

Research Beehive
Room 2.22
Newcastle University
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU

Friday 20 April 2012
9.00 – 17.30

Museums, Migrations, and Identities

The workshop is an opportunity for us to connect to researchers/experts across the topic of migration and to for us to consider issues outside of our specific field of expertise in order to develop our ideas further.

Confirmed Speakers:

Iain Watson, Director of Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums; Professor Ullrich Kockel, University of Ulster; Professor Lynn Staeheli, Durham University; Dr Cathy Ross, Museum of London; Dr Claire Sutherland, Durham University; and Zelda Baveystock, UK Migration Museum Project.

Issues for discussion

Migration and Societal Change

Western European nations are experiencing unprecedented patterns of migration not only in terms of volume but also diversity amongst and within migrant groups. Steven Vertovec has characterised the situation in Britain as 'superdiversity'. He writes: 'Such a condition is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade.' (Vertovec 2007: 1024)

For some migrants, the nature of the experience of migration also differs from previous generations because of the ability to keep in touch with 'home' through new communication technology, greater access to global media, and cheaper travel. This gives rise to increasingly blended and intertwined identities (Risse 2010: 25) generating a complex web of multiple belongings and allegiances within and/or across geographically determined borders. This has raised important questions about how we understand the relationships between places, peoples and identities.

Museums, Peoples, Places and Identities

Since the nineteenth century one important remit of public museums in Britain has been to represent the places, peoples and cultures in which they are located. This has been particularly important for history displays, folk/open-air, city and local museums. Such museums have traditionally been understood as important in fostering a sense of collective identity, civic pride and shared public history, although this has always been internally complicated by the histories of

collections, vested interests and disciplinary priorities. In relation to contemporary issues of migration we need to now ask:

- What are the implications for contemporary museums of the new social complexity described above?
- What does it mean for thinking about museum audiences, visitors and stakeholders? What are the implications for interpretation, display, and collection strategies?
- What does it mean in terms of producing representations of a given place (a city, region or nation), its collective histories and futures?
- What can we learn from museums which have addressed (or plan to address) diversity and migration either as: a) integrated within displays about host populations or b) separated out into distinct migration galleries or stand-alone migration museums?
- Are common strategies developing within museum practice to address such issues? Are there similar or different trends in European as opposed to non-European museums? Are there more similarities or more differences between countries within Europe on this issue?
- How do museum researchers and professionals see the role of public museums in terms of debates around social cohesion and citizenship in diverse societies?

References

Risse, Thomas (2010), *A Community of Europeans?: Transnational Identities and Public Spheres*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London.

Vertovec, Steven (2007), 'Superdiversity and its Implications.' *Racial and Ethnic Studies*. 30:6, 1024-1054.

Links

- see <http://www.mela-project.eu/> for details of the whole project and the consortium
- For details of our work package see <http://wp1.mela-project.eu/wp/spotlights/contents-and-tools>).
- ICCHS webpage: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/sacs/icchs/>

Programme

Thursday 19 April

19.30: Workshop Dinner at Blackfriars Restaurant, Friars Street, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Friday 20 April

9.00-9.30: Registration with Coffee/Tea

9.30-11.00: Research Field 01 Presentation

11.00-11.30: Coffee/Tea

11.30-13.00: Open Session with Academic Guest Speakers

11.30-11.45: Professor Ullrich Kockel, University of Ulster

11.45-12.00: Dr Claire Sutherland, Durham University

12.00-12.15: Professor Lynn Staeheli, Durham University

12.15-13.00: Questions & Discussion

13.00-14.00: Lunch

14.00-15.30: Open Session with Museum Professionals

14.00-14.15: Iain Watson, Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums

14.15-14.30: Dr Cathy Ross, Museum of London

14.30-14.45: Zelda Baveystock, UK Migration Museum Project

14.45-15.30: Questions & Discussion

15.30-16.00: Coffee/Tea

16.00-17.30: Concluding remarks and discussion

17.30: Drinks & Informal Dinner