- In so doing, does the museum continue to be influenced by a history of institutional prejudice, and continue to be affected by its fear of the 'stranger' at its doors?

### **Bicentenary: an opportunity lost**

Back in 2007, many museums and other cultural institutions in the UK scrambled to commemorate the bicentenary of Britain's Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. The government's last-minute support for the commemoration of the Bicentenary, primarily through designating a large fund to be made available to museums via the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), and, with it, the announced expectation that commemorative programmes and events be produced in collaboration with diverse communities (mainly African and African Caribbean), caught many museums by surprise.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, due to heightened expectations of collaboration in developing exhibitions and programmes on this highly sensitive subject, it brought museums face-to-face with the challenges of participation and co-production and the everyday politics and realities of racism, conflict and community activism. This became even more challenging for museums when temporary advisory panels were convened, which used the opportunity to comment on issues wider than the Bicentenary (but seen by many participants as related to the legacy of the slave trade), such as workforce diversity and related museum policies and procedures, which few museums had the staff training or processes in place to address.

A museum professional noted in hindsight that 'consultation' was not an accurate description of what took place in their museum. She said:

I think in many ways the museum made a mistake in starting a process that was framed and understood internally as 'consultation', which effectively meant that while the museum asked for advice and opinions, there was no such impetus to accept what people advised or suggested. There was a sense at certain levels that the process would be there to avert the risk of a backlash by not having it in place. It was not really about true collaboration.<sup>2</sup>

This was echoed by a colleague in a national museum who added,

The gallery objects had been chosen and the design had commenced by the time the consultation panel had been invited in, so many of the things that would have made the gallery collaborative and facilitated a greater 'buy-in' were no longer available for discussion.<sup>3</sup>

Most of all, it was widely agreed that the Bicentenary challenged the museum's edifice of knowledge and power – visible, hidden and invisible (Gaventa 2006). What Cornwall (2008)

termed ‘empowerment-lite’ was cause for resentment when it became ‘participation-lite’ on an issue – the history of the slave trade and its ramifications in contemporary racism – that runs deep into the heart of those communities with which museums wished to establish long-term partnerships, neatly demonstrating how participation within a museum system that continues to disadvantage participants may give them some tools but, as Audre Lorde (1984: 110) puts it, ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’.

So, were the lessons from working with communities in the Bicentenary year reflected back into wider strategic development of museums? Another colleague noted, ‘Co-production is short term and bounded. It does not necessarily change the balance of power or decision-making processes within the institution.’<sup>4</sup>

### Empowerment-lite in the ‘contact zone’

With this in mind, in a series of recently published papers, I have re-examined my own public engagement and participation practice during my many years in senior management of museums in Canada and the UK (Lynch and Alberti 2010, Lynch 2011a, b, c and d). I am interested in the values, the attitudes that informed the work, those underlying philosophies of practice that even in the most reflective work may, at the same time, undermine its democratic and inclusive aims.

During the years that it was my overall responsibility, the Manchester Museum’s engagement work was influenced not only by idealized notions of James Clifford’s ‘contact zone’ (Clifford 1997), but increasingly by what I saw as the complementary writing of the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1989).

Levinas claimed that, as relational beings, humans can only successfully learn about themselves through engagement with another. Translated to museum practice as a reciprocal process, museum staff and community members, despite different backgrounds and experiences, will inevitably develop understanding and respectful relationships through working together in ‘proximity’ (another Levinas theme) and thus become increasingly aware that they are each ultimately dependent upon and responsible for the other.<sup>5</sup> Levinas writes: ‘I am to the other what the other is to me’ (Levinas 1991: 100). This is *reciprocity* in action in the exchange.

In terms of museums, it seemed that if we began our engagement work with an awareness of this mutual responsibility, we could next move to a negotiation of an actual exchange. Thus, in Manchester, an ethics of responsibility and reciprocity was taken into *the museum as contact zone* as we developed the practicalities for a negotiation of an exchange specific to a museum – in other words, related to collections. New ways of working were created, aimed at tackling the central, thorny issues of shared knowledge and the interpretation of collections.

Fundamental to this approach was the establishment, in 2000, of the museum’s Community Advisory Panel (CAP), drawn from Manchester’s many diverse communities, whose origins and journeys reflected those of the collections. The CAP collectively agreed to the express aim that it should challenge the museum’s traditional Eurocentrism through a process of ongoing dialogue and debate related to the interpretation of the museum’s collections.

However, the relationship with the CAP often ran into difficulties, highlighting increasingly troubling flaws in the museum’s philosophy and practice of reciprocity. In retrospect, differences of opinion were frequently diffused by the museum staff’s intervention, and, as in

the case cited at the beginning of this chapter, potential conflict was usually contained, circumvented or completely bypassed. At the 'Are Museums Racist?' debate, held at the museum in August 2007, a member of the CAP described the problem in the following way:

We're here to challenge and I fear that others may not challenge us back. It's not for you to just listen to us being angry and *just* listen. The point is the dialogue. The point is that we could be totally wrong. I don't personally believe I am wrong – but I am willing to listen to somebody who totally disagrees with me.<sup>6</sup>

Over the years of operation, there was an increasing sense that the CAP existed simply to rubber-stamp museum policies and projects, however 'liberal-minded' and risk-taking these projects may have seemed to museum staff at the time. This often resulted in both 'sides' feeling frustrated, dissatisfied and ultimately disillusioned, even while maintaining an increasingly hopeless commitment to the reciprocal process, *in principle*. Those who disagreed with the process simply left the CAP, sometimes in anger. Those who stayed increasingly adopted a more passive role.

In East London, Hackney Museum, well known and respected for its long-term commitment to community engagement, similarly experienced difficulties with participation when its efforts were met with anger from participants. Yet, as one of the curators stated unapologetically, or pragmatically, depending upon your point of view: 'I wouldn't hand over [control] completely unless I'm absolutely sure of my ground and of the people I'm working with. I'd make it clear that the museum has the final say or overall editorial control – if that's the way I think it needs to be.'<sup>7</sup> Yet, in the following case, reported by the museum:

there was a feeling of weariness, of disappointment, of frustration from the community members and the museum staff (two of whom had left). One member of the community embarked on an almost fanatical vitriolic series of complaints and criticisms – that the museum had no real understanding or knowledge of the community, that it lacked commitment and experience, that it was misappropriating the funds, that it was not transparent in its dealings with the community, that it was unprofessional and exclusive, that it was only concerned with completing the project for its own aims and not for any benefit to the community and finally, and most damning, that the museum encouraged (and I quote) 'subterfuge, distrust and competition' within the community.<sup>8</sup>

Despite a commitment to the contact zone ideal in both of these museums – Manchester and Hackney – we somehow continue to face the other with fear, and work hard to exercise control, because engagement will always serve, as Bauman puts it, to 'unmask the brittle artifice of division' (Bauman 1991: 291–2).

## Collective Conversations

In Manchester, we were increasingly uneasy about the seeming inescapability of the stand-off (or, worse, passive collusion) between the museum and its community 'partners'. Yet, we continued to pursue a reciprocal ideal. Building on extensive, long-term work with refugees and asylum seekers and inspired by the affective impact of objects when working with

refugees in object-handling programmes (Lynch 2007), we created the Collective Conversations programme.<sup>9</sup>

At the time this programme was fairly unique and it won various awards. It was an attempt to put Clifford's contact zone literally into practice and was based on the idea of offering opportunities for inter- and intra-cultural dialogue through developing an expanded 'community of interpretation' with participants from local (mainly diaspora) communities. The participants were invited to negotiate the interpretation of the museum's collections (there was a particular focus on using the museum's large, underused collections in store).

This was a way of working that provided opportunities for interested individuals or mixed groups to engage actively with museum collections (including handling them), telling stories and discussing them with museum staff and others. Thus, the museum's avowed intention for the programme was that significant contributions could be made to documentation of collections through the opening up of its interpretative processes (the round-table conversations were filmed by trained museum staff, and added to the museum's website or made available on YouTube). The specially constructed studio space where the conversations took place was christened the 'Contact Zone', a designation that was affixed to the door.

Typically, for the colonized, power is fundamentally coercive, and it is this *coercive seduction* that reveals the power at work within the museum 'exchange' that has interested me throughout my career in museum theory and practice – the very power that was so blithely ignored by refugee women who had not yet been enculturated into the norms and expectations of the Manchester Museum by the women involved in the Collective Conversations programme. Yet, it was only a matter of time before this moment would pass and the women would learn the prohibitive culture of the museum – and they did.

In the case of the Collective Conversations programme, instead of providing opportunities for these people to gain confidence by actively resisting the museum's subtly coercive exercise of power, a consensus-based, tolerant, empathetic, therapeutic culture in the museum worked to undermine this process so that such participants were asked to identify their own good with the good of the institution, and thus help to maintain the museum's *status quo* rather than challenge it.

Back in 2000 at the Manchester Museum (at the beginning of its work with, initially, Somali women), with no prior knowledge of museums, the women had disrupted precedent – picking up the exalted objects, passing them round, discussing and debating them – and then turned to the museum staff, often to challenge them. They took particular pride in angrily correcting the museum's knowledge and interpretation of 'Somali' collections, which they (correctly) identified as Ethiopian. By ignoring museum norms and prohibitions, these women had begun to demonstrate to the very nervous staff members the *use value of heritage*, and the complexity of the relationship between museums, objects and people.

Yet, what was the museum's response? In retrospect, it was clearly a subtle but concerted effort to regain control. While apparently acting as 'co-participants', joining in the activities with the women, the museum maintained its position of distance, 'objectivity' and privilege (Lynch 2011d).<sup>10</sup> Never once did the museum willingly relinquish this position in the exchange, as 'someone who does not, and can *afford* not to, engage in a genuine dialogue' (Talal Asad cited by Clifford 1986: 15).

This unwillingness to relinquish position points to a level of fear – fear of loss of control – as though there is a realization that behind the generous casting of relations between the two

parties, there is always the danger of antagonism. According to Gramsci, the complexes of associations in civil society, such as those between the museum and these women, 'constitute ... the "trenches" and permanent fortifications of the front in the war of position' (Gramsci 1971: 243). Despite an avowed (and genuine) commitment to shared authority, the museum jealously guarded its position throughout its relationship with these women.<sup>11</sup> In subsequent situations where the 'offer' of open and equitable 'interpretation' of collections was ostensibly made available to community groups and individuals (for example), in retrospect this offer can be seen to have been largely fictitious (Lynch 2011d, Lynch and Alberti 2010).<sup>12</sup>

Looking back, the Collective Conversations programme that we devised in Manchester certainly appears to have offered innovative opportunities for the negotiation of collections' interpretation. The refugees brought with them rich potential for creating a dialectic between separate landscapes of experience. Collective Conversations had the potential to 'act as a focalising [agent], capable of drawing together diverse, even antagonistic constituencies' (Hebdidge 1993: 272). But in practice the programme limited access to and choice of collections available for discussion, and similarly – and even more worryingly – it offered limited opportunity for debate between different communities of experience and contestation with the institution.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, the well-known researcher in Maori and indigenous education, notes that, in partnerships with museums, 'negotiations are also about respect for the opposition'. She reminds us that 'some knowledges are actively in competition with each other' (Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 159). In such cases as the Collective Conversations programme, the actual 'negotiation' is questionable as there is little real interaction between museum interpretations and those of the participants, and the hierarchy of interpretation remains unchallenged in favour of the museum.

In reality, the experience for the diaspora participant may be very different from that of the museum, with a very different motivation for participating. Tuhiwai Smith speaks of the Maori motivation behind sharing oral histories with museums, which may be at odds with the museum's purpose. For most Maoris, she says:

It is not simply about giving an oral account ... but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying. The sense of history in these accounts is not the same thing as the discipline of history, and so our accounts collide, crash into each other ... The need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance.

*(Tuhiwai Smith 1999: 28, 35)*

The contact zone task for museums is to allow for resistance, not to suppress it. To borrow from the political theorist Chantal Mouffe, we need to 'envisage the creation of a vibrant public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted' (Mouffe 2005: 5).

## Whose cake is it anyway?

I had an opportunity to examine the effect of public engagement further in twelve major museums across the UK with the recent, high-profile study I conducted for the Paul Hamlyn



Foundation (Lynch 2011d). One day, during the period of the study, a discussion was under way in a city museum somewhere in the middle of England. At a certain point in the proceedings, Tony, the leader of a local group involved in setting up training opportunities for unemployed African Caribbean youth in the area, walked over to a table and grabbed a plate of sliced cake. The task he and the group of participants (the museum staff and their community partners) had been given was to create an 'image' to depict the current relationship between the museum and its local communities.

Handing the plate of cake to the museum's senior manager, he proceeded to direct the mixed group of workshop participants into positions, so that the staff members were holding out the plate of cake, while the community participants formed an orderly queue, awaiting their allotted piece. This, for him, was the reality of the postcolonial contact zone. He asked, 'Whose cake is it anyway?'

Everyone present understood that the institution rewards those whose behaviour is less challenging and more in keeping with its own ethos, placing them at the head of the queue – thus reinforcing what Gaventa (2004) calls 'false consensus' within the relationship by rewarding those willing to concede to the museum's goal.

By distributing the cake (resources) in this way, the museum institution maintains order and control, not through violence and political or even economic coercion, but ideologically, through a hegemonic culture in which the values of the institution became the common-sense values of all, and the 'supplicants' passively form an orderly queue.<sup>13</sup> Thus Gramsci's notion of 'positionality' referred to earlier is here clearly demonstrated, while the 'complexes of associations' between the museum and its community partners disguise what is, as he memorably put it, a 'war of position' (Gramsci 1971: 243).

To break through this, as Yuval-Davis (1999: 7) points out, what is instead called for is an 'acknowledgement of one's own positioning(s) while empathising with the ways others' positionings construct their gaze at the world'. Yuval-Davis calls for 'dialogues that give recognition to the specific positionings of those who participate in them'. But instead of opportunities to name and resist such positionings, a consensus culture is too often developed by the museum in which participants are encouraged to identify their own good with the good of the institution, and thereby help to maintain the *status quo* rather than challenge it, thus colluding in their own marginalization, disempowerment and even exclusion.

If we return to Mary Louise Pratt's original notion of the contact zone, and her concern with challenging the centre–periphery model of the colonial encounter (Pratt 1992), in the case of the cake, it plainly hasn't worked – the museum here is firmly in the centre, holding the cake, displaying an almost nineteenth-century view of a passive subject, outside the institution, awaiting improvement. And again we hear echoes of the Chinese woman's challenging question: 'What is it you want to do to me?'

The point is that, for both Pratt and Clifford, it was clear that the contact zone was a place of conflict between different interests and experiences involving implicit or explicit *struggle*. Clifford plainly saw contact as a negotiation, 'an ongoing historical, political and moral *relationship*, a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull' (Clifford 1997:192).

How do museums and galleries become aware of the subtleties of how power works in the contact zone when the museum, operating as an 'invited space' (to borrow from Nancy Fraser (1993)), sets in place the limits of engagement from the outset? Frequently, the best indication of how these relations are configured is hidden within the language of the museum's or gallery's own policy documents:

- we believe;
- we have a responsibility;
- we have a strong sense;
- we can make people's lives better;
- [we are] generators of well-being;
- we play a leading role;
- [we] increase racial tolerance;
- we nurture a sense of belonging, cohesion, identity and pride.

And we ...

- provide;
- develop;
- expand;
- foster;
- ensure;
- target;
- encourage;
- promote;
- pursue;
- enhance;
- articulate;
- tell.<sup>14</sup>

The rhetoric of service places the subject (community member) in the role of 'supplicant' or 'beneficiary' and the giver (the museum and its staff) in the role of 'carer'. How clear is it to the museum staff who, with the best of intentions, support these words, or to the community members as the 'beneficiaries' on the receiving end, that power is at work within such language. Closer attention must be paid to the discourses of which the language we use in relation to participation forms a part (Hajer 1993: 45).

By placing people in the position of beneficiaries, the liberal morality that informs and permeates engagement work in museums exercises invisible power, and thereby robs people of their active agency and the necessary possibility of resistance.<sup>15</sup> The result of this is the seemingly inevitable experience of Cornwall's notion of 'empowerment-lite' (Cornwall 2008), as clearly described by the staff and community partners at another major museum in the UK, known for its commitment to community engagement. In the attempted co-creation of a large-scale exhibition:

A museum staff member emphatically 'briefs' a community partner on a vision for a major new display project (metaphorically portrayed for this purpose as a basic drawing of a bus – without windows or wheels). The community partner is given the task to 'consult' with the partner's community group for 'input', so as to 'co-produce' the big project with the museum. With little obvious enthusiasm, the community partner does so, and it is received by the group in turn without much enthusiasm. However, they dutifully produce a series of drawings, which are then brought back by the community partner to the museum staff member. The staff member looks through the drawings

with mounting anxiety – disposing of those that don't fit her 'vision' for the exhibition/display. Finally, with relief, she finds a couple that will fit, and duly attaches these images (wheels/windows) to the picture of her vehicle. She has known, all along, where her vehicle is heading.

(Lynch 2011d)

Here we have a typical case of rubber-stamping – using the contact zone as a means to legitimize museum intentions under the guise of consensual approval. The Chinese woman might well ask, 'What do you need *me* for? Why ask me to participate?'

The emphasis on 'reciprocity' and 'consensuality' that has guided much of this work in museums ever since Clifford's contact zone is, according to Chantal Mouffe, conceptually fraught with dangers because it produces the opposite effect, exacerbating society's antagonistic potential. Mouffe maintains that an idealized, consensual form of democracy permeates such contact zone work, promoting a view that, by seeking to avoid conflict, suppresses the politics of the process (Mouffe 2005). The museum thereby continues to exercise its cultural authority (Honig 1993), effectively ensuring that any uneasy perceptions remain hidden from view.

Participants' disillusionment is the unsurprising consequence of this avoidance, in which, however implicitly and unintentionally, certain people and groups are always silenced or excluded (Gaventa 2006). Thus, liberal-minded, contact-zone-type museum work inevitably creates resentment and antagonism simply because it ignores issues of power and, most importantly, the *political dimension* within these encounters and relationships, and prevents any potential opposition from being articulated or acted upon.

Participants in an ethico-political dialogue are rarely equal, and almost never equally represented in the final consensus. Insofar as this dialogue is already projected towards some predetermined end – notions of 'wellness', for example – the field of possibilities is always delimited, with certain behaviours, outcomes and evidence favoured (Chakrabarty 1995). One of the participants invariably 'knows better' than the other, whose world view, in turn, must be modified or 'improved'.

The majority of the organizations in the Paul Hamlyn study (as had been the case earlier in Manchester, with Collective Conversations) clearly demonstrated a disturbing level of intractable institutional hegemony. In feedback from participants, this was revealed in numerous instances of false consensus and in the museum's continued fear and avoidance of conflict.

## Conclusion

Despite the best of intentions, the imposition of the institutions' coercive authority places people (including refugee and other diaspora communities) in the position of being co-opted into supporting (often resentfully) the museum's goals, while silencing any potential resistance or opposition. Such experiences unsurprisingly lead to disillusionment and a break in the relationship between people and the museum.

Beneath the rhetoric of the utopian, democratic, therapeutic, dialogic museum, the space is always contested and political. This is the reality the museum does all in its power to ignore. The task for museums is not to avoid conflict by adopting the safety and control of a therapeutic culture. Nor is it, as Wendy Brown puts it, simply to cultivate 'tolerance as a political end, implicitly constitut[ing] a rejection of politics as a domain in which conflict can be

productively articulated and addressed, a domain in which citizens can be transformed by their participation' (Brown 2006: 89). Rather, the task is to embrace conflict as a return to the political, for it is through struggle that new identities may be forged – actively to create Mouffe's 'public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted' (Mouffe 2005: 5). Thus, the museum contact zone may become, as Cornwall suggests in relation to the institutions of civil society, a 'space ... where in learning to participate, [participants] can cut their teeth and acquire new skills that can be transferred to other spheres – whether those of formal politics or neighbourhood action' (Cornwall and Coelho 2007: 8).

## Further research

Working with the welfare economics theories of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, with the view that the museum has a duty to help others secure their 'entitlements' (Nussbaum 2011), and based on Sen's call to address 'capability failure' in society (Sen 2010), I became interested in applying the notion of 'capability development' as central to the role of museums. Thus, each museum, while realizing its own capabilities, might embark on actively supporting others in realizing theirs; something I subsequently recommended to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.<sup>16</sup>

In my most recent work, I have begun to challenge the role of empathy in the current focus on wellness in the museum that, I believe, alienates museums from the particularities of individual lives and encourages them to view people as interchangeable subjects subsumed under an abstraction, such as 'refugees'. The perceived relationship between culture and public 'wellbeing' has within it the tendency to inflate the problem of emotional vulnerability in working with those most marginalized, minimizing the ability of the individual to cope. Low self-esteem is thus presented by museums as an invisible social disease that undermines the ability of people to control their lives (Furedi 2011), a situation that is greatly exacerbated for those existing in the uncertainty of transitory migrant communities.

Reminded of the challenging question posed by the Chinese woman cited at the beginning of this chapter, and of the resilience and initial resistance of the Somali refugee women at the Manchester Museum, I have been working on another action research project with UCL, Glasgow and Tyne and Wear museums – three large museum services in the UK – titled *I Object! Working through Conflict in Museums*. This project deliberately focuses on contested collections, often the product of dark histories of empire and exploitation and related subject matter, and researches these collections and their 'hidden histories' in partnership – and sometimes in conflict – with participants from diverse communities, thus embracing open dialogue and exchange.<sup>17</sup>

I find myself increasingly focused on a rights-based practice,<sup>18</sup> and returning to the writings of Carl Schmitt for notions of a workable democracy that understands conflict as central to self-determination (Schmitt cited in Mouffe 1999). I thus propose that the essence of public engagement in the museum might be more usefully based on a concept of ongoing and creative *struggle*. It is often claimed that museums can change people; but people can also change museums, as the Somali women did in Manchester, leaving museum staff with uncomfortable, unanswered questions. In my more recent experience there is an emerging practice in those museums that are courageously working in partnership with their communities, taking risks and embracing the real-life challenges they present.

## Notes

- 1 Of the various evaluative reports on the impact of the Bicentenary on the UK's museums, the most thorough and revealing research produced on the subject is the '1807 Commemorated' project, led by Laurajane Smith and Geoff Cubitt of the University of York (Smith and Cubitt 2007).
- 2 This comment (and others in this chapter relating to Bicentenary issues) was made to me in my capacity as chair of the 'Revealing Histories: Remembering the Slave Trade' consortium of eight museums and galleries in the UK's north-west. During the Bicentenary year, I was asked to meet with staff from several museums around the country to discuss their problems with community collaboration. I asked if I could reveal their identities, or that of their institutions, but all the museum professionals interviewed, without exception, elected to remain anonymous. Nonetheless, they gave permission for their comments to be reproduced for publication.
- 3 Anonymous comment, as above.
- 4 Anonymous, as above.
- 5 Here Levinas and the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1991) intersect in this notion of 'reciprocity', when they claim that ethics begins when one acts upon the moral imperative to take responsibility freely and willingly for the other facing them at this moment: I address them as someone to whom I owe something, and, importantly, *who owes something to me*. Bauman is in concert with Levinas in the need to search for an ethical commitment to developing a 'responsibility for the other' and a philosophy and practice of 'reciprocity'.
- 6 Z. Hussain, Manchester Museum Community Advisory Panel member, writer and Manchester-based social enterprise developer, speaking at the 'Are Museums Racist?' debate at the Manchester Museum, August 2007.
- 7 As reported by exhibitions curator Sue McAlpine, of the Hackney Museum, at the Museums Association conference discussion 'Can Museums Really Co-create Everything with the Public?', 7 October 2008, Liverpool, UK.
- 8 As above.
- 9 I have spoken extensively on Collective Conversations, a programme that won an award from the UK's Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and was cited in a European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research (2008) report.
- 10 I further explore the ethical implications of institutional fear of the other in Lynch 2011d.
- 11 I wish to note that I am critically reflecting upon my own practice here, looking back at its evolution, examining with the benefit of hindsight what did and did not work. In no way is this a reflection upon those inspiring professionals within my team (while I was deputy director of the Manchester Museum) who helped to develop and lead what was, at the time, ground-breaking work, from which there has been so much to learn.
- 12 For a more detailed discussion of the Collective Conversations programme, see Lynch 2011d and Lynch and Alberti 2010.
- 13 For Gramsci, hegemonic dominance ultimately relied on coercion, and in a 'crisis of authority ... [the] masks of consent slip away, revealing the fist of force' (Gramsci 1971: lxxxix).
- 14 These phrases and words are all taken from one anonymous museum in the Paul Hamlyn Foundation study. They have since been altered.
- 15 Some of this is explored further in a paper I co-authored with Sam Alberti, where we break this process down through the example of an attempt to co-create an exhibition, *Myths about Race*, at the Manchester Museum (Lynch and Alberti 2010).
- 16 The Paul Hamlyn Foundation has followed up with a three-million-pound organizational change offer to the organizations, who will work closely with their community partners on this transformation process over the next three years. Nine of the organizations have elected to embark on this next stage, called Our Museum: Communities and Museums as Active Partners, with the support of the foundation and the continued involvement of their community partners as 'critical friends'. For more information on this, see <http://www.phf.org.uk/page.asp?id=1125>.
- 17 *Working through Conflict in Museums: Museums, Objects and Participatory Democracy* is now available online at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rmmc20/28/1>. It is based on the I Object! Working through Conflict in Museums project. It should be noted that all six papers in this internationally peer-reviewed special issue not only deal with difficult, sensitive subject matter, challenging relations in the museum sector and proposing new working methodologies, but were written by busy museum professionals from Glasgow, Tyne and Wear and UCL museums. It is therefore an

excellent example of critical (and often self-critical) reflective practice. My introductory paper is entitled 'Reflective debate, radical transparency and trust in the museum'. It is possible to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the issues raised in the publication via the project blog: <http://objectsinconflict.wordpress.com/>.

18 See Federation of International Human Rights Museums at <http://www.fihrm.org>.

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## **PART 2**

# Engaging with cultural diversity

## Migration in museums



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# 5

## IMMIGRATION

### Politics, rhetoric and participatory practices in Italian museums

*Anna Chiara Cimoli*

Although immigration is not a recent phenomenon in Italy, and multiculturalism and diversity have become a reality in schools, hospitals, places of social encounter and the political arena, Italian museums appear to have reacted with a certain sluggishness, or even reticence, to the challenges of interculturality. How are increasingly diverse audiences being taken into account in terms of multilingualism, interpretation and meaning attribution? Are Italian museums revising their narratives, interpretative tools and forms of mediation in order to embrace a wider and more diverse vision of the world? How are they dealing with this complexity?

This analysis will focus on two areas of museum work in Italy. The first concerns museums specifically dedicated to the subject of migration, examining some recent examples and assessing the importance given to immigration in the overall narratives. The second area is the participation and involvement of migrant communities fostered by art museums, which have provided venues for debate, exchange and discussion not merely *about* but also *with* migrants, via an intercultural methodology. In conclusion I will attempt to indicate some of the prospects for Italian museums, covering both their strengths and weaknesses.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Recent epic, sudden oblivion**

Until about fifteen years ago, there seemed to be little room for the subject of immigration in Italian museums. Myriad small-scale, almost local, museums dedicated to *emigration* started appearing from the 1980s onwards (there are currently about thirty). However, the theme of *immigration*, and the challenges it implies, including changes in demographic profile, education and culture, seemed to be largely ignored by the museum community. It was as if the two phenomena – the emigration of Italians and the more recent immigration of other people – had very little in common.

Yet immigration is no longer something new or unexpected; it is not the transitory illness that some politicians suggest. The rhetoric of the foreigner as an enemy from a distant land who needs to be governed by ‘pure’ Italians has dominated part of the collective unconscious since the rise of the Lega Nord political party in the early 1990s.<sup>2</sup> Italians in general, and

politicians in particular, had forgotten that 25 million Italians left the country between 1876 and 1976 (Corti 2003). The journalist Gian Antonio Stella (2003) reminds us in *L'orda: Quando gli albanesi eravamo noi* (*The Horde: When We Were the Albanians*) of the poverty of Italy before the economic boom of the 1960s, a period which many prefer not to remember.

This reflection stands alongside a present which has seen the normal cultural difficulties of immigration exacerbated by the economic crisis, leading certain immigrant groups (e.g. Sri Lankans and Chinese) to return to their countries of origin. However, returning migrants often leave their children behind; these are children who were born in Italy and they are often of school age. One of the immediate concerns is for this second generation to develop meanings for their own life stories, especially since their parents often had neither the time nor the desire to share their experiences. As stated in the final report of the *Expert Meeting on Migration Museums* (IOM 2006: 4):

The voluntary or forced silence of the parents corresponds systematically to the revolt and the rejection of the children ... Migration has long been a 'taboo', a negative experience, a constraint ... Therefore, the parents were ashamed to tell their stories: today the second and third generations miss the stories. Memories are dynamic: they can be shown, visualized and changed.

For the purposes of prevention, this final point deserves our attention. There is an underlying discontent within Italy today, reflecting the experience of some other European countries,<sup>3</sup> which threatens to develop into violence.

Before addressing the relationship between museology and immigration, a brief look at recent immigration policy in Italy will provide a useful historical framework.

### ***Migratory politics versus 'everyday multiculturalism'***

Italy first experienced a positive migratory balance (101 immigrants to every 100 emigrants) in 1973. In the 1980s, the need to regulate the increasing flow of immigrants became evident. The first law to do so was enacted in 1986 (Legge Foschi). In 1990 the Legge Martelli regularized the status of approximately 200,000 migrants and established annual flow rates. In the following decade, soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, many migrants arrived from Eastern Europe (most of them from Albania), and many continued to arrive from North Africa. In 1998, under the Prodi government, the Legge Turco-Napolitano sanctioned certain fundamental rights, such as those concerning emergency treatment, antenatal and post-natal care and healthcare for minors.

In 2002, following this apparent easing of control, the Legge Bossi-Fini established extremely restrictive measures, particularly concerning family reunions, duration of residence permits and the immediate expulsion of undocumented migrants. In the same year Romanian citizens were allowed to travel in Europe without a visa for the first time. This made it easy for certain sectors of the media to target the new arrivals as an 'invasion'.

More recently, a new way of viewing migration has been expressed through the so-called Integration Agreement (Italian Ministry of the Interior 2011). By signing it,

foreign nationals [must] undertake to achieve specific integration objectives that shall be fulfilled during the period of validity of residence permits: acquire a sufficient

knowledge of the Italian language; acquire a sufficient knowledge of civic culture; guarantee the fulfilment of compulsory education to minors.

Official data for 2011 has 5.01 million immigrants living in Italy (Caritas e Migrantes 2012: 443). The ISTAT *Annual Report* of May 2012 reveals that ‘in comparison with the 2001 national census the foreign population in Italy has almost tripled in number and the incidence has risen from 2.3 to 6.3 foreigners for every hundred people’ (ISTAT 2012: 63).

As Italian society becomes increasingly multicultural, the literature concerning cultural diversity, multiple identities and multifaceted citizenship is richer than ever; this creates a new ‘diversity culture’ at every level, starting from school programmes and health policies, to include every other aspect of life.

But how do Italian museums investigate the subject of immigration, and how have they changed their points of view over the past few years? Do they increasingly consider themselves to be social agents, the promoters and leading figures in the vast cultural movement that is currently involving most of the countries in Europe in the construction of a multiple, dynamic identity? How do they accompany the shift from *multiculturalism* to *interculturalism*, which today, at least in Italy, is believed to be a more productive perspective?<sup>4</sup> According to the current Italian debate, ‘interculturalism’ should be considered as an active attitude based on the relational dimension in which shared spaces, languages and horizons are creatively sought by all the actors concerned, be they individuals or groups, whereas ‘multiculturalism’ describes the simple coexistence of different cultures within the same space (Colombo 2011, Mantovani and Salvarani 2005, Santerini 2003, 2010, Vigna and Bonan 2007).

Regarding the relationship between social cohesion and cultural policies, the Council of Europe/ERICArts *Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe* (2013: 39)<sup>5</sup> states:

The Italian response to the new public policy awareness of the multidimensional and interdependent nature of social exclusion – which is leading, in some member states of the EU, to a growing recognition of the potential impact of culture on the other dimensions of exclusion (economic, social, political) – is somewhat mixed.

Very little in the way of central government social policy focuses on culture as a specific issue which might be important to social inclusion. Since 2001–3, the Italian National Action Plans for social inclusion (now renamed National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion) have only vaguely been mentioning the need to guarantee equal opportunities of access to cultural services; more recently, the importance of promoting in ‘new citizens’ a better knowledge of the Italian culture and language with a view to a more cohesive society has been stressed (National Strategy Report 2008–10).

Likewise, there is hardly any explicit policy on the part of the Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities to promote social cohesion ... This is hardly surprising, as Italian cultural policies have long seen heritage protection as their main and unquestioned purpose, and have traditionally paid very scant attention to issues of access, participation and cultural diversity.

Although we cannot say that Italian cultural policies are being transformed according to general and shared guidelines in order to meet the expectations of an increasingly diverse audience, we can highlight several trends that are proceeding in this direction.

## Italian migration museums: from the pride of our ancestors to the uncertainties of today

Joachim Baur (2009) argues that the ‘right time’ to create a migration museum is when the host country thinks of itself as a nation, a single entity with a strong identity and features that are shared and recognized. This general reflection applies to countries such as Canada, Australia and the USA, those studied by Baur, but this is certainly not the case in a country as divided as Italy, as both its ancient and recent history shows. The division between a rich North and a poor South has deep historical roots, but the Lega Nord party added a new, artificial division by speaking of the ‘Po people’ and celebrating, in 1996, a folkloristic relay race from the source of the Po to Venice, in order to establish the geographical borders of this fictional race of people. We should not have been surprised, then, in 1998–9, when MP Mario Borghezio from the Lega Nord party boarded commuter trains with a disinfectant spray in order to ‘sanitize’ them against undocumented immigrants, who were considered to be nothing short of criminals (Crosetti 1999).

If the first condition to be able to create a migration museum is to possess a sense of the country, the second, according to Baur, is to consider immigration not as an episode or as a foreign body within the country’s organism, but as a choral epic, capable of creating integration. This is the philosophy of many American, Canadian and Australian museums, as well as the Musée de l’Histoire de l’Immigration in Paris. However, this is certainly not something Italy is culturally prepared to do. A prime example is the debate on the reformation of the citizenship laws, which has caused intense controversy in recent years.

Despite a certain lack of attention towards the ‘culture of migration’ at the national political level, it must be said that society at the local level has been much more receptive and creative in recent years in terms of cultural policies aimed at strengthening social inclusion and intercultural understanding. This depends mostly on the fundamental diversity of Italy, a country which was unified only in 1860, and whose very physical structure exemplifies the motif of diversity; this translates into a variety of dialects, artistic expressions and local cuisines, among many other aspects. There is also an unequal distribution of migrants within the country; consequently, some areas have needed to confront the issue of migration sooner and more intensively than others.

Besides historical aspects, there is also a legislative factor: the ongoing – though not yet fully realized – process of decentralization, which has been on the political agenda, sporadically, since the 1970s.<sup>6</sup> From a cultural point of view, therefore, the situation has become highly diversified, and it is not possible to talk of a *general* cultural policy (Iervolino 2013).

A more subtle, but still central, aspect related to the present attitude in dealing with the theme of migration is that of a shared historical memory. Italy was the second-placed country in terms of emigration numbers (after Great Britain) between 1845 and 1915 (Corti 2003: 29), and emigration continued up to the 1970s, when Italian children living in Switzerland had to stay hidden and live like prisoners. (This phenomenon has continued, too; see Frigerio and Burgherr 1992.) In almost every Italian family there is a history of migration, poverty and sacrifice. But it seems that the post-war period, from the economic boom of the 1960s to the consumerist attitudes of the 1980s, strongly promoted by the media and, more generally, by the ‘Berlusconi effect’, has created a form of cultural oblivion on a massive scale.

If, twenty years ago, a historical revision of emigration was developed in some villages, cities and regions, the critical interpretation of immigration in museums was still in its

infancy. Among the major museums dedicated to emigration are the Museo Nazionale dell'Emigrazione Italiana in Rome, the Museo Regionale dell'Emigrazione Pietro Conti in Gualdo Tadino, the Museo Paolo Cresci per la Storia dell'Emigrazione Italiana in Lucca and the Museo Narrante Nave della Sila in Camigliatello Silano. To these we should add the Museo dell'Emigrante in San Marino, a small state which, although not part of the Italian Republic, is still situated on Italian soil.<sup>7</sup>

As well as these major examples, there are myriad minor, local museums – small outposts of memory. They sometimes tell just one individual story, usually a successful one. This is the case, for example, in the Casa Giannini at Favale di Malvaro, near Genoa, which was the point of departure for the parents of Amadeo Peter Giannini, the founder of Bank of America. In general, these small museums address their own communities, playing the roles of both bard and apotropaic object. Perhaps they could be described as 'sites of conscience', rather than museums?

My assumption is that a broader, national reflection is still premature, although some attempts are being made to consider migration as a universal phenomenon, and the immigrants as 'new citizens'. Let us take a look at three recent examples, chosen because they represent different degrees of acknowledgement of responsibility towards the issue. This is not a value judgement, but rather a museological analysis of the specificity of each and their meaning in the context of national museums in the light of what has been mentioned above.

### ***The Museo Nazionale dell'Emigrazione Italiana, Rome***

The Museo Nazionale dell'Emigrazione Italiana (MEI) is housed in the Vittoriano Palace, an official and symbolic monument in the Piazza Venezia. Despite the name 'museum' (rather than 'exhibition'), the MEI was always intended to have a limited duration. Promoted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and managed in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities, the MEI project was launched to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy, and this partially explains its transience.<sup>8</sup> Yet the detailed scientific project behind it and its physical location within the most central – and symbolic – of Italian cities made the project an irreplaceable opportunity.

The museum, which opened in 2009, is designed in a traditional, chronological way, with the usual display cases and several digital displays showing videos or providing audio documents. It tells a frank and complete story of extreme poverty, hunger and loss, describing the difficulties of Italian emigrants from the beginning of the nineteenth century, through post-war work in Belgian mines, and up to today's mobility. It also highlights how the emigrants' courage and determination helped to build a better, richer country through repatriation and remittances, and also contributed to the new countries which hosted them.

The final section of the museum is entitled 'Italians in the World – the World in Italy, from 1977 to Today'. The texts refer to Italians' 'new forms of mobility', and are focused on the Italian government's attempts to help its emigrants around the world. The final text concerns immigration into Italy. It neither analyses laws or restrictions, nor deals with the controversial events of recent history.<sup>9</sup> It merely records facts and figures scientifically, and through these underlines the positive role of migrants for the social state. Portraits of migrants on the walls hint at a multicultural society. They are displayed in a fairly neutral way, as though saying, 'We are here too.'

This is no longer enough, however. There is a risk that the portraits communicate the opposite of their intended message – a kind of separation between ‘the Italians’, on the one hand, and ‘the immigrants’, on the other. Representing people with a migratory background at work, for instance in a mechanic’s workshop or in a restaurant, is far too simplistic. Despite good intentions, the risk is one of communicating a hyper-schematic vision of society, where people correspond to their work and are somehow defined by it. The representation of immigration is so peripheral that it risks becoming obsolete before the museum (hopefully) finds a permanent home; yet immigration is by no means peripheral in economic, demographic or cultural terms.

One could argue that the museum is devoted to the history of emigration. But it is a pity that it has failed to grasp the opportunity to link both emigration and immigration with the more general, universal, theme of mobility. The scientific accuracy of the museum’s work is beyond doubt. No word is out of place, nothing could be challenged, criticized or questioned concerning the content. But it does represent a missed opportunity. The links between past and present are not clearly made, and the texts – both in the museum spaces and on the website – are only in Italian. What about all the tourists who step into the museum because they are attracted by the building, or because admission is free? Would it not be worthwhile to expand the final section by adding a more detailed, more realistic, account of the phenomenon of mobility – both arrival and departure – and to update the display language, making it less ‘frontal’ and self-conclusive, and more dialogical and dynamic?

Many international practices and a great deal of recent literature make it clear that it is not always necessary to spend a lot of money, use sophisticated technological devices or have a large number of staff in order to open up a space for discussion about the prejudices, commonplaces and deeply-rooted ideas that we all harbour within ourselves, regardless of education, origins and history, regarding representations of the ‘migrants’ (or ‘others’) who surround us, or our own personal encounters, relationships and networks.

International experiences demonstrate that questioning the individual visitor or the community about their beliefs and almost unconscious attitudes is neither a panacea nor a goal in itself, but that it may be a powerful tool for making the public think about what they know and what they feel, and this can be a first step towards change (Crooke 2011, Golding and Modest 2013, Peers and Brown 2003, Sandell 2007, Simon 2010, Watson 2007).

In the next section I will describe a different approach to the theme of the relationship between diversity and migration, based on the use of moving images and immaterial heritage. Unlike the MEI, the museum in Gualdo Tadino aims to address a contemporary theme through contemporary tools. Although more emphasis could be put on some issues, such as today’s mobility and transnationalism, this museum represents an example of a positive effort to produce a multilayered and dynamic narrative.

### ***The Museo Regionale Pietro Conti, Gualdo Tadino, Perugia***

Gualdo Tadino is a picturesque village located in the Umbrian hills, and a place of massive emigration, mostly towards Central Europe (especially Belgium and Germany) and South America (particularly Brazil).

In 2000, the ISUC (Institute for the History of Contemporary Umbria) launched a pilot project to collect and inventory documents related to emigration from the region. The

museum opened three years later. It was dedicated to Pietro Conti, first president of the Umbria Region. In 2010 the museum was named one of the nine best galleries in Italy by ICOM. Later it was redesigned, under the slogan 'Being Italian is History'. Part of the museum is a research centre containing the most complete audiovisual library about emigration in Italy.

The museum is located in the ancient Palazzo del Podestà. The exhibition is spread over three floors, using a reverse chronology. On the ground floor the focus is on arrival and life in the new country, divided into thematic chapters – work (focusing on mining, one of the most common occupations among emigrants from the region), food, religion, and so on. The next section (first floor) is dedicated to the journey. Here the visitor can watch videos on screens which emerge from luggage, and listen to stories through loudspeakers. The upper floor is dedicated to the moment of departure (the reasons for leaving, the host countries, the difficulties of the integration process, and so on). The reproduction of a passport on a monumental scale symbolizes all those people who left the region for far-flung shores.

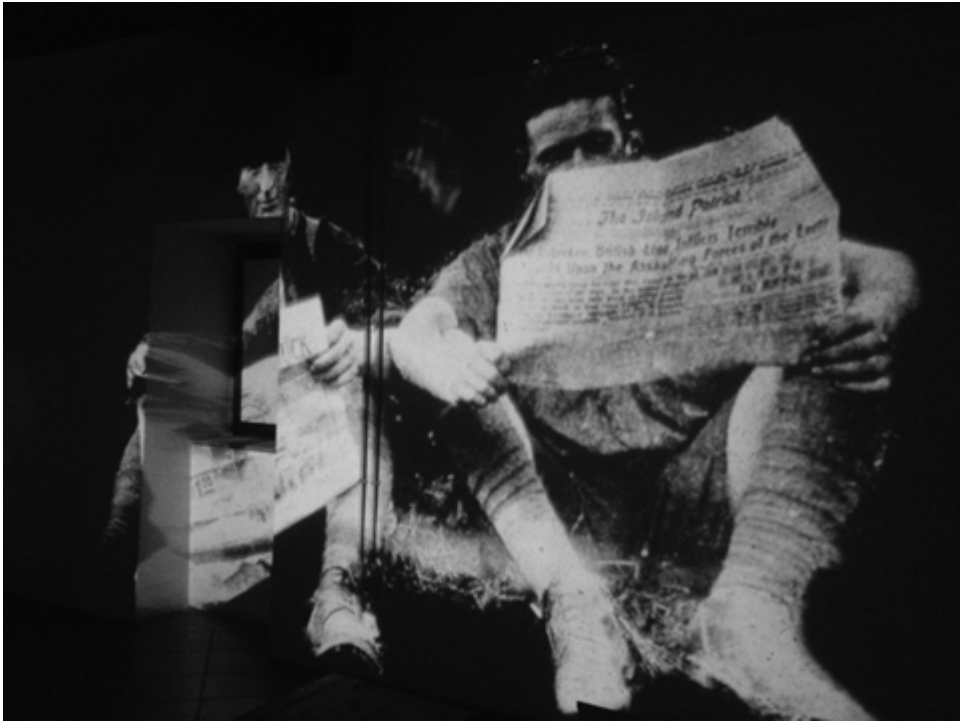
The distinctive feature of the museum is the use of video projections, rather than the exhibition of physical documents. Although there are a few documents, such as letters, personal items and a small statue of Saint Barbara (the patron saint of mineworkers), the curatorial choice was to use mainly videos in order to 'speak about the twentieth century through the tools of the twentieth century', as director Catia Monacelli says.<sup>10</sup> The museum is based mainly on videos acquired from Teche Rai and Swiss-Italian Television.

This choice of a very 'light' and agile tool lies behind the museum's flexibility, which overcomes both the objective limits of the historical spaces and the risk of an overly rigid interpretation of the issue. It also allows some intersections of past and present: for example, on the upper floor images of contemporary immigrants merge with historical ones, suggesting continuity, or even identification.

There are few mediation and interpretative tools, the synthetic captions put beside the exhibits being the most obvious example. The narrative chooses an immersive dimension, where songs, sounds and words are combined with the moving images. Emotion is preferred over historical facts and figures, empathy over in-depth analysis. As schools comprise one of the primary audiences, the museum has developed a wealth of educational activities for groups at all levels. This is also an opportunity to compare yesterday's emigration with today's immigration, in particular by discussing topics such as stereotypes, clichés and racism. The educational activities and the live mediation are fundamental tools in deciphering, updating and discussing the phenomenon.

Despite not being located in a town with significant immigration, the museum refuses to concentrate merely on the past and on the epic of the emigrants. It avoids the local dimension and chooses a larger scale of analysis; and this represents its main quality. Here, more than anywhere else, it is the medium which is the message. The fluidity of the images, the presence of sound and the 'liquidity' of the experience all contribute to the creation of spontaneous associations between past and present, here and there, and they may all be easily updated in the future. This refined communication system could still perhaps be reinforced and made more accessible via integration with other 'technological' tools. Tablets, for example, could provide two main additions to the experience – better factual comprehension through a more detailed historical background, and the possibility of interacting with the exhibits, contributing to them through video footage, interviews and storytelling.





**FIGURE 5.1** A video projection in the Museo Regionale dell'Emigrazione Pietro Conti, Gualdo Tadino. Photo Anna Chiara Cimoli

The MeM, described in the next section, moves a step further in the effort to include the discourse about immigration in the broader field of human mobility, actualizing it and analysing some of its aspects in a very appealing way. The involvement of visitors through interactive devices is not merely for the sake of amusement and 'modernity'; rather, it is a highly effective way to fight prejudice and discrimination.

### ***The Memoria e Migrazioni pavilion, Galata Museum, Genoa***

The Memoria e Migrazioni (MeM) pavilion in the Galata-Museo del Mare e delle Migrazioni (Maritime and Migration Museum), Genoa, is a good example of an attempt to create a genuine dialogue with the public.

The Galata museum was inaugurated in 2004, when Genoa was the European Capital of Culture, but the MeM section did not open until November 2011, following the success of a temporary exhibition titled *La Merica! From Genoa to Ellis Island, the Voyage by Sea in the Years of Italian Emigration* (2008–11). This section is the first 'permanent' museum space in Italy to address the theme of immigration directly, and it places considerable emphasis on recent history.

The [first part](#) of the MeM tells the story of emigration in a fairly traditional way, much in the style of Bremerhaven's German Emigration Centre or Hamburg's BallinStadt; that is, it uses historical reconstructions and a liberal dose of theatrical techniques. The curators have

concentrated on real-life individual events rather than historical generalizations, storytelling rather than statistics, personal identification rather than sociological analysis. At the beginning of the journey, the visitor receives a ‘real’ passport and follows in the footsteps of a single emigrant via interactive exhibits. Environmental reconstructions are scattered throughout the museum space, so that the visitor is plunged into Genoa’s *carrugi*, the old narrow streets, the harbour, the ship, and finally one of three typical destinations: Argentina (with a reconstruction of the Boca district of Buenos Aires), Brazil, or the United States, represented by Ellis Island.

Up to this point, the museum experience is positive, immersive, but not especially innovative. However, it soon becomes more interesting. The photographs of Uliano Lucas bring us up to 1973, the year when the migration balance tipped to immigration over emigration. From this moment on, the museum tells the story of a multicultural society with all its problems and contradictions, but also the positive elements (such as the solidarity of foreign workers with the elderly and children and the role of migrants in the economy). The narrative suggests that migrants have been playing an active part in Italian society for many years, and that ‘everyday multiculturalism’ is a reality, whether we like it or not (Wise and Velayutham 2009).

While the [first part](#) of the MeM is very much about the city of Genoa, the second section focuses on the national context. Where do the migrants come from? What was their journey like? The visitor can choose a postcard and place it on a sensor; the content is read and the itinerary from that country to Italy is visualized on a screen, while the migrant emerges from the globe and tells his or her story as a person, not a number.



**FIGURE 5.2** The Lampedusa boat in the MeM, Genoa. Photo Merlofotografia. Courtesy of Costa Edutainment

Perhaps the most moving exhibit is a boat donated by the municipality of Lampedusa. This island, at the southern tip of Italy, has become an important staging point, mostly for those arriving from North Africa by boat (a migration museum is currently being assembled on the island itself; see De Angelis 2012). Given its symbolical role as the ‘gateway to Europe’, the curators of the Galata were determined to exhibit one of the many boats seized by the coastguard. Around it, infrared videos with dramatic images taken by the coastguard station show the arrival of the migrants and the terrible conditions they had to endure. Three small display cases, ‘lay altars’, house some of the objects belonging to the migrants – children’s shoes, handwritten prayers and other documents.

A further exhibit – an interactive video – reconstructs the interior of a ‘real’ classroom. The visitor–teacher can select a pupil by calling out his or her name; the pupils take turns to stand up and read out a text which tells their personal immigration story.

The story is often told by the objects themselves. Visitors choose one from a group of objects (a bag, a hairdryer, a watering can, a safety helmet, and so on), put it on a sensor, and watch a short video taken from the public television service explaining the role of foreign workers in Italian society. Finally, the ‘reflection niches’ question visitors about what they have learned, what their perceptions were before the visit and whether they have changed, and what prejudices they hold. The director and the curators ask multiple-choice questions about immigration in Italy, mimicking the format of a television quiz show. Most of the questions deal with facts and figures – nobody is out to ‘convince’ anybody. Yet the museum’s position is very clear. This is summarized by the MeM’s poster. In the black-and-white picture of a nineteenth-century ship, our ancestors stand alongside a young, modern-day African migrant in a red shirt. He is now what we were then, merely a few decades ago.

### **The art museum: a place for intercultural dialogue**

Over the past ten to fifteen years, many Italian museums of all kinds have worked with an intercultural methodology to promote their collections to new groups of potential visitors, and to express a new vision of the idea of ‘heritage’. In this more dynamic vision, meanings are generated by negotiation, dialogue and circularity, with a less reassuring but more generative approach towards both the collections and the public (Bodo, Cantù and Mascheroni 2007, Bodo 2012, Bodo and Mascheroni 2012, Bolla and Roncaccioli 2007, Pecci 2009).

Simona Bodo emphasizes all the problems and challenges underpinning the notion of an intercultural approach in Italian museums. She identifies a number of diffused methodologies, such as the ‘training of immigrant cultural mediators’, the engagement of mixed groups ‘in the development of new, shared narratives around collections through storytelling, theatre techniques and other mediation methodologies’ and the ‘interaction with contemporary artists’ (Bodo 2012: 184). The common element in all these efforts is

the recognition that this work can promote more diverse and less stereotypical images of communities by providing participants with the opportunity of self-representation; it can create shared spaces where meaningful, interactive communication takes place and all participants are recognized as being equal.

*(Bodo 2012: 189)*

The museum of contemporary art, especially as it emerged at the same time as the earliest flows of immigrants at the beginning of the 1980s, became particularly sensitive to this

theme. Since the early 1990s, some enlightened education departments have served to promote actions developed not just *for* but *with* migrants, the prime example being the pioneering and ongoing experience of the Tappeto Volante (Flying Carpet) project at the Castello di Rivoli, near Turin, that has been involving migrant citizens, local schools, artists and a variety of audiences in a long-running ‘art experience’ in the disadvantaged neighbourhood of San Salvario (Pironti and Zanini 2010).

How, then, and with what goals, do Italian art museums work *with* migrants, in an intercultural approach? Again, the intercultural dimension is not considered here as an end but rather as a means, a process. Participation, co-design and any form of negotiated interpretation in general are delicate avenues of work, especially if the objectives are not articulated from the outset, and if certain important conditions are lacking. These include, for example, the presence of an in-house educational staff with appropriate training, interest on the part of management and the sponsors in intercultural dynamics, a real willingness to promote innovative experiences, and the availability of adequate human and economic resources.

The recent experiences developed in art museums described below have been selected for their originality, as well as their organizational model (that of Bodo, quoted above). While the choice is largely subjective and made within a much broader panorama, each of the experiences described represents an original ‘method’ or way of involving the migrant citizens in an innovative and beneficial process.



**FIGURE 5.3** A phase of the Tappeto Volante project promoted by Castello di Rivoli. Photo courtesy of Castello di Rivoli

### ***Training for museum mediators aimed at involving their fellow citizens in workshop activities and guided tours***

Perhaps the most complete experience is that promoted by the GAMeC (Gallery of Modern and Contemporary Art) in Bergamo, which in 2007, after a series of preliminary and research activities regarding the nature of its visitors, initiated a course for museum mediators. The goal was to bring migrants closer to the museum via an invitation from someone who speaks their language and shares their culture, an individual who is selected on the basis of an interview and then trained in a series of workshops.<sup>11</sup> Before the start of each new exhibition, the group of mediators received specific training to enable them to perceive the contents of the exhibition through an intercultural lens, ‘translating’ them not only linguistically, but also culturally, for a specific community, by discovering common elements and shared features.

This experience, consisting of constant dialogue, moments of shared reflection and a truly collaborative rapport, has gradually become one of the museum’s strongest features. Giovanna Brambilla Ranise, the director of the museum’s educational department, states that ‘a synergy with the mediators for a participative project is currently a constant element in the museum’s cultural policies’ (Bodo, Da Milano and Mascheroni 2009: 59).

### ***Beyond the confines of the museum: art as a means to generate and regenerate space, and the subjects’ perceptions of space***

This type of experience often sees the involvement of Italian artists and the specific tools of contemporary art, via an invitation to *make and leave a trace*. Exemplifying this are the experiences of the MAP for ID project of the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin and the MamBo in Bologna.

City Telling (2008–9), which took place in Turin and Bologna, was one of thirty pilot projects supported and implemented within the framework of the European project MAP for ID – Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue (Bodo, Gibbs and Sani 2009: 34–5, Pereira, Salvi, Sani and Villa 2010). The underlying goal of the project was to ‘increase the opportunities for the cultural participation of young immigrants and their families, by providing participants with new tools to get to know the place where they have settled and at the same time build a common ground, a “third space” of cultural, linguistic and aesthetic interaction’.<sup>12</sup>

At the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, the project began by setting up a working group consisting of the museum’s educational staff, teachers from a local centre for adult education and training, the artist director Gianluca De Serio, the photographer Anna Largaiolli, and a group of students from a local high school.<sup>13</sup> Following an initial planning phase, focused on determining the theme (the city) and a method which would add value to the storytelling and a knowledge of the local area through physical exploration, picture research and a selection of videos and photographs, the group, composed mostly of people with a migratory background, moved on to the active part of the project via a series of visits to local neighbourhoods and the wider city. Using the geographical origins of the individual as a starting point, an initial narration was constructed using objects, photographs, postcards and other materials. Subsequently, with the involvement of the two artists participating in the project, several parallel workshops were held dedicated to storytelling via video and



**FIGURE 5.4** A phase of the City Telling project at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin. Photo Daniele Ferrero. Courtesy of Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo

photography. The two groups moved through the city identifying the ‘most important’ sites (squares, museums, gardens, but also private homes) while keeping a digital log of the experience. The project ultimately produced four videos and two strips of photographs of considerable artistic quality. Finally, with the help of other partners, it was possible to implement an interactive platform including photos, videos, texts and audio.

***Storytelling and autobiography as a means of interpreting works of art in a personal yet shareable manner***

Brera: Tutta Un'altra Storia (Brera: Another Story) is a project which was developed by the Brera Picture Gallery in Milan and the Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities between 2012 and 2013 (ongoing).



**FIGURE 5.5** A visit in the framework of the Brera: Another Story project, Brera Picture Gallery Educational Department, Milan. Courtesy of Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali

The general idea here is to describe the paintings in the gallery through the eyes of mediators with a migratory background. This implies finding the intersection between the story of the painting and one's own story, and identifying how to communicate it to the group. Quoting from the project's mission statement:

The underlying idea is that every museum is a 'jewel case' full of the many different stories that artworks embody: those of the works of art themselves, those of the artists who created them, but also those of the visitors questioning them and finding unexpected resonances with their feelings, memories and life experiences.<sup>14</sup>

There are two types of visit: some are individual and focus on several works of art chosen by the mediators and linked to each other via storytelling; others are thematic and conducted

by two to four mediators working together (these may be dedicated, for example, to 'Important Moments in Life', 'From Mother to Child', or 'Places'). All visits are free, in Italian, and aimed at small groups.

The tool chosen is storytelling. Some external experts were involved for specific training on the subject. Mediators chose some works of art they wished to engage with; then, after receiving the main historical information from the art historians of the gallery, they were helped to 'translate' their personal contents with the help of the storytelling expert. After two months of experimentation, the mediators were asked to write down their texts, and several professional videos were produced to ensure dissemination of the project.

I attended some of the tours and I recognize the huge intercultural value of the project. It allows multiple, unexpected interpretation, provides a journey through time and space, helps identification with the 'storyteller' and undoubtedly broadens the scope of the museum (an ancient state building with all the severe aura of the traditional, neo-classical museum). This represents one of its main successes: personal biographies, with all that they bring in terms of emotion, memory, affection, nostalgia and rage, are displayed through the work of art, and this prevents the stories from becoming 'too' personal or private; intimacy is protected.

As the organizers point out very clearly in their report, migrant visitors were sometimes disoriented by this form of mediation.<sup>15</sup> For those with a high level of education, it was somehow deceptive to receive limited information about the works of art. For those with a lower level of education, the discourse was problematic, as it required a certain level of competence in terms of capacity for abstraction, contextualization and historical background.

Despite these structural limitations, however, I believe the project is an innovative and beneficial tool, especially when applied to a museum such as the Brera, which offers little room for interaction, divergent interpretations or cross-cultural understanding.<sup>16</sup>

## Conclusions: the danger of a single story<sup>17</sup>

Despite significant tardiness on the part of the public bodies dealing with cultural affairs, Italian museums have recently demonstrated considerable energy regarding what Baur (2009) calls 'migration's musealization' – by which he means both the representation of migrations from a historical point of view, and an interest in museums as 'third spaces' for intercultural dialogue (Bodo 2012).

In both cases, the 'danger of a single story' is present. For migration museums, it consists mainly of the risk of crystallizing past Italian emigration, and therefore creating a strong caesura with the present. This would be historically inaccurate, even given the current, large-scale emigration trends among highly qualified, young professionals as a result of the economic crisis (*Altreitalia* 2011, Licata 2012). For art museums, the risk lies in the separation of curatorial and educational departments. The curatorial side tells one story (as multifaceted and nuanced as it may be), while the educational approach works on a completely different level, with little interaction between the two. Each department speaks its own language, addresses a particular audience, uses its own tools and has different goals. This is mostly the case where the education department is not internal, and the activities are developed by external agencies – as often happens with Italian museums. Here, the implementation of projects is



always at risk, and assessment and critical reflection of them may be inadequate, or even completely absent.

Another possible 'single-story danger' is that of insufficient knowledge of the migratory panorama of a specific area, namely the concrete knowledge of the people, the stakeholders, the community leaders, and the possible tensions and rivalry among them, their life stories and challenges.

Every possible connection with the places where debate takes place should be sought out tenaciously. A strong and continuous relationship with local schools is an excellent way to avoid the risk of an old-fashioned, literary vision of migration. Schools are an excellent observation point for raising awareness of where we stand, how the character, goals and challenges of multicultural societies change over time. Of course, this circulation of ideas and knowledge can happen only if museums (as well as teachers) are prepared to listen. This often demands time, effort and money.

From my own experience as a museum educator, as well as an activist, I believe museum operators should ask for (or create themselves) new spaces for self-education and mutual supervision, in order to avoid the risk of self-repetition or a contraction in the field of real, mutual exchange. The danger of a separation between a 'we' and a 'them' is always present, no matter how much we attempt to avoid it. I also refer to the risk of holding a patronizing attitude towards those mediators with a migratory background (life-long education is crucial and requires very sharp tools). An accurate selection of the profiles, as well as in-museum training, is necessary, in order to avoid any feelings of discomfort.

The lack of funding that has been a significant drawback for museums in recent years has prevented many initiatives from being implemented, and has hindered the realization or appreciation of new experiences. Nevertheless, there does appear to be four strong points upon which Italian museums may depend in terms of launching new projects:

- the stimulus given by European projects for the development of the intercultural potential of museums, which has been an important breeding ground for experiences and opportunities for staff training;<sup>18</sup>
- the discussion and analysis of multicultural societies carried out, above all, by scientific communities, providing a rich and expanding theoretical background; also, simply the advancement of historical research into the theme of migration, which has stressed the universal dimension of the migratory phenomenon;
- the partnerships with schools which, having been given clear guidelines in this regard since the mid-1990s, have often played a pivotal role in the development of an intercultural methodology;<sup>19</sup>
- the tertiary sector and social activism, both actors capable of identifying the fields for intervention, planning specific actions, carrying out diffuse and in-depth activity and experimenting with good practices. A vast constellation of exhibitions, widespread museums, guided tours to ethnic neighbourhoods and new forms of participation are all emerging in Italy, and are often enlivened by small and extremely active associations. The arrival of many migrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the revolts of the Arab spring have triggered myriad exhibition projects, which, together with the internet, blogs and other forms of immaterial visual culture, constitute a kind of widespread 'site of conscience', which relies on such platforms as the internet, social networks and forms of civic distribution.

Museums consist of the sum of works of art, audience reception and mediation between the two. There would appear to be a lot of work yet to be done in order to take into consideration the wealth of such an exchange and allow it to transform the way Italian museums are considered; yet the road-map for this work is under way.

## Notes

- 1 This paper came out of the research project MeLa\* – European Museums in an age of migrations, funded as part of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (SSH-2010-5.2.2) under Grant Agreement 266757.
- 2 The Lega Nord party was created out of the merging of six regional parties from northern Italy. The party was founded in 1989 and was long identified with its first leader, Umberto Bossi. Among the salient points of the Lega Nord's vision are the secession of the 'Po Region' from the rest of Italy, the fight against illegal immigration and the devolution of legislative power to the regions regarding education, security and healthcare (this constitutional reform was the object of an unsuccessful referendum in 2006). Following some major economic scandals, the rift between Bossi and Roberto Maroni (the current president of Lombardy Region) and other controversies, the party now has a very weak representation in parliament. There is considerable literature about the party; see, among others, Cardini 2008, Dematteo 2007, Diamanti 1996, Stella 1996.
- 3 I refer here primarily to the Van Gogh affair, which occurred in the Netherlands in 2004, and to the riots in France in 2005 (the so-called '*crise des banlieues*'). Also, social exclusion was at the heart of the riots which took place in Stockholm in May 2013.
- 4 When speaking about an intercultural methodology I refer primarily to the definition given in the Council of Europe's *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: 'Living Together as Equals in Dignity'* (2008: 10): 'Intercultural dialogue is understood as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.' In recent years, increasing stress has been placed on interculturality as a process, a dynamic attitude of mutual exchange and, therefore, of societal transformation, while the term 'multiculturalism' describes the simple coexistence of cultures, possibly without any interaction. See also Benhabib 2002. As for what constitutes an intercultural approach to heritage, especially in the Italian context, see Bodo and Cifarelli 2006, Bodo 2012, Bodo and Mascheroni 2012.
- 5 This very detailed and informed report was written by Carla Bodo and Simona Bodo.
- 6 The Council of Europe/ERICArts (2013: 51) says:

During the 1970s, immediately after the creation of the regions, Leg. Decree 112/1971 was adopted, conferring to the regional governments some limited responsibilities in the cultural field, only dealing with local museums, libraries and archives. Notwithstanding the strong pressure for more cultural empowerment exercised by the regions, the Parliament, while transferring to the regions responsibilities on the environment, did delay the transferring of cultural responsibilities: the only responsibility transferred was the decree dealing with 'cultural promotion of local interest' (see Leg. Decree 616/1977). This quite general concept was flexible enough, though, to open the door to a certain amount of regional laws also dealing with heritage and the performing arts. After the rather silent 1980s, the decentralization process had a new start at the end of the 1990s, with the adoption of Law 59/1997 followed by Leg. Decree 112/1998: the latter actually adopting a much more restricted scope for cultural decentralization than Law 59 ... Such legislation was ultimately endorsed and further specified by Constitutional Law 3/2001, and, subsequently, by the Heritage Codex ... [H]owever, after a decade, it has not been fully enforced, yet.

- 7 The website of the Museo Nazionale dell'Emigrazione Italiana (<http://www.museonazionaleemigrazione.it>) lists thirty museums, one of which is virtual (Museo Archivio della Memoria in Bagnone). Some of these museums consider migration as *one* of the issues they address. This is the case, for example, in the Ecomuseo Valle-Elvo e Serra, the Museo Etnografico della Provincia di Belluno e del Parco Nazionale Dolomiti Bellunesi, in the Museo Nazionale del Territorio di Biella,

- and in the maritime museums (the Museo Navale Internazionale del Ponente Ligure in Imperia, the Civico Museo Marinaro 'Gio Bono Ferrari' in Camogli, and so on). See also *Nuova museologia* (2010) and Tirabassi 2007.
- 8 Many of the initiatives to commemorate Italy's 150 years of unification have dealt with the theme of migration. These include the *Fare gli italiani* exhibition held at the Officine Grandi Riparazioni (still in progress at the time of writing) and *Turin Earth* at the Museo Diffuso della Resistenza, della Deportazione, della Guerra e dei Diritti e della Libertà (March–December 2011), both in Turin.
  - 9 The *respingimenti* (rejections) of Libyan migrants arriving in Italy by boat started in 2009, the same year the museum opened. In 2012, Italy was condemned for these expulsions by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.
  - 10 Interview with the author, 23 August 2012.
  - 11 Other experiences of this kind are facilitated by the Fondo Ambiente Italiano (FAI), the Fondazione Ismu with the Provincia di Milano–Settore Cultura and the Centro Studi Africani in Turin.
  - 12 See the description of the project at: <http://fondazione.ismu.org/patrimonioeintercultura/index.php?page=esperienze-show.php&id=45> (accessed 30 May 2013). See also Bodo 2012: 186–8.
  - 13 Other partners were the National Museum of Cinema in Turin; MAMbo – Museum of Modern Art in Bologna; Ars Media (communication agency); the 3rd District of the City of Turin; and its Urban Eco-Museum.
  - 14 Available at: <http://fondazione.ismu.org/patrimonioeintercultura/index.php?page=esperienze-show.php&id=98> (accessed 1 June 2013). The mediators were selected on the basis of their previous experience in the field. Some of them work in the GAMeC in Bergamo, while others were involved in the TAM TAM project The Museum for All, promoted by the Museum of Peoples and Cultures and the ISMU Foundation.
  - 15 Most migrant visitors (from 26 different countries) did not recognise the innovative quality of narrative trails. Some had not visited a museum before (8 per cent) or were not regular museum-goers, and therefore had no/few terms of comparison. Some also took for granted the emphasis on storytelling as the key methodology for the trails, as their cultural roots are based on an oral tradition. However, all of them thoroughly enjoyed the experience, including recently arrived migrants/refugees with poor language skills, which were compensated for by the importance of feeling welcome in the museum, coming into contact with the beauty of the artworks and taking part in a cultural activity.  
(source: <http://fondazione.ismu.org/patrimonioeintercultura/index.php?page=esperienze-show.php&id=98>; accessed 1 June 2013).
  - 16 It should be noted that the Brera Picture Gallery has a long history of intercultural approaches to art, for example through the A Brera anch'io: The Museum as a Vehicle of Intercultural Dialogue programme, launched in 2004.
  - 17 This is a reference to a talk by Chimamanda Adichie (2009) as part of the TED Conferences.
  - 18 We recall, in particular, Museums Tell Many Stories (2005–7), and MAP for ID – Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue, its continuation (2007–9). In 2008, the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue, the Ministry for Heritage and Cultural Activities promoted Mosaico: Melting Pot of Europe.
  - 19 Ministerial Memorandum 73/1994 (*Intercultural Dialogue and Democratic Coexistence: The Planning Engagement of the School*); *Accordo quadro sull'educazione al patrimonio culturale tra il Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione e il Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali*, 1998 (Circolare Ministeriale 312).

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# 6

## WORLD IN THE EAST END AT THE V&A MUSEUM OF CHILDHOOD

*Eithne Nightingale*

Having come to the UK as a refugee I wasn't expected to be recognized but the project gave me a sense of belonging. I forgot I was a refugee. I was an active citizen and telling my story helped me overcome the sadness inside me. I thought I could help others to move on.

(Marie Lyse Numuhoza)

At the age of twelve, Marie Lyse Numuhoza, a refugee from the 1994 civil war in Rwanda, carried her two-year-old brother for six months to a refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Eventually she settled in East London with her mother and other siblings. At eighteen, she was employed by the V&A Museum of Childhood as one of several interviewers for the World in the East End project. She also gave her own life testimony, a moving account that formed the basis of a short film, which was shown in the World in the East End gallery.

This chapter will introduce the background to the World in the East End initiative and outline its aims and objectives. It will review how it related to UK government policy at the time as well as to the overall mission of the V&A Museum of Art and Design and, in particular, to that of the V&A Museum of Childhood. It will evaluate the methodology used both in relation to the collection and interpretation of the material, the project's success in achieving its aims and the museum's ability to negotiate the 'contact zone', that space of 'colonial encounters' first articulated by Pratt (1991). It will also explore lessons learned and the legacy the project left.

The project poses fundamental questions that can be only partly addressed without further research. Can such projects really serve a therapeutic function, enhance participants' sense of belonging, and 'help others to move on', as Marie Lyse's testimony suggests? And what about the wider community? How far, if at all, can such initiatives contribute to a greater understanding of, and empathy towards, the lives of black and Asian ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees and promote a sense of inclusion within a specific geographical area, in this case the East End of London?

## The V&A Museum of Childhood in the East End of London

The location of the V&A Museum of Childhood in the East End of London is very different from that of the V&A at South Kensington, one of the wealthiest parts of London. The former is situated on the borders of the boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets, two of the most deprived boroughs in the UK, but also two that are becoming increasingly gentrified. The East End is known as a historic place of settlement for people migrating to the UK, linked to its imperial past, its trade connections, cheap housing near places of employment and its locality near the docks and the City. Few people in East London boroughs are unaffected by migration, either having migrated themselves or having one or more ancestors who were migrants. Those who have lived in the area for generations work, study and live with – as well as marry – people who have roots in other places.

The collections at the V&A Museum of Childhood are very different from the collections at the V&A South Kensington, although this has not always been the case. The Bethnal Green Museum, as it was formerly called, was established in 1872 and served as an outpost of the V&A South Kensington, which had been founded twenty years earlier. Bethnal Green Museum displayed art and design objects from the V&A South Kensington as well as developed its own collections. In the 1920s staff at the museum noticed the number of children who were visiting from the local area and started to collect toys and games. It also designed displays specifically aimed at children – smaller cases were installed, objects were lowered and educational visits were offered to schools. The museum started concentrating exclusively on childhood in 1974 with the transfer of non-childhood items to South Kensington, and this has remained its focus ever since. It is known and well liked by many who have lived in the area for decades but, until the last few years, has not been particularly well frequented by black visitors and other ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees.

### National and institutional context to the World in the East End

Because of a concern that neither the collections of the V&A Museum of Childhood nor their audiences reflected the increasing cultural diversity of the local area,<sup>1</sup> I was asked by the then Director of the V&A Museum of Childhood, Diane Lees, to develop a community strategy and subsequently a gallery entitled *World in the East End*. At the time I was working at the V&A as Head of Equality and Diversity, based at the South Kensington site, and was helping the V&A to develop its museum-wide Access, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy (formally approved by the V&A Trustees in 2003). The following factors were agreed as being central to the V&A's aspirations:

- Access – offering the widest and most appropriate forms of access to the museum's collections, expertise, facilities and services, actively working to overcome physical, intellectual, cultural, attitudinal and financial barriers that prevent this.
- Inclusion – working in partnership with others to help tackle social inequality, discrimination and disadvantage; empowering communities, improving the quality of people's lives, contributing to social cohesion and acting as a catalyst for cultural and social change.
- Diversity – embracing and reflecting diversity, harnessing the potential of all stakeholders (staff, volunteers, existing and potential audiences, key partners) in the development of a truly inclusive museum that inspires and promotes learning, creativity and participation.

Within this broad framework the strategy detailed the responsibility of each department. The V&A collections, for example, should not only incorporate objects that ‘inspire and broaden people’s experience’ but ‘relate to people’s social and cultural heritage, particularly in relation to target audiences, taking care to ensure the heritage of diverse audiences is reflected in the collections’. The artists and makers of work acquired should be ‘diverse practitioners including people from different social and cultural backgrounds and people with disabilities’. Consultation is also mentioned: ‘Where appropriate, curators will consult and engage new and potential audiences when making acquisitions.’ In relation to audiences, the museum ‘will seek to gather visitor intelligence to cover the full range of Museum activities and to obtain comprehensive data on socio-economic background, education, ethnicity, disability ... [and] in order to establish targets and monitor achievements’ (V&A 2003: 3.12.1–2).

The pressure to develop a museum-wide policy on access, inclusion and diversity was partly driven by increasing legislation on equality, such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (amended 2005), and expectations of major funders, such as the National Lottery (created through the National Lottery Act 1993), which was now providing grants for heritage along with four other ‘good causes’. A key driver, however, came from the policies of the New Labour administration (1997–2010). Before winning the 1997 general election, Labour had affirmed the capacity of the cultural sector to ‘promote our sense of community and common purpose’ (Labour Party 1997: 9). Its establishment of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the publication of *A New Cultural Framework* (DCMS 1998) made it clear that New Labour saw the cultural and heritage sector as a key instrument of government in association with other departments, such as the Department of Education and the Social Exclusion Unit. There followed a new emphasis on the ‘public’ rather than the ‘producer’. Annual funding agreements with government obliged museums both to set and to deliver on key performance indicators, such as the number of visitors from social classes C2, D, E (lower socio-economic sectors), from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds, and, later, from the disabled communities. From 2002, New Labour, recognizing the need to go beyond targets, increasingly referred to the notion of public value and the need to ‘best capture the value of culture’ (Jowell 2004).

Yet the situation is more subtle and circular than a simple line of causation from government policy to museum policy and action. Progressive voices within the sector, with their emphasis on public value, rights of access, equality and diversity, also influenced government thinking. Government policy then gave those progressive voices greater legitimacy and more chance of being heard within their respective organizations. Much of what I did during my time as Head of Equality and Diversity was to prepare reports for government on areas of practice within the V&A that were already happening and that chimed with current policy priorities. So, while the drafting of the V&A Access, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy was given impetus by the funding agreement, it was also internally driven. There were other movers and shakers, too. At a regional level in 2003, the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, set up the Commission on African and Asian Heritage, the aim of which was to provide a strategy to support the preservation of African and Asian heritage and make it accessible to all. Building equitable partnerships with African and Asian communities and empowering community-based heritage as well as championing workforce diversity were seen as important parts of this strategy.

The World in the East End project, therefore, tied in perfectly with the V&A’s Access, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, which, in turn, was influenced and supported by central and



regional policies. It aimed to diversify collections and audiences, it was both timely and strategic, and it was an illustration of how good work can be fostered when ‘individual, sector and global values’ (Marstine 2012: 100) align. The support and leadership of Diane Lees was key in this.

### **A blank canvas – developing a methodology for collecting material for the gallery**

While the broad aims of the project were clear, there was no specific or detailed brief for the development of the gallery. In effect, it was a blank canvas with a dedicated space filled with seven empty cases that conveyed nothing of the feel of the East End – a model of a tower block or a row of terraced houses would have been more appropriate. Nevertheless, Teresa Hare Duke, who had been appointed Community Development Manager at the V&A Museum of Childhood following the implementation of the Community Strategy, and I worked closely together to address the task before us. At the time, between us, we had over fifty years’ experience of working at grass-roots level with diverse communities in East London. Teresa had worked in a community arts project in Hackney and I had worked on a training project with Bangladeshi clothing workers in Brick Lane, Tower Hamlets, and in adult and community education in Hackney. Our backgrounds meant we were aware of many of the sensitive and problematic issues that can arise when working with communities who have experienced discrimination at both an individual and an institutional level, whose voices have not been heard and whose stories may have been represented in a negative or distorted light in the media – and indeed in museums.

We were keen to avoid crude categorizations and essentialist, stereotypical viewpoints – a display case dedicated to the ‘Somali’ or ‘Bangladeshi’ community, for example. We decided, therefore, to focus on specific themes, such as journeys, arrivals, festivals, rituals, school, work, play and leisure. In this way we hoped to reflect the hybrid and fluid nature of East London, exploring commonalities and differences between people from different backgrounds and countering negative attitudes and stereotypes. However, there was no readily available collection for this purpose. In the main, the collections at the V&A Museum of Childhood reflect the taste of the English middle classes rather than the diverse cultural heritages of the East End. The obvious solution seemed to be to turn to the local communities themselves to help collect both the tangible (objects sourced from diverse communities) and intangible (oral histories) heritage of local people.

Oral history, despite initial scepticism about its reliability, has gained credibility over time as a rich tapestry of ‘invisible’ histories of women (Mackay 2002; Gluck and Patai 1991), black and ethnic minorities (Hayley 1996; Okimoto 1996) and others whose histories have previously been marginalized has been uncovered. Migrants and refugees are no exception. Marfleet (2007) maintains that there is an absence of refugees from most historical work. Kushner (2006: 40) claims this is not accidental, suggesting that there is ‘actual resistance from the history profession to refugee studies and ... from non-historians, the inability to see history and refugees as linked or relevant’. Both Marfleet and Kushner stress the importance of personal testimony to redress this balance.

Many of the issues arising out of such initiatives as the World in the East End project centre on the subjects of power and control in museums. Which actors are involved in the making or contesting of representations? Who is empowered to do so and under what

circumstances and conditions? How do migrants ‘speak’ within the museums? Or are they spoken for; and if so, by whom? Such questions can be framed in relation to the idea of a museum as a ‘contact zone’, first articulated by Pratt (1992: 6) as ‘the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relationships, usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality and intractable conflict’. As Whitehead, Eckersley and Mason (2012: 86) state, ‘museums can be singularly uncritical about their often one dimensional, Western biased, authorial voice’.

Relationships across the contact zone for the World in the East End project were mainly negotiated through the employment of people from culturally diverse communities as interviewers – Somali, Bengali, Turkish, African, Caribbean, Chinese, Vietnamese, traveller, Roma, East European Jewish and white East End. Nine were recruited from a pool of about fifteen people who had responded to our advert circulated through community organizations and networks in the local area. All were female and received training from the Oral History Society. The main thinking behind recruiting local people from diverse backgrounds was that, being from similar backgrounds, they would be able to access potential participants and, importantly, build trust, thereby eliciting rich material. Importantly, they were employed as paid sessional workers rather than as volunteers. We were aware, through our work in the local area, that there was growing resentment at predominantly white institutions expecting black, Asian and other ethnic minority communities to help museums fulfil equality objectives – or, at a more cynical level, to help them ‘tick boxes’ – for free.

The issue of building trust in relation to research with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers is key. Miller (2004) believes this is crucial in order to go beyond the ‘frontstage’ to the ‘backstage’, concepts developed by sociologist Irving Goffman (1959). Frontstage behaviour is self-protective, manipulative, a ‘performance’ designed to present a particular story for fear, perhaps, of criticizing the host country (Mestheneos 2011). In backstage behaviour there is no need to perform, and access can be gained to real experiences and actual feelings, for example about people’s experience of discrimination. Miller (2004) asserts there is no point of arrival, suggesting that it is more appropriate to think of multiple backstages. There will always be issues that will not be discussed.

Our employment of people from diverse backgrounds certainly yielded rich and varied backstage material of personal experiences of migration, discrimination and hardship, both in countries of origin and in Britain. Take this excerpt from an interview with Betty Nosipho Hlela, who grew up in squatter camps in South Africa before arriving in London at the age of twenty-eight as a member of the cast of *Ipi Tombe*, the hit West End musical:

And in those days there were a lot of Acts that governed the black community. The police had the upper hand; they would come in at any time, whether it’s midnight or three in the morning. They would kick the door, shine torches on your face and count how many people are supposed to be in this house. And if they can’t lock anybody up, they’d start saying, ‘Yah! Who’s smoking ganja here? Who’s drinking here?’ – the type of just empty brutality.

Once you are sixteen, you’ve got to carry a pass. I can’t remember how many times I was locked up because, me, I’ve got a mouth like a thief. I used to forget my pass at home. When you are sentenced, you are given thirty days. Then, if nobody comes in

to bail you, you are sold to a farmer. They come and choose one, two, three, four, five. They put you in the van. You sleep in the pen like a goat.

The interviewer, Anita McKenzie, originally from the Caribbean of Asian descent, knew Betty before the interview and was an attentive listener, allowing Betty to direct her own story and be open about the discrimination and violence she had experienced. It is an interesting question as to how far Anita's background, colour and/or relationship with Betty, as opposed to her skill as an interviewer, contributed to this backstage story and whether someone of a different background and colour would have elicited such a powerful response.

Not all interviewers were of the same ethnic or cultural background as the participants. Two people with experience of working with specific communities and/or with knowledge of the country of origin, but who were not migrants, refugees, or of the same ethnic or cultural background as the participants, also produced rich material. The only person that I, a white English middle-class woman, interviewed was Marie Lyse Numuhoza from Rwanda, whom we had already recruited as one of our interviewers. My other point of contact with Marie Lyse was that, over thirty years earlier, I had spent a year in Burundi and Rwanda as a volunteer, a fact which proved useful in establishing a relationship and understanding some of the historical, political and geographic context in which Marie Lyse's story unfolded:

In 1994 the President was killed. So that's how the war erupted. We had to move through the forest all the way to the Zairean border. It took us about six months. Many people died and we saw many, many different things. You're not scared of the wild animals because there were bullet on top of you and a rocket might fall any second. Even the wild animals, with the bullets and bombs falling, they run away too. Of course, some people got eaten by wild animals because your feet would swell up and you wouldn't be able to walk any longer and you're starving. There wasn't enough food to eat. And once you stay behind, you're gone.

It was about a million people. There are so many branches, like a river going to a big, big, ocean. People who came from the north, the west, the south-east. They are all going to one spot. I carried my younger brother because Mum had another baby. So it was really, really hard for my younger brother to start walking. He walked when he was three. My younger sister was born in the refugee camp.

I remember when we were in the refugee camp we used to ask Dad, 'Why are all those people dying for nothing?' He just told us to sit down and look at the stars and said, 'Don't worry, everyone who dies doesn't just disappear. He becomes a star. They are sitting up there, watching down on all of us.' He didn't know what to tell us really. He didn't have any explanation.

There are various debates about the pros and cons of matching the ethnicity/cultural background of the interviewer with the participant and about 'insider' or 'outsider' status. Dahinden and Efonayi-Mader (2009: 110), in research with African refugees and migrants in Switzerland, found that the African researcher, in this case from Rwanda, was not always able to establish a confidential interview atmosphere and indeed 'some migrants felt freer to talk to interviewers who had no connection whatsoever with their communities'. Drawing on other examples, Dahinden and Efonayi-Mader (2009:115) conclude that 'a similar

background of migration as well as a common belonging to a “visible” minority group was an asset, while shared nationality or ethnicity was sometimes perceived with apprehension’. Other factors, such as showing political support for the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa (Dawes, Tredoux and Feinstein 1989), knowing about and/or having lived in the place of origin or having shared similar experiences (Miller 2004), can help build trust.

Dahinden and Efonayi-Mader (2009: 111) maintain that the ‘expertise, skills and empathy of researchers ... are the key elements to success, there being no general rule when it comes to the ethnic or national background of the interviewer: apart from the fact that common languages and reference points can of course be useful’.

So, what are these skills, this expertise and empathy, and how much do they impact on the outcome of the interview? Interviewers certainly vary in their skill in making people comfortable; looking and sounding interested; accepting emotions without agreeing or disagreeing; allowing silences; permitting unanticipated responses; reflecting on what people have said; and sharing something of themselves (Kissoon 2011). But the style of questioning can also be key to a successful interview.

While asking all the World in the East End interviewers to focus their discussions on set themes, they had relative freedom over how they might approach topics within this framework. What became apparent, however, was that the life stories where interviewers used open-ended rather than closed questions and allowed the participants to determine the direction of their accounts were richer, more detailed and more expressive.

These findings seem in tune with the experiences of other researchers working with migrants and refugees. Using the biographical interpretative method (Bertaux and Kohli 1984; Kohli 1986; Rosenthal 1993; Fischer-Rosenthal 1995; Breckner 1998), Mestheneos (2011) deployed open-response questions, asking refugees to tell their biographical stories from the moment they arrived in this country. In this way each refugee became an active agent in their own story, with most expressing satisfaction ‘in having an (uninterrupted) opportunity to talk to someone about their experiences’ (Mestheneos 2011: 31).

The line and manner of questioning are particularly crucial when people have experienced trauma. Even a warm-up question like ‘Who do you live with?’ can distress children if there has been a recent family bereavement (Alderson and Morrow 2011). Indeed, the same question could also upset an adult refugee who has lost family members through war. There can be advantages in focusing on the present rather than the past, for example by starting with the question ‘Tell us about your life in East London’, particularly when the journey to the UK has been traumatic.

However, listening is even more important than the style of questioning. ‘The witness “from the inside” relives the experience and the good listener has to be there with her as she is doing so’ (Hirsch and Spitzer 2009: 162). But while listening has potential restorative effects and even ‘the capacity to restore the victim’s humanity and identity’ (Hirsch and Spitzer 2009: 163), not listening has serious consequences. ‘If one talks about the trauma without being truly heard or truly listened to, the telling might itself be lived as a return to the trauma – a re-experiencing of the event itself’ (Felman and Laube 1992: 67), and while ‘empathetic listening can actually be therapeutic ... “bad listening” ... can retraumatize the witness’ (Hirsch and Spitzer 2009: 163).

So, while good listening would seem to have the capacity to help ‘overcome the sadness inside me’, in Marie Lyse’s words, bad listening can retraumatize the person being interviewed. But there would seem to be other potential benefits in people telling their life

stories. Theorists from different disciplines believe the act of remembering and retelling life events is important in not only in understanding that life but in forming and reshaping identity. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur employs the term 'narrative identity': 'The story of a life continues to be reconfigured by all the truthful or fictive stories a subject tells about himself or herself' (Ricoeur 1988: 246).

For the sociologist Avtar Brah (1996), 'narrative' is an intrinsic part of how an identity is constituted, rather than simply a vehicle for its expression. She talks of the importance of the imaginative endeavours of storytelling and narrative in the formation of migrant consciousness, noting that 'the autobiographical model is useful ... as a disruptive device' within which 'the "individual" narrator does not unfold but is produced in the process of narration'. It is within the diasporic space that multiple subject positions are permitted to take effect and are 'proclaimed and disavowed' according to historical circumstances (Brah 1996: 10, 13, 208).

This surely relates to Marie Lyse's sense that the project gave her a sense of belonging. For the moment of the interview, at least, she forgot she was a refugee and became an active citizen.

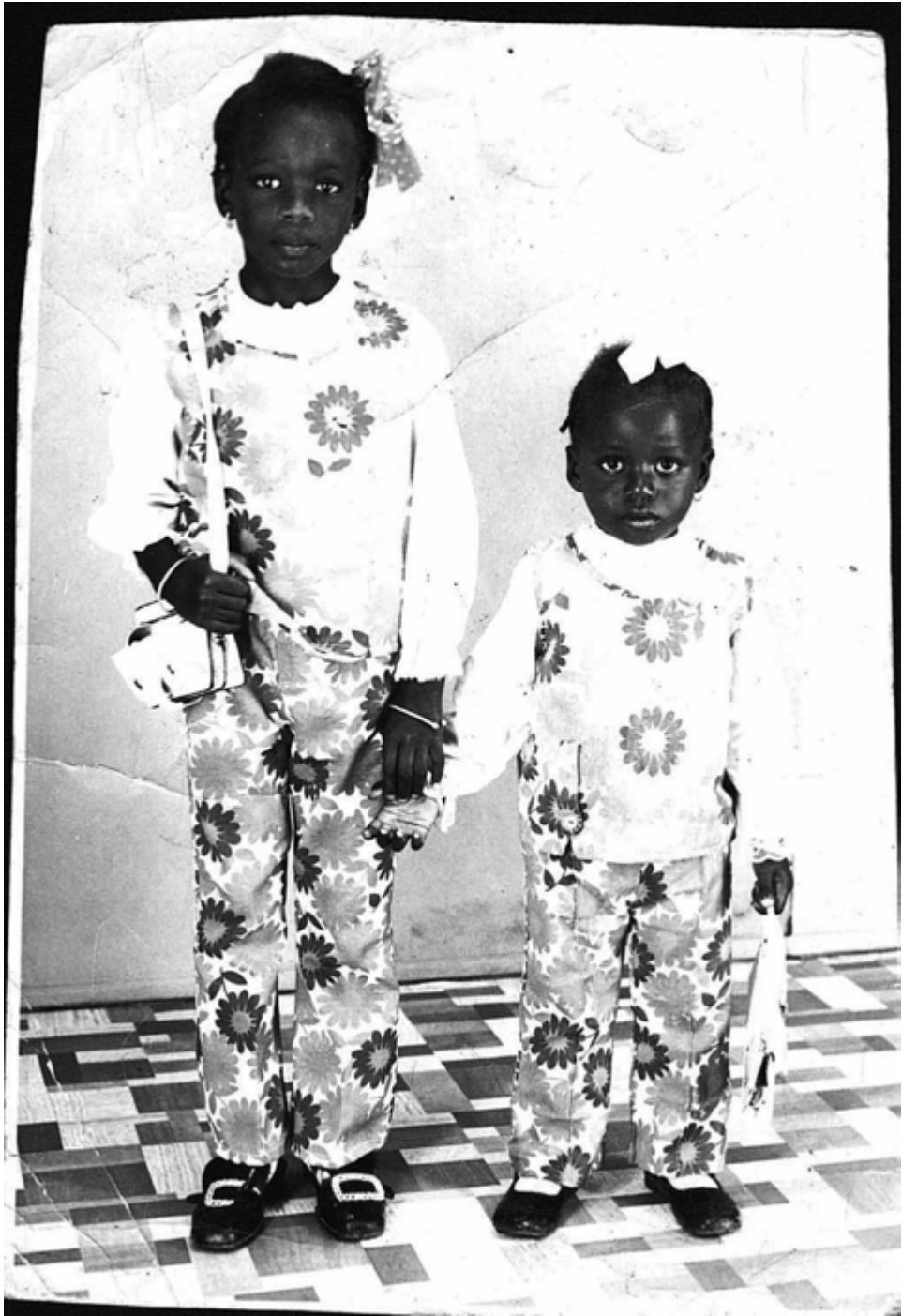
But Marie Lyse perceived other benefits in participating in the project, too. One motivation for sharing her and her fellow Rwandan refugees' experiences within the context of the museum was that she hoped it would 'help others to move on'. Other research supports the view that refugees are more willing to participate if the research is perceived to be of benefit to the refugee community as a whole. This was certainly the case in Miller's research with Bosnian refugees: 'There was a desire to provide information that might help other Bosnians and a belief that we were gathering data for that reason' (Miller 2004: 225).

However, the retelling of harrowing life experiences can affect the interviewer as well as the participant. Indeed, it requires 'tremendous libidinal investment' (Felman and Laube 1992: 67), as a balance must be achieved between empathy with the participant and appropriation of his/her account. Hirsch and Spitzer (2009: 163) state that the interviewer 'must allow the testimony to move, haunt and endanger them; they must allow it to inhabit them, without appropriating or owning it'. Marie Lyse's account of travelling through the forest to the refugee camp in the Congo haunts me to this day. It was an extraordinary and eloquent testimony that we subsequently used in a variety of contexts, consulting with her at each stage of the process.

## Interpretation and display of the material

Initially it was envisaged that people's personal objects would form a key focus for the World in the East End display. However, in some cases, significant objects had been lost, were still in the country of origin or people thought they were not of enough interest or sufficiently valuable for a museum. We were more successful with people's personal photographs and studio portraits taken both in the country of origin and in the East End. These were scanned and used in various displays and on the web. Contemporary portraits were also taken of participants which, with their agreement, were used in displays and on the web.

It was very different with the oral histories. The researchers had collected a rich body of over thirty interviews with adults lasting up to two hours and shorter interviews from a classroom of primary school children. The problem then was how to transform this material into a coherent story within a gallery space.



**FIGURE 6.1** Surya Turner, participant in the World in the East End project, and her older sister from Antigua. Courtesy of Surya Turner and her sister and V&A Museum of Childhood

Our first step was to analyse the oral history material, selecting quotes according to the chosen themes – journeys, arrivals, festivals, celebrations, play, leisure, school, work – identifying both commonalities and differences between people of different backgrounds and ages. Stories of arrival were a rich source of parallel experiences. The comment of Anna Tzelinker, a Jewish refugee who arrived in the East End just before the Second World War, about London's terraced streets was echoed by several other migrants: “‘Look, all the houses are the same! How do people know where they live?’” And that was my first impression.’

There were huge differences in the games played by people of different backgrounds ... and different ages. People living in the East End before and during the war played on construction or derelict sites as well as in the park. Lollipop, a traveller, whose circus family arrived in the East End just after the Blitz, made go-carts out of bomb debris. This was in contrast to children like Kofi Billy, who spent a substantial amount of time inside in front of his computers: ‘I’ve got three computers. Four actually, no, five. I’ve got two PCs, I got Playstation 2, Playstation 1 and Gamecube ... I think it is bad for kids playing too much computer games ‘cos they lose their memory and sit around.’ There were differences in the toys available, too. Many who spent their childhoods in Africa or the Caribbean, for example, made toys from mud and recycled materials in their countries of origin. But this was a feature in the East End as well. Tracie Giles, a traveller living in Newham, made trailers out of recycled boxes: ‘Every Saturday my mum used to get her shopping in cardboard boxes. I cut all the windows and doors out, sew curtains and try and make it look like my mum’s trailer.’ Very little of this creative play in outside space or of being inventive with any available material was reflected in the museum.

We were also interested in quotes that showed the fluid, hybrid nature of the East End and cross-cultural influences that affected street and popular culture. Surya Turner, originally from Antigua, spoke about the Two Tone era of the late 1970s:

It was the era of the Beat and the Specials and Madness as well. Fun Boy Three, that was my sister’s favourites. Punk meeting reggae, meeting ska. Two worlds coming together with my father who was really into music and playing all that kind of early ska stuff.

But this happened at an individual level, too. Faye Downey attended a school with a significant proportion of children of Bangladeshi origin, something she embraced: ‘I do remember at Eid being able to dress up in a sari and have lots of make-up on doing Indian dance at school. And I remember being the only white girl that did it.’

Many of the interviewees told harrowing stories of name-calling and racist attacks. We were keen that these should be included in order to avoid producing a sanitized view of the local community’s experiences that ignored the more discreditable history of Britain as intolerant towards ethnic minorities, migrants and refugees (Kushner 2012). Tracie Giles talked about the racism she experienced at school: ‘But that word, I could not stand it because I was called it so many times. They always assume that Gypsies are dirty. That is another thing that amazes me. “Stinky gypo. Stinky gypo.”’

Having selected the quotes we wanted to use, we now faced the challenge of displaying this material within the seven themed cases alongside the few objects we had collected. This was the reverse of what usually happens in a museum, where the objects drive a display.

Although some of the objects sourced from within the local community were beautiful, it was often the everyday objects that carried more interesting stories. Take the label accompanying a kanga African cloth, frayed at the edges, donated by Marie Lyse Numuhoza and her family: 'My mum carried my young brother and then my sister in this cloth (kanga) through the forest all the way to the Zairean border. You were not even afraid of the wild animals with the bullets and the bombs falling.' Or the egg poacher used by Janet Browne's mother, originally from Antigua, to keep the family expenditure in check: 'When my dad came back with his weekly wage package, my mother tucked the housekeeping money in the bottom of the egg poacher. In the top three sections she put the money for the paraffin, for United Friendly insurance and the dinner money.' A further quote, which appeared alongside a passport photograph provided by Janet's father, showed how thriftiness had contributed to her mother's migration: 'I used this photo for my journey from Antigua in 1953. Anglican brothers in Cable Street found me lodgings at a Somali seamen's mission in Tower Hamlets. I saved £1 a week to bring over my future wife, Fernella, a year later.'

Sometimes, when the community supplied no objects to illustrate the text, the V&A Museum of Childhood provided them itself. A beautiful toy Gypsy wagon, for example, was used to illustrate a quote by Tracie Giles: 'They had wagons in them days and so my grandparents right until they died always cooked outside. At a fair you might see travellers cooking outside and that aroma, that smell, it just brings it back.' The V&A Museum South Kensington provided objects, too. For instance, fashion items and photographs were used to illustrate the Two Tone era mentioned by Surya Turner, while Bollywood posters illustrated the passion for Indian films among children of Bangladeshi origin whose families watched them on satellite television channels.

On occasion, neither the community nor the V&A managed to supply appropriate objects. In these instances, we went shopping. Eid objects were bought in Brick Lane, Hanukkah festival items were found in Golders Green, and clay pots, to illustrate Chandraskhi Misir's memories of celebrating Diwali in Guyana, were purchased in Newham: 'Here we buy little clay pots and candles but in those days in Guyana we made our little pots from mud ... we made them a month before and on Diwali night we would light hundreds of them.' We also asked people to bring back objects from their countries of origin if they were visiting. Huong Nguyen brought back water puppets from Vietnam, and Mustafa Yildirim brought back jerseys from three rival football teams in Istanbul.

Some of the oral history texts were not illustrated by any objects. Quotes about discrimination were used in an audio presentation for the gallery and the longer text from Marie Lyse Numuhoza was integrated, along with still images of Rwanda, into a DVD, also for the gallery. Several of the quotes, organized into the various themes, and lengthier extracts of individual life stories were uploaded to the website and, where possible, illustrated with images.

The use of soundbites on label text, on the audio presentations and on the web seemed to be successful. Audiences appreciated this 'peopling' of the collections, with the objects enlivened by real experiences. However, Kushner (2001: 92), in reviewing the use of oral history in the exhibition on the Holocaust at the Imperial War Museum, criticizes the use of soundbites to illustrate the storyline: 'The price is paid by ultimately losing the individuality of the survivor and his or her attempt to make sense of their life as a whole in order to communicate "the story" more coherently.' He claims that the use of testimony is



successful only when survivors are given the chance to move beyond the restraint of the dominant narrative of the exhibition. Quoting the psychologist Henry Greenspan, he writes, 'To listen to survivors is to listen to survivors. No other purpose is required' (Greenspan 1998: 169).

It is true that some of the lived experiences were so rich that, in some instances, to truncate the recordings seemed to disrespect them. It was for this reason that we decided to put longer excerpts on DVDs or the website. Therefore, our use of short soundbites was balanced, at least to some extent, by longer excerpts that moved 'beyond the constraint' of the seven cases and the themes we had assigned to them. However, bringing soundbites together did work well in some instances, particularly on the audio presentation about discrimination, which showed parallels between the experiences of Jews in the thirties, Caribbeans in the fifties, Bangladeshis in the seventies and travellers in the nineties. Careful selection of quotes was an effective means to bring out commonalities and differences between people from various backgrounds and of diverse ages. Perhaps the biggest challenge was to provide a coherent narrative to so many different stories within the overall structure of the gallery. We addressed this through panels listing key historical facts about a variety of migrations from Western Europe, Eastern Europe, South Asia, South-East Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. A more detailed history was developed for the web.



**FIGURE 6.2** Bengali children in Settles Street, Tower Hamlets, 1978. Courtesy of Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives

## Negotiating the 'contact zone'

So, was the museum successful in negotiating the 'contact zone'? Did it empower black, Asian and other ethnic minorities and migrants to 'speak'? Or were they spoken for; and if so, by whom? Relationships across the contact zone for the World in the East End project were mainly negotiated through the employment of people from culturally diverse communities as interviewers. Migrant and other voices were represented through text, objects, images, films, audios and on the web. Participants signed consent forms agreeing that the material could be used within the museum and on the internet, and they were given the option of remaining anonymous, although only two requested this. Participants were able to withdraw anything they were not happy with, but this happened only in the case of a single interview with a schoolchild (and with good reason). Through the project, we developed good relationships with the participants, due in no small part to the role played by the interviewers, many of whom had known the participants for some time. However, after the material was handed over, both interviewers and participants had little say in what, and how, the material was displayed. (Although consultation did take place over the longer texts for the web and during the making of the films.) The majority of decisions rested with Teresa Hare Duke and myself, with some input from other members of staff at the museum.

Most, if not all, of the participants seemed pleased with the outcome, attending the opening of the gallery and proudly showing the displays to family and friends. Yet, relationships with interviewers and participants have been maintained in only a few important instances. The issue of sustaining relationships with individuals and organizations with whom the museum has worked on specific projects is a pertinent one. Both Keith (2012) and myself (Nightingale 2010) demonstrate how organizations and individuals can feel exploited if the museum drops the relationship once the project has concluded.

## An explicit or implicit approach

During the first three phases, the World in the East End benefited from a large, dedicated space on the top floor of the galleries, allowing for an 'explicit' focus. With the redevelopment of the V&A Museum of Childhood and the withdrawal of this space, however, it was decided to adopt a more 'implicit' approach. World in the East End is now a permanent feature within the 'Home' section of the museum's permanent Childhood Galleries. The thinking behind this was to make it more integral to the museum's galleries, rather than present it as a separate 'ethnic', 'other' gallery that sat slightly apart, and to encourage the museum to take ownership of it. This also enabled the museum to use its own acquisitions and purchased objects so that it did not have to rely on temporary loans from either the community or the V&A South Kensington, which in turn meant it was less dependent on a separate budget and could acquire some longevity.

The focus, this time, was on three generations of three families. They were selected and interviewed with the intentions of broadening commonly held assumptions of what constitutes a family group and of making a conscious statement about tolerance, social inclusion and social justice. The three families were:

- a Bengali family, some of whom had lived in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Bangladesh before coming to East London;

- a family with a lesbian mother whose own mother had been adopted as a child and later became a Jehovah's Witness; and
- a mixed-race family with a Polish father and a Ghanaian mother and grandmother.

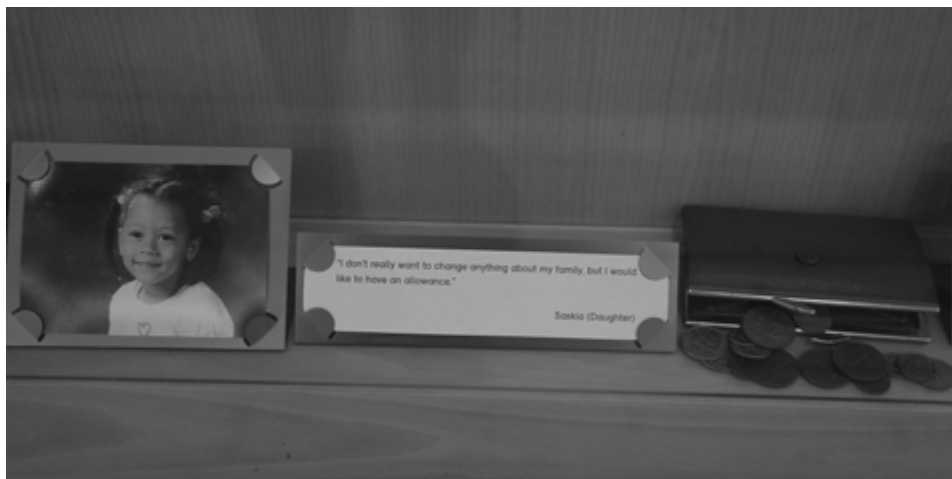
They were chosen in a deliberate attempt to enlarge the notion of what constitutes a family in East London.

This approach yielded interesting insights into family dynamics and perspectives. In the Habiak and Awiah family, Teresa, the grandmother (born in Ghana), regrets that her grandchildren don't get much experience of Ghanaian culture, but Joy, her daughter (born in Sussex), embraces the cosmopolitan nature of Hackney:

I'm in a mixed partnership, my husband is white, of Polish origin, and he was born and brought up in north England. We've got kids together and you're not different in Hackney because there are so many mixed-race children. Now we do both Ramadan and Christmas. I follow a Muslim faith but I still do Christmas because Richard is Catholic.

Richard, Joy's husband, echoes his wife's attitude: 'The best thing about raising a family in the East End is the multiculturalism. The kids are normal, we're all normal here, there's no issue.' Saskia, their daughter, has only one complaint about her family: she would like an allowance.

Antoinette Williamson, born in Dublin, was 'given by the nuns' to the Murphy family, who unofficially adopted her. When her adoptive parents died she was sent, at the age of eleven, to live with the eldest daughter of the Murphy family, who was living in London. Louise, Antoinette's daughter (born in Bethnal Green), is a lesbian. According to Louise, this posed a significant challenge to her mother: 'My Mum's a Jehovah's Witness, so turning out to be a lesbian didn't go down very well. But she always said, "You have a key, you have a home, if ever you need to come back, you're always welcome."' "



**FIGURE 6.3** In the case dedicated to the Habiak and Awiah family. © Eithne Nightingale. Courtesy of Saskia and V&A Museum of Childhood

There is no doubt that the integration of the 'Families' section into the Childhood Galleries has been successful in incorporating broader concepts of diversity, in reflecting the fluid and changing nature of families in the East End, in adopting a bold social inclusion approach and in creating dialogue. It has also created an opportunity to 'zoom in' on the three families whose stories are reflected in the three designated cases. This creates a more in-depth picture than had been possible when one quote was presented alongside each object in the World in the East End gallery. The participants were also much more involved in editing the text and image selection. This added to a sense of ownership, with the families contributing more memories and material throughout the process.

Yet it is also true that the space dedicated to this material is much reduced and therefore less high profile. It seems, then, that both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. 'A dedicated space gives this material focus whereas it may be "lost" within other galleries. On the other hand a dedicated space can reinforce the view that the material is marginalized, different or the "other"' (Nightingale 2010: 68). Nevertheless, although it occupies a much smaller area, it is still an explicit approach within the gallery and audiences continue to react to it as an explicit statement on social justice.

## Concluding thoughts and legacy

The World in the East End initiative was developed under a New Labour government that emphasized the importance of the public value of culture and required museums, through their funding agreements, to say how they would meet this challenge and report on the diversity of their audiences. The initiative very much aligned itself with both government policy and the V&A's Access, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy, actively working to overcome cultural and attitudinal barriers by collecting and displaying objects that reflected the cultural heritage and lived experience of communities in the East End of London. It worked in partnership with interviewees and a range of community organizations in an attempt to 'act as a catalyst for cultural and social change'. It embraced and reflected diversity, harnessing the potential of several stakeholders in the development of 'a truly inclusive museum that inspires and promotes learning, creativity and participation'. These were ambitious aims and it is difficult to evaluate the success of the initiative thoroughly. There was no budget for a formal external evaluation. Nevertheless, there are some indications of success and certainly lessons were learned that inform present and future practice.

Over the various phases of the World in the East End project the V&A Museum of Childhood increased the percentage of its black, Asian and other ethnic minority audiences from 20 per cent in 2002 to 29 per cent in 2008. It also increased its total number of annual visitors over this period from 50,500 to 95,700. This translates into a significant increase in the number of black, Asian and other ethnic minority visitors coming through the doors. Of course, this was not solely due to the World in the East End project. There were other initiatives, including those developed by the Community Development Manager, that brought in new and diverse audiences, too; but the World in the East End was certainly an important part of this overall strategy.

The public response to the exhibition was favourable. Under-represented audiences expressed pleasure in seeing something of their experience or culture represented in the displays. Students of English as a second language, in particular, were delighted to see objects with which they were familiar. Visitors especially enjoyed the personal quotes taken from the

oral histories that explained the significance of the objects. There was, and continues to be, genuine interest in people's stories. As Hartman (1996: 142, 138) writes in relation to memories of the Holocaust:

Survivors' testimonies ... do not excel in providing *verités de fait* or positivist history ... Their real strength lies in recording the psychological and emotional milieu of the struggle for survival, not only then but also now ... [T]he immediacy of the account burns through the 'cold storage' of history, [giving] texture to memory or to images that otherwise would have only sentimental or informational impact ... [E]motion and empathy accompany knowledge.

However, care needs to be taken to present migrants' voices in a coherent manner without losing their individuality. The audio on discrimination and the DVD based on Marie Lyse's life were both applauded and clearly moved visitors. Also, the clear contextual historical information about the migration of various communities helped to contextualize the whole display, combining 'historical fact with emotional impact' (Whitehead, Eckersley and Mason 2012: 38).

There are examples of both interviewees and participants benefiting from the World in the East End initiative. For some of the interviewees, it was a gateway to full- or part-time employment in the cultural or related sectors. And many of the interviewees certainly seemed to benefit from sharing their stories, either because they simply enjoyed the company of a sympathetic listener, or, at a more fundamental level, as part of a restorative process (Hirsch and Spitzer 2009), because it allowed them to reform and reshape their identity within a diasporic space (Brah 1996). Only Marie Lyse was asked directly what she had gained from her involvement in the project. More research needs to be done on how the people who participate in such programmes are affected by them, in particular by the process of sharing their stories in the public domain.

The focus on a specific locality, the East End, was advantageous as it enabled a more inclusive approach, incorporating the experiences of migrants, their families and subsequent generations. It included stories of black and white, migrant and non-migrant, old and young. There are broader questions as to whether this material can contribute to a sense of place and social cohesion, whether it can develop empathy for migrants and refugees and enhance intercultural understanding between migrants and receiving communities. Again, more research is needed into whether, and how, such initiatives can change attitudes and contribute to social cohesion.

Diane Lees' role was key at the outset, but her leaving and the appointment of a new director has not lessened the V&A Museum of Childhood's commitment to the development of this project. Also, fortunately, the museum has not had to reduce its community programme or related staffing (in marked contrast to the cuts that other British museums have suffered in recent years). Indeed, Rhian Harris, the current Director, as part of the proposed refurbishment of the galleries, plans to integrate the narratives of migrant children into larger themes such as 'Play' and 'Education', in addition to developing a dedicated child migration section in 'Family and Home'.

The present political climate, with the resurgence of right-wing racist organizations and all mainstream parties conscious of the power of the anti-immigration vote, undoubtedly poses

challenges to museums incorporating material on migration. However, some directors, despite a change in the direction of the political wind and in the face of less sympathetic regional and central government policies, have succeeded in transforming their mission statements, broadening their audiences, making their collections more diverse and highlighting social justice issues (Fleming 2012: 72–84).

The World in the East End is one initiative that has found new life in this challenging climate. The V&A Museum of Childhood has partnered with the School of Geography at Queen Mary University, London, to secure funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council for three Collaborative Doctoral Awards under the umbrella title ‘Child in the World’. The subject that I am researching under this scheme, ‘Children, Migration and Diaspora’, builds on the work of World in the East End but with a clear focus on first-generation child migration to East London between 1930 and the present day. Key questions focus on how the diversity of experiences of migration to East London shape children’s lives and how the nature of settlement affects their transition and relationship to the East End. Further questions explore which memories, practices, images and objects are important in negotiating notions of diaspora, identity and belonging over space and time, and how the museum should give voice to the diverse experiences of the child migrant, challenge stereotypes, highlight child/migrant agency and promote inclusiveness and a sense of belonging. Building on the experience of World in the East End, the methodological approach involves the collection of tangible and intangible heritage through oral histories, objects and photographs as well as participatory activities for children and adults, such as drawing ‘here’ and ‘there’; taking photographs that reflect their first impressions of East London and walking through locations they frequented as a child.

This new phase – during which, as a Ph.D. student, I am the sole interviewer – will be different. I will need to find effective strategies to negotiate the ‘contact zone’, to build on existing partnerships and develop new ones, and to identify genuine opportunities with different stakeholders to open up discussions and decision-making, thus encouraging ownership in the project as a whole.

In any analysis, aware of the need for ongoing reflection during the research process, I will need to take account of my own position with respect to my gender, class and age. While I am confident that I have the skills and experience to carry out this research, I know there are challenges and issues inherent in working with people who might be wary of authority because they are insecure about their status or have experienced trauma.

I have learned much through my experience of the World in the East End project. The people of East London have rich and fascinating stories to tell, many of them still untapped, but time needs to be spent building trust before migrants and refugees will be willing to share their experiences. Participants must be convinced that the research will not harm them and, indeed, that it will be beneficial to them personally and to the migrant and refugee community as a whole. The role of the interviewer is key in this. A shared background can be a great advantage, but empathy and skill in interviewing are also important.

However, perhaps the most challenging aspect of the research is the museum context. How can such initiatives give voice to the diverse experiences of child migrants, challenge stereotypes, highlight child/migrant agency and promote inclusiveness and a sense of belonging? The World in the East End project answered some, but by no means all, of these questions.

## Note

- 1 According to the 2011 Census for England and Wales, in Tower Hamlets the largest ethnic minority is people of Bangladeshi origin, who at 32% make up by far the largest proportion of Asian/Asian British, a group that comprises 41.1% of the borough's residents. White British make up 31.2%, but all white ethnic groups comprise 45.2% of residents; 7.3% are black British/African/Caribbean/black other; mixed/multiple ethnic groups are 4.1%; 1% are Arab; and 1.3% are from other ethnic groups. In Hackney, to the north, white British make up 36.2%, but all white ethnic groups make up 54.7%; 23.1% are black British/African/Caribbean/black other; 10.5% are Asian/Asian British; 6.4% are from mixed/multiple ethnic groups; 0.7% are Arab; and 4.6% are from other ethnic groups. Newham, to the east, has the highest percentage of black and ethnic minorities in the country, with white British at 16.7% and all white ethnic groups at 29%; 42.2% are Asian/Asian British; 19.6% are black British/African/Caribbean/black other; 4.6% are mixed/multiple ethnic groups; 1.1 % are Arab; and 2.3% are from other ethnic groups.

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# 7

## THE MUSEUM IN A MULTICULTURAL SETTING

### The case of Malmö Museums

*Christina Johansson*

#### Introduction

For those interested in how processes of globalization and migration affect societal formation, museums are excellent objects of study. How museums try to democratize and meet the demands of a changing society and of a more diverse audience, for example with exhibitions addressing migration and cultural diversity, and with various forms of collaborative projects, tells us something important about both changes and continuity in society in general and within the museum sector itself.

From a historical perspective, the museum sector has undergone significant changes over time. In the past museums functioned as important symbols of power for monarchs, empires and nations, and they legitimized the ruling regime (Sandell 2007; Aronsson 2008). Later, museums became important building bricks in the colonial project, functioning as symbols of power as well as displaying and classifying objects from conquered parts of the world (Barringer 1998). Museums have also been active in the edification of good citizens by imprinting civilizing values and social norms on the middle-class population (Bennett 1995) and by contributing to the construction of national identity (Aronsson 2008; Bohman 1997; Kaplan 1994; Knell *et al.* 2011).

However, in the late 1970s a process often referred to as the 'New Museology' encouraged epistemological changes that museums began to implement. This reorientation was driven by important changes in the humanities, which shed light on 'common people' and socially marginalized groups, and meant that the societal role of museums was critically analysed from a power perspective (Vergo 1989; Baur 2009; Boast 2011). This critique inspired museums to become more self-reflexive and democratic. In many ways this is still an ongoing process within the museum sector. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2007) believes that new ideas about culture and society challenge museums to rethink their identity, their approaches to audiences, and their social and ethical responsibilities. Thus museums are moving towards becoming 'post-museums', in which the Enlightenment ideal of a single universal knowledge is questioned and stories that were previously hidden are brought to light (Hooper-Greenhill

2000, 2007; see also Hall 2005). Such a tendency has also been identified by Katherine Goodnow (2008), who points out that Scandinavian museums have begun to show exhibitions that focus on hybridity, transnationalism and transition.

Museums have also started addressing the question of whether they are entitled to tell the stories of other cultures, and, if so, how this should be done (see Hall 2005). James Clifford (1997) has contributed one proposal as to how this question could be answered with his notion of the museum as a 'contact zone'. In Clifford's opinion, in a contact zone the role of the museum should be modified to provide room for meetings, dialogue and negotiation, and the initiative for cooperation should be transferred from the ideas of creative curators to calls for representation from a culturally diverse civil society. The museum, therefore, should ideally no longer be a traditional institution, but a social space where people and cultures could meet and interact.

The museum sector's interest in issues of migration and cultural diversity is growing (Baur 2009; Goodnow 2008). In some countries such issues have even been given institutions of their own, in the form of specific migration museums. This occurs most often in traditional immigration countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia, but the tendency can also be seen in Europe, with the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration in Paris the most prominent example. In Sweden, issues of migration and cultural diversity have been on museums' agendas since the 1970s, with interest in them sharply increasing during the early 2000s (Silvén 2008). In 2004 the Museum of World Culture was established in Gothenburg, but concern for these questions is also evident in the country's more traditional museums. How work with such issues is handled in Swedish museums, however, has rarely been investigated. Some studies of the cultural sector in general (Pripp, Plisch and Printz 2005; Edström and Hyltén-Cavallius 2011) and of specific museums and exhibitions (Ravin 2000; Magnusson 2001; Silvén 2008; Lagerkvist 2008; Axelsson 2009) have appeared, but an extensive understanding of the Swedish situation requires both more overall studies and more in-depth analyses.

In this article the focus is on Malmö Museums (MM) and its work with aspects of migration and cultural diversity. Malmö Museum was founded in 1841 and was initially a small collection with a focus on natural science. Gradually, the museum's collections grew and incorporated various fields, such as the city, art, the natural sciences, technology and maritime science. Subsequently, various sub-museums were established, and then merged to become the institution known as Malmö Museums. In addition to the history, culture and technological development of the region, further aspects of the area's geological and natural history are covered. Since 1937 Malmö Museums has been situated in the old castle of Malmö – Malmöhus Castle (MM n.d.g). In many respects it can be regarded as a traditional municipal/regional museum assigned the task of collecting and exhibiting the history of a specific geographic area. The difference between Malmö Museums and many other Swedish museums with the same assignment lies in its location.

With around 300,000 inhabitants, Malmö is Sweden's third-largest city by population after Stockholm and Gothenburg. The city has attracted many of the immigrants that have arrived in Sweden during the last few centuries and currently around 40 per cent of Malmö's population is of foreign descent.<sup>1</sup> In 2006 the leader of the Liberal Party launched the idea of a Swedish state-funded museum on immigration in Malmö. It was, according to him, important to improve the situation of immigrants and counter racism and discrimination by educating all Swedes about the important role immigrants had played in the development of

Sweden. In his view, the establishment of an immigration museum could be an important tool in this education process (*Sydsvenska dagbladet* 2006a). The proposal did not spark any public debate and an immigration museum never materialized. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Malmö is a city located in a multicultural setting, something that ought to be relevant for the museum sector in the city.

## Aim and research questions

This chapter's aim is to investigate how Malmö Museums has dealt with the challenge of handling and representing the multicultural society in which it is located. Drawing on scholars such as James Clifford, Stuart Hall and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, it focuses on whether – and if so, in what way – the museum has democratized its activities. Can it be regarded as a 'post-museum' telling the stories of previously marginalized groups, and is it open for dialogue and collaboration with these groups? Who – with regard to ethnicity, gender, age and length of residency in Sweden – has been given a voice in the exhibitions and other events, and in which way? How are migration and ethnic diversity represented at the museum? Which challenges does the museum encounter in its efforts to be more inclusive?

## Collaborative projects representing cultural diversity

Much of the research carried out on museums has been optimistic about their new collaborative approaches, such as the studies conducted by Sharon Macdonald, Andrea Witcomb and Ruth Phillips, to mention but a few (see, for example, Boast 2011: 59).

As mentioned above, Clifford favoured the idea of the museum as a 'contact zone', a term he borrowed from Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. In her view, the contact zone is a 'space of colonial encounters' that enables the establishment of contacts between peoples separated by conflict, inequality and asymmetrical power relations (Pratt in Clifford 1997: 192). Clifford states that in many cities the arrival of new immigrant groups can result in contact zones. Furthermore, he argues that since the distances between various groups and peoples is more social than geographical, the term 'contact zone' could be transposed from colonial encounters to internal cultural relations in a state, region or city. Moreover, culture-collecting should, according to Clifford, be understood as 'responses to particular histories of dominance, hierarchy resistance, and mobilisation' (Clifford 1997: 213). Clifford can thus be said to recognize both the possibilities and the problems of a contact perspective.

Other researchers have a more negative outlook on the intentions and possibilities of museums' efforts to open themselves up for collaboration. For example, Tony Bennett (1998), inspired by Foucault, argues that this new inclusiveness demonstrated by museums is still and foremost a way of extending the influence of the elite and an instrument of governmentality, in that museums still want to educate citizens, in this specific case by transmitting the edifying message of cultural tolerance and diversity. James Siegel (2011) is similarly sceptical about the new inclusive approaches and argues that the good intentions are above all a way for museums to recreate and safeguard their legitimacy. Mary Stevens (2007) argues that museums' collaborative approaches can cause or exacerbate rivalry among immigrant groups and ethnic minorities, rather than open up dialogue. The problem, according to Stevens, is that when attention is given to one or several groups, other groups

might feel that they have not been given equal access to the museum, to recognition and to self-empowerment.

Robin Boast (2011) is another sceptic. He criticizes both the way in which ‘contact zone’ has come to be interpreted in a very positive manner and the tendency to overlook the structural inequality that characterizes the term. He points out that Clifford himself acknowledged this asymmetry and warned us about the limitations and pitfalls of the contact zone. Boast believes that, despite reorganization, the colonial legacy is still embedded in the core of museums’ activities. The actions of museums, however well intentioned they might be, have little impact on institutionalized structures with a legacy from colonial times, so, according to Boast, the present-day collaborations of museums could be described as neo-colonial. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2004) also suggests that good intentions alone are generally not enough to accomplish real change in power relations. In her essay ‘Righting wrongs’ she explains that well-intentioned charity projects easily miss the mark if they lack understanding of the cultural formations they are trying to correct. In her view, the cultural education of the oppressed must be merged with democratic values in order to counteract unequal power relations. Stuart Hall (2005) has similar proposals for how democratization of the heritage sector might be achieved. He states that curators, professionals and artists from minority communities must be recruited and trained, so they, with their knowledge and experience, can contribute to the transformation of dominant curatorial and exhibiting habits. Aside from this, the state must be committed to the vision of a more ‘culturally diverse, socially just, equal and inclusive society and culture, and *holding its cultural institutions to account*’ (Hall 2005: 30; italics in the original).

The inclusion of the voices of immigrants and ethnic minorities in the activities of museums has its difficulties, as seen above. The same applies to exhibiting and representing issues of migration and cultural diversity. It is vital to acknowledge a constructionist approach to ethnicity to avoid the very common representations in the museum context of minorities as frozen, essentialized and folkloric cultures (see Goodnow 2008). Thus, by putting too much emphasis on differences between various groups, the focus on ethnicity runs the risk of ethnicization, exotification and othering of migrants and ethnic minorities. As Nina Glick Schiller (2008) convincingly argues, it is therefore important to use an approach that recognizes *similarities* between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and acknowledges that many important transnational connections are non-ethnic.

Jim McGuigan (2005) states that multiculturalism should not be portrayed as a collection of ethnic groups, but rather as an intercultural model allowing the formation of new identities. Furthermore, it is wrong, in his view, to portray ethnic groups as separate, as they routinely interact with each other in different ways. Richard Sandell (2005) emphasizes that it is important for the representations to aim to challenge unequal power relations in order to avoid reproducing them. Stuart Hall (2005) also points out that it is crucial to show how those usually regarded as ‘others’ interact with the main national narrative in order to recognize hybridity and avoid describing minorities as trapped in their ethnicity.

## Method and material

My point of departure was to explore Malmö Museums’ main projects and exhibitions on migration and cultural diversity. After several discussions with a number of curators at the museum, five projects (each of which led to one or more exhibitions) were singled out. I

decided to focus on four of these: the Rosengård project, the Roma project, the Living in Two Worlds project and the Migrating Memories project. The fifth project focused on South Africa and addressed issues of apartheid, oppression, democracy and human rights, rather than migration and cultural diversity, which was why I did not include it.

All of the projects and exhibitions in this study occurred in the past, so an important source of information was the museum's archive. Hence, I was obliged to use material that someone else had deemed worth saving. Fortunately, most of the projects are very well documented. In the museum's archive there are descriptions of the exhibitions, lists of props, photos, minutes of meetings, memos, correspondence, advertisements, media articles and final reports. Migrating Memories, however, was less well documented than the other three. This, and the fact that the curator in charge of that project no longer worked at the museum, made any detailed analysis of it difficult.

The study of the archival documents was supplemented by a series of semi-structured interviews and conversations with members of staff at the museum. Initially, I interviewed a person in a management position with a good understanding of the museum's work with migration and diversity. Then I interviewed the curator who was responsible for both the Roma and the Living in Two Worlds projects. Finally, I interviewed one of the two curators who were responsible for the Rosengård project. Each interview lasted between one and two hours and touched upon various aspects of the project(s) in question, such as the objective, who was given a voice, the degree of collaboration with ethnic communities, pros and cons, representations and results. Admittedly, the interviews were susceptible to bias. The people interviewed obviously had an interest in portraying both the museum and their own contributions in a positive light. Moreover, it had been several years since the various projects had taken place, so the curators' memories might not have been wholly accurate. During the interviews, it also became apparent that this was not the first time someone from outside the museum had expressed an interest in these projects and exhibitions. The curators had previously spoken with various media about the projects, so there was a risk that they, consciously or subconsciously, might have created a sanitized version suitable for public consumption. Yet, I feel that all three interviewees tried to answer my questions honestly, and they were certainly not afraid of raising problems, accepting that mistakes had been made, and explaining what they would do differently today. The critical issues as regards to sources pointed out above are also less problematic here, as I was primarily interested in the curators' views, rather than 'the truth' as such.

Finally, I visited the museum and observed its permanent exhibitions with the aim of finding out if aspects of migration and cultural diversity form part of its more routine activities.

## The Rosengård project

Rosengård, a city district in Malmö, became an area of interest for Malmö Museums in 2000, when the museum decided to launch the Rosengård project. This project received support from a state initiative for the preservation of the cultural heritage of industrialized society (MM 2011c).

Rosengård, part of a grandiose housing programme called 'The Million Programme', was constructed between 1967 and 1974 and at the beginning was regarded as spearheading modernity.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, however, it came to be associated with problems such as

inhospitable architecture, segregation, unemployment and criminality, and, eventually, with immigration (Ristilammi 1994). When the museum project started in 2000, more than 80 per cent of Rosengård's population was of foreign descent.<sup>3</sup>

With this project, Malmö Museums wanted to portray itself as an open museum taking part in the societal debate (MM 2002b). In contrast to more traditional projects, and in accordance with knowledge attained from the international museum scene, the goal of the project was that the museum, in collaboration with the inhabitants of Rosengård, should document the district and mount exhibitions (MM 2011c). However, although the museum intended to create a collaborative project, in reality the influence of the inhabitants of Rosengård was fairly limited. According to the curator, the museum managed the project by determining the themes of the workshops and giving fairly specific instructions regarding their aims and contents. Moreover, the working team linked to the project consisted mostly of museum staff and other officials, while the inhabitants of Rosengård were represented only on an ad hoc basis (if at all).

Malmö Museums was accustomed to people showing enthusiasm when contacted and asked to contribute in some way to its work and collections. However, the encounters with the inhabitants in Rosengård turned out to be quite different. Instead of enthusiasm, museum staff encountered widespread 'project exhaustion'. The curator said that the idea was to involve the inhabitants throughout the project, but they felt they had already been asked to participate in far too many projects. 'So it was not the case that people thought, "Oh, what fun that you came,"' she explained (MM 2011c). Moreover, the curator feels it is important to remember that not everyone took part on equal terms: the museum staff were salaried, while the inhabitants of Rosengård were expected to participate on a voluntary basis, or through the cooperation established between the museum and some schools. According to the curator, the lack of enthusiasm among the inhabitants was doubly frustrating to some people at the museum because they had such high expectations about what they might accomplish with the project and believed that 'they were going to help' the citizens of Rosengård (MM 2011c).

From the start, the Rosengård project was intended primarily to address adults, but since interest from their side was lacking, it had to be redirected. Consequently, the museum started to arrange workshops with various school classes (mainly in the compulsory school) and occasionally with non-profit organizations (MM 2011c). The consequence of this change in the organization of the project seems to have been that it reached the relatively recently arrived immigrant groups, rather than immigrants who have lived in the country for a long time. Noticeable by their absence are any stories from the labour immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s who still reside in Rosengård.

With this project, the museum tried to establish a type of contact zone for the inhabitants of Rosengård, the museum itself and its audience. Obviously, it did not turn out the way the museum had intended. So what went wrong? Apparently, the museum had good intentions when launching the project. The aim was to include the inhabitants of Rosengård in the museum's activities and their histories in the museum's archive. However, it appears that some staff members also felt that they were going to become benefactors, helping the inhabitants of Rosengård. Drawing on Spivak's (2004) reasoning, the problems with the project could be related to insufficient understanding of the situation of the inhabitants of Rosengård by the museum. It seems that the museum staff did not listen attentively to the wishes of the Rosengård inhabitants and consider their living conditions before launching the project. It is

also evident that the initiative for the project came from the museum (and indirectly from the state authorities funding specific projects); it did not signal a wish for recognition from the people of Rosengård. In this particular case the lack of anchoring in the presumptive participant group resulted in lukewarm interest in participating in a non-profit project.

The most striking aspect of the material produced by this project is that the majority of the stories praise Rosengård. For example: 'Rosengård is a great place to live in. I do not understand why everyone talks crap about Rosengård. Instead of talking, come and see with your own eyes. You will see something very good, beautiful, and special' (MM 2002a). In this way, the youths who contributed to the project created a counter-narrative to the conventional, stereotypical image of Rosengård as a problem area – an image that is repeatedly reproduced in the societal debate (see Ristilammi 1994; Wigerfelt 2011).

By focusing on a city district rather than a specific ethnic group (which is the more common procedure in cultural museums), the project achieved the positive result that there was very little representation of migrants as immured in a frozen ethnic identity. In this case, the problem is related to the fact that Rosengård is often negatively portrayed in the media and the residents themselves have very little power to alter that representation. When the youths in Rosengård were offered the chance to create their own image of the district, they were intent on producing counter-images to the district's conventional media portrayal as a problem area. Counter-images to negative stereotypes certainly make the picture more complex and can therefore be both relevant and sometimes necessary. Yet, one problem is that counter-images are, by definition, responses to someone else's agenda. Hence, only representations that contradict the stereotype are possible and one's own preference of what should be emphasized is lost. In this case, the negative media image of Rosengård made it difficult for the participants to bring up *any* negative aspects of the district, since to do so would only reinforce the stereotype. Another problem with counter-images, as pointed out by Hall (1997), is that they have a tendency to consolidate rather than dissolve difference. One of the few negative aspects of living in Rosengård highlighted by participants in the project was a feeling of exclusion from the rest of society. If Hall is right, the paradox is that even if the counter-images produced within the project try to give a positive view of Rosengård, they run the risk of consolidating the difference between the district and the rest of society, since Rosengård is still portrayed as different from the norm.

Overall, then, in this project both the possibilities of collaborative contact work and its limitations with respect to unequal power relations within the contact zone are clearly visible.

## Migrating Memories

The second project I studied was Migrating Memories (MIME), an EU-sponsored initiative with support from the Culture 2000 programme. The project addressed young immigrants and the objective was to make the participants aware of 'the importance of safekeeping memories' and, by means of 'education and cooperation', to see the role of these memories in their 'new countries'. Furthermore, it aimed to present the memories of the 'new Europeans' and the stories of the 'socially disadvantaged, immigrants, and young people' in current European history (MM 2005).

Migrating Memories was a joint initiative of three partners: Malmö Museums; the Museum Centre Vapriikki in Tampere, Finland; and Nottingham Trent University in the UK. It consisted of workshops about the safekeeping of memories, an interactive multilingual

website, a travelling exhibition, and a seminar about methods and why it is important for museums to incorporate aspects of the memory of migration in their work (MM 2005).

From the start, the focus was on young immigrants. Overall, about seventy pupils aged between sixteen and nineteen participated in various workshops in the three cities, during which they learned about documentation, interviews, photographs and archives (MM n.d.i). In Malmö two teachers and thirty relatively recently arrived young immigrants took part in the project (MM 2005).

Hooper-Greenhill (2000) states that the post-museum highlights stories that had previously been neglected. In both *Migrating Memories* and the *Rosengård* project young immigrants were given a voice and offered the chance to take part actively in the process of cultural production. Both projects had problems, but the museum was making a serious attempt to open itself to collaboration and to give young immigrants, whose stories have traditionally been neglected, a voice. In *Migrating Memories* the general focus was on young and relatively recently arrived immigrants; in the British part of the project even asylum seekers were given a voice. This, according to Philip Marfleet (2008), is rather unique. He argues that refugees are virtually absent from public spaces such as museums and exhibitions because of their low visibility in society in general.

The material produced in *Migrating Memories* was rather different from that of the *Rosengård* project. Instead of counter-stories, the focus was on items that were associated with memories from the home country and from the past: that is, the participants' childhood and youth. The stories underlined what was missing, such as close relationships and nature, but also traditions such as music and food (MM 2005).

As mentioned above, presenting migration and cultural diversity is not an easy undertaking. However, by focusing on objects rather than ethnicity, the museum was able to avoid ethnicization and the 'othering' of migrants and ethnic minorities. Maja Povrzanović Frykman's research (Povrzanović Frykman 2013; Povrzanović Frykman & Humbracht 2013) confirms that such an approach is a viable way of avoiding such issues, and she suggests that focusing on objects and material culture might be helpful in avoiding the notion of ethnicity as a decisive factor in migrants' lives. Furthermore, the focus on objects and memories in *Migrating Memories* contributed to a transnational outlook, in that it recognized the migrants' lives and experiences in their 'countries of origin'.

This inclusive transnational perspective was very beneficial for the project. However, it should be noted that the initiative for *Migrating Memories* once again came from 'above'. Malmö Museums, along with several other museums, sought funding from the EU's Culture 2000 programme. The ideal outlined by Clifford (1997) of a museum functioning as a contact zone involves collaboration throughout a diverse civil society, not solely among creative curators. It is easy to conclude that this ideal was not achieved in this project.

## The Roma project

In 2001 Malmö Museums started a project with the main objective of establishing a national museum for the various Roma groups living in Sweden.<sup>4</sup> The first initiative for such a museum came from a Roma association, which contacted Malmö Museums about the matter. However, the museum's decision to launch the project was also preceded by the formation of a new Swedish minority policy,<sup>5</sup> democratization attempts by museums in



general, and a new internal policy for documentation at Malmö Museums that advocated a more inclusive approach (MM n.d.j).

Participation and collaboration, according to Malmö Museums, were key words in the Roma project from the outset. With respect to efforts made by the museum to engage the participants in the planning and steering of the project, the Roma project was more successful than either Rosengård or Migrating Memories. It was run by a project leader – a curator appointed by the museum – who was accompanied by a steering team and a working team. The former consisted of representatives from both the museum and the Roma community and was chaired by the head of Malmö Museums (MM 2011b). The latter consisted of representatives from the museum and various Roma groups: Swedish Roma, Finnish Roma, non-Nordic Roma, recently arrived Roma, and travellers.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these groups, a female reference group was constituted in 2002 to counteract the male domination of the working team. With hindsight, the curator regarded handling the issue of female representation in this way as problematic. She also added that the women's team was somewhat 'on the sidelines' of ordinary activity. Nevertheless, according to the curator, the women's team delivered much more than the male-dominated working team (MM 2011b). One reason for this could be the internal conflicts that divided the main working group.

The main conflict arose from different opinions on the question of representation. The minutes of the meetings reveal frequent quarrels about which groups should be represented and in what numbers, resulting in several resignations. The protocols also include many discussions on whether the representation within the working group should correspond precisely to the Roma subgroups listed in the Swedish minority policy, or if it should be based on other considerations. For example, one conflict arose between Roma groups that have long resided in Sweden and more recently arrived groups. Moreover, some participants in the project accused others of misappropriation of funds and stealing ideas (MM n.d.h).

The curator acknowledged this problem, but emphasized that the conflicts eventually faded away. In her view the conflicts arose when the focus was on the upcoming museum and its staffing. Furthermore, she said they were best understood as a form of resistance against the way in which the majority population attempted to place other people into various categories (MM 2011b).

The museum was obviously well intentioned with this project, which involved various Roma groups continually in the planning and steering processes. However, the way it handled the issue of representation created problems. The objective was that the participants should represent the specific Roma subgroups. The museum arguably created a kind of mini-parliament (without an election), and in so doing shifted the focus away from the important work of establishing a Roma museum and towards individual groups safeguarding their own interests with respect to influence, money and jobs. The conflicts were seemingly exacerbated by the fact that the museum chose to work with the categorization of the various Roma groups established by the state authorities, instead of asking the Roma communities themselves for their opinions. The problems of representation in this project could be seen as variants of those highlighted by Mary Stevens (2007) regarding collaborative projects; many stemmed from the subgroups' fear of not gaining equal or adequate recognition in the planned Roma museum.

However, although the project did not function perfectly, it was significant that the various Roma groups were enthusiastic about participating in it. This can be related to two

aspects that contrast with the other projects: their involvement in the planning of the project from an early stage; and the fact that the initial idea for a museum came from a Roma group.

In 2002 a proposal for a Roma museum was submitted to the government and the Roma project entered a new phase. The focus shifted to collecting information, stories and items to create a sustainable platform for the new museum (MM n.d.j). One of the most important events during this new phase was the exhibition *Roma and Travellers – Beyond Romance and Pain*, whose main emphasis was on the Roma's history and current situation in Sweden. The museum described it as a contribution to showing how Roma history was part of Swedish history (MM n.d.j).

The Roma project had the explicit aim of delivering counter-stories by contrasting the negative presentation of Roma throughout history with positive expressions of Roma viewpoints, cultural expression and heritage. Furthermore, the project aimed to show 'the encounter between a Roma way of life and culture and a non-Roma/Swedish society' (MM n.d.c). *Roma and Travellers – Beyond Romance and Pain* presented stories of the traditional Roma way of life, including such aspects as crafts, songs and traditional occupations, alongside stories of the discrimination suffered by Roma groups. Differences within Roma groups were also highlighted. The curator mentioned that the museum made a distinction between travellers and other Roma at the request of both sides of the group: 'It was important to talk about differences within the group. It was something we dealt with and we made it a part of our story' (MM 2011b).

In contrast with the earlier projects, the Roma project included a considerable amount of traditional ethnographic work with a focus on a particular ethnic group and its history. The museum attempted to draw attention to the new status of the Roma as a national minority and to include them in Swedish history. In many ways, this was an important and commendable effort since the roles played by immigrants and minorities in the creation of Swedish society have often been neglected or scarcely mentioned in the national history. However, with the focus on inclusion in *Swedish* history, the *transnational* history of the Roma largely disappeared. Like many other projects that focus on a particular ethnic group, there was a tendency to portray Roma culture as frozen, essentialized and folkloric. When differences within the Roma groups were displayed they were primarily conceived as differences between two groups: the Roma and the travellers. Stories of change, hybridity and the formation of new identities – regarded as important by scholars like Goodnow, Hall and McGuigan – were rarely mentioned or completely absent.

Significantly, in this project, stories about problems were also missing. According to the curator, the Roma groups above all wanted to display those aspects of their lives of which they were proud: their songs, culture and so on. As the curator explained: 'We ethnologists and cultural analysts wanted to problematize and bring out the difficult things – criminality, drugs, marriage of young women. The Roma did not want to show these things' (MM 2011b). She added that this issue was discussed many times and that the museum came to the conclusion that the Roma had never previously had the opportunity to present their history, so it was understandable that they were reluctant to publicize the more negative aspects along with the positive.

As Clifford (1997) acknowledged, the work conducted in a contact zone could be challenged by unequal power relations within the zone – a problem that was particularly apparent in this project. One objective was to create counter-stories to the more conventional

images of Roma life. To a large extent, the participants did this by creating wholly positive representations of their lives. The museum staff then had the uncomfortable choice of accepting and displaying these sanitized depictions of Roma life or of using their position of power to correct the bias of groups that had suffered a long history of oppression at the hands of authority figures. Eventually, after lengthy negotiations between the museum and the Roma participants, the staff chose the former option. In doing so, the museum came close to acting as a 'post-museum' (Hooper-Greenhill 2000) by challenging the great national narrative of modernity. Here, history is relativized and the floor is given to various groups whose histories have previously been hidden.

### The Living in Two Worlds project

As a spin-off from the Roma project, in 2004 Malmö Museums developed the Living in Two Worlds project, which aimed to develop a travelling exhibition about the current situation and lives of young people belonging to one of the officially defined Swedish minority groups, and, in so doing, make their experiences available to a broad audience (MM n.d.a, n.d.k).<sup>7</sup> In addition, this material was expected to be of use for the planned national Roma museum, and to offer possibilities for discussions concerning the situation of young people, their prospects and their problems in Sweden. More specifically, the project's objective was that the exhibition should be undertaken *with* young people and *by* people from the selected minorities, rather than produced by professional institutions *for* young people.

To avoid the issues which arose in the Roma project, the people selected for the project were not supposed to represent an entire minority, only themselves, in the hope that this would encourage them to relate their individual experiences. Malmö Museums chose to work with people who had something to tell, who could deliver, and who were interested in producing an exhibition (MM 2011b, n.d.a).

When asked why the museum decided to work with three particular groups – Roma, Jews and Sami – the curator said that this was the result of lengthy discussions and that 'these were groups that had been living in Sweden for a very long time ... And they also exist in many other countries. They have a kind of transnational identity, at the same time they are very firmly established in Sweden' (MM 2011b).

There was a stronger focus on hybridity and change in the material produced in Living in Two Worlds than had been the case in the Roma project. It included an interactive exhibition framed by red walls with white corners (a symbol of Swedishness). One of the museum's ideas was that the graphic form of the exhibition should play with traditional Swedish symbols, such as the three crowns, Swedish colours (blue and yellow) and the red cottage with white corners, mixing them with important symbols of the participating minorities (MM n.d.d).

The centre of the exhibition featured three different kitchens that were in some sense typical for the young people of each minority group. The ambition was to depict both similarities and differences between the three minority groups, so the kitchens were equipped with symbols, items and figures with significance for the Sami, Jews or Roma. The contents of the refrigerators were also used as signifiers of difference. According to the curator, despite the differences of the three minority groups, the kitchens primarily emphasized their similarities. For instance, each of the three kitchens included a model of a member of the cartoon

Simpsons family (*Sydsvenska dagbladet* 2006b). The exhibition also contained a ‘music corner’, where music associated with the various minorities was mixed into a single song (MM 2011b, n.d.d).

In this exhibition, as in the previous Roma project, the participants constructed counter-stories to common stereotypes, characterizing the different groups by confronting questions that had their basis in both prejudice and curiosity (MM n.d.b). But the exhibition also produced fictional stories that, to some extent, reproduced common stereotypes, such as that young immigrants often found themselves caught between traditionally oriented parents and their own Westernized ideals. This was also reflected in the title of the project: *Living in Two Worlds*. Yet, overall, the project stressed the similarities between the groups and cultural hybridity in general. It is fair to say that the museum went some way towards engaging young people from various ethnic groups without causing internal conflict or portraying the groups as immured in their ethnicity. However, the project suffered from a nation-state-oriented perspective, with a focus on ongoing identity formations within Sweden. Even though the three groups were chosen partly because of their transnational identities, this part of the story was relegated to the periphery. This was not surprising, given the project’s focus on national minorities.

### **What happened after these projects concluded?**

In general, the museum’s major projects on cultural diversity and migration were initiated at the very beginning of the twenty-first century, several decades after these issues first appeared on its agenda. A similar pattern is discernible in many other Swedish museums around the same time (Silvén 2008: 18). What has happened since then? On the one hand, it could be said that the Malmö Museums’ interest in migration and diversity has declined because it has not initiated any similar major projects in recent years, with the exception of ‘hotspots’ – temporary mini-exhibitions on contemporary issues in which these topics have occasionally been highlighted. Instead of diversity, the museum seems to have concentrated on issues of democracy and free speech. For example, in 2009–10, the museum focused on South Africa, and it has been involved in international efforts to provide safe havens for writers living under oppression. On the other hand, museum staff seem to be increasingly aware of the importance of considering issues of diversity. In documents outlining the objectives of Malmö Museums, issues of diversity and of broadening participation occupy prominent positions. The staff certainly seem to realize that diversity within society is not yet mirrored among themselves, as they are overwhelmingly white and middle class. Moreover, the museum has created a new meeting place called *Globalen*, run in partnership with various NGOs, where the focus is on sustainable development regarding ecological, economic, social and cultural issues.

One explanation for the absence of major projects focusing specifically on diversity could be that it has become more common to include this topic within projects and exhibitions that primarily tackle other issues. This was certainly the case in the museum’s permanent exhibitions at the time of writing (MM 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, n.d.f, n.d.e).

### **Conclusion**

At the beginning of this century Malmö Museums engaged in a number of collaborative projects to explore various aspects of migration and cultural diversity. People with immigrant

backgrounds, minority groups, women, adolescents and children were all involved in the process of documentation and were given the opportunity to contribute their own experiences. Besides giving a voice to previously unheard narratives, the museum went some way towards incorporating the subjects of the stories into the cultural production process itself. In this sense, it made a commendable effort to democratize its activities.

The projects generated many glorifying counter-images – downplaying or even erasing problematic issues – rather than more conventional, problem-oriented presentations. This may have been due to the generally unequal power relations in society. When the participants were given the opportunity to tell their stories, they created versions of their lives that challenged those produced by the social elite. By allowing this to happen, it could be argued that the museum came close to becoming a post-museum (Hooper-Greenhill 2000), in which a single national narrative is challenged by a multitude of stories told by groups previously neglected by museums.

Obviously, the museum means well. To put it plainly, in Spivak's (2004) words, it wants to 'right the wrongs' of earlier times and become an inclusive institution that participates in societal debate. However, these goals were sometimes hard to achieve. The projects were mainly initiated from above and not from a demand for recognition from the targeted groups. And clearly the museum did not respect the wishes of the prospective participants as much as it should have done. To some extent, this can be explained by the environment in which today's museums are obliged to operate. They often have to launch into the time-consuming process of securing funding for their projects at short notice, which frequently leaves little room for discussion and collaboration with external partners. However, the fact remains that when the museum did not listen to the people it wanted to address, the end results were a lack of engagement with the target groups and those groups' consequent reluctance to participate.

At the interviews the museum staff often reflected on the problems they encountered during the projects: for example, they knew that issues arose because they were salaried while the participants were expected to work for free, and because most staff members were white and middle class. Despite their good intentions, a commitment to collaboration and thoughtful curators, the inclusive goals were sometimes hard to realize.

The conclusion is that there are limitations to what a single museum can accomplish on its own. Clearly, the Malmö Museums could pay more attention to the wishes of potential participants before initiating its projects. It could also encourage various ethnic communities to generate more ideas for projects and exhibitions themselves. In addition, it could promote a dynamic definition of ethnicity and culture that avoids ethnicization and the othering of migrants and ethnic minorities and provides room for the representation of hybridity and change. However, if fundamental democratization is to occur within museums, all of this has to be encouraged and supported by the authorities at state, regional and municipal level. As Stuart Hall (2005) suggests, curators and artists from minority communities must be trained and given the opportunity to change museum praxis with their experiences; and, perhaps even more importantly, the state must commit to a vision of society that – to a greater degree than today – is inclusive and culturally diverse.

## Notes

- 1 31 per cent of Malmö's population immigrated to Sweden. In addition to this, 11 per cent were born in Sweden to parents who were both born outside Sweden (SCB 2012).

- 2 The Million programme ran between 1965 and 1974 and aimed to build a million new dwellings at reasonable prices over that period. A huge proportion of Sweden's old housing stock was demolished as part of the programme.
- 3 58 per cent of the population were born abroad, and 23 per cent were born in Sweden but had parents who were both born abroad (SCB 2000).
- 4 Even though this idea was never realized, a local Roma cultural centre (the RKC) has received funding from both the state and the municipality to continue its work and establish a Roma library (Popoola and Söderman 2010).
- 5 During 2000 Sweden ratified two Council of Europe conventions: the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This meant that the Sami (an indigenous people), the Swedish Finns, the Tornedalers, Roma and Jews were all now regarded as national minorities in Sweden.
- 6 The Swedish minority policy divides the Swedish Roma population into these five subgroups. MM regarded it as important that all five should be represented in the working team.
- 7 The project was initiated by Malmö Museums and conducted in collaboration with the Jewish Museum, the Sami Information Centre and Swedish Travelling Exhibitions.

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# 8

## THE ULSTER AMERICAN FOLK PARK AND HERITAGE DIVERSITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

*Karine Bigand*

From the Flight of the Earls in 1607, which saw the last defeated Gaelic lords leave Ireland for the continent, to the current post-Celtic Tiger ‘Generation Emigration’ – to quote a blog/column in the *Irish Times* (*Irish Times* 2013) – emigration has been a major and distinctive element in Irish history. Motifs of exile are recurrent in Irish literature and folklore, even if the recent development of migration studies in Ireland has allowed for a more nuanced vision of the pull and push factors that led Irish people to leave (Miller 1985; Mac Éinrí and Lambkin 2002).

The long tradition of Irish emigration can be traced back to the Irish missionaries in medieval Europe. It also had a military dimension from the sixteenth century, later reinforced when the defeated Catholic soldiers, ‘the Wild Geese’, left Ireland to join continental armies after the Treaty of Limerick in 1691. Emigration could be a matter of choice or constraint, as in the case of prisoners transported to the Caribbean or the Chesapeake region in the seventeenth century. It could be seasonal or permanent and motivated by political, economic or personal factors. In the long history of Irish emigration, the mass emigration wave that followed the potato-blight and consequent Famine of 1845–51 is certainly the best-known episode, not only because of its scale but also because it resulted in long-lasting population decline, a unique phenomenon in Europe (Lambkin and Fitzgerald 2008: 182). A lesser-known episode is the emigration to North America of an estimated 1.5 million people in the century that preceded the Famine, two-thirds of whom were dissenting Protestants from Ulster (Miller 2008: 44). However, despite the ‘persistence of [the] emigration flow from the seventeenth century to the late twentieth century’ (Lambkin and Fitzgerald 2008: 61) and its impact on Irish cultural identity, there is no museum of emigration on the island. In the Republic, the Cobh Heritage Centre in County Cork and the Dunbrody Emigrant Ship in County Wexford are the two main initiatives dealing with post-Famine emigration. In Northern Ireland, the Ulster American Folk Park (UAFP), located near Omagh, County Tyrone, tells the story of the two main waves of emigration from Ulster to North America – the largely Protestant pre-Famine wave as well as the largely Catholic post-Famine one.

The UAFP offers an important case study for its capacity to conjure up opposite terms, such as private/state-controlled, local/national, sectarian/inclusive. Started as a privately run, largely commemorative venture in 1976, it was incorporated in the state-controlled museum sector in 1998. Expanding around the Mellon homestead – the Tyrone home of a local Presbyterian family that emigrated to the United States in the 1810s – it now deals with Irish emigration to America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The UAFP is unusual in comparison to the above-mentioned heritage places that also address emigration in that it combines the pre-Famine emigration to (mostly) rural America with the post-Famine emigration to (mostly) urban America. Because of its initial focus on the earlier wave of emigration, the UAFP has long been viewed as non-inclusive in academic writing, an opinion that seems to be at odds with its growing popularity with visitors and its upgrading to National Museum status in 1998.

In the first fifteen years of its existence, the UAFP more than trebled its number of visitors, from around 36,000 in 1976 to about 114,000 in 1990. Numbers continued to grow over the next two decades, peaking at more than 157,000 visitors in 2007. If anything, the incorporation of the UAFP in the state-controlled museum sector in 1998 brought it under more constraining policy rules regarding cultural diversity and community relations. Yet the academic literature on the UAFP, published over the last twenty years, scarcely acknowledges its efforts to address the interests of the community it serves, often providing idealized visions of what the park should be rather than accurate accounts of what it is.

Using data relating to both the history and the contemporary affairs of the museum, this chapter will try to reconcile what appears to be the paradox of the UAFP's popularity as a tourist attraction and its somewhat unfavourable reputation in cultural heritage literature. It will show how the museum has built on its foundations as a private venture dedicated to the memory of a single family to incorporate a wider narrative of Irish emigration. It will also complement the existing literature with onsite research exploring how the museum countered its intrinsic limitations with initiatives that have made it one of the top visitor attractions in Northern Ireland, as well as a respected education partner and research centre.

## Presentation of the Ulster American Folk Park

The UAFP, which is today one of the National Museums of Northern Ireland, began when descendants of the Mellon family decided to commemorate their Ulster heritage by restoring and opening the family homestead to the public in 1968. Over the next few years, the family acquired more land, through the Scotch-Irish Trust, with the intention of opening an open-air park documenting the Mellons' journey to America. A particular focus was on the success of young Thomas, who was born in the cottage, left for Pennsylvania in 1818 at the age of six, and went on to become a judge and the founder of the Mellon Bank, which still exists today. The UAFP opened in 1976, as part of the commemoration of the bicentenary of American independence. The museum comprises a series of buildings, employing rebuilt original structures and replicas to illustrate the journey of emigrants from the 'Old World' (Ulster) to the 'New World' (America).

The initial layout of the park included very few buildings (see [Figure 8.1](#)). Apart from the Mellon homestead, the only original building was a school, transferred from the nearby village of Castletown. In the Old World section, other buildings included replicas of a forge and a weaver's cottage and, more importantly, a replica of the Presbyterian meeting house



**FIGURE 8.1** UAFP map, early 1980s. Photo Karine Bigand. Courtesy of National Museums Northern Ireland

where Thomas Mellon had prayed as a child. In the New World section, the American life of the family was re-enacted with replicas of the log cabin where the Mellons lived on their arrival and of the large farm and outbuildings they were later able to afford. An early description of the park comments that: 'The New World Site is separated from the Old World Area by a thick belt of tree planting within which visitors are channelled through walled enclosures' (Fulton 1976: n.p.).

Over the years, the park developed further, with the addition of buildings on both sides of the divide (NMNI 2013a). The Old World area now includes seven original buildings, a street of original shop-fronts and four replica buildings, while the New World has five original buildings, one original shop interior, seven replica buildings and a street of replica shop-fronts. The latest addition to the park opened in June 2013: it is the original Tennessee house of the Rogans, a Catholic family who emigrated from Tyrone in the late eighteenth century (NMNI 2013b). The two streets of shop-fronts have been built to replace the thickly planted lane symbolizing the passage between the two worlds. Between them is the replica of an early 1800s emigrant sailing ship, which visitors have to board and pass through to reach the New World.

The original linear narrative that followed Ulster emigrants from their old surroundings to their new ones has not changed in thirty-five years. Emigration in the park is presented as a linear, one-way journey, comprising hardships and constant adaptation to contrasting environments but amounting, on the whole, to improving the emigrants' lives. That this positive representation of emigration did not apply to every emigrant's story was pointed out in an early critical appraisal of the park, shortly after it opened. H. Rex Cathcart, then Professor of Education at the University of Ulster, underlined the fact that the experience of emigration of the Mellons was 'untypical', as they were better-off than many of their fellow Ulster emigrants (Cathcart 1976: 18). To him, the visitor might be misled about the reality of

emigration, because of both the buildings and the contents of the exhibition in the Visitor Centre:

Looking at the two clean, well appointed residences the uninformed might well be prompted to wonder if the migration was worth it. Why did the Mellons go? ...

The Exhibition and the Information Centre need to correct the 'cosy' impression created by the Mellon settlements on the Old World and New World sites. Unfortunately with their emphasis on success they tend to reinforce it. There is a lengthy parade of Presidents, inventors, industrialists, churchmen ... where are the lads that failed for they were multitudinous? ...

Camphill will tend to leave visitors with the 'good news' version of history. This may provide interest, some pride and not a little pleasure but hardly understanding.

*(Cathcart 1976: 18–19)*

As an antidote against this 'good news' version of history, Cathcart recommended solid contextualization of living conditions in Ulster in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which was, indeed, later to be implemented.

### **Review of the existing literature on the UAFP**

Since this short early review, the narrative structure of the park and its initial focus on pre-Famine Protestant emigration have often been criticized in academic writing as ideologically slanted. The main critic of the park has been David Brett, a former Reader in History of Design at the University of Ulster, in three publications on the construction of heritage published between 1990 and 1996 in which he used the UAFP as a case study. Along with other contemporary writers who disparaged the growing heritage industry (Lowenthal 1985; Hewison 1987), Brett considered heritage as a construction and as a threat to history. The UAFP was used as an example of a single-track narrative structure, a concept with which Brett strongly disagreed. In his first analysis of the park, he rejected it as sectarian because:

The experience with which it deals is pre-eminently that of the voluntaristic migrations, inspired in large measures by religio-politico idealism; there is no sense of the beastly poverty that made the later, largely nineteenth century, population movements more or less a necessity of survival; and which were extensively Catholic. This is a partial view of Ulster. I don't object to the partial view provided it is presented as such, openly.

*(Brett 1990: 23)*

Although Brett later acknowledged that the UAFP was 'an attractive place to visit, deservedly popular' (Brett 1993: 189), he still objected to what he saw as its unconsciously constraining narrative. To complete his initial comment on the park, he added:

There is no objection to a partial view provided it is presented as such, openly. But what happens in this instance is that the partiality is inscribed in the very form of the experience, in its topology. Thus it cannot be disentangled from the content.

*(Brett 1993: 189)*

A few years later, Brett devoted a full case study to the UAFP in a monograph, *The Construction of Heritage* (Brett 1996). Elaborating on the two previous articles, he reiterated some of his remarks. The narrative form of the park was thought similar to that of a rite of passage: the passage from the dark ship hold to the light of the American countryside was compared to an experience of rebirth, transforming barbarians into civilized people (Brett 1996: 106, 115). Brett drafted a list of contrasts between the Old World and the New World – stone versus wood, thatch versus shingle, shaggy versus smooth, grazed versus planted, dense versus cleared, ‘natural’ versus rational, ‘picturesque’ versus ‘modern’. While they differ from Cathcart’s ‘cosy’ impression, Brett linked them back to the seventeenth-century Protestant plantation of Ireland, envisaging such contrasts as ‘a reflection of the early Presbyterian concept of Ireland as a “newfound land” to be cleared and planted and made rational’ (Brett 1996: 114). Writing in pre-Peace Process Northern Ireland, he regretted that “‘Ulster” has been imagined as the “Ireland” that still exists in the mind of many Northerners and most Britons’ and argued a better name for the park would be the ‘Ulster-Presbyterian American Folk Park’ (Brett 1996: 114, 115).

In a way, Brett’s harsh view was a product of his time – a time when discredit over heritage matters was common, when conflict-linked sectarianism was rife in Northern Ireland, and when Irish emigration was still often considered the result more of constraint than choice. In such a context, the attempts made by the park’s team in the 1980s to break the single narrative by introducing stories other than Ulster-Presbyterian ones went unnoticed.

As one of the earliest pieces of research giving an Irish-based approach to the concept of heritage, Brett’s interpretation of the UAFP informed most of the subsequent academic writing on the park, including much more recent publications that seem to rely on it exclusively, to the detriment of on-site primary research (Sawyer 2011: 638–9). In 2003, Máiréad Nic Craith, from the Academy for Irish Heritages in the University of Ulster, was influenced by Brett in her assessment of the UAFP’s representation of Irish cultural diversity. She interpreted the ‘wild landscape’ of the first exhibit in the park – a cottage typical of the Sperrin Mountains that would have been common in the decades leading up to the Famine – possibly as designed to reinforce ‘the image of the wild, uncultivated Irish’ (Nic Craith 2003: 179). Conversely, she wondered if the fact that the Mellon homestead is set in ‘cultivated landscape’ could ‘be interpreted as a Protestant reclamation of the neighbourhood’ (Nic Craith 2003: 179). Following Brett’s emphasis on landscape, and without any evidence of further research in the park itself, she concluded that the UAFP failed to achieve a balanced representation: ‘Protestant exhibits far outnumber those relating to Catholics [and] only one tradition is reflected in the post-emigration section reflecting the original purpose of the museum to portray the journey of the Presbyterian from Ulster to Pennsylvania’ (Nic Craith 2003: 180).

In 2005, geographers Catherine Kelly and Cairtriona Ní Laoire carried out on-site research. They visited the park with two groups of final-year geography and heritage studies undergraduate students, one from Northern Ireland and the other from the Republic, and recorded their impressions. Brett’s analysis and list of contrasts had already been circulated among the students during the preparatory classes preceding the visit, so both researchers and students may well have formed preconceived ideas of the park before they arrived. The authors’ concluding remarks confirmed the predicted outcomes of the study, which were in line with Brett’s view of the park: ‘As expected, many of the southern visitor group were surprised at the lack of reference to the famine, which formed a large element of their

migration–education and heritage, whilst the northern group did not reference this issue as much’ (Kelly and Ní Laoire 2005: 79).

The influence of Brett’s interpretation of the UAFP on subsequent research has perpetuated the park’s reputation of favouring one cultural tradition over the other, often regardless of the museum’s efforts to offer an inclusive narrative. Critiques nuancing Brett’s views are rare. In 2003, applying a broad heritage studies approach to the interpretation of the rural environment in Northern Ireland, Brian Graham deemed the UAFP as ‘an essentially neutral resource’, despite Brett’s sectarian reading of it (Graham 2003: 276). He continued: ‘Alternatively, it can be seen as an historically valid attempt to display the ubiquity of the tragedy of emigration to all the peoples of Ireland and to challenge the republican claim to a monopoly of oppression’ (Graham 2003: 276). His conclusion about the role of rural heritage usefully points to the necessity of renewed interpretation in a post-conflict context:

All too often, rural heritage presents an idealised world inadequately grounded in an interpretation of the historical archives and compounded by a failure that those too can be read in different ways. If cultural heritage does play a role in conflict resolution and the deconstruction of binary certainties, then this requires a transformation in the interpretation and representation of the heritage landscape.

*(Graham 2003: 278)*

In my view the UAFP does strive to challenge the binary cultural pattern at work in Northern Ireland through an enriched visitor experience which I shall describe shortly.

To complete this review of academic writing on the UAFP, we must turn to a study of retro-scapes, or landscapes presenting the past, as examples of retro-marketing – that is, based on reproduction of the past (Brown, Hirschman and Maclaran 2000: 146). Having conducted primary on-site research with visitors and museum staff, the authors acknowledged the characteristics and limitations of the UAFP and indeed of any museum experience:

Given the Ulster American Folk Park’s location in the north of Ireland and its remit with regard to the Mellon family, this focus [on pre-Famine Protestant emigration] is only to be expected. In fairness, furthermore, the curators are acutely aware of the gaps in their representations and the accompanying literature goes to great lengths to present a fuller, more nuanced picture. However, there seems to be a resigned acceptance that, in today’s polyvocal postmodern times, it is impossible to control what opinionated customers bring to and get from museums. Prejudices tend to be reinforced regardless of the representations, and pre-existing stories are there to be confirmed rather than challenged.

*(Brown, Hirschman and Maclaran 2000: 164)*

Rather than ‘resigned acceptance’, the phenomenon described here could be explained by studies revealing the essential role of prior knowledge in the learning experience, with the result that visitors will pay more attention in museums to artefacts or narratives with which they are already familiar than to those they know less about, thereby utilizing ‘museums [more] to confirm preexisting understanding than to build new knowledge structures’ (Falk and Dierking 2000: 84). This is an important point to keep in mind, as it suggests that renewed interpretations and myth-debunking can be difficult for museums to achieve.

### Striving to overcome initial limitations

Because they are more general statements than specific studies of this particular museum, critiques of Brett's view offer limited exploration of how the museum has responded to its own initial limitations. Two specificities of the UAFP, namely its origin as a family home and the very nature of its collection, can account for the Protestant slant present in the museum, notably visible in the number of buildings that can be linked to the Protestant or Catholic traditions. They seem, however, to have been largely overlooked in the literature. As hinted at in the above quotation, the original remit of the museum in relation to the Mellon family gave the park its *raison d'être*, its initial funding, its exhibits and its narrative structure. This initial bias towards the family experience of the Mellons and wider Ulster Presbyterian emigration was rapidly tackled through the addition of two original buildings linked to other Ulster emigrants within ten years of the park opening. In 1980, the Hughes Cottage was opened. It was the childhood home of John Hughes, who emigrated in the late 1810s and went on to become the first Catholic Archbishop of New York. Although Hughes's experience was not exactly typical of post-Famine Catholic experience, it was a first step in the expansion of cultural diversity within the park. Then, in 1985, the Campbell House was transferred from nearby Plumbridge. This was the home of two brothers who emigrated in the late eighteenth century. One of them subsequently became a fur-trapper in the Rockies.

A diversity of experiences and backgrounds was therefore represented in the park as early as the mid-1980s, but the Mellons remain the only emigrants present in both worlds. In fact, the difficulty of providing a balanced view of emigration lies largely in the nature of the museum's collection, which consists primarily of buildings rather than objects. This imposes a constraint on the development of the park: not only are original buildings favoured over replicas, but only buildings that are representative of a certain lifestyle in Ireland or America (the Weaver's Cottage or the Log Cabin) *and* are linked either to the area or to local emigrants are deemed suitable exhibits. The fact that most of the buildings in the Old World are from Tyrone or adjoining counties also increases the probability of them having a Protestant background, as Ulster is the most Protestant of the four Irish provinces. In the same vein, when tracing Ulster emigrants to America and linking them to specific houses, it is somewhat easier to find intact original eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century country houses than mid-nineteenth-century urban tenements. Moreover, as transferring a surviving urban tenement or erecting a replica would be a complex architectural operation and prohibitively costly for the museum, the bias towards pre-Famine/Protestant emigration is reinforced, although the recent addition of the Rogan house is a counter-case in point.

Given these limitations, the UAFP could have made the choice to portray *only* pre-Famine emigration. Yet, its archives show the early will and subsequent effort to include Catholic emigration in the park, too (Montgomery 1991: 18). Even before the opening of the Hughes Cottage in 1980, information leaflets and maps handed out to visitors included a 'historical background' section detailing the two great waves of emigration from Ulster, distinguishing them not by the main denomination of the emigrant group but by the labels 'Scotch-Irish' for the first and 'Irish-American' for the second. This distinction was clearly made by Eric Montgomery, then director of the park, when he announced the opening of the Hughes Cottage:

With the addition of the Hughes cottage, we can now tell the story of both waves of emigration. As it happens, the Mellons left Ulster for America at about the same time as John Hughes left with his father, but the Mellons were at the end of one great wave of emigration and the Hughes family at the beginning of another.

*(Irish Times 1980)*

The local newspaper used the same rhetoric – possibly copied from UAFP press releases – when reporting on the actual opening of the cottage a few weeks later:

The completion of the Hughes house enables the story of the 19th century Irish-American emigration to America to be told in the same way that the 18th century Scotch-Irish emigration is portrayed by the Thomas Mellon farmhouse and other buildings.

*(Ulster Herald 1980)*

In 1994, the next specifically Catholic building to be re-erected was the Tullyallen Mass House, donated to the park by the Catholic parish and priest (UAFP 1994). As mentioned earlier, the first exhibit in the outdoor park today is an original one-room cabin from the Sperrin Mountains. Typical of the poor dwellings in nineteenth-century Ulster, it is called the ‘Famine Cabin’ in some of the museum’s literature, highlighting the connection with the largely (but not exclusively) Catholic post-Famine emigration. It was re-erected in the park in 1996 as part of the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Famine (UAFP 1995, 1996).

Buildings re-erected in museums have been considered to carry a different meaning than traditional museum artefacts. For instance, Stephen Mills, commenting on the UAFP, argues that ‘buildings that are authenticated both by the museum-controlled history of their trans-Atlantic movement and by their original size suggest not an exhibition artefact but the real thing. This is the artefact-image as both signified and signifier, an unmediated image’ (Mills 2007: 113). Yet, the visitor’s experience and understanding of the outdoor exhibits is not limited to the buildings alone. The slant in the proportion of buildings that tell Protestant stories is counterbalanced by the presence of costumed interpreters, who attend to visitors in most of the buildings throughout the park. Their role is to tell the story of the building, its provenance and its inhabitants, and why they may have decided to emigrate. Going beyond the traditional binary distinction between the two waves of emigration, they build on the recent trends explored in migration studies and focus on the push/pull factors that led to migration. One guide explained how the people in the Log Cabin or in the Weaver’s Cottage, regardless of their ethno-religious background, were pushed out of the country because of the Famine or the industrialization of the linen industry, how the Mellons were pulled out because some of their family had already emigrated, and how the Campbells were not searching for a better life but rather for adventure. As a result, the visitor’s interpretation of the buildings is never fully unmediated and the multiple-voice experience on offer is not so much about two cultural traditions as about three categories of migrants, focusing on shared experiences across the sectarian divide. This approach contributes to the ‘deconstruction of binary certainties’, to use Brian Graham’s phrase, which is also at work in another outdoor National Museum, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in Cultra (Buckley 1988). The focus on the push/pull factors for emigration and the division of the migration



experience into three phases – leaving/passage/adaptation to new environment – are not only present in the outdoor exhibition but also inform the indoor exhibition, thereby contributing to the cohesion of the whole museum.

The current permanent exhibition, entitled *Emigrants – Two Centuries of Emigration*, opened in 1994 (UAFP 1994). Although it is hardly mentioned in any of the academic literature written about the park, it provides a balanced and detailed view of the two waves of emigration. Its four sections document individual experiences of prominent local emigrants, the pull and push factors for emigration, the conditions during the voyage, and the adaptation to new environments. The titles of the second and fourth sections – ‘Failure and Opportunity’ and ‘Survival and Prosperity’ – suggest contrasting experiences as well as the will of the museum to provide multiple narratives. This is clear from the very first exhibits at the entrance to the gallery – a juxtaposition of a statue representing eighteenth-century emigrants and a poster representing nineteenth-century emigrants arriving in New York after the erection of the Statue of Liberty (Figure 8.2).

Like the costumed interpreters in the outdoor buildings, the indoors exhibition moves away from the initial distinction made in the park’s literature between the two waves of emigration – Scotch-Irish and Irish-American – to focus on personal stories, regardless of the emigrants’ background. When individuals or communities are not clearly identified, only the period can lead the visitor to decide what community was most likely to have been concerned by the situation described. Rather than providing parallel narratives of the two waves of emigration, the aim of the exhibition is to address the phenomenon of emigration from Ulster as a whole, as well as its impact on places and people. It is inclusive rather than exclusive. Its focus on personal stories is expressed in the concluding panel of the ‘Failure and Opportunity’ section:

As we have seen, broad social and economic forces and change formed the essential backdrop of two centuries of emigration but it is important to bear in mind that every individual migrant has his or her story to tell.

Personal factors were often important in shaping the decision to leave although they are often not as well documented as agricultural crises, religious discrimination or rising rents.

Family or neighbourhood disputes, debt, drink or simple depression could all play a part in making up the emigrants’ mind.

The final section of the permanent exhibition focuses on Ulster emigrants’ contribution and adaptation to life in the USA. It addresses one of the shortcomings of the outdoor exhibition by discussing urban migration in the later part of the nineteenth century at length. A reconstructed tenement is on display, complete with cramped bedroom, dirty linen and snoring migrants. Classified ads for cooks or private tutors, discriminating against Irish emigrants, are also presented. Finally, a short film on Irish migration to New York underlines the squalid living conditions by quoting Dickens’s alleged remark that ‘the Five Points make New Delhi look like paradise’.

The same focus on personal stories and experiences is used in the current (at the time of writing) temporary exhibition, *Titanic: Window on Emigration*, on display until March 2014. Like several other Northern Irish museums in 2012, the exhibition marks the centenary of the *Titanic*’s maiden voyage. However, rather than focusing on the ship, as is done elsewhere,



**FIGURE 8.2** Entrance to the *Emigrants – Two Centuries of Emigration* exhibition. Photo Karine Bigand. Courtesy of National Museums Northern Ireland

it concentrates on the fate of the 113 third-class Irish passengers who boarded in Cobh – then known as Queenstown – in County Cork. The migration process is once again divided in three phases, with panels entitled ‘Leaving Ireland’, ‘Life on Board’ and ‘Life after *Titanic*’ and the national dimension of the migration phenomenon – as well as of the loss of life – is strikingly conveyed by two maps charting the counties of origin of migrants and survivors (Figures 8.3 and 8.4). The denomination of the passengers may be mentioned in the short biographies on display in files and in the cases, but it does not serve as the only defining factor for those who departed.

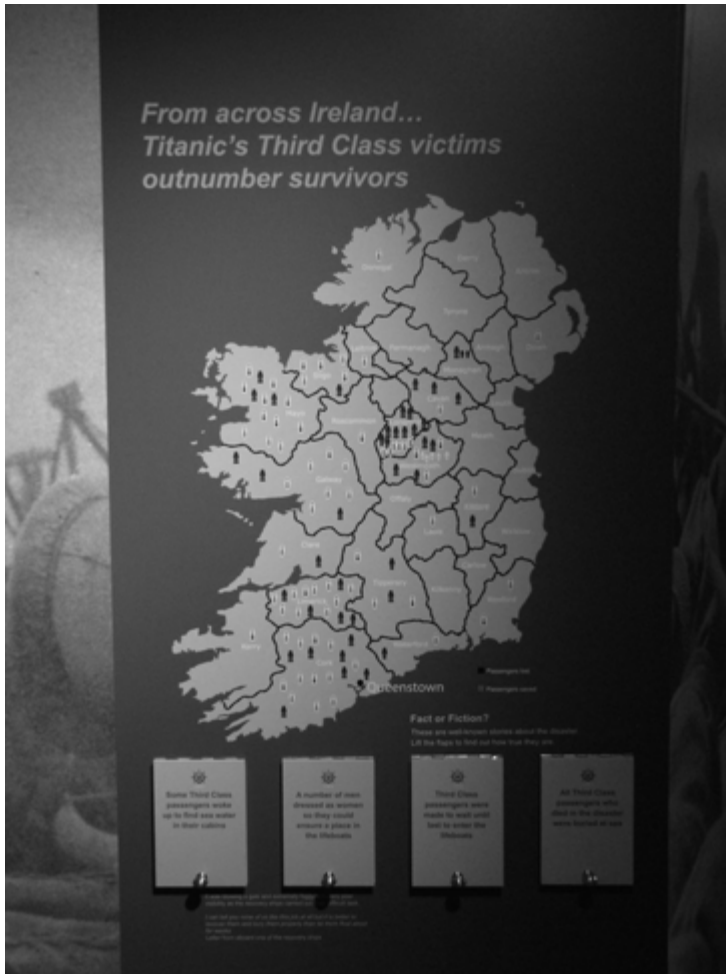
The examples given so far of the reality of the organization of the park and its exhibition show emigration from Ulster as a complex phenomenon as well as the efforts made by the staff to treat it as such, despite the inherent shortcomings of the collection of buildings. This seems to be a recipe for success, since the park was the third most visited museum and



**FIGURE 8.3** Maps – *Titanic* migrants and survivors. Photo Karine Bigand. Courtesy of National Museums Northern Ireland

eleventh most popular visitor attraction (excluding parks and gardens) in Northern Ireland in 2011 (NITB 2012: 15). Moreover, the park is also strongly rooted in the community it serves, as an employer of local people since its creation and through the convivial popularity of its annual special events – 4 July, the Bluegrass Festival and Halloween.

An analysis of the UAFP and its take on cultural heritage and diversity in Northern Ireland would not be complete without a look at its education programmes for schools. The park launched programmes in ‘Education for Mutual Understanding’ and ‘Cultural Heritage’ in the early 1990s, when these two themes were introduced in the curriculum of state schools in Northern Ireland (UAFP 1991; Smith and Robinson 1996). Since then, the educational offer has diversified and it is now tailor-made for primary and secondary levels, in both Northern Ireland and the Republic. Activities are designed to comply with the various curricula (UAFP 2011a). For instance, the ‘Emigrant Journey Re-enactment’ is recommended for pupils aged nine or ten, as it addresses the ‘World Around Us’ section of the Northern



**FIGURE 8.4** Maps – *Titanic* migrants and survivors. Photo Karine Bigand. Courtesy of National Museums Northern Ireland

Irish primary curriculum and the ‘Life, Society, Work and Cultures in the Past: Life in the 19th Century’ section of the primary curriculum south of the border. Similarly, the ‘Early American Frontier’ programme fits in with the ‘Eras of Change and Conflict: Traders, Explorers and Colonizers from Europe’ in the Republic. At secondary level, the ‘Emigration 1815–50’ programme is recommended for the junior cycle in the Republic as it deals with ‘Social Change’ and for Key Stage Three pupils in Northern Ireland, as part of the ‘Developing Pupils as Individuals’ objective. With a residential centre available onsite, the UAFP can also organize longer workshops and bring together school groups from different backgrounds. For instance, a two-day residential programme on ‘Flight from Famine’ is offered to pupils aged ten to twelve from both sides of the border. Both waves of emigration are therefore included in the learning programmes, but the focus, as in the rest of the park, is on personal experiences. Learning programmes for the over-fifties are done through the ‘Live and Learn’ scheme, common to all Northern Ireland National Museums. A recent

project, focusing on oral history and reminiscence, led to the film *Moving Lives*, a juxtaposition of stories from Irish emigrants and new migrants to Northern Ireland (UAFP 2011b).

According to John Gilmour, former education officer then director of the park, academic credibility was always one of the objectives of the UAFP from the outset. A former history teacher, he insisted in an interview that every effort was made from the beginning to develop the park as a museum where research could be carried out, rather than as a theme park (Gilmour 2011). This was done from the 1980s through the development of a library and an emigration database, both accessible to all visitors, as well as a Centre for Emigration Studies, all under the auspices of the Scotch-Irish Trust of Ulster. When the park became a National Museum in 1998, the centre was renamed the Centre for Migration Studies (CMS). It remained under the management of the trust, with various partner institutions represented on the management committee – Queen’s University, University of Ulster, Department of Culture and Leisure, Libraries NI and Enterprise Ulster. The CMS is located in the building adjoining the Visitor Centre and its mission is ‘to serve the community as a leading international institution for the study of human migration, focusing on the peoples of Ireland worldwide’ (CMS 2011: 7). It works in close collaboration with the UAFP and provides solid academic background for the interpretation of the park through publications (Lambkin and Fitzgerald 2008), public events, collaboration with local universities and its ever-growing database. It welcomes researchers and visitors interested in tracing their Irish roots, thereby giving their experiences of the park a further dimension.

This overview of the services provided by the UAFP shows it is far more than a collection of buildings and therefore should not be judged as such. Moving along and with Northern Irish society, its interpretation of Irish emigration has evolved in the last thirty-five years and now focuses on individuals rather than groups, thereby providing a more accurate and less stereotyped portrayal. The promotion of the park to National Museum status in 1998 raised its profile and attracted a growing flow of visitors (Bradley 2011: 13). The park was awarded the NITB’s Visitor Attraction of the Year award for 2008 (NMNI 2010: 6). Becoming a National Museum also made the UAFP more directly accountable to legislation and policies involving museums. Its remit is clearly defined in the Museums and Galleries (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 (part II, article 4) – which states that it must ‘generally promote the awareness, appreciation and understanding by the public of ... the migration and settlement of people with particular regard to the heritage of Northern Ireland’. The UAFP was also affected by the Northern Ireland government’s ‘Shared Future’ good relations policy, which stressed the need for museums to represent the cultural diversity, past and present, of their local area and address the interests of all the communities they serve (OFMDFM 2005: 33).

The activities and resources described in this chapter show the museum has satisfactorily fulfilled such standards, often even before they were established. The presence on the same site of the CMS, following a similar vision of ‘an informed community, confidently and creatively engaged with its migration history, culture and heritage’, should help the park to fulfil its future ambitions (CMS 2011: 7). The long-term aspiration, endorsed by the Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland (the former name of the National Museums of Northern Ireland) in 2004 (MAGNI 2007: 10) although currently on hold due to budget restrictions, is to become an all-Ireland national museum of emigration (Gilmour 2011). This goal certainly indicates the inclusive vision and academic rigour of the staff at the UAFP regarding Ireland’s heritages.

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# 9

## A MUSEUM OF OUR OWN

*Susan Ashley*

### **Museums, globalization, multiculturalism**

Museums have historically been formally and informally used to express versions of citizenship. The kinds of knowledge that are represented in museums about community and citizen membership involve a particular vision, a ‘social imaginary’, in the words of Charles Taylor (2002), or an imagined community, according to Benedict Anderson (1983). A social imaginary enables the systems and practices of a society by narrating a sense of it – it is a shared idea about the nature of a community brought about through communal discourse. Representations through social institutions are key to the imaginary’s perpetuation, but, like representation itself, these are imaginary; that is, works of creation and communication.

The representation of social imaginaries expressed through museum practices can be examined from two perspectives – in the formalized measures of the institutions and in the informal activities and interactions of community members (Ashley 2005). In the first, museum institutions represent and authenticate official statements about identity and belonging, legitimizing versions of a state’s or a community’s history, what is accepted as heritage, who belongs to that heritage and who has membership and status within a community. At the informal level, museums serve as spaces in the public sphere for social gathering and exchange, and meaning-making and dialogue that might diverge from those formally presented by the institution.

Contemporary museums are under considerable pressure to change the ways they address the relationship between identity and citizenship in response to social, cultural and economic processes of globalization. Global flows of people and ideas have necessitated a change in how the social imaginary of a nation is conceptualized and presented, and the character of the publics involved in the sociality of museum spaces. Museums have been called on to democratize their constructions of identity, heritage and community, to represent social and cultural differences as well as homogeneity, and to broaden their functioning as public stages for citizen participation. Other chapters in this book document the varied ways that museums have attempted to democratize representation within globalization by engaging with topics of



migration, immigration and multiculturalism. Accomplishing this form of museum democratization has been difficult in practice.

Farago and Preziosi (2009) write that institutional displays about global movements of people and multicultural national identities have tended to be conceptualized and organized within two models or approaches. The first they term a 'nativist' approach that emphasizes the celebration of essentialized, culturalized group identities; the second reflects neo-liberal ideas of everyone's identities as diverse, transitory and hybrid (Farago and Preziosi 2009: 1). They use the New Zealand exhibition *Te Maori*, which toured globally in 1984, as an example of calculated utilization of the nativist perspective about group identity and sense of heritage. The second approach is widely employed in museum exhibitions about immigration, for example Pier 21 in Canada or the Australian Journeys gallery in the National Museum of Australia, each of which emphasizes cultural flow and cosmopolitanism (Ang 2009). Both of those exhibitions invoke messages of a shared heritage in diversity, that 'we are all equally settlers in this land'.

But neither of these models acknowledges who is holding the power to represent in these cases, or the relative subject positions of those represented and those doing the representing. Museums have been slow to comprehend this unstated power dynamic. Who is doing the representing when multi-cultures are exhibited? As Bernadette Lynch (Chapter 4, this volume; 2011) has noted, practices of social inclusion in museums initiated and led by practitioners from the dominant culture (despite deep collaborative processes) tend to treat members of minority cultures as 'beneficiaries' of museum attention, not agents with power. This limits the perception of what ordinary people are allowed to contribute, or what they are entitled to know and decide, and avoids the fundamentally political nature of the interactions.

There has been substantial scholarship about the need to shift the power dynamic in museums, suggesting that institutions should function less from the first perspective suggested above – as transmissive sites for authoritative knowledge of dominant cultures – and more as democratic forums for engaging multicultural communities and co-creating knowledge. Such a democratic shift in museum positioning would entail *less* of the idea that museums reach out and include others to ensure that visitors participate, and *more* of the idea that people will assert their own agency, and make their own choices in the way they use culture, history and heritage as a resource. This would invoke, for Farago and Preziosi, a third model that is neither nativist nor neo-liberal, and instead creates an 'interstitial space' advocated by Homi Bhabha (1994) that accommodates resistance, flexible subjectivities and power sharing. Here, individuals or groups that self-present may use essentialized identities or hybrid identities, but do so as a strategic cultural claim on the domain of the political (Robbins and Stamatopoulou 2004).

This chapter explores the latter idea – how minority cultures, particularly immigrants to Canada, have acted as cultural agents on their own terms within interstitial spaces to make political claims. In this instance, ethnic communities bypass mainstream museums, and instead express their ideas about heritage, identity and citizenship by creating museums of their own. Museum-making and in-public practices of exhibitioning have become one form of media by which immigrant communities make sense of their new world and changing subjectivities, as well as strategically assert their voices in the public sphere. My interest in this phenomenon was spurred when studying an exhibition on black history in Canada, shown at the Royal Ontario Museum in 2000, which was created through a collaborative process with an

African-Canadian committee (see Ashley 2011). The reaction to that study by a Latin American scholar in Canada was: 'I am interested in museums: *we* want to have a museum of our own.' What spurred this impulse to which he referred – *we* want to have a museum of our own? Who was the 'we' in this instance, and why did he use the phrase 'of our own'? How and why would groups of people aspire to create and use museums? This scholar seemed to have strategic interests in mind – museums used as public statements for ethno-cultural purposes – but he himself clearly performed a cosmopolitan subjectivity.

This chapter offers two case studies of immigrant communities who have used museological practices in this struggle to self-represent. It explores the manifestation of a people's sense of heritage when their lives are disrupted or marginalized, and they have moved as emigrants away from their country of origin. It also considers the ways that museum-making practices have enabled and restricted their revisioning of self, community and citizenship in their new countries.

## Heritage and citizenship

Both the concepts of heritage and of citizenship are parts of the social imaginary that underpins personal and collective identities. Both concepts are used as identity-indicators of membership in states (political entities with geographic boundaries) and in nations ('whole way of life', cultural or ethnic group formations). Heritage encompasses the foundational assemblage of traditions, ideas and things from the past that a nation or a state wants to pass on to future generations (Hall 2000). Citizenship is typically used as a marker of someone's status within a state, and to describe the formalized practices related to certain rights and duties within that state (Isin and Wood 1999). Both heritage and citizenship are invoked in disputes over membership in these community formations, identifying who belongs and who does not. So the potential politics of both words is important, and public statements and in-public positioning made in places like museums wield significant power. The historic role of national museums, for example, has been to construct and make public official statements about heritage, thus giving an official stamp of legitimacy to particular versions of heritage, but also to legitimize particular versions of citizenship.

Heritage is an imaginary in relation to the past, used by people to give meaning to their identity – a complex of values, symbols, meanings and relationships which, importantly, is an affective process. It appeals to an emotional sense of historical cultural legacy that contributes to present-day identity and a sense of communally shared signification of aspects of the past, but also represents a desire to colonize the future with those meanings (Ashworth 2008). Heritage is used on both individual and communal scales, and is framed both as process and as 'things'. The emotional and imaginative use of heritage can be seen as both a conscious and unconscious process. Heritage can be understood as a particular historical construct we intentionally build, but also as the unarticulated background or part of the cultural baggage we carry around with us. Not a 'thing' that 'is', but an unconscious environment or a background noise that is normalized in the present, and a building block in the development of personal identity. It is possible to think of heritage as one part of Tony Bennett's (2006: 52) 'logic of culture', the process of working on and transforming the self that arises from the ongoing tension between the unconscious traditions we inherit and the self-conscious efforts we make throughout our lives to strive for individuality. Deciding what parts of these unconscious traditions to keep and pass on between generations becomes an emotional decision about choices.

On a collective level, self-conscious efforts to construct identity might embrace and project a particular version of heritage or tradition. It is here that the potential politics of heritage becomes important, where public representations about heritage, such as those in museum exhibits, have particular meanings. So heritage in its collective form is then about power. Laurajane Smith (2006) argues that heritage is a cultural and political practice that does work in the present, especially socially to legitimize or to exclude individuals and cultures. It is a reflection of power structures, an instrument in the exercise of power, and, as Ashworth (2008) points out, a colonization by power structures into the future. So choices – political choices – are made as to what is included and excluded in the communal articulation of heritage, including membership or citizenship status.

Both heritage and citizenship continue to be linked to *place*, particularly to bounded nation-states. But Ashworth *et al.* (2007) write that heritage is often mistakenly interpreted as physical locations that possess inherent qualities, a ‘sense of place’ that bestows identity. Instead, official designation of places as ‘heritage’ should be seen as a symbolic territorial claim – a signification of meaning by which a state or community declares ownership of a particular location. Ashworth *et al.* argue that much social and political identification has no particular need to be rooted in a particular place. Identity, community and heritage are capable of being ‘de-rooted and re-rooted’ as people reconfigure their relationship to time and space.

Thus it is interesting how this imaginary called ‘heritage’, used by people to define a collective identity and also citizen membership, changes when place can no longer be assumed as an identity-marker. When people have moved as immigrants to a new location far away from their country of origin, they are removed from both political places and places to which they may have attached heritage significance. How do they redefine their identities, their place in community, their sense of heritage, and how might they contribute to broader discussions in Canada about identity, heritage, citizenship and museums?

In this [chapter two](#) museum-related projects, each undertaken by minority cultural groups in Canada, are presented as ‘interstitial spaces’ of heritage and citizenship. The motivations behind the undertaking of these projects, how these communities express the projects’ relationship to their ideas of identity and heritage, how the projects are used as a medium of communication to transmit ideas and values, and in what ways the projects articulate citizenship and politics in the new location are all discussed. The two communities investigated reflect two groups of minority immigrants in Canada: Indo-Sikhs and Latin Americans.<sup>1</sup>

The first case study is the Gur Sikh Temple museum in Abbotsford, British Columbia, a historic Gurdwara which is still actively used as a religious temple. The museum opened in 2011 in a historic building designated as a Canadian National Historic Site in 2002. It was researched, planned, co-produced and consumed by Sikh-Canadians, descendants of early twentieth-century economic migrants. The second case study is the Museo Solidaridad, created in the early 2000s in Toronto. This museum was generated within the Chilean community to capture and reflect the history, experience and trauma of Chileans in the context of the struggle for democracy in Latin America. It is a less typical museum-like form, more focused on intangible heritage and programming.

In both cases museum-making by these minority groups appears to have both inward-looking educational and socializing functions and external orientations, making public statements about broader belonging. The museum sites were used to demand recognition, assert membership and claim rights in the present, as well as to project a legacy or testimony or

colonize the future with their perspectives. The groups' museum-making appeared to use and rework heritage as a space and a practice that expresses citizenship on a performative or rhetorical level identified by Farago and Preziosi (2009: 2) as 'nativist', but also on a deeper, more contextualized, meaning-making level. Each reflects a different manifestation of this process – one an attempt to present a strategic public face that fits into the official national heritage of Canada, the other presenting a more multi-layered and activist approach that questions or challenges mainstream culture in Canada.

### **Gur Sikh Temple museum, Abbotsford**

The Sikh community in Canada emigrated from the Punjab in north-west India, where they were a religious minority, from the turn of the twentieth century onward. They viewed themselves at the time as an entrepreneurial, military-serving and agrarian landowning class of British subjects travelling to a fellow-colony. But they found a hostile environment in Canada with labour exploitation, prejudice about their cultural beliefs and practices, and discriminatory laws (Buchignani, Indra and Srivastava 1985). The Canadian government in the first decades of the twentieth century, for example, passed laws to restrict immigrants from Asia, and banned wives and children from joining their husbands (Buchignani, Indra and Srivastava 1985). The construction of the Gurdwara in Abbotsford, British Columbia, was a collective effort by these pioneering immigrants from the Punjab, completed in 1911. Sikh settlers raised funds for the property, situated on a high point of land in the centre of town, and encouraged the local sawmill (where most of the men worked) to donate lumber. The wood-frame temple became the spiritual and physical centre of the community, with a first-floor prayer room and a ground-floor community dining hall.

One hundred years later, more than half of the million or so Indians of the South Asian diaspora in Canada are Punjabi-originating Sikhs. Canadian Sikhs in British Columbia are now less worried about sheer survival and have become an affluent middle class (Bhargava *et al.* 2008). Thus the museum organizers – including university, business and community leaders – have a fairly unified desire to present their community as successful and prosperous. By establishing a new museum, the organizers wanted to dispel myths about their heritage, present a story not told in mainstream museums, and assert its legitimacy as part of the national Canadian historical narrative. But the positioning of heritage that has resulted is highly selective, with a particular – positive – framing. The museum builds a linear settlement narrative from impoverished arrival through to economic and even political success in Canada; it represents mainstream perspectives on Punjabi history; and it celebrates the arts and culture of Canadian Sikhs today. But this exhibitionary public face tends to mythologize, rather than dwell on, continuing difficulties of the present. Racial tensions, for example, tend to be historicized to the past, when Sikh pioneers first arrived in Canada.

This positive framing suggests Farago and Preziosi's 'nativist' category of institutional display, but with the minority group as the agent of representation. Power rests with the cultural group itself in relation to the dominant external culture, but the identity expressed is for public consumption. This dynamic has been theorized by anthropologist Andrew Shryock (2004) as the difference between 'in-public' culture and 'insider' culture. He maintains that in-public cultural forms are identity performances constructed in order to protect the private side of a culture from outside attention and possible invasion. Cultural representations project a performative public identity which he calls 'Identity 1' or 'mainstreaming', which

legitimizes a culture within the broader national identity, bringing status and assuring economic prosperity. Shryock theorizes an 'Identity 2' behind the performative display as that informal, behind-the-scenes place where community members can be themselves, where new, seemingly unsavoury immigrants reside; and where internal identity differences are prominent.

Identity 1 and Identity 2 clearly came into conflict within the celebrations in 2011 that included the opening of the Sikh museum, attended by an audience of thousands of community members and Canadian Prime Minister Steven Harper. During the Vaisakhi festival and parade, there was blatant exhibiting of portraits of Indian Sikh extremists on T-shirts, posters and parade floats in Abbotsford and nearby Surrey, but not within the museum. The movement for an independent Sikh state in India, ongoing since British rule in the mid-1800s and inflamed by partition in 1947, has deep-rooted support in Canada, and not without violence. The devastating bombing of an Air India flight in 1985 has been attributed to Canadian Sikhs. Whether they are terrorists or heroes is a deep argument within the Canadian Sikh community, and there is a continued presence of radical Sikh elements in British Columbia's Lower Mainland area, of which Abbotsford is a part (Armstrong 2012). The identity of some members of this community has evolved within a broader, transnational formation, where heritage is signified both in present everyday life and in imagined allegiances with ideals in past homelands.

Museum organizers, however, felt the subject of Sikh extremism had no place in their new institution. But they and the museum might well have to devise a strategy for how to deal with this Identity 2 part of their heritage. Because of its public nature as a public platform, although organizers might want to maintain a purely mainstream and celebratory image, external elements may demand that the museum address more controversial subjects. The museum is situated within an active Sikh temple that serves as a community centre; thus, trying to separate the mainstream from the gritty, the politically correct from the passionate, will be difficult. But this in itself is an inherent problematic of democratization: while the Sikh museum enables new voices and self-representation on the scale of the Canadian public sphere, who gets to speak publicly *within* the museum space is itself subject to unequal power relations and may become an issue for internal interrogation.

## Museo Solidaridad

The Solidaridad museum took a different tack. It was developed by a group originally from Chile. Most Chileans in Toronto fled their homeland in the wake of the Pinochet military coup in 1973. Arriving as refugees, they brought their political convictions and social activism, as well as a strong sense of community because of their left-leaning ideology. Transnational practices have continued to be strong here (back and forth flows of ideas, money and visits), perhaps because of the wealth and intellectual status of these immigrants. Those I interviewed expressed a sense of heritage in terms of roots or culture that was passed down to them – language, attitudes, values, stories, memories and arts. Ancestors or bloodlines figured prominently. Most seemed quite willing to divorce the idea of heritage from any notion of a land-base, perhaps an effect of being uprooted. One respondent, interestingly, differentiated between heritage as 'matrimony' and heritage as 'patrimony'. The former, for him, was a 'kith and kin' sense that is part of personal heritage, or the idea of home not necessarily in the sense of a place, but more like 'in the bosom of my mother'. On the other

hand, he defined ‘patrimony’ as a sense of material heritage linked to ‘fatherland’ – a history, land, wealth and what the respondent called ‘the right to control’ linking this heritage to formal institutions and power.

The idea of the Solidaridad museum was partially to serve as a community focal point, but also as a political centre for Latin Americans in Toronto. In the words of the museum director, here they wanted to ‘appropriate the museum form to give power to the Latin American community and to validate it through museum-style authority’. ‘Solidarity’ is the name of the museum because that is its intention: to maintain and perpetuate political solidarity with Chileans and other Canadians, and to create a legacy to pass on to future generations. Heritage in this case is viewed as having the particular political use of trying to maintain activism. The organizers said they wanted to create a forum, a ‘contact zone’, returning to the past using different forms of art and storytelling, and, importantly, hoping to encourage new, multiple and divergent perspectives about ‘heritage’.

The museum has launched activities and events with supplemental exhibitions in transient locations, employing narratives that focus on political and group-identity messages. For example, it used quilt-making to tell stories about the Allende and Pinochet regimes in Chile, where teens, participating in this traditional craft, heard important testimonies from the past. Also, though, the quilts *they* made became part of an exhibition about the past and future political activism in Canada. The group also felt that museum programmes could not only build solidarities among Latin Americans but also contribute to and build Canadian activism and political participation (or, as one said, ‘keep the political fighting spirit alive in Canada’). Moreover, the museum maintained continual links with cultural groups in Chile and some connection to other transnational activists, displaying a concerted desire to maintain a political and cultural diasporic connection.

### Similarities and differences

While both of the above cases relate to museum- and heritage-making among immigrant groups, there are differences as well as similarities in their approaches and attitudes. Both projects have at their core histories of trauma within their migrations and in their settlements in a new land. Both have integrated refugee narratives and subjectivities into their ideas of heritage. Narratives moved beyond heritage as a place-based identifier and sought other means of signifying the past. Both cases are single-voice museums that might be considered isolating, in terms of participating in the broader public sphere (Brown 1993). In each, the exhibitions focused on storytelling, a portable medium that can hold and transfer a sense of heritage more effectively than place or even ‘things’ – there were no collections and few objects in either museum. They voiced a sense of heritage that focused on the immaterial, which incorporated personal stories, songs and ‘ways of doing things’, rather than on ‘thingness’ or materiality. But in both cases, *creating* concrete manifestations of heritage that embodied their ideas or values became important to the group or community as a strategic act – an exhibit, a museum, solid things as a legacy for future generations.

Interestingly, both projects employ festivals as a key part of their public offerings through the museums. Scholars have analysed the role of festivals as ‘staged authenticity’ in relation to heritage tourism (Chhabra *et al.* 2003: 702) and in relation to ‘shallow multiculturalism’ (Sandercock 2004:156). But in both of these cases, the ethnic festivals appeared not as simple, celebratory stagings, but as assertive, in-your-face declarations of material presence. Festivals,

like museum structures, work to reinscribe geography, both as an embodied process and by staking a territorial claim that might transgress official lines and places. In these case studies, mobile, transitory festivals worked together with the more permanent museums-as-legacy, but also in reactive opposition.

Both groups shared a concern that they were constituted and marginalized by race by other Canadians. The terms 'Sikh' and 'Latin American' are themselves generalizations that signal racial difference. Neither of these is a homogeneous group, but they tend to be constituted as such by the government and other Canadians. The Canadian government imposed 'Sikh-ness' on the Gur Temple National Historic Site by assuming it was dealing with a unitary racial community, and it expected committee members to speak for Sikhs as a group, even though internal differences – which are clearly evident in festival displays and the press – are a normal condition of any group formulation. The Chileans found themselves constituted as 'Latin American' especially within the funding policies of the Department of Canadian Heritage. This 'othering' process of identification has been acknowledged by writers in various countries (Piper 1998; Mahtani 2002; Veronis 2007), and in Canada it is sometimes linked to the effects of the national multiculturalism policy, which brackets people into nameable groups, then trivializes them as bearers of certain simplistic cultural rites, such as food and dress (Henry 2002).

But it is in the differences between these two groups that I see possibilities for connecting their activities to new citizenship processes that are not just about status and formal procedures, such as voting. Formally inscribed ideas of what constitutes citizenship are very often linked in nation-states to particular fixed representations of heritage. Isin and Wood (1999) instead describe a layered conception of citizenship as an active and ongoing process and relationships by which individuals and groups struggle for *rights*, rather than a set of formal procedures. I found that both kinds of citizenship were reflected in the heritage-making displayed in these two case studies: on one hand, heritage as a status indicator of nation-state citizenship; and, on the other, heritage invoked as a part of minority struggles for recognition *in* and active contribution *to* the shaping of Canada.

The Gur Sikh Temple case study hinged on the first: this group wanted to show themselves as a sanctioned part of existing narratives of 'Canadian-ness', and they historicized and culturalized any problem areas with a celebratory focus on stories consigned to the distant past. On the other hand, Solidaridad articulated the desire to build political solidarity among different players, and, further, to use heritage and creative arts as a process for political action within their new country. Putnam's (2000: 21) distinction between *bonding* and *bridging* social capital is relevant in these different practices of citizenship: bonding interactions are 'inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogeneous groups', whereas bridging interactions are 'outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages'. The committee that produced the Sikh museum avoided dissent in their attempt to seek status within the existing social imaginary by reinforcing a positive identity and historical narrative.

Conversely, Solidaridad might be seen as a site for heritage practices that could be considered bridging – those that draw in different members of Canadian society (other Latinos, Anglos, Chileans), seek out new ways to make claims, but more importantly facilitate struggles for dissent and political expression of citizenship. Solidaridad is also an excellent example by a minority group of people to make the museum a dialogic 'contact zone' in James Clifford's (1997) use of the phrase, as opposed to the Sikh community's reliance on a static

transmission of ideas about heritage and citizenship. Thus the two cases reflect divergent approaches to citizenship within these museum-building projects: ‘mainstreaming’ a public face in one case, and asserting power and rights in the other.

Notwithstanding these differences in the political nature of the projects, I cannot discount the fact that the producers and organizers in both cases evinced a strong sense of personal engagement with heritage – and citizenship. Those who were committed and engaged emotionally with these museum-building projects developed wider social networks and communities of practice, participated more fully in the political decision-making for ‘their’ communities, and experienced deeper forms of belonging and nuanced senses of heritage than peripheral players and audiences. Thus, I would suggest that the very action of making things public within these projects generated richer levels of social and cultural capital for those who were actively committed to them, both within their minority communities and in wider society. It was not just the representational end product – the museum or exhibition – that was significant for the practice of citizenship in these cases, but the *process* of creating these heritage projects. So, while the public faces of these museum projects – the exhibits that audiences see – may be viewed as two different ways of defining group heritage and expressing group citizenship, on a personal level new imaginings and engagements with heritage, and new dynamics of citizenship, had a significant impact on those with hands-on involvement in museum-making.

Thus, these two examples represent the complexity of museum-making. On one side, the objective was to engage with heritage and citizenship as part of and in relation to existing imaginaries of Canada. On the other side, it was more of an assertive process where engagement and creative behaviour resisted old imaginaries and proposed new relationships. But that was not the only result. Museum-making processes exemplified here can also be seen as useful parts of a cultural toolkit when it comes to expressing and debating both identity and membership in a community. What was important was not necessarily the end result – the exhibit or programme – which, by its nature as a communication medium, tends to be fixed in what it can present or perhaps engages individuals only at a single point in time. In fact, those fixed end results can sometimes have detrimental or unintended effects. Rather, processes seem key here – the idea of ‘making’ rather than ‘representing’ as the positive knowledge-building and citizen-building connections that museum spaces and practices can offer.

## Note

- 1 The director of each museum was interviewed to collect background details and motivational information.

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# 10

## IDENTIFICATION, HYBRIDIZATION AND AUTHENTICATION

### Representing the heritage of migrants in four cultural institutions of Sucre, Bolivia

*Tamara Glas*

The rich heritage of the historic centre of the Spanish city of Sucre (La Plata) is an excellent, intact and well-preserved illustration of the architectural blending achieved in Latin America through the assimilations of local traditions and styles imported from Europe.

*(ICOMOS 1990)*

This description of the architectural qualities of Sucre's city centre in the ICOMOS report on its inclusion in the World Heritage List underlines how the encounter between the Spanish conquistadors and local populations gave birth to a new style through the blending of different cultural practices now valued and considered meaningful for humanity as a whole. This 'encounter', however, also led to the domination of populations that today still struggle for equality, nearly two centuries after the independence of the country in 1825. Bolivia as a whole and the city of Sucre in particular have witnessed political conflicts that are rooted in the colonial history of the country. These conflicts have exposed the white urban elite to indigenous claims (Le Bot 2009, Barragan 2007, Franqueville 2000). They have similarly exposed what remains of a colonial paradigm regarding the recognition of a culture based on a different social structure where the *ayllu*, the Andean community and main organizational structural unit in Quechua and Aymara cultures, plays a major role (Rasnake 1988, Franqueville 2000). The present tensions arose principally in the 1990s during a neoliberal era under governments bringing new but limited political rights to what Hale describes as the 'permitted Indian' (Hale 2006; see also McNeich 2008). Rights given to indigenous populations were limited to specific sectors only, and were non-negotiable in others. This ignited the protests that eventually led to the election of Evo Morales in 2005, the first indigenous president in a country where 60 per cent of the population consider themselves of 'Indian' descent.

Morales's political agenda has been marked by a struggle against poverty, the redistribution of land, and the drafting of a new constitution recognizing indigenous rights, thus opposing what he refers to as 'internal colonialism' (Caceres 2006). In political terms he has thus attempted to fight against the social inequality inherited from the country's colonial past

(Do Alto and Stefanoni 2008). But, as Saïd (1979) showed, destroying the colonial paradigm is not only an issue of politics or economy but is also based on cultural, philosophical, or psychological needs. Moreover, this need for cultural recognition in a post-colonial setting, rather than being the recognition of an indigenous culture that contributed four centuries previously to the creation of the hybrid architectural style that characterizes Sucre's city centre, is also the recognition of a present-day hybrid culture where changing identities make for new subject-positions that emerge through the interweaving of elements from the colonizer and the colonized (Bhabha 1994).

In the case of Latin America, Néstor García Canclini's book (2010; first published in Spanish in 1989) offers a critical analysis of modernity, underlining how the process of hybridization contributes to framing cultural practices in this specific geographical context. His ideas are still relevant today. With respect to heritage, he advocates the deconstruction of a ritualized hegemonic system and suggests instead taking into account the way new representations of the past emerge from hybrid reinterpretations of tradition (Canclini 2010). This chapter is an attempt to investigate how four cultural institutions in Sucre interact with these new representations.

Central to this question is, of course, the issue of identification. Authors like the sociologist Claude Dubar (2000) offer insight into what he calls a 'crisis of identities', demonstrating how the identification strategies we adopt for ourselves, both in the narratives we construct and in the ideas we choose to defend, gradually come to challenge the identities traditionally constructed by others. This phenomenon is reflected in the museum world by the new museology, a movement which seeks to allow communities to participate in constructing their own narratives instead of obliging them to be defined by institutional experts (Van Mensch 1992, Watson 2007, Desvallées 1992 and 1994, Assunção Dos Santos 2010). Dubar's work seems to draw from Jonathan Cullen's analysis of identification in the literary context, where he also demonstrates how identities are constructed by different forms of identification. For Cullen, concepts like the agency of the subject or subject-positions depend on the way identification is understood and how different narratives compete with each other. What is at stake is not so much the actual content of these narratives as the different registers of identity on which they are based and in which choice or determining forces are understood differently (Cullen 1997).

Returning to the Bolivian situation, such concepts as culture, hybridism and identity are all understood as dynamic entities, creating a challenge for a government breaking with the integration policies of former governments such as Sanchez de Lozada's (1993–7; 2002–3) and with the fundamentalist movement of Felipe Quispe, whose political party (MIP) sought to defend indigenous 'purity' and rose to prominence in parallel with Morales's party (MAS), but did not achieve its success (Lavaud and Lestage 2006). Indeed, Morales's new constitution (2009) defines Bolivia as a 'multicultural state', which implies recognition of the existence of several cultures within Bolivia's borders. It also refers to a vision of 'Indianness' understood much more 'openly' (Le Bot 2009), including peri-urban mixed-race populations or migrant populations that break with the traditional image of the 'Indian' as a rural peasant. And yet, the government does not seem to present a clear position in terms of its cultural policies (Le Bot 2009, Do Alto and Stefanoni 2008). It seems, for instance, that NGOs continue to fight against poverty using ethnic criteria, disregarding urban and mixed-race populations for not being 'Indian enough' (Lavaud and Lestage 2006: 54).

This ambiguous situation poses a challenge to institutions focusing on the representation of Bolivian identities, such as museums. However, it is also an opportunity for them to play a crucial role in social change. In her sociological analysis, Corinne Delmas (2011) argues that the concept of expertise and its role in science have gradually been reinterpreted over the past decades. She argues that with the deconstruction of the 'positivist myth', the authoritarian position of the expert has been challenged by the rise of the individual as decision-maker and expert of his/her own life. The heritage field is no exception to this phenomenon. Museums' authority (Bennett 2002, Karp, Mullen Kreamer and Lavine 1992, Ashley 2005, 2006), their temple-like form and their function in maintaining social order (Bourdieu and Darbel 1966) have all been questioned, and now they are also being reinterpreted as places where democratic participation and power-sharing are made possible. As Kaplan puts it, 'after two decades of much "museum bashing" in print as colonialist, racist, maleficent, misogynist, and even irrelevant institutions, there is a new emphasis and search to redefine the museum in the twenty-first century' (Kaplan 2006: 166).

This redefined museum, often referred to as the 'post-modern museum' (Hooper-Greenhill 2000), is mainly characterized by its new action within society. Thanks to the complex relationships it constructs with its communities (Watson 2007), it becomes a place to build social capital, it fights against social exclusion, and it expands into sectors such as health, education and urban planning (Crooke 2007). This new museology allows the museum to 'shape ways of seeing beyond its walls' (MacDonald 2006: 6) and strives to transform the excluded into participating decision-makers, thus adapting to the changing definition of expertise in society and evolving new identification strategies. It is seen as the space where different and dynamic interpretive communities come into play with each other (Hooper-Greenhill 2000) and where heritage can be seen as a 'process of re/construction of cultural and social values and meanings' (Smith 2011: 39). Consequently, museums have become battlegrounds in heated societal debates. 'Debates over who is authorized to speak for whom, and about what, have created a sometimes disquieting and sometimes exhilarating dialogue over the politics of representation', explains Steven Dubin (Dubin 2006: 479), commenting upon the role museums have come to play in 'culture wars'. One of these debates is the issue of post-colonialism.

In 1997, James Clifford published a now-famous piece shedding light on this changing role of the museum in colonial and post-colonial debates. He presents museums as 'the space of colonial encounters' (Clifford 1997: 188) or as 'contact zones', a concept he borrowed from Marie-Louise Pratt (1992). According to Clifford, museums should be considered as places where 'ongoing relations' are established between colonizer and colonized. Central to this concept is the idea that here again issues of power and domination structure the way authenticity and identity are authoritatively defined. But museums may also become places where these relationships can be re-read, where 'more than ever before, curators reckon with the fact that the objects and interpretations they display "belong" to others as well as to the museum' (Clifford 1997: 209), thus illustrating the approach of the new museology.

Clifford's idea has been extensively commented upon in contemporary literature since its publication (Purkis 2013, Schorch 2013). Andrea Witcomb (2007) has, for instance, considered the limits of an interpretation of this idea as only allowing community groups to represent themselves, arguing that the museum could also be considered as a community in itself or as part of a community. Criticism also emerged, claiming that projects trying to create this kind of dialogue could in fact perpetuate the museum's domination (Boast 2011).

The danger lies in inviting participants to do exactly what the museum wants them to do, thus recreating the pattern of domination that was supposed to be abandoned. Contemporary literature on the subject also suggests strategies or provides examples of good and bad practice regarding how museums can better approach the question of the colonial pasts of the societies they serve. Susan Ashley, for instance, deals with these issues in the Canadian context, illustrating the changing role of museums and their relationship to First Nations through examples such as the Royal Ontario Museum and the Canadian Museum of Civilization (Ashley 2005). Another example is the recent article by Edwards and Mead (2013) analysing the use of colonial photographs in British museum displays, focusing on the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum in Bristol.

Some museums have become famous as examples of good practice for challenging old preconceptions by implementing innovative methodologies, such as Te Papa in New Zealand (Schorch 2013, Beier de Haan 2006) and District 6 in South Africa (Rasshool and Prosalendis 2001, McEachern 2007). As for bad practice, the recent exhibit *Exhibitions, l'Invention du Sauvage* at the Quai Branly Museum in Paris has been widely criticized, as Lotte Arndt's (2012) article documents. However, apart from several cases in Mexico, few articles tackle examples in Latin America, which seems to have been neglected in this mainly English-language literature (even though, as Canclini shows, it represents an extremely interesting context in which to think about such issues). This chapter is an attempt to contribute to filling this gap by presenting four examples from Bolivia that allow us to reflect on the contrasts between scientific museology and new museology in a post-colonial setting and in a specific political context.

This study describes the representation of migrants from the countryside – *campo* in Spanish – to the city of Sucre. It explores the migrants as a specific – although heterogeneous – group for whom this hybrid culture is all the more important as the members of the group physically move through cultural influences. It is based on the observation of four institutions offering four different authentication and musealization methods of presenting Bolivian heritage that include or exclude hybrid forms of heritage brought about by migrant populations. A more specific post-colonial perspective would be a valuable and worthwhile approach for future research on this subject. At this stage, this study only attempts to compare different museological approaches within the same context with a particular focus on authentication methods.

Indeed, the *Nara Document on Authenticity* (ICOMOS International 1994), the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003) and the Yamato Declaration (UNESCO 2004) all testify to a major reflection on heritage and the authentication of mobile traditions and living cultures. The Yamato Declaration concludes that the term 'authenticity' is inappropriate for qualifying intangible heritage and that it can only refer to tangible heritage, while several authors argue that the separation between the two is somewhat artificial (Deacon *et al.* 2004, Smith 2011). Another position, taken by Bernard Deloche (1999), involves defending the idea that all heritage preserved by museums becomes inauthentic as it is necessarily the substitute of itself as soon as it is taken from its primary context. In practice, the study by French sociologist Nathalie Heinich (2009) of the values used to 'construct' heritage shows how authenticity is both a central value and a term that is often troubling and shunned. Inspired by these works reflecting the complexity of authentication processes, this chapter focuses on living traditions related to material culture in Bolivia and the methods that are chosen to define what is authentic and what is not. The particular

case of Sucre demonstrates how defining the authentic elements of a culture can be an opportunity for debate on the meanings of heritage, thus laying bare the performative dimension of authenticity.

The study is based on a series of semi-directive interviews carried out with the directors and staff of the major cultural institutions of Sucre between March 2008 and April 2009, four of which were selected to be presented here: La Casa de la Libertad (a historical museum), MUSEF and ASUR (two ethnographic museums), and AMB (an NGO manufacturing a line of couture based on traditional patterns). In each case observations were also made within the institutions. This means that the sources are not drawn directly from the migrant population itself but are considered through discourses produced by the museums, and that the evaluations, when they exist, are only those of the museums. Further investigation would require an anthropological approach beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, conclusions can still be drawn on the methods used by the museums.

### Migrations and conflicts in Sucre

Before focusing on the chosen institutions, I feel it is worthwhile to present some background information on the social context and the recent conflicts that have occurred in the city of Sucre.

Sucre is the fifth-largest city in Bolivia and the country's historical and official capital (Bolivia 2009), still conserving the judicial and constitutional powers it inherited from the colonial past. The Spanish city was founded in 1538 and was developed to house the important administrative structure necessary to manage the exploitation of the nearby mines of Potosí. Evidence of this past is particularly noticeable in the architecture of the city, as described in the ICOMOS report quoted above, and is a source of pride for many inhabitants (Le Bot 2009: 205). Situated at an altitude of 2750 metres in the Altiplano plateau, the city is also the capital of Chuquisaca, one of the nine regions that constitute the Bolivian national territory. With its central position, Chuquisaca is geographically located on the frontier between the states of the Altiplano, which are pro-Morales, and the lower states of the Media Luna, which claim autonomy.<sup>1</sup> Chuquisaca's role as the place where the controversial new constitution was drafted in 2007–8, the symbolic importance of its colonial past and its intermediary location between the Altiplano and Media Luna explain why Sucre witnessed racist violence during the period when this study was undertaken. An unfortunate example of this was the beating and humiliation of dozens of men from the *campo* on 25 May 2008<sup>2</sup> in the main square of the city, with symbols of their traditional culture publicly burned (Martinez, Platt and Rivière 2008). This took place with the participation and consent of elected representatives, including the president of the university and mayor-to-be Jaime Barrón (Brie 2009). Barrón was later arrested. The brutality of the attacks created a shockwave that made neutrality almost impossible and increased demands for a public debate. Some historical and ethnographic museums, like ASUR (the Foundation for Anthropological Research and Ethno-development) and MUSEF (the National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore), as heritage institutions, believed they had to react, although others remained silent.

At the heart of this situation is an opposition between the representation of rural and urban ways of life. Contrasts in language (Quechua versus Spanish), clothing (traditional versus Western), religion (Christian mixed with Andean cosmogony versus Christian), political



FIGURE 10.1 Bolivia. Map Tamara Glas

system (communitarian *ayllu* versus individualist democracy), ethnicity (majority of Quechua versus Spanish descent) and so on make for a cultural dichotomy accentuated in the contemporary period by decades of economic inequality and a lack of urban planning (Deler 1993) that has polarized the two groups. Moving to the city is therefore often experienced as a cultural shock, and, especially for young migrants, makes defining one's identity difficult. Among other examples, Marco Coysara, the director of Ñanta, one of the cultural centres helping child workers, interviewed in February 2009, described the way many migrant children would often change their clothes and refuse to be addressed in Quechua when trying to integrate in the city, thus denying their rural origin in order to escape racist aggression (Glas and Hargrave 2011).



Now with 280,000 inhabitants, and like most Bolivian cities, Sucre has known a strong increase in population largely due to inter-city migration, rural exodus and rural-city temporary migration (OIM 2011, Mazurek 2008, Franqueville 2000, Cortes 2000). Annual growth was 4.3 per cent in 2001 (Arreghini 2011), and 62.4 per cent of the population of Chuquisaca lived in urban areas according to the same census (Vargas 2005). A large number of people from the Quechua communities of the countryside surrounding the city have indeed either moved permanently or commute to the city (Dory 2007). Compared to surrounding countries, this phenomenon is relatively recent in Bolivia; it was largely triggered by the closing of the Potosí mines in 1985 (Franqueville 2000: 55). Moreover, the number of temporary migrations, during which members of a family move to the city for only a few weeks to sell products from the *campo* or work small jobs (*empleada* (maid), *cargador* (carrier)), created a situation in which having two residences is typical for Bolivian migrants (Mazurek 2008, Franqueville 2000). Indeed, the 'most important migration remains in the nearby cities, which allow them to keep a cultural and economic link with their place of origin' (Mazurek 2008: 5).

The relationships these migrants maintain with their own culture are therefore very complex. Migrants are thus confronted with an image of indigenosity that has changed over the past decade as urbanite migrants 'are changing their habits and a large number of people are choosing to identify themselves as indigenous even if they do not live in an indigenous community or speak an indigenous language' (McNeich 2008: 49). At the same time they face an aggressive and polarized opposition between urban elite and rural indigenous people, which triggers racist violence. In the light of these social changes and as they adapt to the city, they are forced to face a hybrid representation of their own identity comparable, to a certain extent, with what Bhabha (1994) describes in India. Moreover, following Canclini's analysis of modernity, Bolivian sociologist Franz Flores shows that this hybridization is also a problem. According to Flores (2006), although traditional indigenous culture may still be acceptable in Sucre for a stigmatizing elite as part of the conventional image of a 'good Indian', hybrid culture is not accepted:

The conventional vision of what is popular consists in seeing the indigenous or the ethnic as a static entity that should be protected from the 'contamination' of modernity and thus converts the popular into a museum piece ... It is evident that this analytical perspective does not allow one to explain the process of blending and hybridization that popular cultures go through under the influence of modernity and globalization.

Understanding whether and how this hybridization is taken into account by cultural institutions and specifically museums in Sucre leads to understanding the role these institutions can play in the social changes and political tensions witnessed throughout the country.

#### **Four examples of cultural institutions and their relation to the migrant and rural communities**

The first of the four examples selected is La Casa de la Libertad (House of Freedom), a former Jesuit university where the independence of Bolivia was proclaimed in 1825. It is situated on the main square of Sucre and became a historical museum after legislative power was transferred to La Paz in 1899. La Casa de la Libertad displays objects, especially portraits

and furniture, in historical rooms, demonstrating through key figures (King Charles III, Marshal Sucre, Juana Azurduy) the history of the country's birth, with its principal emphasis being on Bolivia's gaining of independence. It is a rather traditional institution mainly targeting foreign and Bolivian tourists and offering a few special events, such as concerts of Baroque music. The second museum is the ethnographic museum of Sucre, MUSEF, created in 2004. This is a local branch, with its own director and programmes, of the national ethnographic museum in La Paz, which houses the collections and organizes the main exhibitions. Although it does not use the term in its promotional literature, MUSEF for the most part applies the principles of new museology as practised in English-speaking countries (Assunção Dos Santos 2010), aiming for accessibility and participation and seeing itself as an educational centre, with children and youth among its main target groups. The third example, ASUR, is a hybrid institution, comprising a foundation, a museum and a shop, which focuses on the traditional weaving of indigenous communities around Sucre. Its mission is the preservation of intangible know-how, the exhibition of indigenous culture, and the development of an economic element through its shop. This institution can be seen as implementing 'Latin'<sup>3</sup> new-museological methodology and it can be defined as an ecomuseum. Although it does not deal with *all* the heritage of the territory, it does concentrate on territories where Jalq'a and Tarabuco communities live. It values an important part of their local heritage and empowers them by using their traditional weaving as a basis for economic development and social change, thus reflecting Rivière's definition of an ecomuseum and Varine's theoretical writings (Rivière 1989: 142, Varine 1978). The final example is an NGO that works with migrant women producing a Bolivian line of couture created by Sonia Aviles, the director, using traditional patterns the women have learned to embroider. It could be argued that this is an ecomuseum too, as groups of women use some of their traditional know-how as a basis for solving their problems and gaining social consciousness (Varine 1978, Delarge 2001, Desvallées 2000).

A threefold investigative approach was used to assess each institution:

- 1 Focus on accessibility by asking if the museum is accessible to migrants. Are they part of the audience? Is the museum in contact with them?
- 2 Assess representation by asking if migrant populations are represented in the exhibitions of the museum. What characterizes this representation? Is hybridism also part of this representation?
- 3 Examine participation and agency by asking if the migrants participate in the activities of the museum. Do they have a say in how their culture is represented? Are they given the opportunity to define what is authentic in their culture?

Based on the answers to these questions, the conclusion attempts to describe methods and authentication patterns that may enlighten each museum's strategy.

### **La Casa de la Libertad**

The way La Casa de la Libertad presents itself makes it more than a museum where visitors can learn about Bolivian history through a collection of historical objects. According to its director, Mario Linares Urioste, interviewed in February 2009, it is a 'civic' museum, implying that the objects displayed teach visitors about both history and what it is to be a

Bolivian citizen. Objects are referred to in its mission statement as ‘relics’: that is, objects that have a sacred dimension. This element shows that the museum, as the memorial of the proclamation of Bolivian independence, sees itself as a patriotic institution. Its vision confirms this perception: ‘To strengthen and promote Bolivian identity, maintaining and defending the historical and cultural values of society.’<sup>4</sup> This vision raises questions as to what Bolivian identity is, whether it is defined as multicultural (as the new constitution suggests), whether the question of hybridism is tackled in the way post-colonial scholars have argued, and whether the ‘cultural values of society’ are seen as open and debatable issues. The presence, representation and participation of migrant and *campesino* populations seem necessary to ensure that Bolivian identity can be represented in its various aspects in one of the major colonial buildings of the city centre.

Unfortunately, La Casa de la Libertad does not collect specific data on the numbers of migrants and *campesinos* who visit. During the interview, Mario Linares Urioste explained that, according to the museum’s statistics, 30 per cent of visitors were from Chuquisaca; he claimed, moreover, that *campesinos* did sometimes visit ‘from very faraway places’. This second claim is not verifiable. When asked if the museum had a policy to reach out to these populations, he proudly presented a special programme for people from the rural areas entitled ‘La Casa de la Libertad va a los barrios marginales’ (La Casa de la Libertad goes to the peripheral/poorer areas). The title seems inappropriate given the connotations of the word ‘peripheral’ (not socially integrated, minority, sidelined) and creates the impression that little thought was put into it. The *barrios* that were mentioned during the interview were cities such as Yotala and Tarabuco, both rather touristy places and easily accessible by bus from Sucre. In addition, this programme, which was the only one addressing this issue, represented less than 0.4 per cent of the museum’s yearly budget. In terms of content it merely included the organization of exhibits outside the museum: taking knowledge to the outskirts in a rather paternalistic way.

While the extent of indigenous populations’ contact with the museum’s exhibits is uncertain, their absence from its walls and showcases was indubitable. Although numerous rooms presented the history of Bolivia’s independence, none tackled the question of ethnic diversity or the role of the Indian populations in the struggle for freedom. However, after this study was carried out, a refurbishment project was drafted for 2014 to include indigenous history in La Casa de la Libertad (Donoso 2012), finally recognizing this as a major lacuna. The director said this project would be undertaken ‘in order to create a process of solidarity, of multicultural union, so that the museum can be an inclusive museum’ (*El Diario* 2011). It is difficult to say whether this is a strategic break with the museum’s policy of 2008–9, or whether the elements described here, such as the programme for *barrios marginales*, marked the very beginning of this new direction. During the interview conducted in 2009 Linares explained that the museum ‘is absolutely apolitical. It does not have any political reference nor does it claim to have any ... Since it is a civic temple we do not take stands on any political opinion.’ The presence of a banner on the museum’s gate a few days prior to the vote for the new constitution in 2009, featuring the words ‘Vote No’, therefore seems rather inexplicable.

Thus, La Casa de la Libertad seems to have an ambiguous political position and tends to present a version of Bolivian history where ethnicity does not exist. The museum’s proposed new project may go some way to addressing this issue. However, the director still seems to be standing by the temple-type approach (*El Diario* 2011), which implies that the



**FIGURE 10.2** La Casa de la Libertad shortly before the vote for the new constitution. Photo Tamara Glas

participation of representatives of migrant hybrid culture remains outside the museum's main agenda for the time being.

## MUSEF

MUSEF, the National Museum of Ethnography and Folklore, is based at two sites – one in La Paz, the other near Sucre's main square in the city centre. The institution was founded in 1925, but the Sucre branch only opened in 2004 in order to expand the museum's activities. MUSEF-Sucre depends on the La Paz museum for storage and exhibition design, but it has its own budget to run the museum and organize events. It offers two permanent exhibits (the gallery of traditional masks and an exhibition on Uru-Chipaya culture); temporary

exhibitions; an auditorium where visitors can view educational films on demand from a catalogue; and special events such as openings, workshops for children, and film screenings. At the time when the interviews were held, the museum was undergoing changes in direction and visitor policy. Ana Maria Lema, its new director, had just taken up her position and MUSEF-Sucre was attempting to reach out to its local community. Its vision is: 'MUSEF aims to make Bolivia a place where cultural diversities can be expressed freely and can generate spaces of intercultural encounter in which this diversity can strengthen our country.'<sup>5</sup> This vision clearly takes into account the multicultural aspect of Bolivian society (emphasized by the use of the plural 'diversities') and strives to make it a positive and enriching element for the country. How does MUSEF attempt to achieve this goal?

As with La Casa de la Libertad, the museum does not collect specific data on migrant or *campesino* visitors. The main target groups are primary and secondary school children, who visit either on their own or in groups, including groups of migrant children from the nearby Ñanta NGO. In collaboration with this educational centre, the museum organized a temporary exhibition of masks created by the children as part of a workshop in spring 2009, thus demonstrating the will to include local migrant populations as visitors, and to encourage their participation in the museum's activities and allow them to express themselves through their objects. The masks were inspired by the permanent exhibition on traditional Bolivian masks, which was presented in a theatrical and aesthetic display reflecting the diversity of expressions and rituals related to Carnival throughout the country. The second, much more didactic, exhibition presents dioramas, showcases and panels illustrating the characteristics and way of life of the Uru-Chipayas, a small minority that is said to be one of Bolivia's oldest cultural groups. None of these exhibits directly addresses the issue of hybridism or migration, although clearly the masks can constitute a basis for discussion on comparing cultures, and the Uru-Chipaya exhibit triggers thoughts on cultural difference and indigenous communities. Indeed, several elements show that the museum is willing to engage in discussions on present identities and aims to reach out to the communities for participation. When interviewed at the museum in March 2009, Ana Maria Lema described her approach as follows:

What I am interested in with MUSEF-Sucre is not only to show Bolivia because the function of the MUSEF is to show the cultural diversity, the cultural richness, the cultural heritage of the whole country, but also to serve as a display for what is going on in Sucre and in the provinces.

How this display will be built remains unclear, but Gustavo Aguilar Salvador, coordinator at the museum, whom I interviewed in December 2008, suggested MUSEF would 'go outside the four walls' and work with villages in the *campo* to build what he called a 'community museum'. As yet no concrete projects have been implemented in Sucre, though. Back in 2008, only La Paz had started making contact with some indigenous communities, and a specific methodology had not been formulated, as Aguilar's comments made clear. Focusing more specifically on the racist conflicts that had taken place in Sucre, Aguilar described the role of the museum as 'a space of dialogue, to preserve respect for the other'. Specifically, the museum's position was expressed in its increasing interest in the local community. Aguilar believed that the conflicts were above all a local issue, and that MUSEF's mission could be achieved through the organization of seminars on themes such as 'civic participation' and 'community justice'. But here again, there was no specific methodology to implement this

idea. Nevertheless, organizing a screening of Jorge Sanjines's film *La Nación Clandestina* to celebrate the fifth anniversary of MUSEF-Sucre's foundation may indeed be interpreted as a political initiative. Sanjines, an independent Bolivian film-maker, is one of the major intellectual figures supporting the struggle of the indigenous populations of Bolivia. His film provides the viewer with 'insight into the changing structures of indigenous communities in the Bolivian Andes' (Restrepo 2011). This is achieved through the story of a migrant who returns to his village after being sent to the city as a youth and then faces a crisis of conflicting values in the *ayllu*. Although at the time Sanjines was the president of the main cultural institution financing the museum and his film was presented for its cinematographic qualities and to generate international recognition, the subject it tackled was evidently linked to the tensions that arose in Sucre in this changing context.

To sum up, MUSEF seems to be starting to position itself as an instrument for local communities, and it is trying to gain its public's trust by showing that it is open to dialogue. Because of the recent nature of the projects, no thorough evaluation of them has yet been carried out and their ideas lack methodological explanations. An increase in visitor numbers does seem to indicate some success; however, it remains to be seen what the museum will do to attract more visitors in the future. The future might also mark an evolution in how adult migrant populations and hybrid culture make their way into the galleries, something which as yet is not the case.

## ASUR

The final two projects can arguably be defined as ecomuseums in the sense that the construction and functioning of these projects encompass the main characteristics of the original ecomuseum concept.

The first definition of an ecomuseum was drafted by Georges-Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine in 1971 during the International Council of Museums (ICOM) general conference:

Fragmented, interdisciplinary museum demonstrating man in time and space, in his natural and cultural environment, inviting the whole population to participate in their own development through various means of expression essentially based on the reality of sites, buildings, objects, real things more striking than the words or images which invade our lives.

*(Rivière and Varine 1971)*

This implies two major distinctions. First: that an ecomuseum is not so much about objects as about an environment. Second: that it is created for the development of a community and not merely for the conservation of a collection. Later, Varine formulated these two conditions more specifically. He outlined 'above all two notions ... : that of an integral museum, i.e. taking into account all the problems of society; that of a museum as action, i.e. as a dynamic instrument of social change' (Varine 2001: 182). In short, 'classical museums conserve for the pleasure of individuals whereas community ecomuseums consume [the past] for the development of the group' (Varine 1978: 32).

ASUR, the Foundation for Anthropological Research and Ethno-development, 'Anthropologists of the Southern Andes' (Fundación para la Investigación Antropológica y el

Etnodesarrollo, ‘Antropólogos del Surandino’), refers to the concept of *etnodesarrollo* (ethno-development). Commenting on this concept when interviewed in February 2009, Veronika Cereceda, ASUR’s general director, explained: ‘Ethno-development would be a development from inside the culture’, that is, a form of empowerment where communities have the possibility of deciding for themselves how to represent and maintain their traditions through development they can control within a globalized world. This idea corresponds to the given definitions of the ecomuseum in the sense that the emphasis is on the development and actions of the community. But it is based on the root ‘ethno’, which relates to ‘ethnicity’ and refers to indigenous communities, whereas the ecomuseum encompasses many different kinds of communities, not only those based on ethnicity. Indeed, working with the Jalq’a (located north-west of Sucre) and Tarabuco (to the east and south-east of Sucre) in Chuquisaca, ASUR developed ways of preserving these groups’ know-how and creating economic opportunities around traditional tapestries.

ASUR was founded in the 1980s and depends entirely on the work of two anthropologists, Veronika Cereceda and Gabriel Martinez. At the time the Jalq’a community’s know-how was endangered by the selling of their traditional tapestries in a rapidly growing market they could not control. Nearly all preserved tapestries were sold for far less than their true value and such a small number remained in the community that the tradition almost died out. To combat this, Cereceda and Martinez, together with local leaders, organized workshops to maintain or recreate the weaving traditions, and these proved to be highly successful. In 2001, Kevin Healy, a US sociologist specializing in grass-roots and rural development in the Andes, estimated that four hundred weavers from five Jalq’a communities were participating in the project and that ASUR was employing about twenty people (Healy 2001). According to the museum director, since Healy’s study, the number of employees had risen to thirty by 2009, and the project had integrated Tarabuco communities, too. Moreover, the project had created a museum to display pieces in both the Jalq’a and the Tarabuco styles and teach the public how to read and appreciate them. This building also includes a shop where the tapestries are sold.

ASUR’s vision is of ‘indigenous communities with a strong culture, capable of creatively facing the inevitable confrontation with modern society (technology, markets, economic systems, etc.), without losing their roots, and contributing, with their values and knowledge, to the construction of a national identity’.<sup>6</sup> This takes hybridism into account by clearly reflecting the idea of a changing and adaptive culture. Furthermore, the contribution of indigenous communities to a ‘national identity’ reflects the idea that these communities can participate in the multicultural state that the new constitution affirms through their values and knowledge.

### ***ASUR’s approach to hybridism and migration***

ASUR has a dual approach towards migration. On the one hand, its work is a way of preventing forced migration by providing job opportunities and proper incomes for the communities:

Incomes do vary, depending on skill and effort, but the impulse toward individuation and social fragmentation is checked by mutual recognition that expanded future earnings depend on successful community management. The economic gains from the project have also strengthened Jalq’a family life and set in process a dynamic for

expanding active community involvement. The best weavers make the most of the new opportunities by having relatives pasture the animals. Young women in several villages have stopped working as live-in domestic servants in Sucre where monthly earnings amounted to a measly \$10, choosing instead to stay home with their children and weave. And their husbands are also staying home.

*(Healy 2001: 282)*

Indeed, Healy notes that men no longer have to migrate to the Chapare region, where they previously had to work for several months each year in order to earn enough money to survive. Women's lives have also changed as they have broadened their social role, strengthening their position in relation to men. Later, courses in accounting and management as well as literacy training became integral to the project. 'The entire project has been an example of reshaping Andean culture to play a role in the modern marketplace,' says Casandra Torrico (1995, cited in Healy 2001: 282), an independent researcher who carried out a study on ASUR as part of her work on Bolivian textiles.

On the other hand, ASUR can be regarded as a museum or cultural space where accessibility to migrants is not a priority. It is a showroom, located a few blocks from the main square, that is primarily geared to tourists. Weavers participate in the exhibition by being present in the spaces and demonstrating their art, and the public can interact directly with them. Participation in the authentication process takes place within the community. As Torrico notes in her assessment of the project:

It has become an important moment for collectively discussing, arguing, and analysing a specific piece among themselves, which greatly enhances understanding of the mechanisms and criteria for evaluating and assigning a value to their work. They expertly judge the quality and uniformity of the wool and its colors, and the harmonizing effects of the designs within a given spatial arrangement, as well as other aesthetic and technical details. This change has begun a process whereby the standards become negotiated by the people themselves rather than left solely to the marketplace to decide for them.

*(Torrico 1995, cited in Healy 2001: 288)*

Compared to the previous two examples, ASUR's method breaks with the traditional museum's authentication process, where a museum expert defines which objects are valuable, when, according to Bennett,

It is imperative that the role of the curator be shifted away from that of the source of an expertise ... and towards that of the possessor of a technical competence whose function is to assist groups outside the museum to use its resources to make authored statements within it.

*(Bennett 2002: 104)*

By letting the communities decide for themselves which objects are valuable, and leaving to the anthropologists the tasks of exhibiting them in the museum and selling them in the shop, ASUR seems to be implementing Bennett's preferred methodology, which in turn corresponds to the non-authoritative post-modern museum.



The institution's reaction to the conflicts in Sucre runs along the same lines. In May 2008, a few days after the riots, the museum organized a conference and debate during which Pascale Absi, a French anthropologist specializing in Bolivian social questions, offered a historical perspective on the origins of racism. Cesar Brie, the director of El Teatro de Los Andes, a theatre near Sucre, also showed footage he had shot that later served as evidence to prove that certain politicians participated in the riots. Reactions were strong and emotional, but the questions of Bolivian identity and political responsibility were tackled in the light of historical facts and contemporary images.

ASUR does not directly address migrant populations, but it does have a clear position on hybridism in culture. It aims to act as a space for debate about the current conflicts in Bolivia, something it seems to accomplish quite successfully. And its adoption of the concept of *etnodesarrollo* – which is comparable to ecomuseology – signals a break with the authoritarian dimension of the traditional museum in order to empower communities to value and authenticate their own heritage and enable them to use it in order to adapt to a globalized world.

### Arte Mujer Bartolina

Arte Mujer Bartolina (Art Woman Bartolina; AMB) may also be considered as an ecomuseum, although it does not use this term. Founded in 2000, it is an NGO that offers migrant women training and work as dressmakers. The pieces they produce are then sold under the AMB brand. All of the clothing is designed by the director, Sonia Aviles, using traditional Bolivian patterns. Aviles is a Bolivian from Tarija who emigrated to Italy, where she worked in an immigration office. During our interview, conducted in January 2009, she explained that her experience as both a migrant and a government employee in charge of applying migration policies prompted her to reflect on the situation in her own country. She decided to return to Bolivia and began working with a group of migrant women who had started their own tailoring workshop (traditionally a man's job in Bolivia). Without any previous training, she designed a collection the women could make and managed to secure funds, mainly through the Italian Embassy, to show the pieces in Turin. In ten years, the project had grown to such an extent that AMB had eleven workshops in the peripheral quarters of Sucre and two shops in the city centre. At the time of our interview, Aviles was conducting market surveys to assess whether AMB should expand on a national basis.

AMB exhibits, conserves and researches traditional textiles, which are the three activities that allow it to be interpreted as a museum-type (or an ecomuseum-type) organization. It certainly fits within ICOM's definition of a museum<sup>7</sup> through its exhibition of traditional textiles and patterns (in the shop, on the website and in fashion shows); its conservation and transmission of know-how used in the making of traditional fabrics and embroidery; and its research on Jalq'a and Calchas patterns. This research focuses not so much on ethnographic as on practical factors: how the textiles are elaborated, what meanings can be given and reinterpreted.

AMB emerged in the community in response to the difficulties faced by migrant women who were trying to find employment in Sucre. In addition to providing work and professional training, it now offers classes in hygiene, reading and writing, and there is a day-care system for children (although it is not uncommon to find kids running around the workshops). Importantly, it is also a way for the women to work collectively and share their

experiences. These elements make it an integral museum and a place where the major problems of this community are being tackled through the creation of economic prosperity and empowerment; thus, it can be read as an ecomuseum, according to Varine's definition.

### ***Methods used by AMB to value and authenticate migrant culture***

AMB's main target group is migrant women, and their participation in the project is facilitated by adaptation to their specific requirements (for example, childcare). Their work is valued in a very positive way as high-quality, handmade *couture*. The communication tools used to publicize the clothes, such as the website and articles that were devised by Marina Chavez, one of the employees in the head office, also value the women and shed light on the project through photographs of them at work. The publicity also stresses the originality of the collections: traditional patterns in modern dresses which correspond to the hybrid nature of the project and the mixing of cultural identities. The women participate by utilizing some of their traditional knowledge. However, neither the final design nor even the technique is theirs, as they learn to sew in the workshops. They do have a say in the development of designs, but ultimately AMB is a business with a hierarchical structure that limits ASUR-like participation.

It seems that Sonia Aviles's ideas and decisions, as the director, are the principal elements in AMB's fostering of social change through discourse. Politically, she describes her business as neutral, although 'obviously not right wing, considering what we do'. A great source of pride for her is that she has contributed to a shift in attitudes among Sucre's bourgeoisie. When she first opened the shop, she encountered a lot of criticism, especially from other professionals in the high-fashion sector, who asked, 'Do those *cholitas* [mestizas] know how to make *couture*?' According to Aviles, opinions changed when the Italian ambassador's wife started wearing AMB dresses, and they are now much sought after by the upper classes, thus changing how the objects are viewed. But, unlike a museum, this has not been achieved by exhibiting and eliciting comments through displays and panels. If Aviles's discourse has played a role in changing people's perceptions of traditional patterns, this has happened because AMB has changed the social function of the objects, rather than perceptions of them *per se*. Empowerment has occurred through the market, through the social acceptability accorded to visiting the shop and buying the dresses.

Migrants are central to the AMB project and cultural hybridism makes it work. It seems that this NGO has discovered an interesting way both to preserve traditional know-how among migrant women and to overcome upper-class prejudice about the women's ability to make high-quality clothing. AMB has also helped change the social and economic positions of the participants, who now earn up to twice as much as the average salary while also receiving a basic education. However, the authentication process does not belong to the participants. Rather, it could be argued that the director acts as the project's sole expert, with success or failure in the market largely determining what is valued and what is not.

### **Conclusion: authentication processes**

When dealing with hybridism in culture, the question of authenticity inevitably arises. Hybridism implies mixing, changing and thus moving away from a comparable object or practice that may be used to define authenticity in an authoritative way. When based on comparison, authenticating new forms of culture becomes difficult. It could be argued that

modern hybrid objects are altered traditional artefacts and therefore that they are, by definition, inauthentic; or that the know-how and techniques used to produce such objects are no longer those of the traditional community and thus do not correspond to the values that define a tradition as authentic. However, this form of authentication, which contrasts the 'real thing' with the 'fake', is limited, which explains why the Yamato Declaration rejected it in the case of intangible heritage. What makes heritage real is not necessarily dictated by objective criteria. Authenticity is also defined by emotion, as in the relationship one has with an artwork (Heidegger 1993), or by how one interprets the idea of the maker in relation to the form, as in the restoration of architectural monuments (Jokilehto 2006). Numerous works on history similarly indicate that heritage is defined by the kind of relationship people have to time and memory (Hartog 2003, Nora 1984, Certeau 1975).

The following questions might be useful in deciding which authentication methods to use:

- 1 Is the history of Bolivia inauthentic because it is incomplete and does not take into account the indigenous struggle?
- 2 Should an ethnographic museum trying to represent a 'living culture' not also represent the changes and developments in that culture?
- 3 Is modernization part of the authenticity of a culture?
- 4 How authentic are ASUR's tapestries, given that they are not made in the traditional context (which involved women making them for their own families, rather than to sell them to the outside world)?
- 5 Are Arte Mujer Bartolina's patterns authentic?
- 6 In a post-modern approach, is it more important to consider *who* gives the answer rather than *what* the 'correct' answer is?
- 7 Is there a space for debate that makes authentication a performative process fostering recognition, construction of meaning, and social development?
- 8 Who defines which set of values should be considered?

In the case of La Casa de la Libertad, clearly a higher authority – the director, the expert – is in charge of staging Bolivian history according to a traditional, nationalist set of values. MUSEF is also in an authoritative position. Although willing to share their power to define what is authentic with their community, the museum staff still seem uncertain of how to do so. Their values correspond to what academic ethnography views as authentic indigenous culture. In the case of ASUR, the anthropologists act as trusted counsellors and opportunity-makers, but the participants make the decisions about the value of their work. In the case of AMB, although the director is open to sharing the creation and authentication processes, she remains in charge, as she would be in any hierarchical business. And her values are set by the market.

It seems clear that the social changes these institutions generate are directly proportional to their will to change this set of values and to leave the decision to be made or approved by others. Not all museums regard their mission to be to change society in this post-modern perspective. La Casa de la Libertad might not want to engage in social issues, but rather act as a conventional representation of the past. ASUR uses its museum in a similar way: as a temple where knowledge can be passed on.

Interestingly, none of the people I interviewed for this study criticized any of the other institutions during the interviews. On the contrary, their willingness to use one another's



**FIGURE 10.3** Market selling indigenous-style artefacts in the colonial building of the Monastery de la Recoleta. Photo Tamara Glas

knowledge and spaces generates more success for all of them. AMB needs ASUR to value the traditional tapestries. La Casa de la Libertad is better equipped to store traditional tapestries safely than ASUR, which lacks both space and conservation facilities. MUSEF preserves many important archives and can contextualize objects in a broader sense, taking into account other objects from the culture, in addition to textiles. All of these elements are complementary, and the four institutions, with their own specializations, will probably disagree over what is authentic, yet they might also define it within a different identification or museological paradigm.

In addition to this question, there is a process that is central to the creation of multicultural cultural policies. Beyond each institution's contact zone, there is a broader zone that emerges from the diversity of the institutions themselves, and that also provides an opportunity for debate and change.

## Notes

- 1 In 2006, the Morales government organized a referendum on autonomy. The vast majority of the country voted 'no', but in the Media Luna (Santa Cruz, Pando, Beni and Tarija) the outcome was 'yes'. In 2008, after the new constitution was drafted, these four 'regions' organized elections on autonomy without the approval of the national government. In response, Morales offered to put his mandate to the test with another vote which confirmed him as president and enhanced his legitimacy. These events are described in Thede and De la Fuente (2008).

- 2 On 25 May 1809 the first 'cry for freedom' took place in Sucre, marking the beginning of the struggle for independence. The celebration of this event is extremely important in Bolivia and especially in Sucre. On this occasion, Morales decided to visit Sucre and link the event with the financing of medical equipment for the *campo* around the city. A large number of *campesinos* assembled at the stadium where the president's helicopter was supposed to land. However, for security reasons, it never did, and the *campesinos* were attacked by a group of rioters.
- 3 Assunção Dos Santos (2010) uses this category to describe the new museology that emerged in countries where Latin languages are spoken – primarily in Southern Europe and South America.
- 4 See the museum's official website. Available HTTP: <http://www.casadelalibertad.org.bo/index.php?action=31> (accessed 30 September 2013).
- 5 See the museum's official website. Available HTTP: <http://www.musef.org.bo> (accessed 3 May 2011).
- 6 See the museum's official website. Available HTTP: <http://www.asur.org.bo/en/asur/profile> (accessed 30 September 2013).
- 7 According to the glossary of ICOM's Code of Ethics, 'a museum is a non-profit-making permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment' (ICOM 2013).

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## **PART 3**

# Migration history and national narratives in museums

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# 11

## THE MIGRANT AND THE MUSEUM

### Place and representation in Ireland

*Elizabeth Crooke*

#### **Introduction**

In her exploration of second-generation Chinese identity in Ireland, Nicola Yau observed a double-consciousness caused by the negotiation between their Irish and ‘authentic identity’ (Yau 2007). Identity, which is forged upon social, ethical or emotional attachments (Yuval-Davis 2006), responds to the experiences and particularities of place. For migrants, these experiences evolve with movement and settling in a new place. Adding to the complexity, there is no single story of migration – the desire or necessity to move from one place to another is underpinned by wide-ranging rationale, making it impossible and undesirable to generalize. Furthermore, the new place will have its own particular conditions, determined by history, the economy and public attitudes, which will shape cultural, social and economic experiences. In the case of arrival in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, migrants will find places where identity and belonging are in continuous negotiation – as a result of either the political divisions in Northern Ireland or the evolving nature of Irish identity in the Republic of Ireland. The consequence of such destination politics is evident in the character of museum and art initiatives, in both places, that have included migrant communities. This chapter reflects upon that to reveal the museum space as a powerful means of communicating and influencing how place is experienced by migrant communities.

Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, with separate political jurisdictions and particular cultural contexts, are two very different prospects for the new arrival. In the Republic, the start of the twenty-first century was the decade of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ and, for the first time in its history, the country witnessed large-scale immigration.<sup>1</sup> This was not only the return of the Irish diaspora, attracted by the booming economy. In 2006, it was calculated that at least 10 per cent of the population were nationals of other countries; the majority were UK citizens, but a significant number were from Eastern Europe (many of whom responded to Irish government labour recruitment campaigns) and a small number were asylum seekers. By then, there were 420,000 migrants living in the Republic (Fanning 2012: 2).

There they found a place where ‘ideological accounts of an Irish mono-cultural past’ (Fanning and Mutwarasibo 2007: 449) dominated political attitudes. According to Fanning, this was exemplified in the debates and eventual removal, in 2004, of the right to Irish citizenship for children born to immigrants in Ireland. Four years later, the government-funded anti-racism body, the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, was wound up, after ten years in existence, leaving Ireland bereft of a clear vision of how to tackle racism (Fanning 2012: 234). These recent changes gave the impression of a country that is less generous with its citizenship, holds a limited view of Irish identity, and is not as concerned with racism. This sits uneasily with Ireland’s history of emigration and attitudes to the Irish diaspora. Emigration is a major part of the national story, both for people who stayed and for those who left to become members of the Irish diaspora. In contemporary Ireland the members of the diaspora are presented as sharing Irish national identity, even if their ancestors left generations ago. Identity is revealed as a blend of real lived experience and how we imagine a place and a people to be. The emigrant who has arrived in Ireland from Eastern Europe, Asia or Africa and is bereft of the connection hailed by the Irish diaspora has to negotiate a new sense of belonging and identity associated with the place where they live now.

Northern Ireland has among the lowest number of immigrants of any region of the UK, with most attracted to London and the East of England (Hawkins 2013). This is no doubt a consequence of both the conflict in Northern Ireland and the region’s distance from the economic heart of the UK. Between 2000 and 2009, it is estimated that 110,000 international migrants arrived in Northern Ireland.<sup>2</sup> A significant portion came for work, such as nurses from India and the Philippines. A further feature was a disproportionately large number of Polish people, compared to the rest of the UK, many of whom were young, well-educated males (Northern Ireland Assembly 2011). Research in Northern Ireland has shown that, for the most part, locals have ambivalent attitudes towards these migrants, with most believing they have come to fill legitimate vacancies in specific sectors (e.g. medical staff) or have taken on work that the Northern Irish themselves are not prepared to undertake. They are also mostly positive about the new ideas and cultures brought by migrant communities (Gilligan 2008). The region has, however, experienced race hatred (Northern Ireland Assembly 2011: 32–3), with numerous shocking examples reported in the press (Wallis Simons 2012), leading to the suggestion that in post-conflict Northern Ireland racism is ‘the new sectarianism’. Although this has been largely dismissed (Gilligan 2008), instances of racism are a concern for the region and it is evident, from the initiatives discussed later in this chapter, that engagement with migrant communities has become embedded in the community–relations work traditionally associated with improving links between Protestant and Catholic groups. The examples of museum and arts initiatives that follow, situated in the different political and cultural jurisdictions, reveal how heritage practice can assist in forging belonging. In these examples, migrant communities have to negotiate with prevailing and dominant political cultures to find their voice in the new place.

## Negotiating belonging in the heritage space

Carrying a suitcase, or a few bags, when arriving in a different country with a new life ahead is an experience that every migrant shares. The suitcase has now become an international symbol of migration and it is frequently used in exhibitions and artworks to symbolize

movement. For instance, the Irish immigrant Annie Moore is represented in a sculpture at Ellis Island Museum, New York, carrying her suitcase. This poignant symbol becomes a metaphor for ‘displacement, memory and something left behind’ (Kelly and Morton 2004: 638). Unsurprisingly, as it is so much part of the Irish national story, an emigrant’s suitcase – representing the Irish who left the island – was included in the *Irish Times*’ History of Ireland in 100 Objects project (O’Toole 2013). The suitcase, sharing basic characteristics with migration across the globe, unites a mutual experience. In community access galleries in Australian museums, Andrea Witcomb has described how it has been used to lead visitors through a ‘story of dislocation’ – marking the moment of arrival and a time of loss and displacement. In the exhibitions she has reviewed the story is one of ethnic difference represented in the objects people brought with them (Witcomb 2009, 2012). The same format was used in the UK for the *Stories in a Suitcase* hosted by Kirklees Metropolitan Council in 2004. In this example sixteen suitcases were displayed alongside arrival stories and artefacts (Strickson 2004). The geographer Irit Rogoff presents luggage as a ‘multiple marker’ of ‘memory, nostalgia and access to other histories’. It can also be an ideological construction either of ‘utopian new beginnings or of tragic doomed endings’ (Rogoff 2000: 37). In her account luggage can be glamorous or a mark of exile, and ‘memories and cultural symbols are objectified, concretized, virtually museumified in a suitcase’ (Rogoff 2000: 38). A sense of loss, vulnerability and a lack of material goods are all often communicated by the suitcase. In the public context of a gallery, the open suitcase is also a means to demonstrate change, new beginnings and a willingness to engage with the viewer, negotiating belonging with the new destination.

Such initiatives, whether they trigger responses of loss or are more positive, connect through shared experiences. Often with a range of people participating in them – people from different countries and with diverse life experiences – the shared experience of departure, travel and arriving unites the group. As a result a new migrant community is formed.

The suitcase narrative has been used within Ireland to share the experiences of those who have recently arrived. UNICEF Ireland and Dublin City Council Integration Unit used this format for *Suitcase Stories* (2010–11), an initiative that provided the opportunity for refugee children living in Ireland to share their stories. Here, the suitcase became a metaphor for the changing life experiences of the individual. Each suitcase’s interior was taken to represent where the participant had originated, while the exterior was an indication of where they were now.<sup>3</sup> The project was concerned with not only physical journeys ‘but also the inner journeys that the participants have travelled’ (UNICEF Ireland 2011: 14). The tangible presence of the suitcase as an artefact became the means to enable a journey to new places and a new life, and provided an opportunity to reflect upon that transformation.

This sense of transformation was evident in the exhibition *Destination Donegal* at the Regional Arts Centre, Letterkenny, County Donegal, in 2011 (Purkis 2013). Involving twelve people who had moved to Donegal from outside the Republic of Ireland, each person was represented in the exhibition with a full-length, life-size, portrait photograph, a panel of text of their own words, and footage of a filmed interview between the participant and the curator (Figure 11.1). The participants also selected some of their clothing for display as well as a number of artefacts. One spoke of an arranged marriage and another shared descriptions of loneliness and boredom in an asylum seekers’ hostel. There were also descriptions of the positive experiences of professional and cultural life in Ireland (Purkis 2013). The participants talked of ‘family history, life-changing journeys, descriptions of



**FIGURE 11.1** Exhibition panel, *Destination Donegal*, Regional Arts and Cultural Centre, Letterkenny, Donegal, April 2011. Photo Elizabeth Crooke

feelings, indications of national identity and cultural differences, accounts of racist incidents, and discussions about children' (Purkis 2013: 58). The exhibition was also an opportunity for the individuals to share their cherished possessions with others; in some cases these were symbolic of the place they had come from, while in others they marked their arrival and current status in Ireland.

For the participants, *Destination Donegal* was an important moment because of the feelings it triggered. Reflecting upon her participation, Nolunga Shologu, born in South Africa but living in Donegal for ten years, felt the exhibition both affirmed and celebrated her roots and marked her place in Donegal. She explained it made her feel 'very proud of my country and my roots' and added that she never thought she would end up living 'in a foreign land, and I would be appreciated, the main thing was to be appreciated as a foreign national'. Nolunga was very positive about the attention she received during the exhibition and afterwards: 'we feel we are accepted in this community.'<sup>4</sup> Inga Bock similarly felt pride in her origins, but also commented on the shared experience of immigration: 'I thought it brought people a bit closer, the fact that we're not actually that different.' For Inga, everybody shares the concept of home: 'no matter where in the world they're from, home is the same sort of idea, the same feelings'.<sup>5</sup>

*Destination Donegal* forged a new awareness of the diversity of the county, even among those who belonged to emigrant communities. Gary Gomringer, who had arrived in Donegal from Germany via America, commented, 'I felt there was more in Donegal than I



**FIGURE 11.2** Display of objects belonging to Dr ElHindi. Photo Elizabeth Crooke

actually knew ... I was really surprised – the diversity of people that are living here right now.’<sup>6</sup> For Dr ElHindi, involvement in the exhibition was a great experience (Figure 11.2). He described it as representing people ‘you could say are foreigners, but they are not foreigners, they are part of society, but they are sharing their own culture, and I felt part of that group’. His involvement triggered a sense of pride: ‘my culture, my own identity, my country were definitely presented’.<sup>7</sup> Sharmalia Karmat had the same reaction. She was delighted to meet her fellow-participants from Sudan, Iraq and America and found the whole experience empowering: ‘it is nice to know, when you come from a different country, to tell your story and at the same time blend in with them, because I think everybody who comes has a story to tell’. For Sharmalia, the exhibition was an opportunity to ‘put my story and my views forward’. Not only that, it was a mark of her arrival and importance within Donegal: ‘and at the same time, me telling my parents when I go back, they couldn’t believe it. That all this happened, and the photograph, and write up in the newspapers. It makes you feel special and it makes you coming here as an ambassador of India.’<sup>8</sup>

This exhibition affirmed both a sense of arrival and one of belonging. Participants described an overwhelming sense of celebration of who they are and of what they contribute to the character of Donegal. There is a sense that their experiences, their stories, are part of the identity and heritage of the place where they live now.

A museum, so often seen as the essence of local identity, is a powerful means both to establish and to shift significance and attitudes. In 2012, as a component of the History of



Ireland in 100 Objects project, the National Museum of Ireland displayed ten objects that represented modern Ireland (Decorative Arts and History, 23 October–2 December 2012). By public vote, one of those ten was to become the 100th object in the series. Amongst the ten, and representing the migrant experience in Ireland, was a certificate of naturalization. Alan Shatter, TD, and Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, in his speech at the Citizenship Ceremony prior to the exhibition, announced its addition to the National Museum collection as an acknowledgement of the ‘tens of thousands of our new citizens and the important part you play in our communities throughout the state’ (Shatter 2012). This document, hard-won by new arrivals, is an essential mark of their right to stay and to establish a future in Ireland. The symbolic value of its display in the National Museum was not lost upon Shatter. Such small acts of inclusion can have significant consequences for a sense of acceptance, as revealed by the participants in *Destination Donegal*. Through public display in established spaces, particularly in a place with the status of the National Museum of Ireland, the experience of immigration into Ireland and receiving Irish citizenship is presented as embedded in the Irish story.

*Destination Donegal*, and the inclusion of the certificate of naturalization in the National Museum, offered a challenge to traditional notions of identity in the Republic of Ireland, which has been described as ‘calcified’, with far too much focus on a ‘national’ memory of ‘white Catholics’ that ‘possesses little resonance for the so called new Irish, nationals and non-nationals alike’ (Ryan 2011: 207). This traditional notion of Irish identity was avoided in the Arts Council (Ireland)’s scoping study, which, early on, provided a broad statement on its approach to Irish identity: “Irish” is not presumed to be synonymous with such terms as “white” or “Catholic” but rather potentially inclusive of a plurality of diverse and co-existing identities’ (Jewsbury, Singh and Tuck 2009: 8). These actions carry broader significance: they indicate a move away from a monocultural perspective on Irish identity. By engaging with migrant communities, and including their histories in public spaces, the contributions those migrant communities make to the character of their new home are given some recognition. As is indicated in the interviews above, this is an important step towards establishing a sense of belonging.

### ‘Shared futures’ in Northern Ireland

In the spirit of shaping a shared society, two narratives recur when experiences of how immigration is presented in Northern Ireland are considered: first, that immigration is ‘nothing new’; and second, the theme ‘we are all immigrants’. Alongside this, attempts are made to present a view of the positive contribution of immigration to forging a more interesting and productive society. The *Migration Update* published by the Northern Ireland Assembly reminds us that the presence of Jewish people in the province dates back to the thirteenth century (Northern Ireland Assembly 2011; Russell 2012). The ‘solidarity of experience’, of Irish emigrants abroad and new immigrants into Ireland, has been recognized by both political leaders and the artistic community – a recent twist is the example of African actors playing the key roles in classic theatre on the Irish emigrant experience (Ryan 2011). Crucially, embracing diversity is presented in the terms of what can be gained: it is enriching and provides opportunities for ‘mutual sharing, questioning, learning, understanding and change’<sup>9</sup> (Arts Council 2009, 2010).

The notion of the shared experience of immigration into Northern Ireland was the focus of the exhibition *Our People, Our Times*, created by the Northern Ireland Museums Council

(NIMC) in 2004 (Crooke 2007). This exhibition was a result of working with people in Northern Ireland from various ethnic minority groups, and the selected objects came from Africa, Central America, the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East. At the Ulster American Folk Park the exhibition included a festival plaque from Sri Lanka, figurines from Ghana and Mexico, a samovar from Iran, a rubbing from a temple mural in Thailand, and a flute and drum from Bangladesh. What united such a range of artefacts was the central idea that ‘we are all “diverse” – whether our ancestors came here hundreds of years ago, or we have just recently arrived’ (Fraser 2004: 2). Focusing on the experience of migration into Northern Ireland, the exhibition was described as ‘a history of Northern Ireland’s cultural diversity’. It began in the Mesolithic period with ‘Ireland’s first migrants’ and continued by telling the story of arrivals in the archaeological and historical periods. Communities more often thought to be recent arrivals, such as travellers, Jewish communities and Italians, were shown to have settled in Northern Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Visitors were informed that the Indian community was in the province as early as the 1930s and the Chinese community from the 1960s. Both of these groups, and individuals who have arrived more recently, were celebrated for their contributions to medicine, the arts, food and manufacturing. Duncan Morrow, then chief executive of the Community Relations Council, presented the exhibition as a means to emphasize that Northern Ireland has always been a changing place and that accepting that diversity is something we should ‘earnestly wish for, not a disaster to be resisted’ (Morrow 2004: 3).

Within Northern Ireland, museums are approached as places of authority and influence. In response to *Our People, Our Times*, Chris Bailey, director of NIMC, described museums as places ‘where people can come to understand and respect the distinctive and shared cultures that make up Northern Ireland’s society’. He marked out museums as places of influence that can forge a sense of belonging. For NIMC, the exhibition ‘shows how museums care for and represent the cultural heritage of everyone that lives or works in this part of the world whether they have just arrived, or whether their ancestors travelled here thousands of years ago’. The exhibition was one part of the NIMC’s Cultural Diversity Strategy, ‘which we hope will support museums in helping to break down the sectarian and racist attitudes which are so often based on misinterpretations of the past’ (Ulster American Folk Park 2005).<sup>10</sup> In Northern Ireland, where difference has been a sectarian issue, and recent arrivals have suffered racist violence, these are important lessons. In a local newspaper the exhibition was presented as reparation for recent attacks – it was described as ‘working to make amends’ by exhibiting the ‘treasures’ brought by immigrants and giving them an opportunity to ‘share their culture with their neighbours’ (Donegan 2006). The aspiration was that the exhibition would provide a positive experience for vulnerable communities and those needing to learn more about the province’s diverse communities.<sup>11</sup> For the museums that hosted the exhibition, it was an opportunity to make links with local ethnic minority groups. The resulting exhibitions included objects from the Philippines, Morocco, Chile, Hong Kong, Lithuania and Poland. Special events included food tastings, dance workshops, arts and crafts, music and storytelling.

The events that coincided with *Our People, Our Times* also included a celebration of Irish and Ulster-Scots culture. In Northern Ireland projects that tackle cultural diversity are concerned as much with the needs and experiences of the established communities as with involving migrant or new communities. This is evident in *A Shared Future: Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland* (OFMDFM 2005), the recent policy guidance

for community relations, which has as its focus the creation of 'a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society'. The opening paragraph of the framework acknowledges growing ethnic diversity, indicated by nationality, culture, religion and language. Mention is made of the racism experienced by 'new migrant workers', such as Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, and the importance of migrant languages such as Mandarin, Hindi and Cantonese. However, when discussing Northern Ireland's 'multi-ethnic' society, this document primarily means the traditional Protestant and Catholic communities, the 'long resident communities', rather than the 'newer residents' (para 2.6.12). The document makes multiple references to 'long resident' concerns: flags, memorials, sport with both Gaelic and British origins, archiving the Troubles, and collections in museums in Ireland which predominantly reflect the established communities.

This focus is also demonstrated by the work of the now well-established Community Relations Council (CRC). Founded in 1990, its core purpose is to address the legacy of violence and division, building this around the concept of a shared society. The initiatives it has supported are for the most part, but not exclusively, concerned with the two traditions represented by Protestant and Catholic communities. Although the CRC does not present its projects along a dual structure, 'community relations' projects generally target sectarian violence, while minority ethnic and faith communities are most often included in 'cultural diversity' projects. In their analyses of the 'shared futures' framework Graham and Nash (2006: 25) explore the processes of creating public policy in a context of 'deeply rooted segregation and zero-sum ethnocratic politics'. Within the document they observe a deliberate 'constructive ambiguity' in terminology and definition employed to 'avoid alienating any one group' (Graham and Nash 2006: 261). The consequence of this approach for minority ethnic communities in Northern Ireland is a lack of clarity of language and focus of initiatives. This could also be seen as an opportunity to persuade those striving to forge bonds between migrant communities and local populations to build their projects into core community relations work.

In Northern Ireland, as the population profile expands, there are attempts to move away from the established politics of 'us and them', Catholics and Protestants. Now, the histories of European, Asian and African communities have become an important means of understanding ourselves and experiencing the place where we live. The ArtsEkta projects in Belfast, for instance, are using arts of ethnic minority communities to create an acceptance of difference that can move across traditional community boundaries.<sup>12</sup> As a result, it is common for heritage and cultural projects that look at difference in histories of the 'established communities' to add the experiences of Asian, African or other Europeans. The blended approach to cultural diversity is demonstrated by a programme of activities coordinated by the Mid-Antrim Museums Service titled Cultural Fusions (2011–13), presented as a means to promote and share experiences of different cultures 'amongst indigenous and ethnic minority groups'.<sup>13</sup> Cultural Fusions was funded by Peace III, a European Union programme that focuses on projects that contribute to peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the border regions. This project was predominantly about local communities exploring divided histories and diversity and was largely understood in relation to Protestant and Catholic traditions, identities and histories. The core exhibitions focused on the local experience: images of Ireland, the political crisis between Ireland and Britain in the early twentieth century, banners and parading, the experience of the Plantation in the 1600s and the Troubles of the late twentieth century. However, intertwined with these programmes was consideration of

ethnic minority groups. For instance, the collaborative art project titled ‘How Did I Get to Limavady?’ focused on the migrant arrival narrative – and resulted in the creation of mixed-media panels that depicted the journeys from countries of origin to Northern Ireland. Awareness-raising was the focus of a project initiated by a local art club by inviting Chinese, Indian and Eastern European artists to introduce them to new art forms.

A similar message of shared experiences was communicated by the artefact-based ‘My Treasure’ project (2013), which explored diverse traditions and cultures by encouraging people from different ethnic communities to share the stories behind the objects they cherish. The aim was to tackle sectarianism and racism by building new relationships across community groups. The process underpinning the project, which included storytelling workshops with participants, enabled the diversity of faith and traditions to be explored. Through this journey, people interacted and learned about difference. The project’s aims (see Table 11.1) – all of which had long been established objectives for cultural projects in Northern Ireland (Crooke 2001) – were given a fresh aspect through the inclusion of the experiences of ethnic minority groups.

The ‘My Treasure’ exhibition presented thirty-five stories from people from the diversity of communities in Northern Ireland – Slovakian, Sudanese, Indian, Polish, French as well as people from the local political traditions (Figure 11.3). The participants worked with a local storyteller to draw out the narrative behind each artefact and this was then shared through text and images. These objects were then displayed in a touring exhibition. Raquel McKee, who came to Northern Ireland from Jamaica, shared a statuette of a mother and child, and explained:

My mother, a USA resident, gave this to me 7 years ago after meeting my third son. It is a visual reminder of a prophetic calling to motherhood for me. On some days I see it as a challenge and I want to cover it up so I don’t have to see the standard I am missing. But I treasure it because it suggests how my mum sees me: a successful, loving, elegant mum who has well turned out children – with no food round the mouth or sick down the clothes! That’s encouraging.

The potential of this project is represented in this comment from Raquel. Here she is telling us about an experience and emotions that many of us share. The experience of being both a parent and a child is one that crosses ethnic boundaries. This initiative is an example of the new approach to cultural diversity programming which has developed with the growth of

**TABLE 11.1** ‘My Treasure’ project: aims [http://niarchive.org/CulturalFusions/My\\_Treasures.aspx](http://niarchive.org/CulturalFusions/My_Treasures.aspx) (accessed 5 May 2013)

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- 1 To address sectarianism and racism across the North East born from a lack of understanding and appreciation of the diverse traditions and cultures represented by our ethnic minorities and their contribution to our cultural life today.
  - 2 To build relationships with and across ethnic minority groups and encourage them to share their cultural traditions with others.
  - 3 To highlight the diversity of faith and cultural traditions represented by ethnic minorities across the North East.
  - 4 To encourage young people to interact with and learn from ethnic minority communities.
-



**FIGURE 11.3** 'My Treasure' exhibition, Mid-Antrim Museums Service, July 2013. Photo Elizabeth Crooke

migrant communities. Previously, museum, culture and arts initiatives engaging with issues of diversity and integration were largely conceived and practised in relation to the established communities; now they routinely include the experiences of ethnic minority groups.

## Conclusion

Both curators and political figures clearly view the museum or gallery space as a place of contact. The inclusion of a certificate of naturalization in the National Museum of Ireland as an artefact that represents modern Ireland is an indication that immigration is as much a part of the Irish national story as emigration ever was. *Suitcase Stories* and *Destination Donegal* both highlighted the way in which immigration to Ireland can empower individuals by giving them new life experiences and opportunities. These and the other exhibitions, people and experiences discussed in this chapter all demonstrate that museums in Ireland are developing at a rapid pace. There has been a significant shift in historiography – an expansion of whose stories and whose experiences are deemed worthy of inclusion in museums. There is greater awareness of the position of museums as iconic spaces, where the essence of a place is communicated and can be altered. Finally, museums and galleries have been ascribed a function as places that can mediate change.

The museum context was crucial in all of the examples presented here because it aided the process of recognition and the establishment of roots in the new place. Museums are

regarded as the essence of local culture and identity, so they have the power to effect change in how we understand a place and its people. Various referred to as memory banks, identity houses and places of influence, they can guide our understandings of history, identity and belonging. The exhibitions discussed here, either in museums or art spaces, are a means to communicate the stories and experiences that forge our identity, connect us to a place, and link us with other people with similar experiences. Within them, the artefacts are crucial as vessels that mark movement and arrival. The few objects that people carry with them to a new country are used to express the life-changing experience (Basu and Coleman 2008). Parkin (1999: 304) sees these mementoes as ‘articles of sentimental value, which both inscribe and are inscribed by their own memories of self and personhood’. Such objects are full of personal meaning, communicating the fear of the unknown that is unavoidable when leaving one place for another.

The projects discussed in this chapter all revolve around the shared experience of emigration and everyday life, be it through the display of objects or through the telling of the participants’ stories. They speak of the importance of representation and the impact of inclusion in mainstream culture while also contributing to our understanding of the formation of emotional attachments and how this allows newcomers to identify with a place and people. Immigration into Ireland challenges us to revisit established discourses on identity on the island, both the Republic’s ‘monocultural past’ ideal and the ‘two traditions’ model of Northern Ireland. Crucially, minority ethnic community arts and heritage should be valued as a means to mark and celebrate difference, without thinking that will result in other cultures being threatened or diminished.

## Acknowledgements

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## Notes

- 1 The total population of the Republic of Ireland in 2011 was 4.581 million (<http://www.cso.ie>) (last accessed 15 April 2013).
- 2 In 2011 the population of Northern Ireland was 1.811 million ([www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk)) (last accessed 15 April 2013).
- 3 [www.unicef.ie/NewsMedia/Suitcase-Stories-Art-Workshop-72-128.aspx](http://www.unicef.ie/NewsMedia/Suitcase-Stories-Art-Workshop-72-128.aspx); [www.hughlane.ie/outreach-projects/past/517-suitcase-stories](http://www.hughlane.ie/outreach-projects/past/517-suitcase-stories).
- 4 Interview with Nolunga Shologu (18 May 2011).
- 5 Interview with Inga Bock (24 May 2011).
- 6 Interview with Gary Gomringer (19 May 2011).
- 7 Interview with Dr Joseph ElHindi (24 May 2011).
- 8 Interview with Sharmalia Karmat (19 May 2011).
- 9 [www.artscouncil.ie/en/areas-of-work/actions/arts-and-cultural-diversity.aspx](http://www.artscouncil.ie/en/areas-of-work/actions/arts-and-cultural-diversity.aspx) (last accessed 6 March 2013).
- 10 As a legacy, some artefacts included in this exhibition are able to view online: <http://img1.nmni.com/uafp/Collections/Collections-highlights/Our-People,-Our-Times> (last accessed 5 May 2013).

- 11 Cleary Bronagh, development officer, Fermanagh County Museum, personal Communication (23 October 2006).
- 12 [www.artsekta.org.uk](http://www.artsekta.org.uk) (last accessed 11 January 2014).
- 13 Programme material available at: <http://niarchive.org/CulturalFusions> (last accessed 11 January 2014).

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# 12

## THE RECOGNITION OF MIGRATIONS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF CATALAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

Representations of the history of migrations and cultural diversity in Catalan museums, 1980–2010

*Fabien Van Geert*

### Introduction

It has been argued that since the nineteenth century museums have frequently been used for the creation of national identity through the presentation of a national narrative based on a common history and heritage (Bennett 1995, Macdonald and Fyfe 1996). Within this creation of national identity, immigration and cultural diversity have been integrated as part of the national narrative in many museums (Lavine and Karp 1991, Simpson 1996, Nederveen Pieterse 1997, Goodnow and Akman 2008). Their permanent exhibitions have been revamped in order to include migration processes in dynamic representations of history and of national and local identity. For that reason, they have had an important role in the construction of a new multicultural identity, one tolerant of cultural diversity and which would incorporate new forms of identity (Macdonald 2003, Ang 2009). Consequently, according to Witcomb (2003: 80), who draws on Bennett's (1998) theory that the history of museums is one of civic reform, even though the specific aims of reform have changed, the role of today's museums has shifted from the instillation of a sense of morality in the nineteenth century to the acceptance of cultural diversity. However, as argued by Blickstein (2011), the narrative about immigration in museums is very much linked to a certain representation of the nation that includes – but at the same time excludes – certain segments of the population. As such, as Silven (2010: 133) argued, museums not only document what they produce but create memory and meanings through processes of definition and selection of a common heritage.

In Catalonia, the focus of government action since the so-called 'democratic transition' in 1975<sup>1</sup> has primarily been on the promotion of a national identity (Villarroya 2012: 31). In the context of international migration, the model of the integration of immigration has been studied since the 2000s (Zapata-Barrero 2006, Caïs Fontanella and García Jorba 2008), being defined as an intermediate position between the assimilationist French model and the multiculturalist Anglo-Saxon one. Within this general perception, some authors have defined the cultural policies of Catalonia and its integration among the different levels of government

from the perspective of the construction of a national identity in a historic process, including the integration of migration (Cramer 2008, Villarroya 2012). In this context, it has been stated that Catalan national identity has always been based on the Catalan language. In fact, after more than thirty-five years of decentralization, national identity remains a central issue on the Catalan political agenda. Very few studies have been done, however, in relationship to museological institutions and to the way they represent the immigration phenomenon. There is no reference to the use of Catalan museums in multicultural contexts in the Catalan or Spanish literature. In fact, museum studies are practically non-existent as a field of academic research in Spain, as both museums and museum studies are seen as practical fields. Nevertheless, I will argue that the analysis of the evolution of the narrative on immigration inside Catalan public museums offers the reader a complementary vision of the construction of Catalan national identity, and enlightens what is commonly defined as the ‘Catalan model of integration’.

This chapter will analyse the way migrations of both the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries are perceived in the construction of Catalan national identity through the representation of the history of twentieth-century migrations and twenty-first-century cultural diversity in national and local (and especially Barcelona’s) public museums. To do this, it will examine the roles of these institutions and cultural policies in the construction of national identity from the first democratic government, the CiU administration (1980–2003), to the tripartite left-wing government (2003–10) in the various immigration plans. Several permanent and temporary exhibitions will be examined, as well as activities organized in both national and local museums that exemplify these policies. Special attention will be paid to Catalonia’s capital city, Barcelona, which has received large numbers of immigrants over the past forty years. In this context it has defined a clear conception of its identity as intercultural (Bonet i Augustí 2006, Zapata-Barrero 2010).

### **The ‘Fer País’ identity construction, the ‘Catalan manner of integration’ and the invisibility of migration (1980–2003)**

After General Franco’s thirty-six-year dictatorship (1939–75) and the exclusion of regional identities from the democratic transition, the 1978 Spanish Constitution finally recognized the country’s cultural and linguistic pluralism (Article 3.2). At this historic moment it was decided to carry out a democratic transition that would not condemn the past. Furthermore, a new regional organization of the state was introduced with three basic levels of governments, each with a high degree of political autonomy: the central government; the autonomous communities or regions; and the local councils. The seventeen autonomous communities or regions were given broad power in matters of culture: the Constitution grants these communities both management and normative control over areas such as museums and libraries. As pointed out by Villarroya (2012: 34–5), the involvement of regional governments in cultural matters has been greater in communities that have their own language and culture, particularly the so-called ‘historical nationalities’ (that is, the communities that obtained administrative autonomy first: Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country).

Jordi Pujol, the leader of the centre-right *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union; CiU) – a coalition of two parties formed that governed Catalonia from 1980 to 2003, in the wake of the democratic transition – declared his objective as the revitalization of post-dictatorship Catalonia. At the time, due to the development of its industrial sector,

Catalonia's population comprised a significant number of economic migrants from other, poorer, rural areas of Spain – such as Aragón, Valencia and especially Andalucía and Extremadura – who had travelled in the 1920s, 1950s and 1960s in search of work (Arango 2007). Others had arrived as a result of Franco's political strategy to promote a unified Spain and a homogeneous population (Holo 1999: 166–7). By 1975, in Barcelona, one of the main destinations for the migrants, 44 per cent of the population (1,755,000 inhabitants) had been born outside Catalonia (Ajuntament de Barcelona 2010: 3).

It was in this context that the CiU developed the foundations of a Catalan national project, known as 'Fer País' ('Making the Nation'), based on language and culture. It was couched in a civic and inclusive language, which invited both autochthonous and new communities to participate (Davis 2009: 143–4). This was represented by Jordi Pujol's definition of a 'Catalan' as 'anyone who lives and works in Catalonia, and feels [Catalan]' (Centre d'Estudis Jordi Pujol 2014). According to Villarroya (2012: 8), this strong correlation between Catalan identity and the Catalan language made linguistic policy very important. Thus, Bonet i Augustí (2006) argued that Catalonia based its policy towards immigrants on respect for specific identities but also on voluntary cultural and linguistic integration.

During its time in power, the CiU set up the first Department of Culture of the democratic period to draw up its cultural policies, with the goals of enhancing national identity and dealing with issues linked to the heterogeneous nature of Catalan society (Cramerí 2008: 146). During this period the government aimed to encourage folk and traditional culture, invested in infrastructure for the cultural sector with a strong symbolic element, and set up publicly funded radio and television stations in order to promote linguistic and cultural identity (Villarroya 2012). It was in this context that the first Catalan museums, mostly erected locally in the 1980s, constructed a narrative about local identity that was designed to buttress nationalist sentiment among a population that had been victimized during Franco's dictatorship (Roigé Ventura and Arrieta Urtizbera 2010: 541). Holo (1999: 166) has suggested that these were built as 'museums of memory' – determined to perpetuate the memory of pre-Franco Catalonia and to commemorate those characteristics that had been repressed during the dictatorship. The history of twentieth-century immigration into Catalonia was scarcely mentioned in this national identity construction.

The first immigrants from abroad arrived in Spain at the end of the twentieth century, although their presence remained insignificant until the 2000s. Under the legal framework of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 (Article 149), the power to regulate the admission and legal status of immigrants rests with the state. However, the Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalonia's regional government), like the other governments of Spain's autonomous communities, is responsible for the welfare, education and cultural and social integration of immigrants once they have arrived in the region (Article 148). No single body deals with this task. Instead, the management of immigration is divided between various political departments. This means that many instruments of intervention and various budgets are dedicated to the integration of immigrants. As a consequence, it is difficult to assess how much the process costs or whether it has been successful (Caïs Fontanella and García Jorba 2008).

The Departments of Education, Health and Social Welfare of the Generalitat de Catalunya were the first to implement policies in relation to immigration. Then, in 1992, the Inter-Departmental Commission for Monitoring and Coordinating Actions on Immigration Matters was set up by the Generalitat. This produced the Inter-Departmental Immigration Programme<sup>2</sup> (1993–2000), which included contributions from all the departments involved

as well as social organizations, immigrant associations and trade unions. Its aim was to promote the integration of newly arrived people by coordinating the activities of the various government departments and the other organizations. In 2001, a second Inter-Departmental Immigration Programme (2001–4) was approved. One novel aspect of this programme was the adoption of a ‘Catalan manner of integration’, to achieve ‘a balance between respect for diversity on the one hand and the feeling of belonging to a single community on the other hand’ (Generalitat de Catalunya 2001: 118).

After the construction of local museums in the 1980s, national institutions were built in Barcelona during the following decade to promote the dissemination of a Catalan national identity discourse and to position the city as a cultural tourist destination in the wake of the 1992 Olympics (Roigé Ventura and Arrieta Urtizberea 2010: 541–2). However, these national museums ignored the presence of both new and old generations of immigrants in Catalonia, as the construction of national identity was mainly concerned with integration in Catalan culture. This is particularly apparent in the Museum of Catalan History, opened in 1996 as the first national museum, which focuses on the history and the memory of ‘our country’ – with the creation of ‘Catalanness’ being the museum’s sole mission (Holo 1999: 178). This institution corresponds in many ways to the national institutions created during the nineteenth century, when, according to Bennett (1995: 47), it was commonly accepted that museums should have a nationalizing and even civilizing function. For Holo (1999), knowledge of a common history promotes social cohesion around the idea of a shared country. In relation to migrants, the museum was designed to ‘function partly as a stimulus for integration, encouraging new residents to understand Catalonia’s history and to begin to forge their own personal links with it’ (Cramer 2008: 143–4). Cramer therefore concludes that it is more accurate to describe this institution as an exhibition of ‘The Story of Catalonia’, rather than a history museum (Cramer 2008: 146).

### **The multiculturalization of Catalonia: towards the integration of immigration in the national history (2003–10)**

After more than twenty years of CiU government, in 2003 a tripartite left-wing coalition won the Catalan general election in what was an increasingly diverse society. Since 2000, the country had experienced a massive wave of immigration due to the job opportunities offered by the booming construction industry. Like other regions, Catalonia had seen increasing numbers of immigrants arriving and settling throughout its provinces. This contrasted with the migrations of the mid-twentieth century, during which new arrivals almost exclusively moved into industrial and urban areas. Furthermore, while the first wave of migrants came from Spanish rural areas, this new generation originated in Latin America (particularly the Andes region), Eastern Europe, Asia (particularly China and Pakistan) and Africa (especially Senegal and Morocco). Consequently, by 2012, more than 15 per cent of the Catalan population had been born outside Spain (Institut d’Estadística de Catalunya 2013). In 2000, this figure had been only 2.9 per cent.

Given this unprecedented influx, the Catalan government’s main challenge became the creation of an environment in which all citizens felt they could participate in a collective national project which ensured the survival and diffusion of the Catalan language, recognized cultural and linguistic diversity as a source of enrichment, and promoted Catalan culture abroad. Among the numerous measures implemented by the government to generate a

greater sense of nationhood by reinforcing identity, Villarroya (2012) distinguishes between those that focus on achieving greater international visibility for Catalan culture and those that aim to foster social cohesion.

At the time, there was a generally positive political perception of immigration as an opportunity to consolidate the Catalan national project. As Ang (2009) affirmed with reference to Australia's white assimilationist past, the more recent celebration of multicultural diversity in that country has been presented as an unambiguous sign of national progress. The same could be said of Catalonia. This optimism reached its peak with the celebration of the first International Forum of Cultures, which took place in 2004 in Barcelona. Organized by the Barcelona City Council, the Generalitat de Catalunya, the Spanish national government and UNESCO, the forum was established to discuss peace, education, knowledge, human rights and cultural diversity as well as to devise strategies to promote the city as a tourist destination. The Museum of the History of Immigration in Catalonia was created as a national museum in the same year in Sant Adrià de Besòs (34,000 inhabitants), to the north of Barcelona, in order to decentralize Catalan national museums away from the city centre. The official aim of this museum was 'to become a reference centre in both the study and the dissemination of the historical and testimonial vision of migration' (Boj 2004: 23) of both the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. As such, under the tripartite government – more than fifty years after the initial wave of Spanish migration – immigration was finally recognized as part of Catalan national history, from the perspective of the new migrations.

Thereafter, the Plan for Citizenship and Immigration (2005–8) was approved and directed to the whole of Catalan society. It stressed the importance of helping immigrants to integrate by encouraging their use of Catalan during social, economic, political and cultural communication. Furthermore, in a bid to improve social cohesion, the plan championed the recognition of cultural diversity and interculturality and the construction of a more plural Catalan identity through 'sharing spaces, intercultural dialogue, and knowing about the cultures of origin of immigrants' (Generalitat de Catalunya 2006: 50). It affirmed that:

We aspire to be a socially articulate society under the principle of equality, with an open and pluralist cultural and political plan. It is an optimistic focus, motivated by a tradition of receiving migrants, which views current immigration as a new opportunity to unite Catalan society with a view to the future.

*(Generalitat de Catalunya 2006: 158)*

According to Argelaguet (2006: 434), the plan changed the tone, but not the essence, of the CiU's approach to national integration. It continued the traditional strategies of restoring and fostering Catalan national identity while avoiding a separation of Catalan society on the grounds of language or identity, and declared that when 'immigrants use the Catalan language as a vehicle for communication, it can greatly increase their level of integration' (Generalitat de Catalunya 2006: 160).

The National Agreement on Immigration, approved in 2009 under the tripartite government, is the current political instrument for the management of integration. It goes one step further than the plan in its recognition of a multicultural Catalonia, defining the region 'as a diverse society built largely through the settlement of persons from elsewhere', which 'creates a need but also a new opportunity for defining the country that we will be in the future' (Generalitat de Catalunya 2009: 15). This implies that 'those of us who recognize our

differences but wish to live together do so by positively evaluating diversity while, at the same time, defining a space of cohesion and common public culture' (Generalitat de Catalunya 2009: 5). Consequently, one of the three objectives of the National Agreement on Immigration is to make Catalan the common public language:

It is desirable for newly arrived persons to gain linguistic competence in both Catalan and Castilian (Spanish) throughout the process of integration into Catalan society. Nevertheless, the markedly unfavourable starting point of the Catalan language [when compared with the widespread social use of Castilian], as well as the role of a common language and unique contribution to global diversity that it provides, means a special effort should be made to promote the knowledge and social use of Catalan.

(Generalitat de Catalunya 2009: 24)

The various plans and their conception of the integration of immigration into the national narrative have had a significant impact on exhibitions in national museums and cultural centres, conceived as instruments to transmit positive images of immigration in general, the cultural specificities of immigrants and their integration into the Catalan national programme – as outlined by Bennett (1995 and 1998). In 2011, the *Migrants' Dialogues* temporary exhibition was particularly illustrative of this trend both because of its focus and because of where it took place. It presented black-and-white photographs by Joan Thomas of immigrants from many different countries, with the stories of their integration into Catalan society displayed under the portraits, and was held in the cultural centre of the Consortium for Language Standardization in Barcelona. This consortium was created in 1988 by the Generalitat de Catalunya and city councils with the aim of facilitating the learning, use and diffusion of Catalan throughout society, mainly through free Catalan lessons and socio-cultural activities that present Catalan culture to newcomers.<sup>3</sup> Some of these events are hosted by local museums.

Another clear example of the impact of these policies was the exhibition *Immigration, Now and Here* in 2008–9 at the Palau Robert, Barcelona, the Generalitat de Catalunya's multi-functional exhibition space. The exhibition's aim was to explain that the government viewed immigration as an opportunity and was seeking to create a cohesive nation through integration and respect of the Catalan language. It was divided into five main ideas/spaces with the themes: 'The World on the Move, about global human migrations'; 'Catalonia, a Land Made from Waves of Migration', which focused on the region's tradition of accepting immigrants; 'Voices', which presented the people behind the immigration statistics; 'Together', which addressed the challenges of a multicultural society; and, finally, 'What about Tomorrow?', which discussed the way in which the National Agreement had responded to the new, pluralistic Catalan environment. As such, this exhibition clarified the policy described in the 'Citizenship Programme', which required 'an explanation of the transformations affecting Catalan society' (Generalitat de Catalunya 2006: 161). However, no mention was made of museums in either the 2005–8 plan or the 2009 agreement. One of the few policy statements to refer directly to cultural institutions advocated:

Strengthening actions that, in the cultural field, help invigorate the role of libraries and popular culture centres as spaces for interrelation between people.

- 1 Guaranteeing that libraries become spaces of acceptance for newcomers.
- 2 Strengthening the integration aspect of the different manifestations of popular culture.  
(*Generalitat de Catalunya 2009: 59*)

In a bid to meet this objective, a large number of ‘cultural diversity celebrations’ (Delgado 2005: 255) took place in many public spaces of Catalonia and Barcelona under the auspices of the tripartite government and socialist local governments. In fact, according to the 2005–8 plan and the 2009 agreement, immigrant cultures had to be presented to the wider population. Many conferences and educational workshops focusing on music and food were organized in many municipalities, sometimes in local museums. For instance, in 2008, the museum in Sant Boi (a municipality in Barcelona Province) organized a one-night celebration of the Tamazight culture of the Rif region of Morocco, an area from where many Catalanian immigrants originate. The evening consisted of a feast of Tamazight food and traditional dances and music performed by local immigrants from the region.

Meanwhile, the Museum of the History of Immigration in Catalonia continued to operate, although its activities were severely restricted due to financial problems. It received very few visitors and gradually slipped from national and even local consciousness. In 2008, it hosted the ‘Museums, Immigration and Interculturality’ conference on the presentation of immigration in museums. Two years later, it acquired an old railway carriage – part of the *El Sevillano* train that had transported migrants from Andalucía to Catalonia – and installed it at the museum’s front entrance as the ‘Migration of the Twentieth Century’ component of the exhibition. The carriage was entirely musealized through an emotive presentation of the migrants’ journeys via a ‘suitcase narrative’ (Witcomb 2009: 52), which told their stories through their memories of the objects they brought with them. The exhibit also focused on the process of arrival, in an echo of many exhibitions found in maritime museums or ports of entry, such as the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. As such, the ‘spirit of the place’, as conceived by Viel (2008), was quite clear. However, as Purkis emphasizes, this type of curatorial approach situates people as perpetual migrants:

frozen in time, their identities defined as connected to that past moment in time when they arrived from their home country. A structure is used which allows visitors to read and hear and see the journeys people made through oral history. Individual testimony is part of the communication; it is emotional and personal, yet it is set in the past, and considered as a typical example within the wider narrative of the exhibition that concerns arrival and setting up a home.

(*Purkis 2013: 53*)

Following the 2009 agreement, the museum finally introduced more recent migration waves into its narrative and tried to establish connections with the local immigrant communities through activities, virtual projects and temporary exhibitions. The permanent ‘Migrate’ display was installed in the garden, and constituted the third of the five planned components of the museum, as originally outlined in 2004.<sup>4</sup> This space focused on the concept of frontiers (physical, urban, administrative, etc.) encountered by migrants throughout their journeys and daily experiences, yet it made no explicit reference to the political treatment experienced by many immigrants in Catalonia. As such, it represented a move in the opposite direction to that followed by some Anglo-Saxon museums, which have been working to ‘provide a

tolerant space where difficult contemporary issues can be explored in safety and in the spirit of debate' (Sandell 2007: 3).

Meanwhile, the Museum of Catalan History has continued to present a CiU version of the region's history that largely ignores immigration, although there have been a few exceptions. For instance, in 2003 it staged a handful of temporary exhibitions that touched on the migrations of the twentieth century. One such was *Somorostro*, which dealt with the history of the razed neighbourhood of slums that stood on Barcelona's beach until 1966 and was partly built by migrants from other regions of Spain. Then there was *Catalonia: A Welcoming Land: A Review*, which was mounted as part of the 'Catalonia Today' programme organized by the Generalitat de Catalunya between 2000 and 2003 to explain the political, social, cultural, human and economic situation of Catalonia to the rest of Spain through touring exhibitions. It argued that Catalonia has always been a land of migration. However, in the permanent exhibition, the twenty-first-century migrations are mentioned only in the final exhibition space ('Portrait of Contemporary Catalonia (1980–2007)'), alongside other transformations in Catalan society that took place in that period.

Clearly, then, in contrast to the renovated permanent exhibitions of many Western national museums that now include migration processes in dynamic representations of history and national and local identity (Goodnow and Ackman 2008: xxviii), in Catalonia national museums and cultural centres have been reluctant to reflect upon multiculturalization and the transnational identities of the region's citizens. Instead, they are primarily concerned with the presentation of immigration particularities and its integration in the national process as part of the transmission of Catalonia's national policies, thereby excluding certain segments of the population from the nationalistic perspective (Blickstein 2011). Therefore, Catalonia has witnessed little of what Bennett (1998) and Witcomb (2003) see as the changing role of museums – from the formation of national values to the acceptance of cultural diversity. As a consequence, Catalan museums have a very limited role to play in the construction of a new multicultural identity – one that is tolerant of cultural diversity – and the incorporation of new forms of identity.

### **The representation of cultural diversity and migrations in local Catalan museums (1996–2010)**

In 1985, the Spanish Local Governing Act gave city and town councils administrative powers over local heritage, cultural activities and amenities. In practice, according to Villarroya (2012: 35), this gives local authorities almost unlimited power to promote cultural activities at the municipal level, including in museums. Under the Constitution and the 2006 Catalan Statute of Autonomy, Catalan municipalities also have the right to define their own integration plans. Barcelona has made full use of this power, especially between 1979 and 2011, when the city was governed by the left-wing Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSC). Unsurprisingly, this led to considerable political tension between the CiU regional government and the city council.

In 1996, the Contemporary Cultural Centre of Barcelona – a public consortium created in 1994 by the Provincial Council and Barcelona City Council to represent the city in a positive light – presented the *City of Difference* exhibition. Curated in collaboration with the Baruch Spinoza Foundation, this exhibition aimed to promote the advantages of plurality and peaceful coexistence at a time when Barcelona was receiving substantial numbers of new



immigrants. In fact, since the turn of the century, and especially since the 2004 International Forum of Cultures, there has been a common belief that Catalonia benefits from immigration as long as social cohesion is promoted. In Barcelona this perception was shared at the municipal level and was integrated into the city's cultural policy. In 2004, the La Capella de l'Antic Hospital de la Santa Creu exhibition centre in the Institute of Culture presented the *Quòrum* exhibition, which explored the phenomenon of immigration in Barcelona that was transforming the configuration of the city at the time. It explored the phenomenon of immigration in Barcelona that was in the process of transforming the city. The exhibition presented the work of nine artists – either native or adopted Barcelonans – who produced specific projects on issues relating to the day-to-day life of the community, such as urban development, housing, identity and so on. According to Ferran Mascarell, the president of the Commission for Culture, Education and Social Welfare in Barcelona City Council, this exhibition 'set forth proposals geared towards looking at the phenomenon of immigration more as an opportunity than as a problem'. For Mascarell, the main aim was 'to put forward elements for reflection that help to create a more cohesive, altruistic and therefore more just society' (Mascarell 2005: 263). The venue chosen for the exhibition was particularly fitting, as it is in the Raval district, one of the most eloquent examples of the recent transformation of the social, urban and cultural environment of Barcelona, as it accommodates tourists, indigenous individuals and immigrant families side by side.

The political determination to turn Barcelona into a city that is open to cultural diversity was particularly evident in its participation in the Year of Intercultural Dialogue, declared by the European Parliament and Commission in 2008. As part of this project, the History of the City Museum presented *Connected Barcelona, Transnational Citizens: Migratory Growth and Urban Practices*, which focused on the transnational networks established by immigrants between Barcelona and their native regions. Visitors were encouraged to see Barcelona as a thoroughly modern city. The exhibition represented a new vision of multiculturalism, going beyond the mere display of various communities living in a single place (see Ang 2009: 20, who analyses a similar development in Australia). However, the stories and images it presented were uniformly positive and cheerful, without any mention of the conflicts and double allegiances that can arise out of immigration. The whole process was represented as harmonious, with the tensions between unity and diversity entirely ignored, even though, according to Ang (2009: 21), they are central to the multicultural problem. Moreover, no other Barcelona museum attempted to tackle the city's history of immigration in 2008.

In 2010, a new local plan of integration was approved by the city council. Ratified under the PSC government of Jordi Hereu, this Barcelona Intercultural Plan adopted an intercultural model as the city's cultural identity.<sup>5</sup> For the mayor,

the intercultural model recognizes diversity but emphasizes the aspects that unify us. It focuses on the importance of relationships in a positive interaction that facilitates understanding and sharing, resolving conflict peacefully through a shared sense of belonging ... [It is] a new paradigm, a new focus, a step forward that anticipates new demands and challenges: a firm step towards managing complexity and converting it into opportunity. (Hereu 2010: 20)

The Ethnological Museum of Barcelona is a clear example of this interculturalization of the city's identity. Created in 1949, it is one of the oldest ethnological institutions in Catalonia

and houses more than 70 per cent of the region's ethnological collection, including artefacts from Catalan-speaking territories dating from the nineteenth century through to the beginning of the twentieth. Under the direction of Josep Fornés Garcia, the museum has tried to convert itself into a 'Museum of the People' (Fornés 2007), and it is now open to social collaboration in the organization of its cultural activities and events. It has thus developed an interpersonal relationship with any inhabitants of Barcelona and Catalonia who request its support. For example, in 2006 Gypsy communities collaborated with the museum to create the *Gypsies: The Rom Culture in Catalonia* exhibition. Many migrant communities have similarly worked with the museum to represent their cultures in temporary exhibitions or activities (although rarely in the permanent exhibition). For example, the Colombian community participated in the launch of the *Carnival of Barranquilla* photography exhibition in 2010 by presenting a concert of Barranquillan traditional music to the public.<sup>6</sup> That same year, with the assistance of the museum, the Colombian community also took part in the Barcelona Carnival Parade, giving the city a taste of the Barranquilla Carnival in the process. Yet such community participation in the museum's activities remains very limited, corresponding to what Matuščík (1998: 101–2) has described as 'ludic multiculturalism'. Always celebratory in tone, this shows 'people clothed in various "ethnic" garb, serving "ethnic food" to the tune of "ethnic" or "world" music with dancers showcasing "ethnic" steps in the background' (Fortier 2008: 16). According to Kurkiala, 'diversity is celebrated while "real difference" is shunned' and a sort of "'feel-good" diversity is established' (Kurkiala 2002: 22–5). More generally, Gruson (2011) asks whether museums can truly change the representation of migrations through such projects, performances and displays. In fact, the regional government has admitted that:

Another of the shortfalls [of the second Interdepartmental Immigration Programme] is recognizing and promoting the understanding of the different cultures currently present in Catalonia, beyond the regular schedule of intercultural festivals, where food, music and folkloric traditions are the main events.

(*Generalitat de Catalunya* 2006: 157)

Even though Barcelona was undergoing a 'multiculturalization' process in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the topic of migration was covered in only a handful of History of the City Museum exhibitions (and even then it remained firmly in the background). Two examples were *Slum Villages: The Informal City* (2009), which was similar to the aforementioned *Somorrostro* exhibition at the Museum of Catalan History, and *We've Got the 600! Recovery without Democracy: Barcelona 1947–73* (2010), which was similar to *Seat 1950–77: The Architecture of Repression*, also at the Museum of Catalan History. *Slum Villages* dealt with the shanty-towns that were erected by the immigrants themselves in the first half of the twentieth century and were later torn down by the municipal authorities to allow for the development of the modern city. The history of migration to Catalonia clearly pervaded this exhibition's narrative – albeit not explicitly – as *barraquisme* (the self-construction process) would not have taken place without the migrants' presence in the city. In *We've Got the 600!* the museum covered Barcelona's cultural, social and economic transformations during the 1950s and 1960s through the image of the Seat 600 car that was manufactured at the time. As the exhibition made clear, these processes hinged on the migration to the city of workers from other regions of Spain.

While Barcelona's History of the City Museum scarcely mentions these early migrations, and even though exhibitions on the theme of migration are rather uncommon in local museums, other local Catalan museums have explicitly integrated the history of immigration into some of their exhibitions, regarding the new waves of immigrants in an interconnected dynamic. One example was the *Newcomers to the City: The Urban Construction of Manlleu: 1900–2005* (2008) exhibition at the Industrial Museum of the Ter – named after the river which facilitated industrial development in Catalonia – in the municipality of Manlleu. This presented the history of immigration to the municipality (20,000 people) in both the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries from the perspective of urban development. Another example was *A Place to Live: Sant Feliu de Guixols, 1954–2008*, staged at the Museum of Sant Feliu de Guixols, which explained the influence of the various waves of migration on the urban development of the municipality (22,000 inhabitants) and especially on its different neighbourhoods. Finally, *Intertwining Memories* (2008), at the Municipal Museum of Terrassa (Barcelona Province), focused on the Ca N'Anglada neighbourhood, inhabited mainly by the families of earlier migrants and newcomers. In contrast to the other two exhibitions, which primarily utilized municipal archives, *Intertwining Memories* employed a 'suitcase narrative' approach, presenting testimonies, life histories and objects donated by early and recent immigrants to the municipality. These oral histories and artefacts illustrated migration history, but also left visitors in no doubt about the difficulties migrants face during the integration process.

The development of these exhibitions could be explained by the dispersal of twenty-first-century immigrants throughout Catalonia, and by local councils' and museums' interest in integrating this process into the local identity from an intercultural perspective in order to promote peaceful coexistence, as described in local plans such as the Management Plan for Immigration in Terrassa and the Management Plan for Diversity in Manlleu (both 2003). In this process, old migrations were seen through the lens of new immigration dynamics. These were presented as intertwined processes in local museums in the hope of persuading the autochthonous population to accept and understand the presence of new immigrants, as mentioned in the various Catalan integration plans. The Terrassa exhibition was particularly illustrative of this. In fact, in May 2003, the Ca N'Anglada neighbourhood was the second Spanish municipality to experience serious ethnic clashes (following an outbreak of racially motivated violence in El Ejido, Andalucía, three years earlier). We can therefore see the Terrassa exhibition as a political instrument to try to maintain social cohesion in the town by highlighting the parallels between the old and new migrations and the problems of integration experienced by many of the town's current residents or their ancestors. (The majority of Terrassa's inhabitants descend from migrants from other Spanish regions.)

## Conclusions

The recognition of migration in the creation of Catalan national identity since the democratic transition, seen through its representation in public museums, can be divided into several successive phases. During the CiU government (1980–2003), migration was not represented in the national museums, as the creation of a Catalan identity was based on the *integration* of migrants in the 'Fer País' project. During the tripartite coalition government (2003–10), the focus shifted and Catalan society was conceived as plural. However, although the early migrations were recognized through the creation of the Museum of the History of Migration, their presence within general institutional narratives remained limited to the

socio-cultural context at the core of museum themes. In local museums, a link has occasionally been established between earlier and more recent waves of immigration in attempts to promote social cohesion. Yet the history of migration continues to be largely ignored by most Catalan museums, partly because the subject – and indeed the museums themselves – played a rather limited role in the tripartite coalition's attempts to create a multicultural Catalan identity.

In Barcelona, even though the city's identity is conceived as intercultural, its museums have made few efforts to integrate the history of migration into their exhibitions. Instead, current cultural diversity is represented in a one-dimensional, 'ludic' way in order to promote social cohesion. This is typical of national and local museums throughout Catalonia, which by and large are merely instruments for the promotion of learning and the social use of the Catalan language. Furthermore, due to the severe financial problems of the Museum of the History of Immigration in Catalonia, the absence of a permanent migration narrative in the Museum of Catalan History, and the temporary nature of many of the exhibitions and activities that do touch on immigration and cultural diversity, the plurality of Catalan identity, both in the past and in the present, has no permanent space and is not integrated in the 'story of Catalonia'.

In 2010, the CiU returned to power at the Generalitat de Catalunya. Soon after, the right-of-centre Popular Party (Partido Popular) won the Spanish general election. The CiU also won control of Barcelona City Council for the first time in the democratic era. By then, the implosion of the property sector, combined with the effects of the global economic crisis, had resulted in an extremely high rate of unemployment. Consequently, a large number of immigrants left Spain in search of new job opportunities in other countries and politicians started to lose interest in the promotion of intercultural dialogue. As a result, it seems highly unlikely that the history of immigration will be integrated into Catalan museums any time soon.

## Notes

- 1 The Spanish transition to democracy is the era when Spain moved from the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, following his death in 1975, to the restoration of the Spanish monarchy marked by the Spanish Constitution of 1978.
- 2 All translations from Catalan to English of legislative documents, names of museums and exhibitions are by the author.
- 3 In 2012, it had twenty-two centres throughout Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, Andorra and the autonomous community of Valencia, where the Catalan language or its variants are spoken.
- 4 Alongside the 'Migrate' and the 'Migrations of the Twentieth Century' spaces, and the 'Masia of Can Serra' (for temporary exhibitions), the project planned to include a 'Migration Times' space, quantifying immigration to Catalonia, an introduction room and the 'Moving Humans' space on the process of migration. For a complete description of the project, see: [http://oliba.uoc.edu/mhic/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=148&Itemid=84](http://oliba.uoc.edu/mhic/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=148&Itemid=84) (accessed in September 2013).
- 5 'Interculturality' can be understood as the Catalanized version of the French concept of *interculturalité*.
- 6 The Colombian community is the fifth most numerous immigrant community in Catalonia, comprising more than 12,500 people in Barcelona (4.40 per cent of the city's total immigrant population).

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# 13

## MIGRATION HISTORY AND NATION-BUILDING

### The role of museums and memorials in post-devolution Wales

*Marco Giudici*

#### Introduction

This chapter presents a case-study analysis of public displays of Wales's history of immigration in museums and memorials after the 1997 devolution. It discusses the relationships between post-devolutionary policies related to inclusion and diversity and the opening of exhibitions and memorials dedicated to immigration.

Over the last two decades, increasing attention has been paid to the representation of immigration and diversity in museum settings (Crooke 2008; Goodnow 2008; Johansson 2010; Lewis 2005; Merriman and Poovaya-Smith 1996; Witcomb 2007). Yet, museum scholars have tended to ground their analysis within nation-states, with little attention paid to 'stateless nations' (Guibernau 1999; McCrone 2001), which are in the process of gaining increasing political autonomy. With a few exceptions (Crooke 2008; Mason 2007), the portrayal of immigration and diversity in the Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish museum and heritage sectors seems to be almost entirely missing from the current academic debate on museums and memorials in the UK.

This chapter aims to fill this academic gap. In so doing, it focuses on two case studies: the *Italian Memories in Wales* (IMW) exhibition and the *Arandora Star Memorial* (ASM) initiative, including the establishment of a commemorative monument as well as the exhibition *Wales Breaks Its Silence: From Memories to Memorial*. Without aiming to be representative of all Welsh museum displays and memorials related to immigration and diversity, IMW and ASM have been chosen for their importance in terms of media coverage, 'national' venues involved and number of visitors. Being among the first events of their kinds to occur in Wales – as they were entirely dedicated to immigration and to a specific migrant community – IMW and ASM offer an ideal vantage point from which to observe how the museum and heritage sectors' attitudes towards diversity have changed in recent years. Thus, the main focus of this chapter is discussing the significance that IMW and ASM had for Welsh museums and for Wales as a nation, in the context of devolution. Although they were involved in the organization of both IMW and ASM, Italian associations are beyond the scope of this analysis.

The chapter is divided into five sections. The first briefly contextualizes Wales's inclusive discourse. The second puts museums into the post-devolution context. The third analyses IMW and the fourth ASM. Finally, the conclusion addresses a number of the questions that these initiatives generated. The chapter primarily draws on the analysis of museum displays and memorials as well as on museum reports and publications. It is also based on interviews with curators and media coverage.

## **A tolerant nation? Wales, immigration and ethnic diversity**

Wales claims to have historically shown unique tolerance towards migrants and minorities (Evans 1991; Robinson and Gardner 2004; Williams 1995; Williams, Evans and O'Leary 2003), in contrast with an allegedly imperialistic and intolerant English/British tradition (Holmes 1991; Panayi 2010). This popular national myth has been given a sort of institutional aura by the inclusive approach to immigration and diversity embraced by the National Assembly for Wales (NAW) and successive Welsh governments since devolution (Chaney 2009; Chaney and Fevre 2001; Day 2010; Williams 2003; Williams and Chaney 2001; Williams, Evans and O'Leary 2003). These have adopted state-of-the-art policy initiatives to foster racial equality and democratic participation, which arguably marks a discontinuity with Welsh governance before devolution and even with the British model of multiculturalism (Rex 1995; Back *et al.* 2002; Delanty 2003; Grillo 2007; Panayi 2010).

The Welsh inclusive policy can be interpreted as an attempt to reach out to the country's growing migrant population (Chaney and Fevre 2001; Williams 2003; Day 2010). With increasing migration from Eastern Europe (Thompson, Chambers and Doleczek 2010) and dispersal of asylum seekers (Crawley and Crimes 2009), the number of non-UK-born people in Wales rose from 91,491 to 167,871 (3.1 to 5.5 per cent of the Welsh population) between 2001 and 2011 (ONS 2001, 2011). With the changing ethnic make-up of Welsh society having a potential impact on future elections and referenda, the devolved political institutions have been trying to reach out to migrants to nurture their civic engagement (Williams and Chaney 2001; Williams 2003). They have also been trying to reach out to Welsh society at large. In so doing, they have aimed to cultivate an inclusive sense of belonging to Wales, constructing a *civic* (rather than ethnic) notion of Welshness (Chaney and Fevre 2001; Day 2010), one that recalls the Scottish devolutionary experience (Penrose and Howard 2008; Hopkins 2008). This approach marks a discontinuity with previous definitions of Welsh identity (Jones 1992), which has traditionally been seen as either class-based (the coalfield experience) or ethno-linguistically connoted (the Welsh language).

## **Welsh museums and diversity**

Over the last decade, the Welsh museum sector seems to have been receptive to the devolved political institutions' civic and inclusive effort, with Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales<sup>1</sup> taking a range of initiatives to give more space to Wales's history of immigration and diversity. In 2006, St Fagans National History Museum opened a new gallery, Oriol 1, which explores themes such as 'beliefs, family and nation, with a clear emphasis on the multiplicity and diversity of identities and ways of "belonging" present within Wales today' (Mason 2007: 174). Opened in 2005, National Waterfront Museum, Swansea, has also provided space to present 'the diversity of those who have made a major contribution to



Wales past and present', including 'Italians, Spaniards, Irish, Scots, English and Jews, as well as people from the Caribbean, Asia, Somalia and the Yemen' (Mason 2007: 252).

This increased attention to Wales's diverse communities could be attributed to the Welsh political institutions' enhanced interest in museums and cultural initiatives. As Mason (2007: 254) has argued: "'Culture" has risen up the political agenda sufficiently to gain its own minister and committee ... cultural policies strategies issuing from the Assembly clearly position culture as an important force in community cohesion and regeneration.' As a registered charity and an independent chartered body, which receives its core funding through Welsh government grant-in-aid, National Museum Wales, in particular, appears to have been receptive to the Welsh political institutions' inclusive political agenda (Mason 2007: 21).

However, as Mason (2007) has argued, the Welsh museums' increased commitment to inclusion could also be interpreted as a wish to take a more active role in promoting community relations in an increasingly multicultural society. In 2011, National Museum Wales (2011: 9) stated that it aimed 'to become known as an organization where open discussion of contemporary issues takes place in a non-prejudicial and inclusive environment'. In other words, museums in Wales have increasingly 'sought to act as "third places", and through this strengthen communities and support civil engagement' (Black 2012: 224). For example, National Museum Wales has recently claimed to be 'ideally placed to strengthen tolerance, citizenship and mutual respect for the diverse communities of Wales and the world' (National Museum Wales 2011: 1).

The Welsh museums' commitment to diversity could also be seen as part of a broader picture. Various authors (Black 2012; Crooke 2008; Lewis 2005; Merriman and Poovaya-Smith 1996) have observed that, over the last two decades, museums across the UK and around the world have increasingly taken an active interest in themes such as immigration and multiculturalism, in response to the rapidly changing racial make-up of the communities they serve. Yet, there is an additional aspect to the Welsh context because museums are also playing a pivotal 'nation-building' role (Crampton 2003) in reshaping the identity of a country that has now been granted autonomous political institutions but is yet to become fully independent.

A 'stateless nation' (Guibemau 1999; McCrone 2001) within a larger multinational state (the UK), with overlapping identities (British/Welsh) and diverse linguistic patterns (English/Welsh), Wales has traditionally had difficulties in getting to grips with an overarching definition of Welshness that could accommodate its inner cultural differences (Balsom 1980; Day 2010; Jones 1992; Smith 1984) as well as its growing migrant population. Devolution has offered a new chance to overcome ethno-linguistic divisions and build a sense of national belonging that could embrace everyone living in Wales. In this context, it seems that museums have developed collections with the intention of making both indigenous and migrant people 'proud' of being Welsh. In so doing, they seem to have rediscovered the notion of tolerance as an element of Welshness that could make Welsh people proud of their nation and, at the same time, give hope to recently arrived migrants. As the next section illustrates, the IMW exhibition offered an ideal chance for St Fagans to explore Welsh tolerance and, therefore, meet its commitment to inclusion and diversity.

### ***Italian Memories in Wales***

Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, IMW was the result of a collaboration between the ENAIP, the London-based cultural and educational branch of the Italian Christian trade

union, ACLI, and St Fagans, which provided oral history and archive skills training, advising on layout, panels and venues, coordinated loans of objects and organized parallel events and talks. After its opening at NAW in March 2009, IMW toured Wales until May 2010 and was displayed at various venues, including St Fagans, Ceredigion Museum and Newport Museum and Art Gallery. The exhibition drew upon a vast oral history project involving fifty-four Italian interviewees from a number of generations. It featured thirty-four panels with extracts from interview transcripts (in Welsh, English and Italian) and pictures, in addition to displays of objects (such as an old coffee machine and a decorated ice-cream cart) and an interactive 1940s phone containing several audio interviews. The exhibition attracted an impressive 25,000 visitors between January and May 2010 at St Fagans alone (Rhys 2010), and it received considerable coverage in Welsh national newspapers (e.g. the *Western Mail*) and on BBC Wales.

It is unsurprising that St Fagans had a keen interest in organizing and hosting this exhibition. Italians comprise one of Wales's oldest and largest immigrant groups (Hughes 1991; Giudici 2012b), and they feature prominently in Welsh collective memory and popular culture, with their cafés (the so-called *bracchi*) especially celebrated in literature and the media (Giudici 2012a). In addition, Italians are generally viewed by the Welsh as a 'model minority' (Reed *et al.* 1989: 226) – socially integrated, economically successful and willing to contribute to society (e.g. through food provision). Such a stereotype could be imputed to the remarkable upward social mobility that second-, third- and fourth-generation Italians often experienced (Giudici 2012b), with many Welsh-born Italians achieving prominent positions in the media, education, art and sport.

Thus, IMW offered an ideal opportunity for St Fagans to put its commitment to diversity into practice by displaying a migrant story with which many Welsh visitors could easily engage. As a museum report declared, Italians in Wales were seen as 'an element of Welsh history that nearly all can relate to' (Rhys 2010). IMW project manager and curator for contemporary life at St Fagans Owain Rhys explained, 'It could be argued that IMW was pushing at an open door ... Italians are long-established here, and are an integral part of certain communities, so have been accepted and have integrated successfully.'<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, St Fagans aimed to display a success story, one that highlighted migrant integration, upward social mobility and positive contributions to society, together with the indigenous population's tolerant and welcoming attitude towards diversity. For example, in one of the panels, Wales was portrayed as a sort of rural idyll to which even Second World War Italian PoWs (who sometimes chose to stay after the war) could happily acclimatize, finding similar conditions to those back home. One 1950s picture portrayed the happy and successful family of a former PoW: in smart Sunday suits and dresses, they posed next to a brand-new tractor outside their picturesque farmhouse near Bala (north Wales). In an interview extract, the son of the former PoW recalled, 'Father ... loved working on the land, and he saw that there was a future for him to start life in Wales. Father always said: "What the Welsh people did for me, I can never forget."'

Thus, a picture was painted of the Welsh embracing the Italians for their work ethic and unique service to society. As another interview extract read: 'At a certain time all the electricity board people would come in [the café] for their breakfasts; you had the coal men coming in for their lunch, after their shift. Sunday evening, a pile of women from church would come in after mass.'

A 1938 photograph of the Canale Café in Cwmparc (south Wales) similarly emphasized Italians' involvement in the community, with the shop-owners, in their white coats, standing

behind the counter, ready to serve their customers. The Italian contribution to Welsh society was also highlighted by a huge early 1900s Victoria Arduino coffee machine (from Cresci's Caf , Ynysybwl) and a decorated ice-cream cart (from the Penguin's Caf , Aberystwyth), which were displayed at the very heart of the exhibition.

With most of St Fagans' visitors being family groups (including grandparents) from south Wales (Mason 2007: 165), IMW's objects and pictures were ideally placed to stimulate the audience's emotional engagement. Most Italian immigrants have historically settled in south Wales, with their caf s familiar establishments throughout Cardiff and in the surrounding coalmining valleys (Hughes 1991; Giudici 2012b). Hence, a large proportion of visitors, particularly those from the older generations, probably had vivid memories of the 'golden age' of Italian caf  life (up to the 1960s) and could engage with the artefacts and pictures displayed at St Fagans. The aforementioned museum report confirmed, 'because of the subject matter, many visitors enjoyed the exhibition on a personal level' (Rhys 2010), while the manager of the Heritage Lottery Fund for Wales, Jennifer Stewart, declared: 'this project, featuring photographs and interviews, will stir up a lot of emotions and tell the hidden stories of many people who have contributed to the cultural and economic growth of Wales'.<sup>3</sup>

As Kavanagh (1996: 2–4) has observed, 'when people visit museums, they can do no other but bring their life histories and memories with them ... Personal memories may be stirred by the images, objects or words made visible.' Thus, by displaying an exhibition with which many people in Wales could engage on a personal level, St Fagans turned itself into a 'third place' and attempted to change public perceptions about the sensitive social issue of immigration. It aimed to show the Welsh public that all migrants could be a valuable resource for the nation and contribute to society, just as Italians had in the past. As the museum report stated, one of IMW's aims was to 'raise awareness about the role of Italians in Wales ... the welcome they received in Wales and [encourage] comparisons with current immigrant communities' (Rhys 2010).

The exhibition could also be seen as an attempt to enhance the Welsh people's pride in their tradition of tolerance, as it aimed to demonstrate that Wales has long embraced diversity. Thus, by providing Italians with an official place in Welsh history, St Fagans hoped to encourage visitors to question and rethink their assumptions of 'what it means to be Welsh' by promoting a more civic and inclusive idea of Welshness. This approach was in line with the attention the museum had paid to the theme of 'belonging' since the opening of Oriel 1, and it paved the way for subsequent collaborative exhibitions exploring immigration and diversity. As Owain Rhys pointed out:

We recently exhibited a very successful Refugee House project ... have interviewed and collected objects to represent the experiences of Welsh Muslims and Jews, and have examples of objects, photographs and oral histories of Gypsies ... [W]e need to continue to collect and develop this. Groups that we haven't represented include Polish and Somali communities – maybe these could be included in future projects.

IMW aimed to reach out to migrants as well as to the indigenous population. As Modood (2007: 149) has observed, migrants and ethnic minorities cannot be expected to embrace the host country's identity if this lacks a strong 'emotional pull'. Given its positive and successful outcome, the Italian migrant experience could be seen as a powerful emotional pull that could be used to engage with other migrant people. IMW's hardworking and integrated

Italians presented an ideal ‘clear-cut definition of “good citizen”’ (Guibernau 2007: 25) that could be emulated by other immigrants.

Thus, with initiatives like IMW, it seems that Welsh museums have started to play a more active role in society, one that could be seen as inspired by (and in turn inspiring) Wales’s inclusive agenda. As Owain Rhys observed, ‘National Museum Wales contributes to, and is influenced by, National Assembly policies.’ As noted above, the exhibition opened at NAW, which subsequently commented on the event in its *Annual Equality Report*, hailing it as one of its most important cultural initiatives ‘related to equality, diversity and human rights’ (NAW 2009: 8). In other words, NAW acknowledged that IMW was instrumental in promoting social inclusion and equality. Several NAW members also recognized the significant role the exhibition played in changing public attitudes and encouraging recently established migrants to embrace Wales by following the Italian example. For example, the leader of Plaid Cymru (the Welsh nationalist party), Leanne Wood, declared:

There is a deep respect for the Italians that have come to Wales. The Italians that struggled and that came during that time have much to celebrate today ... I hope that [they] will act as a new beacon of hope for future generations who come to Wales.<sup>4</sup>

### **The *Arandora Star* Memorial initiative**

The ASM initiative included the establishment of a memorial and the organization of a touring exhibition commemorating Wales’s fifty-three Italian victims of the *Arandora Star*, a liner torpedoed by a German submarine on 2 July 1940 while transporting German and Italian internees to Canada (Holmes 1993; Ugolini, 2011).<sup>5</sup> ASM was promoted by the *Arandora Star* Memorial Fund in Wales (ASMFw), an association formed by several generations of Italians living in Wales, including descendants of the ship’s victims. Like IMW, the initiative received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The memorial was unveiled on 2 July 2010 in St David’s Metropolitan Cathedral, Cardiff. A plaque displaying the names of the victims and the epigraph ‘Wales and the Italian Community remember all those who perished, their families and the survivors’ (in English, Welsh and Italian) aimed to reinforce the Welsh–Italian bond by celebrating Italians’ successful integration within and contribution to Welsh society. The memorial was the work of Welsh letter-carver Ieuan Rees and Welsh-Italian sculptor Susanna Ciccotti, who used Welsh slate and Italian terracotta to represent Welsh–Italian friendship. As the ASMFw stated:

We decided ... that the memorial’s material should symbolise the close association and traditions of the two countries – slate for Wales and terracotta for Italy. Our memorial ... will recognise the contribution made by these men and their families to the communities of Wales. We will also remember the Italian survivors, who despite further hardships as internees following the *Arandora Star* tragedy were eventually welcomed back home to Wales. All this is done in furtherance of the spirit of reconciliation and of peace among nations.

*(ASMFw 2010: 18, 3)*

Thus, despite remembering a traumatic event, ASM did not aim to seek an official apology from Wales. Instead, it celebrated Italians’ successful integration into Welsh history, viewing

internment as ‘an isolated rupture in harmonious relations between Italians and the host community’ (Ugolini 2011: 23). The use of ‘symbolic’ materials recalled Cardiff’s Irish Famine Memorial, which was fashioned from Irish stone and Welsh slate and aimed to celebrate Irish immigration to Wales and the friendship between the two peoples (O’Leary 2004: 2). It could be argued that the *Arandora Star* Memorial similarly highlighted ‘reconciliation, in an attempt to achieve closure of a difficult and painful past’ and ‘was [another] model of symbolic inclusiveness’ (O’Leary 2004: 2). Thus, although it was commissioned by members of the Italian community, the memorial afforded Welsh institutions at both local and national levels the opportunity to celebrate Wales’s history of immigration and disseminate the image of a tolerant and inclusive country, one that is not afraid to come to terms with difficult aspects of its past and reconcile with its former enemies. By choosing to erect the memorial in the heart of Cardiff, both the council and the cathedral symbolically provided Italians with an ‘official’ place in the Welsh capital’s history. The Lord Major of Cardiff, Keith Hyde, formally attended the unveiling ceremony, and Welsh television channels gave the event national exposure (BBC Wales 2010; ITV Wales 2010).

As noted above, another aspect of the ASM initiative was a touring exhibition, *Wales Breaks Its Silence*, which was displayed in several venues, including National Waterfront Museum, Swansea, which provided the gallery space and contributed to the publicity, events and education package. The exhibition included a copy of the memorial and a model of the *Arandora Star* itself, along with panels featuring press cuttings and testimonies from the victims’ children and grandchildren. It attracted 45,000 visitors between September and October 2011.

For Swansea’s museum, *Wales Breaks Its Silence* offered an ideal opportunity to put NMW’s commitment to inclusion into practice and devote more space to the diverse communities that participated in Wales’s industrial history. As the curator for modern and contemporary industry, Ian Smith, pointed out:

We try and tell the story of the industrialization of Wales and of course Italian immigrants played their part in this, but we acknowledge the stories of other nationalities and ethnicities too. For example, we recently held an exhibition about Jewish immigrants to Wales.<sup>6</sup>

Despite focusing on internment, the exhibition emphasized Italians’ historic contribution to Welsh society, often with reference to their cafés and ice-cream parlours. Thus, like IMW, this exhibition aimed to stir up emotions, including sympathy for the *Arandora Star*’s innocent Italian victims. As Ian Smith commented, ‘most visitors ... expressed horror at the “rounding up” of the Italian migrants’. This emotional presentation of the past could be seen as an attempt to encourage the audience to adopt a more positive attitude towards contemporary migrants and asylum seekers by linking them with the Italians’ experience.

*Wales Breaks Its Silence* also offered Swansea’s museum the chance to design outreach programmes aimed at young audiences. Ian Smith explained:

Our education team arranged special lessons and talks to go along with the exhibition. We changed one of our education spaces into an Italian café where the pupils learned about Italians who made Wales their home. The Theatre Na nog production company

put on a play all about those events in the Second World War (subsidized by the museum) and schools visited the exhibition in conjunction with seeing the play.

These attempts to reach out to schools and educate children about diversity are in tune with current Welsh government policy relating to children's rights and inclusion. Since devolution, one significant advance has been the creation of the Children's Commissioner for Wales, who enacts the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into secondary legislation (Chaney 2009). The political institutions of devolved Wales have also shown a keen interest in promoting inclusion and equality in the school environment.

However, *Wales Breaks Its Silence* could also be seen as part of the Welsh museum sector's attempt to play a more active role in promoting inclusion and diversity among young audiences. As National Museum Wales (2011: 1) stated, 'our vision is to create a world-class museum of learning' and to make 'learning ... a catalyst for change'. The *Arandora Star* exhibition certainly fitted into this vision, as it aimed 'to educate the next generation and to inculcate in it a sense of shared experience and destiny' (Young 1993: 2–3), which entailed a more inclusive and civic sense of national belonging.

Individual curators' childhood memories can also inspire initiatives relating to diversity that are aimed at young audiences. As Ian Smith pointed out:

Personally, I think that there is more of an understanding that Wales is made up of a multicultural society and we reflect this in our exhibitions ... Having grown up in the Hafod area of Swansea in the 1950s and 1960s where I had Italian, Irish, Polish ... Jewish families from all over Europe, I naturally assumed that every street in the world was like ours – it didn't matter where you came from, you were just a 'neighbour'. Angelo Greco [one of the survivors of the *Arandora Star* tragedy] had a café just down the street from me.

## Discussion

Despite their apparently positive impacts on Welsh society, both IMW and ASM raised questions about the accuracy of their narratives. With the vast majority of IMW interviewees being long-established first-generation migrants, 'success' narratives tended to prevail over any recollections of negative experiences. For instance, IMW glossed over the hostility that Italian PoWs and coalminers encountered in Wales (Giudici 2012b). Owain Rhys explained that the museum 'didn't dwell on [negative aspects], as 90 per cent or more of the oral history and photographs reflected happy memories'. As Black (2012: 220) has observed:

In history museums ... [w]hile the memories of a community may not present a picture which is in all cases balanced or accurate, it is the story telling and the engagement in the emotion of the memory which creates the richest resource ... [T]he issue is how to transfer such content into the museum while maintaining an overall balance and ensuring the museum's expertise has not been compromised.

Commenting on the *Neighborhood Project*, Lewis (2005: 111) observed that the Chicago Historical Society had 'two incompatible goals: first to analyze and then to celebrate the history of the neighborhood. Achieving the first goal offended some of the community partners; achieving the second required omitting evidence.'

It may be argued that IMW's avoidance of certain controversial topics was, in a way, balanced by the ASM initiative. However, ASM also presented potential risks and limitations, namely an over-victimization of the Italian migrant community. Ugolini (2011: 233) has observed that

in many respects, the victimisation narrative which runs throughout British Italian literature addressing internment draws upon the powerful 'Italiani, brava gente' [Italians good people] mythology ... which perpetuates 'the ahistorical innocence of the Italians', underestimating their involvement in the Fascist party.

A potentially dangerous consequence of over-victimizing Welsh Italians could be to draw attention away from other, more severe, manifestations of racially motivated violence. For example, in 1919, Arab and West African seamen residing in the Butetown area of Cardiff were attacked in bloody race riots (Evans 1991, 2003). Yet, they have not received the same amount of attention as the Italian internees. As Black (2012: 219) has pointed out:

In seeking to incorporate the lived experiences of the previously marginalised ... museums can give too much space to those groups which ... have pushed hardest to have their stories told ... [This invites] in some previously marginalised groups to become part of the 'authorised version' of the past – while others will remain silent and ignored.

## Conclusion

Following devolution, museums in Wales have given increasing space to immigration and diversity, in response to the rapidly changing ethnic make-up of Welsh society. This enhanced interest in diversity seems to fit into the inclusive agenda of the devolved political institutions, which has given a sort of institutional aura to Wales's traditional claim to be a tolerant nation. Yet, it also denotes a sincere and autonomous effort among some Welsh museums to represent diversity and promote a more inclusive sense of national belonging. In this context, IMW and ASM may be seen as stepping-stones for Welsh museums, as they were among the first nation-wide initiatives to be entirely dedicated to Wales's history of immigration and to focus on one specific migrant community: the Italians.

With Italians being a long-established, integrated and 'popular' group in Wales, both IMW and ASM were ideal opportunities to include diversity, drawing on narratives with which many Welsh people could potentially engage. By emphasizing the successful integration and contribution of Italians, both IMW and ASM aimed to have a positive impact on society at large by encouraging Welsh people to rethink their sense of national belonging and embrace a more inclusive and civic idea of Welshness. They also aimed to encourage migrants living in Wales to embrace the country and integrate, following the Italian example.

However, despite their potentially positive social impacts, questions remain about the accuracy and effectiveness of IMW and ASM, and about how successful they were in enhancing people's understanding of contemporary migrant communities. In 2012, St Fagans organized the *Refugee House* exhibition, which explored the experiences of contemporary asylum seekers in Wales. Comparing it with IMW, Owain Rhys commented: 'the reactions ... from participants and visitors were much more striking – probably because [the exhibition] was dealing with a contemporary, divisive issue'.

## Notes

- 1 Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales – comprises eight museums across Wales, including St Fagans National History Museum, Cardiff, and National Waterfront Museum, Swansea.
- 2 Personal communication with Owain Rhys, curator of contemporary life at St Fagans and project manager of IMW, 9 April 2013. All Owain Rhys quotes in this chapter are taken from this interview.
- 3 *Western Mail*, 23 February 2008.
- 4 *Western Mail*, 3 March 2009.
- 5 Following Italy's declaration of war on Britain (10 June 1940), roughly 4,300 Italian male citizens living in Britain were put under arrest and interned as enemy aliens. A total of 446 Italians died in the sinking of the *Arandora Star* while being deported to Canada.
- 6 Personal communication with Ian Smith, curator for modern and contemporary industry, National Waterfront Museum, Swansea, 25 March 2013. All Ian Smith quotes in this chapter are taken from this interview.

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# 14

## MIGRATION EXHIBITIONS AND THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY

Reflections on the history of the representation of migration in Australian museums, 1986–2011

*Mary Hutchison and Andrea Witcomb*

### Introduction

The longstanding and diverse nature of Australian museums' engagement with the history of migration<sup>1</sup> offers a rich case study for those interested in the history of the representation of migration in museums and the ways in which it intersects with public debate and policy concerning immigration and living in a multicultural society. It is our hope that a discussion of these relationships in Australia and the types of exhibitions and curatorial strategies that have developed in response to them over the last thirty years will offer a useful basis for international comparison across countries, including those with similar settler histories as well as those experiencing more recent migrations and challenges to the ways in which they have thought about their identity.

Our chapter is based on our understanding that Australian migration exhibitions are, at heart, concerned with the cultural identity of a settler society founded as a British colony but whose population is largely the result of 200 years of immigration from all corners of the world. On this basis, the representation of migration in Australian museums is unavoidably a political project that reflects the tension between public recognition of Australia as a culturally diverse rather than an Anglo-Celtic society and the need to articulate a national identity that projects a culturally cohesive nation. Our analysis reveals how public debate and government policies have influenced the collection and exhibition of material concerning migration over time, and the strategies that museums have developed to reflect and indeed contribute to public discourse. In teasing out the detail of museum exhibitions of migration in relation to identity issues, we suggest a typology of exhibition practices associated with a number of curatorial strategies. Our discussion is based on individual and joint research, and is specifically based on a project looking at the relationship between Australia's collecting sector and changing understandings of cultural diversity and citizenship funded by the Australian Research Council and led by Andrea Witcomb.<sup>2</sup>

We begin with a brief historical background to the Australian context of migration and multiculturalism. This is followed by an outline of the key types of exhibitions and curatorial

strategies we have identified and a detailed exposition of their characteristics, their immediate context and the issues with which they engage, through a number of examples. While our discussion is structured chronologically and our exhibition types can be understood as responses to particular moments in recent history, they do not supplant one another in a clear chronological and evolutionary pattern. The Immigration Museum in Melbourne, for instance, has examples of both of the key exhibition approaches we identify within its exhibitions as well as a number of curatorial strategies. This is partly due to the longevity of some of its displays but also because different exhibitions and galleries perform different aspects of the museum's mission. The typology provides the basis for a conversation between approaches across and within time-frames.

An important factor in our discussion that we want to note at the outset is the tension between ideas about cultural diversity that have developed as part of a policy of multiculturalism associated with migration, and the place of Australia's Indigenous peoples and history in relation to this. As Ann Curthoys (2000) has argued, there is an 'uneasy conversation' between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people<sup>3</sup> concerned with land rights and multiculturalism as a policy most directly related to migrant groups. As a result, cultural representation of Indigenous Australians and migrant groups in museums has tended to occur in parallel. However, under the aim of fostering an inclusive approach, there have been, from the beginning, some exhibitions within a 'migration' context that include Indigenous history and culture. In these cases Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not only seen as part of the cultural mix of contemporary Australian society but as having always engaged with the 'newcomers' and having acted with agency in the context of colonial oppression.

## Historical background

Australia was established as a British colony in 1788. Its contemporary population, with the exception of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, are descendants of immigrants, whether they arrived in the early colonial period or at some time over the next 225 years. In addition to the British colonists during the nineteenth century there was a significant range of people from Europe, other British colonies, Asia and the Pacific islands. However, one of the things that united the Australian colonies when they federated in 1901 was the desire to ensure a *British* Australia based on the 'crimson thread of kinship'.<sup>4</sup> The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 was particularly designed to restrict Asian immigration. Over the following years, new Asian arrivals were effectively stopped and any attempts to encourage migration focused on Britain. This policy was known colloquially as the 'white Australia' policy.

After the Second World War the federal government initiated a massive and unprecedented immigration programme to fulfil its post-war reconstruction aims to boost the population and develop Australian industry. But it was soon discovered that immigrants would have to be sought from countries beyond Britain if population targets were to be met. Consequently, migration agreements were made with the International Refugee Organization and over time with an increasing range of European countries. By the 1970s immigrants from the Middle East were also being accepted. Over this period it was understood that people from non-Anglo backgrounds would assimilate into Australia's predominantly Anglo-Celtic culture rather than maintain their own traditions, cultural values and mores. (See Jordens 1997 and Jupp 2001 for histories of Australian migration.)

The post-war changes in migration to Australia eventually produced a social climate in which Australians became more willing to end racially discriminatory immigration regulations and to entertain the notion that Australian cultural identity might comprise more than Anglo-Celtic cultural values and practices. These ideas came to the fore with the election of a Labor government in 1973. By 1975, eligibility criteria for immigration on the basis of country of origin had been abolished (Jordens 1997: 225) and the Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby, had proposed Australia as a 'multicultural' society.

In the context of Labor reformism of the time, this proposal essentially entailed a migration settlement policy designed to redress past inequities through a range of social, economic and cultural measures (MacPhee 1981). The vision, as Grassby suggested in a 1973 speech, was that the Australian nation should be like a family – the 'family of the nation' – in which members are committed to the common good while retaining their distinct individuality (Grassby 1973: 3). Within this general framework, the idea of Australia as a 'mosaic' of cultures became a popular shorthand description for Australian multiculturalism (e.g. Jordens 1997: 225).<sup>5</sup>

By 1988, when Australia celebrated its bicentenary (200 years from the first colonial settlement), there was broad acceptance of the country's multicultural nature. As literature of the time published by the Office of Multicultural Affairs proclaimed, 'Australia is a culturally diverse nation' (Berzins 1989: 110). The end of discriminatory immigration policies also meant that the ethnic mix of the population was broader, with significant numbers now coming from Asia, including tens of thousands of refugees from Vietnam, who first started arriving by boat as asylum seekers in the late 1970s.

### **Creating a space for the maintenance of culture within multiculturalism**

Key to the principles of Australian multiculturalism of the 1970s and 1980s, in strong contrast to the previous policies of assimilation and integration, was the value placed on the cultural traditions and historical experience of non-English-speaking newcomers. Throughout the period this change in orientation resulted in funding for a variety of cultural initiatives. For instance, multilingual broadcasting services became a feature of community radio stations and a national broadcasting organization, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), was established. SBS comprises both a television and a radio station dedicated to broadcasting programmes that combine cultural services for migrants with the promotion of awareness of the multilingual and multicultural nature of Australian society (Ang, Hawkins and Dabboussy 2008; Jordens 1997: 229–30). Another cultural initiative was the Australian Ethnic Heritage Series, inspired by Immigration Minister Grassby. This published sixteen books between 1983 and 1987 which aimed to communicate the histories of specific ethnic communities and their contributions to Australia alongside a discussion about the difficulties these communities faced in accessing social, economic and cultural resources (Price 1960; Zubrzycki 1960; Martin 1978).

Australian cultural institutions, also influenced by broader 1960s and 1970s developments, such as the 'new museology' and 'history from below', were willing participants and leaders in the establishment of a 'multicultural' Australian historiography. As we highlight in our detailed discussion, libraries began to collect books in foreign languages for their migrant audiences, archives began to document migrant communities, and museums began to represent migrant cultures.<sup>6</sup> With this, the seed was sown for an entwined relationship between

the representation of migration in museums and changing narratives of national identity in relation to the existence of culturally diverse groups in Australian society.

### Types of exhibitions and curatorial strategies

Our research identifies two central concerns in Australian museum engagement with the theme of migration. One primarily seeks to represent Australia's cultural diversity as integral to its national identity through collection and exhibition strategies that focus on the value of different – that is non-Anglo – ethnic cultures. The other focuses on how cultural diversity has been experienced, understood and used, and what this means for how we engage with one another. One way of characterizing these approaches is that in Australia the representation of migration occurs in the form of exhibitions that typically are predominantly concerned with either culture or history. Taking our analysis a step further, a first glance suggests that those dealing with the representation of different ethnic cultures tend to be celebratory while those dealing with the history of how difference has been experienced tend to be more critical in their orientation. However, the political valences of these strategies are not absolute and change according to the political context at the time of their use.

Our argument is that approaches which focus on representing the cultural practices and traditions of various ethnic groups emerged largely in response to the multicultural policies of the 1970s and 1980s in the spirit of equity and opportunity for non-Anglo-Celtic migrant groups. Exhibitions in this context were designed to celebrate Australia's cultural diversity in support of the pedagogical intention to encourage an understanding of Australian identity as multicultural rather than essentially British. In step with broader policies, they took up the intention to accommodate ethnic communities into Australian identity by highlighting migrant contributions to the Australian economy and society in cultural terms. In doing so they frequently used what has been identified as a cultural 'enrichment' narrative (Hage 1998; McShane 2001). While such exhibitions were part of a general 'progressive moment', from a critical perspective they could also be seen as a 'handmaiden' to government policy (McShane 2001; Witcomb 2009) or even as a reinforcement of the 'other' in white Australia (Hage 1998; Ang and St Louis 2005; Ang 2009). However, in the more politically conservative era of the twenty-first century, with its more restrictive immigration policies, in which diversity needs to be defended and fought for all over again, the celebration of diversity may once again be seen as progressive, or even oppositional, albeit with an eye on past critiques. As we shall argue, cultural diversity is no longer understood simply as functioning like a mosaic. Instead, there is a much more sophisticated understanding of the power relations inherent in our models of cultural diversity.

The approach which historicizes Australia's cultural diversity can also be read as either celebratory or critical, depending on context. When multiculturalism was an important plank of governmental agendas at all levels of Australian government, the critique of past immigration policies served to support more open policies and was thus part of the celebration of Australia as a multicultural society – a society that had shaken off past prejudices. When multiculturalism fell out of favour, however, such historical approaches could be, and were, read as critical of both Australian society and the conservative government that came to power in the mid-1990s.

Within the historical approach, we further identify several different curatorial strategies. The first, which developed at the same time as the cultural approach, is simply a recognition

of the history of migration and an attempt to critique the notion that Australia became multicultural only in the post-Second World War period. We would argue that this strategy takes up the new vantage point for viewing diversity across modern Australian history provided by the move from an assimilationist policy, which expected new migrants to become Australian by taking on British values, to multicultural policies, which naturalized cultural diversity as part of the social fabric. As such, it forms part of the ‘celebratory’ moment which, as indicated above, has achieved a renewed connection with progressive politics – in this instance as a history in tension with a desire to value what is seen as the fundamental Anglo-Celtic nature of Australian society.

The second strategy, developed at a time of enormous public debate within Australia about the country’s immigration policy in the context of the ‘War on Terror’ and the increasing arrival of asylum seekers by boat, takes the form of a critical engagement with the history of Australia’s immigration policy. Until 2001, this approach could be seen as extending understanding of the history of Australian migration in the spirit of well-established multicultural policies. However, it began to take effect in exhibitions at precisely the same time as Australians, and the Australian government, began to lose their faith in multiculturalism. The result was that some Australian museums were identified as undermining Australian values as they were expressed in an increasingly conservative context. Thus began Australia’s own version of the ‘Culture Wars’ – known as the ‘History Wars’.

The third strategy is the attempt to develop exhibitions that use Australia’s migration history to develop more nuanced understandings of how cultural diversity works in the present as well as how it worked in the past. Characteristically, this strategy involves interaction between cultures and highlights cultural change. It is also the most curatorially complex. It includes looking at personal experiences of living with cultural diversity in a particular place over time; seeking to dissolve national boundaries and embed Australia in a transnational history in which people, objects and ideas are moving constantly between places; and using aesthetic and poetic devices to create imaginative forms of dialogue across cultural difference.

Exhibitions may feature more than one of these approaches – or indeed a mixture of all three.

### **Celebrating multicultural Australia – culture and history**

In 1986, Australia’s first migration museum, the Migration and Settlement Museum, opened in Adelaide, South Australia. It was the culmination of a chain of investigations that started with a Grassby-inspired survey of local ethnic collections and resulted in a museum that collected and exhibited the cultural material of specific ethnic groups and provided a history of migration since European settlement. Recent research shows that it was not the first institution in Australia to collect and exhibit ethnic material and the history of migration, but it was certainly the first to do so as its sole focus and with a government mandate.<sup>7</sup>

The museum pursued its interest in representing migrant cultures primarily through the use of temporary exhibitions created in collaboration with various ethnic groups. The effect was a strong celebration of South Australia’s cultural diversity and a clear message that Australia’s ethnic groups were worthy of inclusion in the state’s (and, by implication, the nation’s) story. The opening temporary exhibition was *Textile Traditions: Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia*. It comprised a display of costumes and household textiles in keeping

with the new museum's mission to create displays 'about the history and cultural traditions of all the different communities which make up South Australia's multicultural society' – 110 groups in all (Szekeres 1989: 73). As well as carrying the broad pedagogical concern of multiculturalism, *Textile Traditions* exemplified the intention to redress, as first director Viv Szekeres (1989: 79) said, the 'Anglo-Celtic bias' in Australian collections by exhibiting previously unrepresented material and working cooperatively with the relevant ethnic communities to develop displays of that material (Anderson 1986: 4).

*Textile Traditions* is a model of what became a longstanding and widespread approach to representing migration through culture – particularly 'different' cultures. But the Migration Museum also provided historical context for its celebratory temporary exhibitions. This took the form of a permanent display of a chronology of Australian immigration that included the dispossession of Aboriginal people (focusing particularly on South Australia), and other permanent exhibitions focusing on particular periods of immigration. Together these showed Australia as a land of migrants from a variety of cultural backgrounds from the beginning of colonization. Highlighting the more critical view provided through the historical record, Viv Szekeres wrote that she felt the museum had a clear political mission to bring to light the difficult and often traumatic experience of being a migrant in Australia, as well as the devastating effect of colonization on the Indigenous peoples (Szekeres 1989: 73–9).

In the 1980s period of maturing multicultural policies, the Migration Museum was at the forefront of celebrating Australia's cultural diversity and announcing that Australian national identity was now more complex and open. Szekeres's understanding of her role as the museum's director also reflects the new generation of historians and social history curators who were keen to address the erasures created by earlier historians in their narratives about the past. Among the many new cultural and historiographical projects of this 'Bicentennial' decade, a signal event in 1988 was a conference of museums and libraries hosted by the Victorian Branch of the Museums Association of Australia and Library Council of Victoria to discuss 'new responsibilities' in 'documenting multicultural Australia'. The intention of this gathering was to influence historical collections policy directly on the basis that the official record did not include documentation of the 'presence in, and contributions to, Australia' of Indigenous peoples and immigrant communities with diverse languages and cultures (Loh 1989: 1). Participants included national collecting institutions and the Migration Museum as well as ethnic organizations and Aboriginal groups who reported on how they were collecting and housing their cultures and histories. The conference's aim clearly indicates that its focus was to celebrate the 'contribution' of ethnic groups to Australian society, whether through their cultures or a history of their presence in Australia. Significantly, it included Aboriginal people in this frame of reference at a time when there was not only a growing movement for reconciliation between the Indigenous population and the colonizers but a strong critique of Australia's founding moment as 'Invasion Day' – the beginning of Indigenous dispossession. (See Bennett, Mercer and Carter (1992) for a collection that critiques the narratives that underpinned various representations of the nation during 1988.)

At a time of inclusive refiguring and re-presenting of Australian history,<sup>8</sup> the involvement of Indigenous people in the conference may be seen as a determined bid to find a way through the 'uneasy conversation' between them and multicultural initiatives. An interesting and influential historiographical approach that emerged through the Ethnic Heritage Series was one which assumed that Australia was a nation of immigrants in which Indigenous people were the 'first people'. The strongest use of this 'peopling of Australia' approach was in *The*



*Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, its People and their Origins*, first published with the support of the Australian Bicentennial Authority in 1988 (Jupp 2001). It designated Indigenous people as the ‘first settlers’ – followed many thousands of years later by others who also successively became settlers – and included the histories of 107 ethnic communities in Australia, giving equal status to all, including the English, the Irish, the Scots and the Welsh.

In 1988, the idea of the peopling of Australia also provided the frame for an exhibition at Sydney’s new Powerhouse Museum<sup>9</sup> – *Australian Communities*. In contrast to the celebratory exhibition of Australia’s cultural diversity which identified ethnicity and culture with non-Anglo-Celtic groups, *Australian Communities* explicitly explored migration and a more inclusive understanding of Australia’s multicultural identity by initiating a conversation between Indigenous peoples and all newcomers since 1788. As a result, in this exhibition there was a sense in which the Australian community as a whole was defined by cultural diversity in ways that made diversity ‘something in which we all participate, rather than a special addition, like icing on a cake’ (Witcomb 2009: 56).

Another development signalled in this exhibition was the combination of the pedagogical intent to value cultural diversity with critical reference to the history of Australian immigration policy. A pamphlet accompanying the exhibition stated: ‘Regrettably, well-entrenched negative attitudes towards Asians, left over from the 1800s and World War II, still exist. Despite the rich contribution of Asian immigrants, some parts of the Australian community continue to express resentment and hostility towards them’ (Douglas 1991). While the critique remained implicit, it seemed that the history of the peopling of Australia could provide a space in which to draw attention to the issues of anti-Asian ‘white Australia’ policies, and assimilationist policies which expected new arrivals to forget their own cultures and become ‘Australian’.

Above all, representations of multicultural Australia during the 1980s, often associated with Bicentennial activities, highlight the contemporary concern with cultural equity by seeking equal representation for all. Significantly, in terms of our typology for understanding the various approaches to museum representations of migration and its imbrication with an understanding of Australia as a culturally diverse society, there are exhibitions that use history as a device to enable and encourage a conversation around issues – whether the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or the exclusion of people by race from Australia. Here we read an aim to extend the mission of the museum beyond a celebration of diversity to some kind of political engagement involving a critical standpoint on Australia’s past and, by implication, a defence of the policies of the time.

In the years after 1988, the notion that all settlers were migrants was, however, far from established. In 1991, for example, the Australian National Maritime Museum (ANMM)<sup>10</sup> in Sydney took up the migration theme in a permanent exhibition which dealt with the migrant experience within the frame of sea travel ‘from the convict period to the present day’. The exhibition was called *Passengers*. The description of ‘migrants’ was reserved for those who made the journey as part of the post-war migration scheme. Those who came before the Second World War were simply ‘settlers’.

Cultural difference as the focus of the ‘culture’ approach to exhibiting migration also continued as a regular methodology. For example, *Chops and Changes: Food, Immigrants and Culture*, developed by the Migration Museum in 1996, extended the *Textile Traditions* model into a celebration of the contributions of diverse cultural traditions to Australian life by

focusing on the impact of a cornucopia of different food on what Australians from an Anglo background considered ‘dull old Australian chops’ (grilled lamb chops served with boiled potatoes and a green vegetable such as green beans). An unanticipated effect of seeking to establish the value of cultural diversity in this way, however, was to locate non-Anglo cultures as a colourful addition to Australian society rather than self-determining members of it (Hutchison 2009). In other words, despite the aim of inclusion, they were never really equal and they were always separate. As Ghassan Hage put it:

if the exhibition of the ‘exotic natives’ was the product of the power relation between the coloniser and the colonised *in the colonies* as it came to exist in the colonial era, the multicultural exhibition is the product of the power relation between the post-colonial powers and the post-colonised as it developed *in the metropolis* following the migratory process that characterised the post-colonial era.

(Hage 1998: 160–1)

### **New developments: histories of migrant experience and cultural change**

In the context of the dominant migration exhibition mode – and critiques of its focus on culture as a static characteristic of certain groups – alternative approaches in the 1990s were perhaps less visible. A significant development, however, was the emergence of exhibitions which engaged with diversity as an *interaction* between cultures. Both of the exhibitions we discuss here brought the distinct history and culture approaches together by using history to open up the theme of how different groups shared a place and by examining, rather than simply documenting, the impact of interaction between cultures, through the experience of history. In other words, culture became dynamic and history became something that was experienced, as well as a context. *Bridging Two Worlds: Jews, Italians and Carlton* was a 1992 exhibition made possible through a collaboration between the Melbourne Jewish Museum, the Italian Historical Society and Museum Victoria and held at the Museum of Victoria. It explored the experiences of two migrant groups who had lived in Carlton, an inner suburb of Melbourne, since the nineteenth century. It was clearly a celebration of the contribution of Jews and Italians to the development of a more cosmopolitan culture in Australia, but it was also attentive to another issue – the question of how we accommodate cultural difference and become multicultural. By looking at everyday life in one place over time, including reference to its colonial beginnings, the exhibition showed change occurring as a result of cultural interaction in a particular location. Place and time thus became key characters in the story, with a productive and enabling force. Another element in this exhibition was the evocation of migrant experiences in Carlton through personal testimony and the novelist Arnold Zable’s often informal and expressive text. For instance: ‘Learning Australian: The local school. This was the melting pot. This was where the children of Carlton – Europeans, Aussies and Asians alike – came together. Sometimes they fought and taunted each other. Sometimes they fell in love’ (Zable 1992: 23). Unlike expository text which creates a distance between the author and the reader in order to invite critical examination, this approach, which owes more to the devices of creative than expository prose, closes the distance. It draws the reader inside the experience of multicultural Carlton, enabling it to be felt.

*Sweet and Sour: Experiences of Chinese Families in the Northern Territory*, developed by the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory and the Chung Wah Society in 1996,

also focused on a single place – Darwin. The Chinese experience in Australia has its origins in colonial times, and in this case, as well as celebrating the maintenance of cultural traditions, the exhibition dealt with the difficulties Chinese families experienced as a result of discriminatory government policies (Healy 1996: 3). The exhibition included displays of traditional objects and histories of Chinese families, bringing historical experience in Australia together with traditional culture.

In both *Bridging Two Worlds* and *Sweet and Sour* we see not a history of Australia's cultural diversity as in the 'peopling' approach, but the experience of cultural diversity in action through the historical experience of ethnic groups in the wider cultural context of a particular place. Such exhibitions are not simply celebrating diversity but engaging with the more difficult question of how racism, as well as good will, have shaped the way we are.

As we show in our discussion of more recent exhibitions, this 1990s' intention to look at culture as dynamic rather than static, through the experience of history and in association with a particular set of cultural strategies, has re-emerged in more recent times.

### **Migration exhibitions in the context of political challenges: history and culture**

In 1998 Australia's second migration museum, the Immigration Museum, opened in Melbourne. The new museum's displays were in many ways updated versions of the South Australian Migration Museum's initial 1986 approach. Displays of culture were framed by a chronology of 200 years of settlement that included its impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the 1992 recognition of Indigenous land rights known as the 'Mabo Case'. A community gallery provided a space for displays developed with ethnic community groups which included the more recent waves of refugees from South America and Africa and over time came to include Irish and Scottish groups as well as non-English-speakers.

Rather than taking the long-term 'peopling' approach to settlement, which included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the settling process, the Immigration Museum emphasized the connection between all those who had arrived since colonization. In its opening booklet, the museum's patron, the Governor of Victoria, wrote: 'The story of immigration is essentially the story of all non-Indigenous Australians. Over the past 200 years millions of people have settled in this country, bringing with them diverse cultures and beliefs' (Immigration Museum 1998: iv). In some of the displays the connections between the experience of different cultural groups were drawn out poetically through personal stories and expressive text. While the idea of the contribution of 'our immigrants' persisted in this museum, it did so alongside an intention to focus on the interaction between cultures in the creation of contemporary Australia. The clear message of the Immigration Museum in 1998 concerned both culture and history as things we all might share: 'We need to acknowledge our history with all its shades of light and dark, and celebrate our rich diversity' (Immigration Museum 1998: 24).

While the approach of the Immigration Museum could be seen as well rehearsed and holding no surprises in the context of advanced Australian multiculturalism, in retrospect its 1998 celebratory rhetoric signalled a clearly progressive politics in the midst of a conservative turn. It opened in the middle of a tumultuous public debate about multiculturalism, sparked by the election of a conservative federal government in 1996, that mirrored concerns about social cohesion in other multicultural Western societies at the time. One sign of the times

was the sharp rise in popularity of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party. In her maiden speech in the Federal Parliament, Hanson (1996) railed against 'special privileges' for both Indigenous Australians and migrants, especially those from Asia, Africa and the Middle East, many of whom had come as refugees.

In this new context, the South Australian Migration Museum took its consistent intent to educate audiences about the experience of migration into direct political engagement. It provided a strong counter to uninformed criticism of refugees, particularly those arriving as asylum seekers, through a travelling exhibition called *Survivors of Torture and Trauma*, which aimed 'to help people understand the experience of torture and trauma'.<sup>11</sup> The exhibition invited audiences to walk through an installation which recreated the refugee experience of being caught with nowhere to go. It also moved people through the process that refugees have to undergo in order to reach Australia as part of its humanitarian intake. In our story of the history of various curatorial strategies used in representing migration in Australian museums, this exhibition is important because it extended the evocative power first demonstrated in *Italians and Jews in Carlton* to an attempt to engage with poetic strategies aimed at immersing visitors in the world of the 'other' rather than maintaining boundaries. The aim here was clearly to engage the potential for empathy among those who attended the exhibition.<sup>12</sup>

Concerns about terrorism, asylum seekers and social disintegration were a far cry from the 1988 celebratory approach to cultural diversity. As well as including refugee groups in migration exhibitions and dealing with the refugee experience directly, museums responded to the times by highlighting history as a means through which to examine migration and cultural diversity, using it to renew their intention to educate Australians about their multicultural society. The clearest and most contentious example of this approach was the first permanent exhibition at the new National Museum of Australia, which was opened by the Prime Minister as a major Centenary of Federation event. This exhibition explicitly revived the Bicentennial's 'peopling of Australia' theme. It was called *Horizons: The Peopling of Australia since 1788*. Strikingly, its interest in history extended beyond the idea of waves of immigration from colonial times to the present to cover the history of immigration policy. Individual experiences of migration, told largely through objects, were located in the context of key policies, such as populating Australia's empty spaces and restricting that population by race. For example, one display focused on the Vietnamese asylum seekers who travelled by boat across the China Sea to the 'top end' of Australia in the late 1970s. Personal objects from one such perilous boat journey were juxtaposed with some of the polemic that greeted these 'boat people' (as they were often derisively called), such as a newspaper poster declaring, 'Sink them!'

Such strategies provide room for a strong affective response of discomfort, which, in turn, may lead to some level of critical insight. Another affective device, using a more poetic approach, was also provided in *Horizons* in an artwork expressing the peopling story as the layers of an Aboriginal midden.<sup>13</sup> In the top few centimetres, above layers of sand and shells representing thousands of years, shoes, leather and glass appeared among the Aboriginal artefacts, pointing to the cultural exchange that inevitably followed the moment of contact. In a simple use of the art of installation, visitors were confronted with the politics of land-ownership in which it is clear that 'migrants' or 'settlers' or 'pioneers' – all terms used to describe the arrival of non-Indigenous people but with different political connotations – are but sojourners in comparison with the original inhabitants. At the same time, the radical differences between the two cultures and the implications of those differences are also suggested.

While there was some public debate about the Migration Museum's *Survivors of Torture and Trauma* exhibition, *Horizons* suffered a much more dramatic reception. It received very poor press from conservative critics and from a conservative review panel that called for the gallery to be shut (Commonwealth of Australia 2003; Message 2009; Witcomb 2009). In 2009 it was replaced by a still-current exhibition called *Australian Journeys*, whose interest lies in tracing Australia's 'interconnections with the world'.<sup>14</sup> In this exhibition the focus is on objects as an expression of transnationalism rather than either culture or the history of migration or immigration policies. Histories of travel, trade and migration – the main themes of the exhibition – are implicit rather than explicit and there is no central narrative or any other device to provide a point of view. The movement of ideas, people and objects in and out of the country is captured in rich detail but nothing is offered about what this may mean in terms of cultural diversity, Australia's position in the world or Australian identity. What remains is a space of flows and exchange. For example, one of its many objects is an Irish dancing costume designed and sewn by the Australian designer Rachel Franzen. Franzen is not Irish, although she has a passion for Irish dancing. She now lives in and runs her business from Dubai. The design of the costume blends Irish and Arabic decorative motifs. While it might speak to transnational flows and movements of people, it cannot be taken as either an expression of cultural identity on the part of an ethnic group or of their migrant experience. Instead, it speaks to the global flow of people, to the hybrid nature of contemporary cultural identities and perhaps to a depiction of Australian society as cosmopolitan from its very beginnings. The frame of the nation and the problem of defining its cultural identity has all but disappeared.

By contrast, in 2003, the Melbourne Immigration Museum opened a new permanent exhibition called *Getting In* with the clear pedagogical intent of trying to reclaim some of the ground now lost to conservatives. Taking up what *Horizons* started, it provides a history of Australian immigration policy within the larger 'peopling' frame, declaring that 'More than 9 million people have migrated to Australia since 1788.' The exhibition includes an interactive installation that invites visitors to interview prospective migrants and make decisions about their eligibility on the basis of the criteria of the day. It is a process that invites comparison with current policies. It also seeks to educate the public on the difference between migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in a bid to generate more understanding of the plight of the latter two groups.

In *Getting In* a historical framework is used to show how cultural diversity has been understood and managed in Australia over time. Other migration exhibitions in this recent period also seek to drill into cultural diversity rather than retreat from it and have drawn on embodied affective interpretive methods as well as a strong eye on history in order to do so. Another development in *Getting In* is the move away from the ethnic community experience to that of individuals and approaches that seek new ways of bringing Indigenous people into the conversation.

## Culture, history and place

Since 2003 there have been a variety of examples of exhibitions that seek to engage with the experience of cultural diversity and to include Indigenous people within that frame. One approach has been to return to the themes of cross-cultural experiences within a place, first explored in *Bridging Two Worlds: Italians and Jews in Carlton*, in combination with a more

complex understanding of the ways culturally diverse groups have contributed to Australia. A striking example among more recent exhibitions was one which reclaimed ethnic experience in the context of history and place – the 2007 South Australian Museum travelling exhibition *Australia's Muslim Cameleers: Pioneers of the Inland* (Jones and Kenny 2007). At a time of controversy about Muslim Australians, this exhibition showed the long history of Muslims in Australia and their contribution not to cosmopolitanism but to British settlement of the country's interior. Documents and objects bore witness to work and skill rather than heritage, and highlighted the complexity of the interactions between the cameleers and both British and Aboriginal people. While archival documents conveyed a history of discriminatory immigration policy, they also highlighted the respect that British explorers had for the camel drivers who enabled much of their exploration. Aboriginal artefacts using camel hair and others depicting camels and turbaned figures revealed further forms of cultural interaction. The exhibition was lightly framed by history. Visitors came across the stories of interaction and experience through discussion of the particular items displayed within headlined sections. It was the power of the objects and images to inculcate a sense of place and experience with minimal explanation, rather than an explicit narrative, that carried the pedagogical intent.

Another example, also with a strong history and place framework, is *Migration Memories*, curated by Mary Hutchison as part of an Australian Research Council project about exhibiting cultural diversity (2005–8).<sup>15</sup> In two exhibitions with communities in small regional locations she explored the nature of migrant experiences, using the history of migration in each place as a frame. The experiences featured were not those of ethnic communities, but of individuals, including those from English-speaking and Aboriginal cultures. Their histories – which might extend over generations – reflected local migration history from the colonial period to the present and its impact on local Aboriginal people, including forced migrations. Hutchison's research was informed in part by curating exhibitions at the National Archives of Australia, whose collection of government records includes detailed personal documents as well as documents concerning policy and its implementation. She used these to show the relationship between personal and historical/political histories very sharply.

One of the lessons from *Migration Memories* was that focusing on migration in the context of locality highlights the possibilities of seeing it in terms of migrations within Australia as well as from overseas, and in terms of displacements/movements both out and in. In this way *Migration Memories* reopened and extended the potential interest of migration history as a theme for migration exhibitions.

Two other aspects of *Migration Memories* reflect emerging characteristics of exhibitions seeking to address cultural diversity. One is that it explored ways of inviting audiences into a conversation with cultural diversity in their place by engaging forms of communication such as personal stories in the words of their tellers and through expressive and first-person texts that, like Arnold Zable's in *Bridging Two Worlds*, work to draw the reader into an experience. The other concerns the inclusion of Aboriginal stories in the frame of migration history, not so much as a story that precedes but as one that continues and is part of the present context of cultural diversity. In practice, this exploration inevitably called up the 'uneasy conversation' and perhaps because of this often had a particularly strong impact on local audiences and the individuals who shared their histories for the exhibitions.

In its most recent (2011) exhibition, the Immigration Museum in Melbourne also explores the meaning of living in a culturally diverse society. *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* breaks the link between the representation of migration to Australia and representing Australian identity

as shaped by its cultural diversity (see Witcomb (2013) for a fuller discussion of this exhibition). The focus is not on migration, but on what it means to live in a culturally diverse society. As such, the intention is to counter the growing presence of racism, particularly among young people, who form the main audience for this exhibition. It attempts to explain the process of identity formation and the implications of this for social relations, including the processes by which we exclude people from belonging.

The exhibition begins by making each visitor the subject of the display through a video installation that invites visitors to reflect on and question their own positions as members of a culturally diverse society by confronting them with images of people from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds that alternate between welcoming them and pushing them away simply by their body language. After this introduction, the exhibition goes on to explain how our identities are expressed through our use of language, clothing and jewellery, eating customs and so on. This is followed by a series of personal stories in which people from a wide variety of backgrounds (but sadly not Anglo backgrounds) use objects and cultural practices to negotiate their cultural identities, which always turn out to be complex and not reducible to a single ethnicity.

From this starting point based on individual identity, the discussion moves to questions about how a society defines its identity by defining boundaries between self and other. For example, a room full of passports from around the world speaks to our ability to exclude people *and* to welcome them. Practices of exclusion are then explained through a history of racism in Australian popular culture in which the 'white Australia' policy looms large. Display items include games, advertising and political ephemera as well as documentation of everyday practices, such as the bullying of those who are 'different'. Unlike previous exhibitions in which the recognition of self was meant to lead to validation, here this recognition leads to an uncomfortable questioning of one's responses to racist situations.

In *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* migration history and cultural diversity have parted company and are no longer conflated. The exhibition is not about the experience of migration but rather what it means to live in a culturally diverse society where identity is multiple and hybrid. Difference is back on the agenda – not as a spectacle or a colourful addition, but as something embedded in a conversation about what kind of people we want to be as Australians. Audiences are invited to engage in this dialogue through their own experiences and feelings.

## Conclusion

What is clear from this history of the ways in which migration has been represented in Australian museums is that the close relationship between the histories of multiculturalism and the representation of migration in Australian museums provided a very limited frame from which to approach the more complex question of how to address cultural diversity. The close association between culture and ethnicity made it particularly hard to represent the experience of living in a culturally diverse society. While a more historical approach made some inroads into this problem, particularly when it was centred in a place, allowing diversity to emerge from within, more recent exhibitions, such as *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* and *Migration Memories*, point to new configurations between culture and history. Rather than representing the past, for example, *Identity: Yours, Mine, Ours* deals with the legacy of the past in the present. It does so by representing individuals rather than communities, pointing to their multiple allegiances and creating a space for affective, embodied and personal stories.

Questions of identity here are not simply to do with static understandings of culture. This creates a space in which it is possible to question received understandings based on fixed cultural understandings. Likewise, *Migration Memories* uses personal experiences to break the mould of group identity while allowing historical contexts to come through. In these spaces it becomes possible to engage across former divides between Indigenous, settler and migrant groups and create a space in which it might be possible to start the process of making 'uneasy conversations' more comfortable, without eliminating the tensions.

## Notes

- 1 The South Australian Migration Museum opened in 1986, making it the first museum of its type in Australia. The Immigration Museum in Melbourne and the Migration Heritage Centre, New South Wales, were both established in 1998 (the latter now has a primarily online presence). As well as these dedicated museums, many of Australia's national and state-funded museums have permanent exhibitions about migration. There are also a number of established museums which focus on the history of particular ethnic/cultural groups in Australia, such as the Chinese Museum in Melbourne, the Polish Hill River Church Museum in South Australia, and Jewish museums in Melbourne and Sydney. Temporary and touring migration exhibitions have also been staged regularly.
- 2 Other team members include Kylie Message, Ian McShane, Simon Knell and Arne Amundsen. The project is DP120100594 and we wish to acknowledge the funding provided by the Australian Research Council.
- 3 In Australia, the preferred term for Indigenous people is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to specify the differences between them and avoid homogenization. 'Aboriginal' covers the continent and Torres Strait Islander, the islands of the Torres Strait to the north of Australia.
- 4 Henry Parkes made this argument for the federation of the Australian states.
- 5 The development of Australian multicultural policy by Grassby and his successors took place in the context of a wider discussion about social and cultural equity that had become increasingly influential from the late 1960s. Grassby was significantly influenced by both the Canadian multicultural policies of Pierre Trudeau (an influence discussed by Zubrzycki 1995) and the work of Professor George Zubrzycki, a sociologist who was a post-war Polish migrant to Australia (MacPhee 1981: 1).
- 6 These activities are clearly documented in the papers from a 1988 conference entitled *New Responsibilities: Documenting Multicultural Australia* (Birtley and McQueen 1989).
- 7 As part of the ARC project, Karen Schamberger at Deakin University is uncovering the existence of collections dealing with non-Anglo-Celtic settlers and migrants in Australian museums from the nineteenth century. These collections are not extensive or systematic like those underpinning the exhibitions discussed in this chapter, but they raise interesting questions as to why they were collected and how they were used. Also, no more than a handful of ethnic-specific museums emerged before the 1970s.
- 8 The history series *A People's History of Australia since 1788*, edited by Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee, is another example of a project which capitalized on the Bicentennial to take a fresh look at the 200 years since the first colonial settlement.
- 9 The Powerhouse Museum opened in 1988. It was based on the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, whose own forerunner had opened in 1880. The addition of a Social History Department was one of the differences from the museum's previous incarnations.
- 10 This museum was meant to open in 1988, but this was delayed until 1991. *Passengers* was one of its opening suite of galleries and it remains in place today, with its curatorial vision largely intact.
- 11 [www.history.sa.gov.au/migration/galleries\\_programs/community\\_access\\_gallery/survivors.htmweb](http://www.history.sa.gov.au/migration/galleries_programs/community_access_gallery/survivors.htmweb) (accessed 21 February 2007).
- 12 For a discussion of the ethical difficulties involved in such immersive strategies, see Witcomb (2013).
- 13 A midden is a term used by archaeologists for a site where a particular community deposited domestic rubbish over many years. In the case of Indigenous people in Australia, a midden on the coast would typically include thousands of shells from shellfish, bones from fish and birds and so on.
- 14 [www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/australian\\_journeys/](http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/australian_journeys/) (accessed 15 January 2014).
- 15 <http://rsh.anu.edu.au/migrationmemories/> (accessed 15 January 2014).



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# 15

## HERITAGE AND THE REFRAMING OF JAPAN'S NATIONAL NARRATIVE OF HOKKAIDO

### Negotiating identity in migration history

*Julie Higashi*

#### Introduction

Museums play a major role in forming social identities in processes of nation-building (Crimson 2001, Launius 2007). This is especially the case with what Hooper-Greenhill (2000: 16–18) terms ‘modernist museums’ that originated in the nineteenth century and continue to exist today. Recently, with the emergence of new paradigms, ethnographic collections are being revisited by scholars and museum practitioners (Goodnow and Akman 2008, Ashworth *et al.* 2007). Their studies have mostly dealt with European and multicultural societies, but have also become relevant when analysing museums in Japan, as many have begun to challenge the perception of Japan as ethnically ‘homogeneous’ (Dale 1986, Lie 2001, Siddle 2003, Weiner 2008). In recent years, Japan’s shifting political context has greatly impacted museological practices of museums envisaged, in the words of Clifford (1997), as ‘contact zones’.

Studies in *nihonjinron*, literally translated as ‘theory about Japanese’, exploring issues of Japanese national and cultural identity, became popular after the war and in particular in the 1970s and 1980s in various academic fields, business sectors and among state actors. These studies promoted the ideology that Japanese identity depended on its ability to maintain a homogeneous and harmonious society, thereby legitimizing the dominance of the ethnic Japanese, domestically and internationally (Yoshino 1992, Oguma 1995, Befu 2001). Nevertheless, analyses of *nihonjinron* show that this ideology has evolved since the pre-war imperial era.

When the Meiji government (1868–1912) embarked on a policy of colonization and assimilation to educate the peoples of Okinawa, Ainu, Korea and Taiwan to become ‘Japanese’, the emphasis was on the ‘boundaries of the Japanese’ (Morris-Suzuki 1998, Oguma 1998). A centralized and imperial Meiji government in Tokyo abolished and replaced the feudal system of Tokugawa Shogunate, restoring political power to the emperor. The newly born nation-state required an ideology that could unify the various communities anchored in regional clans for centuries (Gluck 1985). In other words, ‘the Japanese’ included several



FIGURE 15.1 Japan. Map Laurence Gouriévidis

ethnic groups when the Meiji government set about creating a nation-state and an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983); people in the colonized territories were to be incorporated as subjects of the emperor.

Policy-makers in the central government in charge of proposing cultural policies have framed Japan as historically and geographically isolated, thereby asserting the homogeneity of the Japanese. Until recently, the central government did not engage in serious dialogue with local governments struggling with the representation of Japanese identities in museums. The first national museum recognized as having freed itself from the concept of ‘modernist museum’ is the most recent, Kyushu National Museum (Carlile 2009, Ishiwata 2011: 1612–22). It opened in 2005 in Dazaifu City in south-western Japan and is geographically closer to Seoul than to Tokyo. The museum encourages visitors to view cultures as connected via ocean routes, which shaped not only the Kyushu region or Japan as a whole but also the neighbouring Asian cultures. The example of Kyushu National Museum is a strong reminder of the fact that museums can play a pivotal role in reframing the multi-layered identities of citizens by acknowledging the diversity in values within the framework of a democratic nation-state.

As another case in point, this chapter examines the changing paradigm of the Japanese identities reflected in the historical narrative of Hokkaido in relation to the indigenous Ainu.

Hokkaido is the largest of Japan's forty-seven prefectures, and one of the four main islands (along with Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku). In 1869, the Meiji government established the Hokkaido Colonial Commission (*kaitakushi*) in Sapporo to modernize and cultivate the area's unsettled land. The migration of clan communities to Ezo, renamed Hokkaido, began that year and continued until the early 1920s (Howell 1983, Mason 2012). The Ainu population inhabited Sakhalin, northern Honshu and the Kuril Islands, yet with the Meiji government's migration policy and enactment of the Former Aborigines Protection Act in 1899, they became increasingly marginalized (Howell 1994, Siddle 1996: 52–75, Morris-Suzuki 1998: 9–34). The use of 'Former' in the law implied that the Ainu were set to become 'Japanese', but in reality this meant only the expropriation of their land, language and cultural practices. The law was finally abolished in 1997 and replaced with the Law for the Promotion of Ainu Culture. However, the Ainu's right to self-determination failed to be publicly acknowledged. It was only in the aftermath of the United Nations passing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in 2007 that the Japanese Diet passed a resolution that recognized the Ainu as 'indigenous people of Japan' in 2008 (Hokkaido Prefectural Government 2010: 28–33).

With internal and external pressure to resolve identity politics in museums, the state, the prefectural government and various Ainu associations are currently reframing not only the local identities of Hokkaido but also the debate on what it means to be Japanese. Based on archival research, interviews and field research observation, this chapter examines how museum practitioners have grappled with representations of the history of Hokkaido since 1968, the centenary of the Meiji Restoration.

### Centennial cultural projects in Hokkaido

In 1968, the Hokkaido prefectural government launched numerous cultural projects to commemorate the centenary of the founding of the Colonial Commission in today's Sapporo. Both the Japanese central government and the prefectural government funded these projects, with significant sponsorship from major industrial corporations and donations from private citizens (Hokkaido Prefectural Government 1966). The museums and monuments built as part of the centennial project represented Hokkaido and Japan as unified and temporally progressive, an extension of the Meiji era. With the intention of inspiring Hokkaido's citizens to support the economic industrialization process,<sup>1</sup> the prefectural government planned the anniversary celebrations so 'the next generation could inherit the pioneer spirit' (Hokkaido Prefectural Government 1966: 2) of the Meiji era migration policy that led to Hokkaido's development. With migrants from the main islands settled in Hokkaido, the Ainu were inevitably portrayed as being on the verge of extinction through assimilation, pushed to the periphery in the historical narrative of Hokkaido.

'Modernist museums' are characterized as presenting order, categorization and progress, ideologically closely connected to the authoritative and master narrative of a nation (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 16–18). The Hokkaido Prefectural Pioneer Memorial Museum (*Kaitaku kinenkan*), which opened in 1971, is just such a museum. It was built in the Nopporo Forest Park in the suburbs of Sapporo as part of the centennial project and termed the 'Historical Museum of Hokkaido' in its English-language pamphlet. In other words, the pioneer history of those who migrated from Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu was made synonymous with the history of Hokkaido itself.

The large tapestry that has hung in the Pioneer Memorial Museum entrance hall since the museum's opening is purposely devoid of any patterns that would remind visitors of the indigenous Ainu people's role in Hokkaido's history. The motif adopted for the design was the seven-pointed star of the official Hokkaido government emblem, which was based on the flag design used by the Colonial Commission of the Meiji government. In a 1971 interview between Takeo Sato and Sakae Konoe, Sato, the designing architect of the museum, revealed that people in Hokkaido 'make a strong stand against equating Hokkaido with [distinctive] Ainu patterns' (Konoe 1971: 46). In fact, Tadao Tanaka, the tapestry designer, was asked to use nature motifs to represent Hokkaido in the design of an even larger tapestry in the memorial hall (Tanaka 1971: 36). The wall on the north side of this hall is covered with horseshoes that were donated to the museum from all over Hokkaido. According to Sato, this was meant to 'pay homage to the horses that played an important role during the pioneer era' (Sato Takeo Architecture Design Office 1971: 201). Sato explained that the museum building is dedicated to the migrants who survived harsh conditions, such as the bitter weather and uncultivated land: 'a memorial for the pioneers, a site for souls to rest in peace' (Konoe 1971: 44). In short, the Pioneer Memorial Museum was designed to be both a spiritual and a monumental site for Hokkaido's migrant settlers who arrived after the Meiji Restoration.

Nevertheless, the founding director of the museum, Tetsuo Inukai, took pride in the relatively large space devoted to the presentation of the history of the Ainu. The *chise* exhibited in the museum is more than just a display; it was an Ainu heritage preservation project. These traditional houses were no longer used in daily life, so the curators had to turn to the Ainu community to build the *chise*. The administrators made sure to perform the traditional Ainu ceremony of purifying the site, asking an Ainu elder from Shiraoi, Hokkaido, to conduct the *kamuinomi*, the Ainu spirit ceremony that invites gods inside the *chise* (Inukai 1971: 59). In this way, the museum administrators participated in the preservation project while a professional crew videotaped the entire process.

Of course, building an authentic *chise* in a controlled setting required active cooperation between the museum administrators and the Ainu community. However, to use Scott's (2012) term, the 'source community' provided the knowledge as invited guests, cooperating with the museum, and the exchange of knowledge was one-way and temporary. Moreover, like the *kota* (the reindeer herder's tent), which has become a visual icon in the Saami museums and 'majority museums' in Oulu and Stockholm (Levy 2006: 142–3), the *chise* represents a dilemma by relegating the Ainu and their history to the past. As will be seen later, this museological practice is drastically different from that practised at the National Museum of Ethnology, which opened in 1977. The relationship that museum practitioners have with the source community has also evolved.

When the Pioneer Memorial Museum opened in 1971, the 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympics was fast approaching, so the museum prepared a special exhibit on Ainu culture to attract international visitors. By then, many Ainu artefacts had been purchased and taken out of the country by scholars, tourists, foreign missionaries and museum curators. The Smithsonian Institution, the Russian Museum of Ethnology and the Leipzig Museum of Ethnology, for example, all had their own Ainu collections (Hochius 1999, Ogihara *et al.* 2007: 68–82, Foundation of Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture 2011). In fact, a survey conducted by Yoshinobu Kotani of Nagoya University revealed that the ethnological



**FIGURE 15.2** A *chise* displayed at the Hokkaido Pioneer Memorial Museum. Photo Julie Higashi. Courtesy of Hokkaido Kaitaku kinenkan

artefacts and archives relating to the Ainu in the United States and Canada were superior to those in Japan (Kotani 2003a, 2003b).

The lack of artefacts is not the only serious shortcoming of the Pioneer Memorial Museum. The story of the Ainu people is presented mostly in the context of the *wajin* (ethnic Japanese from the other three main islands), not as an important standalone element in Hokkaido's history. This central aspect was not altered when the permanent exhibition underwent a six-year renewal process between 1986 and 1992. The narrative is reinforced by the 100-metre-tall Centennial Memorial Tower, opposite the entrance, and so the first thing visitors see when entering the museum. The tower represents what Hokkaido achieved through the sweat and blood of the migrants, according to Ken Iguchi, its designer (Iguchi 2007: 25–7). Bronze plaques, affixed to the tower at the entrance level, detail the story of the Meiji government and the colonization of Hokkaido. On these are engravings of places, events and people which today's students study in Japanese history classes: the historic buildings of the Hokkaido Colonial Commission, the Sapporo Clock Tower and early coal miners in the act of drilling. In one scene, three people who appear to be Ainu – judging from the distinctive swirling and symmetrical patterns of their clothing – are shown hunting in a forest with bows and arrows. They are depicted as 'primitives' in contrast to the 'cultured' foreign advisers who brought Western technology and knowledge to a nation-state being built by the Meiji government. The text inscribed on the plaque informs visitors that 'the present status of Hokkaido was achieved *solely* by the incessant effort of its pioneers'



**FIGURE 15.3** Hokkaido Centennial Memorial Tower, entrance area. Photo Julie Higashi. Courtesy of Hokkaido Prefectural Government Office

(emphasis added). The one-sided *wajin* story – the story of ethnic Japanese from the main islands – leaves no room for an alternative historical narrative.

Admittedly, some changes were implemented when the Pioneer Memorial Museum was reopened in 1992: for instance, the section entitled ‘Former Inhabitants’ was renamed ‘The Founding of Ainu Culture’ and was allocated more space to represent the era before the establishment of the Meiji government (Wakazono 2004: 203–4). Deriha (2000: 14), who contrasted the original display with the reorganized 1992 exhibition, observed that the new version (which has not changed since) depicts the Ainu as going through ‘a wave of contacts’ with the *wajin* and then being ‘victimized’ by the Meiji government’s assimilation policy. Nevertheless, Toshikazu Sasaki, from Hokkaido University’s Center for Ainu and Indigenous Studies, remains frustrated by the representations of the Ainu because ‘scholars have not defined the Ainu independently of the *wajin* point of view’. Rather, they have given them ‘the role of the “Other”’ and not gone beyond the frame of ‘Japanese history’, despite the abundant scholarly works produced by his predecessors, Yukichi Habara and Shinichiro Takakura, to name but two (Sasaki 2013: 4–5).

### The Historical Village Museum of Hokkaido

Another centennial project was an open-air museum that recreated the historical landscape of the pioneer era as perceived by the regional government. Covering approximately fifty-four hectares, the Historical Village Museum of Hokkaido opened in April 1983 in Nopporo Forest Park, where both the Centennial Memorial Tower and the Pioneer Memorial Museum are also located. When construction was under way, Motohiko Hirota of the





**FIGURE 15.4** Reproduction of the Hokkaido Colonial Commission at the Historical Village of Hokkaido. Photo Julie Higashi. Courtesy of Hokkaido Prefectural Government Office

Hokkaido Centennial Construction Office, who supervised all of the centennial architectural projects, noted that the museum would be similar to the world's first open-air museum in Skansen, Sweden (Hirota cited in Hokkaido Prefectural Government 1966: 16). According to Silven (2008: 9), the aim of Skansen, which was built in 1891, was 'to form and express a national Swedish identity' and 'create the nation Sweden by forming a Swedish natural and cultural history'. Similarly, the Historical Village Museum of Hokkaido presented a unified space that was neatly organized to shape the national consciousness of a supposedly homogeneous and harmonious society.

As a whole, the Historical Village Museum demonstrates that towns and villages in Hokkaido formed around communities of migrants from the main islands. Whether these communities from different regions, occupations and religious backgrounds lived without conflict is open to question, but the museum represents Hokkaido as a 'clean and ordered space where controlled behaviour could be observed', as is the case in most 'modernist museums' (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 14). The historical landscape of those who colonized the uncultivated land is recreated, while the stories of the Ainu are completely ignored. Upon entering, visitors walk through a reproduction of the old Hokkaido Colonial Commission in Sapporo, used today as the visitor centre. Although the original Hokkaido Colonial Commission building was destroyed in a fire five years after its completion in 1879 (Historical Village of Hokkaido 2004: 4), perhaps no other piece of architecture in the village better symbolizes the colonization policies of the Meiji government.

For those who do not spend time in Nopporo Park, where the Centennial Tower is visible from every corner and the two museums provide the narrative of the founding of

Hokkaido, there are other centennial projects to view: for example, statues of government officials who worked for the Colonial Commission, which are designed to remind people of the official founders of Hokkaido. At Sapporo's Odori Park stand the bronze statues of Horace Capron, the former United States Commissioner of Agriculture, who headed the group of foreign advisers, and Kiyotaka Kuroda, who created the recruitment system of the farmer-soldier *tondenhei* to protect the land from Russian invasion. Another bronze statue, of Michitoshi Iwamura, the chief judge of the Hokkaido Colonial Commission in 1871, stands tall in Maruyama Park, adjacent to the Hokkaido Shrine. These parks, museums and monuments all visually define the physical landscape and reinforce a historiography of Hokkaido, giving pride of place to the central government's political and cultural policies.

### Clashes over the representation of Hokkaido

It was during a time of political turmoil both within and outside Japan that the prefectural government of Hokkaido orchestrated the centennial projects. In 1968, college campuses around the world were shut by student protests against what they perceived as authoritative governments and administrators. The 1960s was a decade of social struggle and resistance in Japan, too, including violent student actions against the automatic renewal of the United States-Japan Security Treaty. Ordinary citizens living near US military bases also joined these protests (Marotti 2009). Hokkaido was not immune to this political unrest, and the following decade saw a political resurgence of the Ainu. This impacted on academic circles, notably anthropologists and ethnologists, and prompted museum staff to re-examine their way of exhibiting the Ainu culture.

A group of private citizens also initiated an alternative set of cultural projects for the centennial celebrations. Rather than focusing on the government officials who were lauded for their founding of Hokkaido, they planned to erect a large monument paying homage to the Ainu, to the island's farmers and fishermen, and to the prisoners who laboured to build its roads. Genzo Sarashina, a scholar of Ainu culture, led this group with the support of sculptors Shin Hongo and Meiji Honda, who contributed to the monument's design. The initial idea was to erect the monument – entitled '*Fusetsu no gunzo*' (People who Endured the Wind and Snow), a campaign slogan that was also used in the official centennial project – in Odori Park, where the statues of the government officials were erected. However, the original design – which depicted an elderly Ainu figure sitting alongside standing non-Ainu figures – had to be altered in response to criticism from the Ainu, who argued that it was insulting. After two years of negotiations, the monument was finally erected in Tokiwa Park, Asahikawa City in 1970. The citizens group declared that they did not want a 'Sapporo-centred' commemoration of Hokkaido's centennial and believed that Asahikawa City's location in the centre of the island made it a more appropriate choice (Hokkaido Citizens Group Planning Committee n.d.: 1). The monument was maliciously bombed in 1972 and restored in 1977. The local newspaper, *Hokkaido Shimbun* (1972), reported that the bombing of 'the Ainu monument', as it was known to the local people, occurred at exactly the same time as a bomb exploded in the hallway of Hokkaido University, where Ainu artefacts were displayed. According to the paper, the bombers were not Ainu.

As mentioned above, in 1968 the academic community became involved in the Ainu political resurgence. Some anthropologists demanded the cancellation of an excursion to Hokkaido that was planned to take place before the International Union of Anthropological

and Ethnological Science Conference. The organizers were accused of treating the Ainu as if they were exhibits, with one travel agent's advertisement especially criticized for suggesting that visitors would have the opportunity to 'observe their traditional lifestyle'. The Ainu were also portrayed as living in *chises*, which was by no means the case (Kinase 1997: 12). Furthermore, in 1971, at the annual joint conference of the Anthropological Society of Nippon and the Japanese Society of Ethnology, a group of Ainu led by Shoji Yuki stormed into the proceedings at the Sapporo Medical University. The theme of the symposium was 'The Current State and Future of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Northern Territories'. Irritated that *wajin* scholars of Ainu studies were not joining the campaign to overturn the Former Aborigines Protection Act, the protesters accused the conference delegates of playing a major role in depicting the Ainu as 'a dying race' and displaying them like a 'zoological specimen' in museums (Tsuchino 1974: 111). It was perhaps no coincidence that the activists particularly targeted Saburo Watanabe, then acting president of the Sapporo Medical University, who chaired this conference. In his younger years, Watanabe had been an assistant to Sakuzaeon Kodama (1895–1970), who in the 1930s had led the excavation of Ainu graves in Hokkaido, Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands to collect skulls (for craniological study) and heirlooms (Ueki 2005: 17). In 2012, this matter reached a local court, when a group of Ainu demanded the return of the remains collected by Kodama and his team, which were now housed in a charnel house in the parking lot of Hokkaido University (Izumi 2012).

As Lewallen (2007: 509) has demonstrated during her fieldwork among the Ainu community, 'prior consultation, cooperation, and collaboration' that is 'reciprocal' is essential when conducting ethnographic research because of the Ainu's deep distrust of anthropologists. And museum practitioners must be similarly judicious when they require information about the 'source community' for an exhibit, as will be explained below.

### The National Museum of Ethnology and the Ainu community

In the 1970s, anthropologists and ethnologists were no longer able to ignore the political issues that had started to surround the Ainu. In 1977, while Ainu activists were making their case to the academic community, the National Museum of Ethnology (or Minpaku, as it is usually known) opened in Osaka. Kazuyoshi Ohtsuka, a scholar of Ainu studies who worked at Minpaku from the planning stage, documents that the Museum Planning Office within the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture placed Ainu culture within the framework of *kokumin* (directly translated as 'national people'), conceptualizing Japan as a unified and homogeneous society (Ohtsuka 2011: 118). However, after careful discussions on how to build and where to display the *chise*, according to Ohtsuka, the Minpaku staff decided to exercise their anthropological expertise. They represented the Ainu as a discrete culture that was separate from the *wajin* Japanese; thus, the *chise* was displayed between the East Asian and Northern Asian culture sections rather than in the Japanese gallery. With the help of Shigeru Kayano, founder of Nibutani Ainu Museum in 1972 and the first Ainu to be elected a Diet member, the *chise* was duly built. Subsequently, ever since the opening of the museum, Minpaku has maintained a close relationship with the 'source community'. To this day, every year, a group of Ainu from different regions and the museum administrators jointly conduct the *kamuinomi* ceremony to invite gods to look after the Ainu artefacts that are on display and stored in the museum.

Sandra A. Niessen (1994: 23), however, challenged this museological approach and asked why Minpaku did not 'represent the Ainu struggle with dominant Japanese culture in its exhibits, and instead concentrated on a fictitious image of the past [i.e. the *chise*]'. Niessen alluded to *The Spirit Sings* exhibit at Calgary's Glenbow Museum in 1988, which native Canadian peoples boycotted. This was funded by Shell, the giant oil company that was having a significant impact on the Lubicon Cree people at the time. Ohtsuka (1996) and Shimizu (1996) wrote a counter-argument in response to Niessen's criticism of Minpaku's representation of the Ainu. They suggested the North American-centred 'new museology' ignored non-English-language research produced by 'peripheral scholars ... [in] the world system theory of anthropology' (Kuwayama 2003: 11). Ohtsuka argued that it was crucial to define the Ainu as having a distinctive culture of their own, rather than framing them within the *wajin* Japanese narrative, and the *chise* exhibit ensured that visitors understood this 'visually and instantly' (Ohtsuka 2011: 118). Furthermore, with the enactment of the Law for the Promotion of Ainu Culture, Minpaku has had visiting scholars (*gairai kenkyuin*) from the Ainu community conducting research and taking courses on other indigenous cultures and global indigenous movements, thus making the exchanges reciprocal (Ohtsuka 2002).

Nevertheless, between 2004 and 2006, Henry Stewart and Korin Hazuki conducted research on the representation of Ainu at twenty-one museums, sixteen of them in Hokkaido, including the Pioneer Memorial Museum and the Ainu community museums. Their report concluded that, except for one or two institutions, 'museums that narrate the current state of Ainu are virtually non-existent', with the exhibits often centring on 'traditional' Ainu culture, even though so-called Ainu culture differs from region to region (Stewart and Hazuki 2006: 59–60, 66). The same pattern seems to be followed whether the museums are public, private or administered by members of the Ainu community, and whether they are located in Honshu or Hokkaido. For example, the National Museum of Japanese History in Sakura City, Chiba Prefecture (which was not included in Stewart and Hazuki's research), has a section entitled 'The Ainu People and the Development of Hokkaido', which narrates the fate of the Ainu in a typical manner, as follows:

After the founding of the Hokkaido Colonial Commission in 1869, the *tondenhei* and groups of samurai descendants migrated to Hokkaido, working together with farmers who joined the settlements ... On the other hand, the earlier Ainu inhabitants were deprived of their tradition and culture.

However, Masahiro Nomoto, director of the Ainu Museum in Shiraoi, Hokkaido, claimed that his staff do not agree with this assertion. When interviewed on 3 December 2011, he stressed that the Ainu have always found ways to maintain their traditions, albeit in different forms.

## Moving forward

The current Ainu population is estimated to be somewhere between 23,000, in Hokkaido alone (Hokkaido Prefectural Government 2006: 3), and 50,000 throughout the whole of Japan (Ochiai and Tsunemoto 2013: 301), although many inhabitants are probably unaware of their Ainu lineage so it is almost certainly significantly higher in reality.

A new cultural policy was drafted in 2008 after community groups, with the support of the international indigenous movement, put pressure on the Japanese government to accept

the Ainu as ‘indigenous people of Japan’ (Larson *et al.* 2008). In September 2011, the Ainu Museum in Shiraoi, an outdoor museum, was chosen to become Hokkaido’s first national Ainu museum, partly because of its proximity to Lake Poroto (the spiritual bond between the people and the natural environment is important in Ainu culture). Established in 1976 as the Shiraoi Foundation for the Preservation of Ainu Culture, a folk museum was opened on the site in 1984.<sup>2</sup> This should have been transformed into the national Ainu museum<sup>3</sup> by 2020, in time for the Tokyo Olympics, at which point it will become ‘a symbol of ethnic coexistence’ (Council for Ainu Policy Promotion 2012), marking a significant political and cultural shift in the perception of Ainu communities in Japan’s national narrative. Miyuki Muraki (Ohnishi *et al.* 2012: 9–10), managing director of the Ainu Museum in Shiraoi, who has been working there for almost thirty years, notes that, unlike other museums, they have a *densho* (literally ‘handing down’) office, which places special emphasis on the preservation and transmission of intangible heritage, such as storytelling, the playing of traditional instruments, embroidery and sculpting. In other words, the museum staff – 70 per cent of whom are Ainu – are responsible for perpetuating these Ainu traditions and passing them on to future generations. The Ainu have thus been working to maintain and learn about their own cultural heritage in community-based museums to recover land, river and cultural rights (Nakamura 2007: 151–3, Hasegawa 2010: 218–19).

A member of the Advisory Council for the Future of Ainu Policy, Teruki Tsunemoto, has stated that ‘The national government has great responsibility to take sufficient measures to ensure the revival of indigenous Ainu culture, taking into consideration the historical context of how the modernization of Japan as a national policy seriously damaged their culture’ (Ochiai and Tsunemoto 2013: 315). Part of the council’s plan is that the Ainu Museum in Shiraoi will be at the centre of a host of collaborative projects, including the building of a memorial monument that will house the Ainu remains excavated by Sakuzaemon Kodama and others. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology reported in June 2013 that it had so far found 1,635 skeletons kept in eleven universities throughout Japan (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology 2013: 1). But not all Ainu groups support this memorial project. The head of the Asahikawa Ainu Association, Kenichi Kawamura, for example, argues that the remains should be returned to their communities, not housed in a government-sanctioned monument (Izumi 2013). On the other hand, when I interviewed Masahiro Nomoto on 29 February 2012, he expressed the hope that the preservation of intangible heritage would turn the new national museum into a place where ‘the next generation can form their identities as Ainu ... [and] *new* traditions will be created’ (author’s emphasis). The revitalization of Ainu culture is more than ‘just the transmission of culture, but refers also to the creation of communal places and a strengthening of the Ainu identity’ (Hasegawa 2010: 224). The Ainu’s right to appreciate their own culture and to disseminate knowledge of their traditions has finally been brought to the fore.

## Conclusion

Peoples, in this case the Ainu and the Japanese, are historically and politically defined, and constantly changing. At the time of writing (June 2013), the Pioneer Memorial Museum at Nopporo Park was soon to be officially renamed the Museum of Hokkaido and reorganized to place more emphasis on the history and culture of Ainu and Hokkaido within Northeast Asia (Aoyanagi 2013: 2). Interestingly, since 2012, international visitors arriving in Hokkaido



**FIGURE 15.5** The Ainu exhibit at Shin-Chitose Airport. Photo Julie Higashi. Courtesy of Ainu Museum, Shiraoi

via Shin-Chitose Airport, the closest airport to Sapporo, have been greeted by an exhibit on Ainu heritage assembled by the Ainu Museum in Shiraoi. Similar installations are planned for other public spaces, such as railroad stations. These projects are part of the three-year *Iramkarapute* ('Hello' in Ainu) campaign, funded by the local, prefectural and central governments as well as private organizations, and they will certainly increase the visibility of Ainu heritage.

When visitors experience a different sense of time and place in Hokkaido, as they surely will at the new national Ainu museum, they are encouraged to explore new ways of looking at their own societies. UNESCO's mid-term strategy 2008–13 defines the role of museums as 'a foundation of identity, a vector for development and a tool for dialogue, reconciliation and social cohesion' (cited in Goodnow and Akman 2008: vii). Museums' recent attempts to disseminate their knowledge of Ainu heritage are certainly in accord with this vision. Today's physical landscape of Hokkaido's capital city Sapporo still represents an all too familiar national narrative of the 'founding' of Hokkaido in the nineteenth century. However, the island's museums are already helping to broaden Japanese identity by offering a modified museology and historiography of the relationship between Hokkaido and Japan as a nation, a process that will surely continue when the national museum opens in Shiraoi in 2020.

## Notes

- 1 Hokkaido's Regional Development Bureau was established in 1951 to implement national government policy through its Hokkaido Comprehensive Development Plan.
- 2 See [www.ainu-museum.or.jp/en/study/eng15.html](http://www.ainu-museum.or.jp/en/study/eng15.html) (accessed 1 November 2013).
- 3 The official name was undecided at the time of writing (June 2013).

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