

Mela*

European Museums
in an age of migrations

MeLa* Midterm Seminar



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MeLa* Project

European Museums in an age of migrations

www.mela-project.eu

European Commission

European Research Area, 7th Framework Programme

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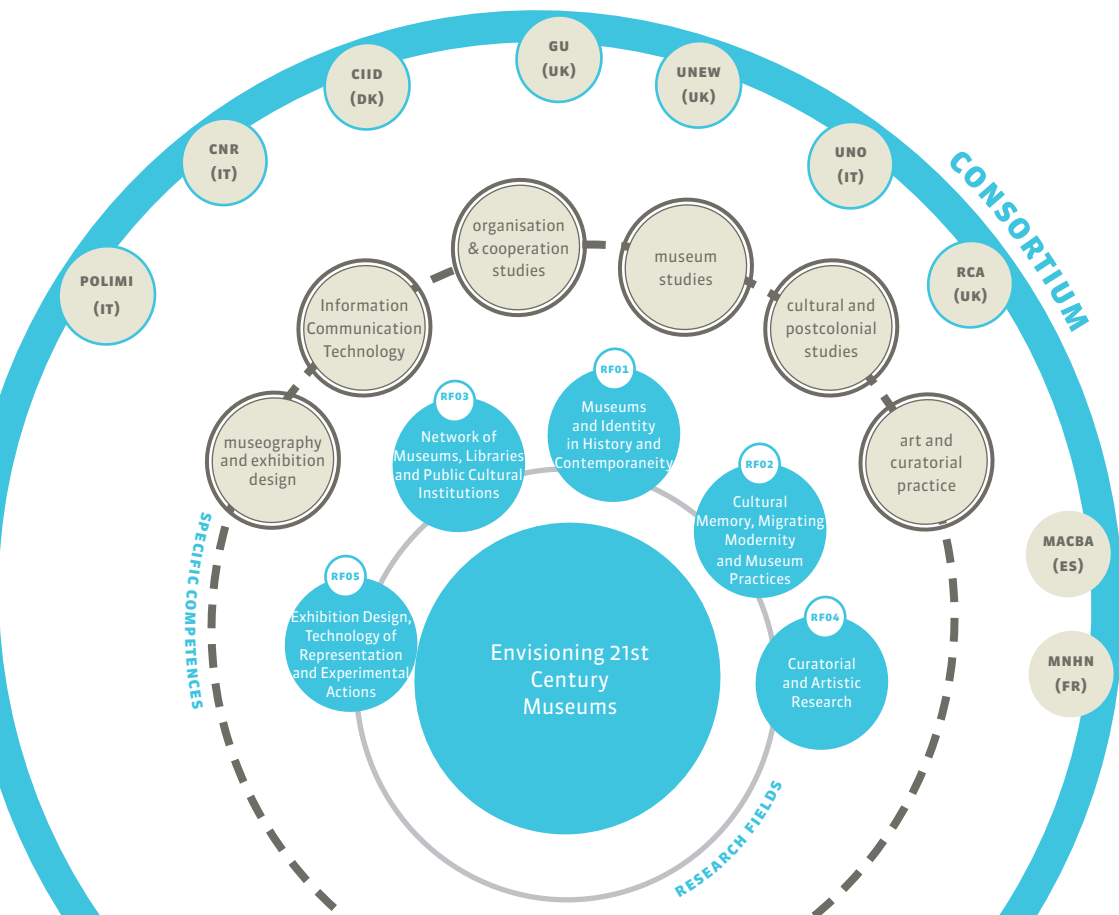
March 2011 – February 2015

Acronym	MeLa*
Title	European Museums in an age of migrations
Short Description	Adopting the notion of 'migration' as a paradigm of the contemporary global and multicultural world, MeLa investigates the role of museums in twenty-first century Europe. Through a focus on the transformation of museums, meant as cultural spaces and practices, as well as physical places, MeLa aims at identifying innovative museum practices which respond to the challenges posed by an age characterized by intensive migration flows; fluid circulation of information, cultures and ideas, and by 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. The expected outcomes of MeLa include a critical overview and reflection on the role, mission, strategies, spaces and exhibition design for contemporary European museums. The findings of the research will cohere in a series of scientific publications and policy statements.
Web site	www.mela-project.eu
Duration	March 2011-February 2015 (48 months)
Funding scheme	Collaborative Project (CP): small and medium scale research project
Grant Agreement	266757
EU contribution	2.699.880,00 €
Consortium	9 partners (5 countries)
Coordinator	Politecnico di Milano
Person Responsible	Prof. Luca Basso Peressut
EU Officer	Mr. Zoltán Krasznai

* *Mela* is a Sanskrit word meaning "gathering" or "to meet." Today is used for intercultural gatherings, intended as opportunities for community building that can perform a strong socially cohesive function.

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The MeLa Project

MeLa - *European Museums in an age of migrations* is a four year interdisciplinary research project, funded in 2011 within the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission under the Social Sciences and Humanities. Adopting the notion of “migration” as a paradigm of the contemporary global, multicultural reality, MeLa reflects on the role of museums and heritage in the twenty-first century Europe.

The Project aims at investigating how and at what extent the features of this “age of migration”—new demographic flows; the accelerated mobility and the resulting layerisation and hybridisation of contemporary societies and identities; the fluid circulation of information, ideas and cultures, and the consequent improvement of cultural encounters and cross-fertilisations; the politic, economic and cultural processes pertaining the creation and consolidation of the European Union— can affect and foster an overall transformation of contemporary European museums.

By considering the current evolution of European museums both as cultural spaces and physical places, the main objective of the MeLa Project is to identify innovative muse-

um practices which may enhance their role in facilitating mutual understanding and social cohesion and building a sharper awareness of an inclusive European identity.

MeLa promotes the widespread use of the advancement of knowledge produced by the Project guaranteeing a high open access level to all Project products.

The in-progress results are collected in the **MeLa* Book Series**, a collection of open-access digital publications which report the main findings ensued from the research activities developed by the different MeLa Research Fields, available on line on the Project website.

The final project findings will finally coalesce into the **MeLa* Critical Archive**: a digital platform drawing together the main insights gathered within the research investigations, a research tool for exchange among partners, and a communicative project aimed at conveying the complexity of the highly interdisciplinary project’s approaches and findings as a unitary yet multifarious cultural proposal.

www.mela-projet.eu

MeLa main questions

In an age characterised by accelerated and multifaced mobilities – physical, economical, social and cultural – how might we reconsider the role of the museum?

What happens or can happen when the peoples and places implicated in museum representation shift, change, multiply, fragment and/or move?

Which practices can be implemented in museums to engage their users in dialogic and participative ways and challenge traditional on-sided narratives?

How can museums contribute to the construction of inclusive identities and citizenships? Should museums' representational practices and design strategies change? If so, how?

MeLa European added value

Based on its competences, the role of the European Union in matters of cultural institutions, migration and citizenship-building is intended:

- To foster respect for diversity and to constrain discrimination, racism and xenophobia;
- To prevent the different approaches in the Member States from hampering the free movement of persons across the European Union;
- To develop active European citizenship;
- To promote culture as catalyst for creativity, mutual understanding and enrichment of the communities;
- To enhance the shared cultural heritage through the development of cross-border cooperation between cultural institutions;
- To support cross-border mobility of those people working within the cultural sector, encouraging the transnational circulation of cultural and artistic outputs, and fostering intercultural dialogue.

By drawing on these principles and on their relation with the ongoing transformation of museums, MeLa aims at identifying innovative museum practices and strategies responding to the challenges and chances posed by this “age of migrations”.

MeLa Research Fields: An interdisciplinary approach

Due to the complexity of its core topics, the ambition of its objectives and its interdisciplinary approach, the MeLa Project involves nine European partners (five universities, two museums, a research institute and a small enterprise) and has been organised into six Research Fields:

RF01 - Museums & Identity in History and Contemporaneity

Focusing on the historical and contemporary relationships between European museum representations and identity within the contextual structure of place, investigates how curatorial strategies, models and practices are currently evolving with the aim to identify innovative and effective curatorial practices.

→ Whitehead, C., Eckersley S., Mason, R. 2012. *Placing Migration in European Museums: Theoretical, Contextual and Methodological Foundations*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.

→ Whitehead, C., Mason, R. Eckersley S., Lloyd, K. eds. 2013. *“Placing” Europe in the Museum: People(s), Places, Identities*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.

→ Whitehead, C., Eckersley, S. Lloyd, K, Mason, R.,

eds. 2014. *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

<http://wp1.mela-project.eu/>

RF02 - Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernity and Museum Practices

→ Questions the role of contemporary museums to foster a revision of their role as sites of contaminations, fluxes, border-crossings and migrating memories, and investigates how this “age of migrations” is nurturing – or could foster – new curatorial approaches and practices, focusing in particular on the interaction and influence of new media arts.

→ Ferrara, B., ed. 2012. *Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernities and Museum Practices*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.

→ Chambers, I., De Angelis, A., Ianniciello, C., Orabona, M., Quadraro, M., eds. 2014. *The Postcolonial Museum. The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History*. Farnham: Ashgate.

→ Chambers, I., Grechi, G., Nash, M., eds. 2014. *The Ruined Archive*. Milano: Politecnico di Milano.

<http://wp2.mela-project.eu/>

RF03 - Network of Museums, Libraries and Public Cultural Institutions

Looks for innovative coordination strategies and models between European museums, libraries and other public cultural institutions around the themes of European cultural and scientific heritage, migration, integration, and and the use of Information and Communication Technologies.

→ Innocenti, P., ed. 2012. *European Crossroads: Museums, Cultural Dialogue and Interdisciplinary Networks in a Transnational Perspective*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.

→ Innocenti, P. ed. 2014. *Migrating Heritage. Experiences of Cultural Networks and Cultural Dialogue in Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

→ Innocenti, P. 2015 (forthcoming). *Cultural Connections: Practices and Policies of Migrating Heritage in Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

<http://wp3.mela-project.eu/>

RF04 - Curatorial and Artistic Research

Stresses the relevance and strategic value of the curatorial and artistic research for the advance-

ment of knowledge by exploring the relationship between art, migration and representation within the contemporary exhibition sector.

→ Noack, R., ed. 2013. *Agency, Ambivalence, Analysis. Approaching the Museum with Migration in Mind*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.

<http://wp4.mela-project.eu/>

RF05 - Exhibition Design, Technology of Representation and Experimental Actions

Aims at developing experimental design proposals for museum exhibitions (temporary and permanent), as well as user-centred research to understand the needs and values of the different users of the museum system.

→ Allen, J., Lupo, E., eds. 2012. *Representing Museum Technologies*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.

→ Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, ed. 2013. *Redefining the Lobby of MACBA Study Center: Selection of Proposals*. Barcelona: MACBA.

→ Basso Peressut L., Postiglione G., eds. 2014. *Museum Multiplicities: Field Actions and Research by Design*. Milano: Politecnico di Milano.

<http://wp5.mela-project.eu/>

RF 06 - Envisioning 21st Century Museums

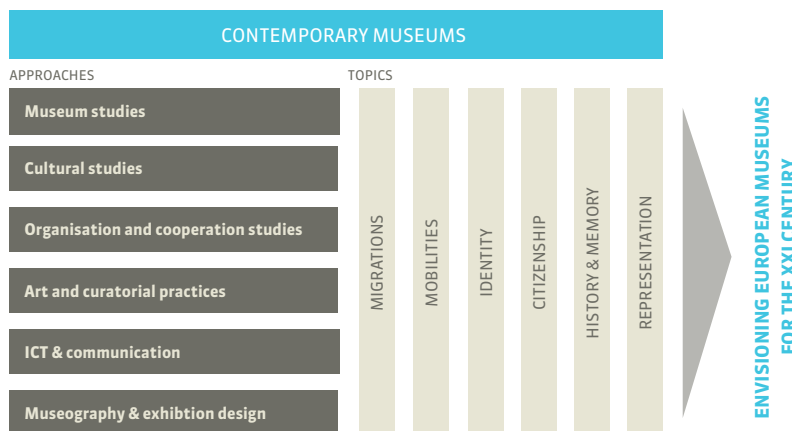
Focuses on the transformation of contemporary museums considered as complex systems of knowledge, based on the interaction between the building, its contents and their display. It aims at identifying and eventually envisioning new museographical models, communication strategies and museum practices, which may be able to react and accommodate new curatorial approaches, as well as to foster and contribute to new museum contents and messages in relation with the contemporary chances and challenges posed by our “age of migrations”.

→ Basso Peressut, L., Pozzi, C., eds. 2012. *Museums in an Age of Migrations: Questions, Challenges, Perspectives*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.

→ Basso Peressut, L., Lanz, F., Postiglione, G., eds. 2012. *European Museums in the 21st Century: Setting the Framework*. Vol. 1-3. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.

→ Lanz, F., Montanari, E. eds. 2014. *Advancing Museum Practices. An overview of innovative experiences in 21st century European museums*. Turin: Allemandi.

<http://wp6.mela-project.eu/>



The MeLa Project aims at promoting a wide circulation of the advancement of knowledge produced by the Project research actions; consequently its dissemination plan was conceived to endorse the availability and accessibility of its research findings and outcomes at large. Based on this premises, open access policies have been agreed by the Consortium Partners, and an extensive set of dissemination tools and activities has been implemented.

The [website](#) plays an important role in guaranteeing access to all Project products, presenting the Project and its in-progress development, and constantly updating with MeLa news, forthcoming conferences and calls for papers organised within the Project or related to its research topics. The MeLa [blog](#) is a lively tool intended to launch consistent events, trigger discussions, and report about products, ideas and suggestions in a more informal context. The [Newsletters](#) provide a four-monthly overview about the Project, its outcomes, events and publications; each issue and a monthly [Bulletin](#) will moreover present other relevant activities and events related to MeLa research topics, which are going on in the wider European research community such as call for pa-

pers, book presentations, exhibition reviews or other research project descriptions.

The MeLa Project already promoted an extensive set of [public events](#) some of which were targeted to specific audiences (and, in particular, to scholars and museum practitioners), some others to a wider public: brainstorming sessions, international conference with call for papers, art exhibitions, seminars and workshops.

The preliminary findings and main results ensued from the research activities developed by the different MeLa Research Fields are reported in the [MeLa* Book Series](#): a series of open-access digital publications available on the MeLa website and in all the main European Libraries.

The final outcomes of the Project will eventually coalesce into the [MeLa* Critical Archive](#), a digital platform drawing together the main insights gathered within the research investigations.

→ THE MELA* BOOK SERIES

The MeLa* Book Series, which was launched in March 2012, currently includes 11 publications and will be further enriched in the next years.

- 01_ Basso Peressut, L., Pozzi, C., eds. 2012. *Museums in an Age of Migrations. Questions, Challenges, Perspectives*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
- 02_ Whitehead, C., Eckersley, S., Mason, R. 2012. *Placing Migration in European Museums: Theoretical, Contextual and Methodological Foundations*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
- 03_ Ferrara, B., ed. 2012. *Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernities and Museum Practices*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
- 04_ Innocenti, P., ed. 2012. *European Crossroads: Museums, Cultural Dialogue and Interdisciplinary Networks in a Transnational Perspective*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
- 05_ Allen, J., Lupo, E., eds. 2012. *Representing Museum Technologies*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
- 06_ Noack, R., ed. 2013. *Agency, Ambivalence, Analysis. Approaching the Museum with Migration in Mind*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
- 07_ Basso Peressut, L., Lanz, F., Postiglione, G., eds. 2013. *European Museums for the 21st Century: Setting the Framework* (3 Vols). Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
- 08_ Whitehead, C., Mason, R., Eckersley S., Lloyd, K., 2013. *“Placing” Europe in the Museum: People(s), Places, Identities*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
- 09_ Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, ed. 2013. *Redefining the Lobby of MACBA Study Center. Selection of Proposals*. Barcelona: MACBA.
- 10_ Basso Peressut L., Postiglione G., eds. 2014. *Museum Multiplicities: Field Actions and Research by Design*. Milano: Politecnico di Milano.
- 11_ Chambers, I., Grechi, G., Nash, M., eds. 2014. *The Ruined Archive*. Milano: Politecnico di Milano.



<http://www.mela-project.eu/publications>



POLITECNICO
DI MILANO

POLIMI – Politecnico di Milano, Italy (Coordinator)
Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DAStU)
Department of Design
Major Competences: Museography & Exhibition Design
Key Members: Luca Basso Peressut, Gennaro Postiglione



COPENHAGEN
INSTITUTE OF
INTERACTION
DESIGN

CIID – Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design, Denmark
Major Competences: ICT for Interaction Design
Key Member: Jamie Allen, Jacob Bak



Istituto di Tecnologie Industriali e Automazione
Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche

CNR – Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Italy
Institute for Industrial Technologies and Automation (ITIA)
Major Competences: ICT for Design & Research Management
Key Member: Marco Sacco



University
of Glasgow

GU – University of Glasgow, United Kingdom
History of Art, School of Culture and Creative Arts (HOA)
Major Competences: Cultural Heritage Informatics, Museum
and Art History Studies
Key Member: Perla Innocenti



MUSEU
D'ART CONTEMPORANI
DE BARCELONA

MACBA – Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain
Major Competences: Museum, Contemporary Art
Key Members: Bartomeu Mari



MUSEUM NATIONAL
D'HISTOIRE NATURELLE

MNHN – Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, France
Musée de l'Homme, Département «Homme, nature, société» (DHNS)
Major Competences: Museum, Natural Science
Key Member: Fabienne Galangau Quérat



Royal College of Art
Royal College of Art and Design

RCA – The Royal College of Art, United Kingdom
Department of Curating Contemporary Art (CCA)
Major Competences: Curatorial Art Practice
Key Member: Victoria Walsh



UNEW – Newcastle University, United Kingdom
The International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS)
Major Competences: Museum Studies
Key Members: Chris Whitehead, Rhiannon Mason



Università degli Studi di Napoli
"Orientale"

UNO – L' "Orientale", University of Naples, Italy
Department of AHuman and Social Sciences (DSUS)
Major Competences: Cultural and Social Studies
Key Member: Iain Chambers

The MeLa* Midterm Seminar

Let the Museum Speak

www.mela-project.eu

MeLa* Midterm Seminar

Musée de l'Histoire de l'immigration, Paris

September 24th, 2013



The venue of the Seminar was chosen among the most relevant, renown and debated museums in Paris, the Musée de l'Histoire de l'immigration (formerly known as Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration), located in the Palais de la Porte Dorée. This institution is an important place of documentation, encounter and transmission of the material and immaterial traces illustrating two centuries of immigration history in France, as well as a cultural and social catalyst – which has also been the theatre for controversial debates and actions related to contemporary migration issues.

Photo of the Palais de la Porte Dorée. © Mathieu Nouvel / Etablissement public du Palais de la porte Dorée.

The MeLa Midterm Seminar

Two years and a half after the MeLa Kick-off Meeting held at at Musei Capitolini and MAXXI in Rome, which inaugurated the beginning of the MeLa Project activities, the Midterm Seminar has represented an important milestone fostering introspection, dissemination, collection of new stimuli and planning of further tasks, as well as gathering new key findings through the coalescence of theories and practices.

By triggering a multi-disciplinary and multi-perspective critical debate about the transformation of the contemporary museums, the Seminar aimed at capturing the complexity of these processes by facilitating a cross-fertilisation between the scientific outcomes developed by the scholars involved within the MeLa Project and the innovative experiences promoted by some pioneering museums, illustrated through the words of the directors and curators who conceived and actualised them. Accordingly, the program of the Midterm Seminar included a morning session, devoted to the presentation of the ongoing results of the activities developed within the MeLa Research Fields 1, 2, 3 and 4, which are currently being completed, and two afternoon sessions

aimed at reporting about the advanced practices promoted by several new or renovated European institutions, in order to evaluate the outcomes and new perspectives they produced. The selection of the invited museums was led by a plurality of tasks, on the one hand drawing on the consistence and the quality of the experiences intended to foster the involvement of new audiences and enhancing the role of museums as agents for social change, on the other highlighting the wide and transversal interest for these issues, which are at the core of the revision of a variety of museums. The panel was indeed characterised by the differentiation of the focus and mission of the presented museums and their distribution across several European Countries. The heterogeneity of the reported experiences highlighted the richness and the variety of the approaches, tools and strategies which are being experimented to afford the challenges posed by this “age of migrations”.

The title of the conference—“Let the Museums Speak”—ensued from the double-folded aim of this event. On the one hand, the MeLa partners intended to present the in-progress results of their investigations to the museum community, in order to gather further viewpoints and suggestions. On the other hand, moving from the registered need of sharing experiences and ideas between academics and practitioners, MeLa decided to invest to promote the participation of selected curators and directors from different types of institutions across Europe.

Building on the results of this international seminar, coalescing with the outcomes of the ongoing research activities and of the other brainstorming sessions and events promoted in the last years, it is possible to highlight three major themes that represent fundamental insights for the Project. These issues are presented here as **key observations**, complemented with a reflection upon their **implications** and related **recommendations**.

→ **WIDENING THE CONCEPT OF MIGRATION**

Observation. Within the current socio-cultural context, it is possible to register an early attempt—which is yet desirable and should be fostered—to broaden the common understanding of “migration.” On the one hand, it is increasingly considered and presented as a complex and differentiated phenomenon, which today involves the long range movement of ethnic groups, as well as the raising mobility of individuals who move for personal reasons related to work, study, research or tourism. On the other hand, more and more frequently it is not simply referred to the migration of people and peoples, but is acknowledged as a dynamic conveying significant resonances and implications, and as a condition of the contemporary society, which is profoundly influenced by the accelerated mobility of cultures, ideas and objects, and by the rapid sharing of knowledge and information.

Implications and Recommendations:

→ Within this scenario, issues of migration should not be considered as a prerogative for a “type of museum” (i.e. migration museums),

but rather as a “topic for museums”. Building on its extended meanings and implications, migration can be investigated from several perspectives by different museums, even though their main focus lies on other specific fields (e.g. city museums, national and regional history museums, ethnographic museums, art museums). According to their particular tasks and target audience, these institutions can integrate migration topics within their educational programmes and outreach projects, or explore them through temporary exhibitions, specific galleries as well as permanent exhibitions. Hence they may broaden the common understanding of migration, raise awareness of an inclusive identity, and finally facilitate mutual comprehension and social cohesion.

→ As far as concerns “migration museums,” their focus should not be limited to the representation and documentation of historical or contemporary immigration or emigration phenomena, but rather they might explore migrations in a wider sense, by investigating their effects on different societal aspects, in the past as well as today, and thus presenting multiple perspectives, comprising plural voices, and including the subjects who traditionally have been excluded.

→ The promotion of research projects on the topic should be encouraged and supported at different levels, ranging from the initiatives with a broad transnational scope to those acting at a local scale. This support should be especially improved for the projects fostering the active involvement of museums, implementing experimental actions, and stimulating the exchanges between theoretical outcomes and practices.

→ **RE-THINKING THE MUSEUM AS A SYSTEM OF REPRESENTATION**

Observation. Today, European museums seem to be involved into a general renovation impetus, which is actualised through major radical ventures or minor step-by-step projects. These initiatives are fostering a reassessment of museums’ mission, collections and narratives, aimed at eventually reconsidering their social and political role. Along this process, it seems possible to detect the assimilation of migration issues in a variety of institutions, which are more and more often integrating topics related with migration, cultural diversity and multi-cultural encounters.

Implications and Recommendations:

→ The renovation processes carried out by contemporary museums can be developed through different means and strategies: experimentations with new curatorial practices (e.g. co-curating, participative collecting or artistic cooperations) aimed at fostering the reinterpretation of collections and narratives; the implementation and enhancement of temporary exhibitions, intended as a tool to approach difficult topics and to pluralise standpoints and perspectives; the promotion of advanced educational programmes and out-reaching projects, improving the involvement of wider and more differentiated audiences; the improvement of cooperation strategies with other cultural institutions.

→ Among the aspects to consider within the planning of these initiatives, it is important not to underestimate the crucial importance of the connections between the exhibition spaces and design and the museums' contents: the building, the collections, the narrations and their display are not separated neither in different to each other, and indeed should be all considered as the fundamental parts of a complex system of knowledge, participating to

the evolution of contemporary museums into places where physical, intellectual and cultural barriers may be overcome.

→ Information and communication technologies as well as technological devices can offer interesting possibilities for the improvement of representation, collection and education practices: they are changeable, allow multiple entry points, include a plurality of voices, provide different levels of access to contents and information, overlap them in different interpretation layers and, eventually, foster participation. Nevertheless, their use and implications should be further explored. For example, the costs of these tools and their maintenance should be carefully considered, and their reliability may be improved—when the exhibition of a relevant part of the content is entrusted to technological devices and displays, their working fails ultimately cause gaps and misunderstanding in the transmission of the message. Moreover, their coalescence with the museum design and contents needs to be better investigated from a conceptual and aesthetical point of view, in order to overcome the sort of “detachment” these means may cause between the visitor and

the exhibition, or their use as an extended and poorly attractive high-tech version of traditional captions (which ultimately provide one-sided communication and an individual use).

→ PROMOTING AND SHARING EXPERIENCES

Observation. It is evident that not all the museums have the same understanding of their social and political role. Beyond the specificity of each case—related to the particular statute, structure, focus or social, cultural and political context of the institution—this gap is also engendered by difficulties in sharing ideas, language barriers, as well as different access to funding, mobility programs, training and refresher courses, which hinder cultural operators from remaining constantly updated about the latest debates, insights, innovative practices and experimentations.

Implications and Recommendations:

→ The improvement of the opportunities for the directors and curators of European museums to meet, share and exchange ideas should consistently be stimulated and supported, for example through the promotion of workshops,

roundtables and seminars involving practitioners from different countries, sectors and fields of interest.

→ The cooperation between museums and universities should be nurtured by fostering cooperative projects and facilitating the participation of museums and other cultural institutions to research projects; their involvement indeed is often frustrated by too binding commitments and demanding requirements that can't be fulfilled by all the museums, especially when they are minor local institutions with limited staff and resources, already suffering the effects of the ongoing financial crisis.

→ Furthermore, additional funds should be addressed to minor projects, temporary exhibitions and experimental actions, developed at both large or local scale, whenever they prove to be highly innovative, thought provoking and aimed at challenging the traditional approach of the museum itself.



A forthcoming publication from the MeLa Midterm Seminar

Within the past two years and a half, the MeLa Project has been promoting brainstorming sessions, seminars and international conferences, aimed at enhancing exchanges and cooperation with a wide range of European museums, in order to share and debate research advancements and major preliminary findings.

The most relevant outcomes of these events will coalesce in a forthcoming publication, *Advancing Museums Practices*. The book will be published in Spring 2014 by the Italian publisher Allemandi, and will be immediately available on line as an open access book on the publisher web page, as well as on the MeLa website.

→ Lanz, F., and Montanari E., eds. 2014. *Advancing Museums Practices*. Turin: Allemandi.

With contributions by: Cécile Aufaure (Musée de l'Homme, Paris, France), Richard Benjamin (International Slavery Museum, Liverpool, United Kingdom), Peter Bjerregaard (Museum of Cultural History, Oslo, Norway), Christoph Bongert (German Emigration Center, Bremerhaven, Germany), Pierangelo Campodonico (Galata Museo del Mare, Genoa, Italy), Bambi Ceuppens (Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium), Denis Chevallier (Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, Marseille, France), Alexandre Delarge (Écomusée du Val de Bièvre, Fresnes, France), Angela Jannelli (History Museum of Frankfurt, Germany), Vito Lattanzi (Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico "Luigi Pigorini", Rome, Italy), Hélène du Mazaubrun (Musée d'Histoire de l'immigration, Paris, France), Cathy Ross (Museum of London, United Kingdom), Michel Rouger (Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux, France), Ramzi Tadros (Musée d'Histoire de l'Immigration, Paris, France), Boris Wastiau (Musée d'Ethnographie de Genève, Switzerland).

In the previous page: Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, detail of a museum's display case © Lorenzö / Etablissement public du Palais de la porte Dorée.

Conference Programme

09.15 – 9.45

Opening

- **Luc Gruson**, Director of the Musée d'Histoire de l'immigration, Paris (France).
- **Luca Basso Peressut**, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Politecnico di Milano (Italy), MeLa Project Coordinator.
- **Zoltan Krasnai**, European Commission, DG Research and Innovation, MeLa Project Officer.

9.45 – 12.40

Reflecting on European museums in an age of migrations

- **Chris Whitehead**, International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies, Newcastle University (United Kingdom).
Museums and Identity in History and Contemporaneity.
- **Iain Chambers**, Human and Social Sciences Department, Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale" (Italy).
The Archive, the Museum and Migrating Modernities.
- **Perla Innocenti**, History of Art, School of Culture and Creative Arts, University of Glasgow (United Kingdom).
Migrating Heritage: Strategies and Practices of Cultural Networks in Europe.
- **Victoria Walsh**, Department of Curating Contemporary Art, Royal College of Art (United Kingdom).
Curatorial and Artistic Research in an Age of Migrations.

14.40 – 16.20

Afternoon session 1 – Sharing Experiences

- **Cathy Ross**, Museum of London, United Kingdom.
Mediating the Global City: Representing Migration in the Museum of London.
- **Alexandre Delarge**, Écomusée du Val de Bièvre, Fresnes, France.
An Overview of the Experiences of the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.
- **Christoph Bongert**, German Emigration Center, Bremerhaven, Germany.
"Passage". The German Emigration Center as Immigration Museum.
- **Pierangelo Campodonico**, Galata Museo del Mare, Genoa, Italy.
Building a Migration Heritage. Yesterday and Today, in Italy and in Europe.
- **Angela Jannelli**, Historisches Museum Frankfurt, Germany.
CityLab: A Participative Research Tool for the Investigation of the Many Senses of Place.

16.40 – 18.00

Afternoon session 2 – Envisioning Strategies

- **Peter Bjerregaard**, Museum of Cultural History, Oslo, Norway.
Rethinking Research and Exhibitions at the Museum of Cultural History.
- **Cécile Aaufaure**, Musée de l'Homme, Paris, France.
The New Museum of Mankind : Collections, Research and Public.
- **Denis Chevallier**, MuCEM, Marseille, France.
The Genesis of the National Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisation.
- **Bambi Ceuppens**, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium.
Drawing on the Renovation of the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

18.00 – 18.30

Debate and Conclusions



Contents overview: Morning Session

The principal investigators of the MeLa Research Fields 1, 2, 3 and 4 presented the preliminary results of the activities developed so far.

→ **Chris Whitehead, Newcastle University**
RF01 – *Museums and Identity in History and Contemporaneity.*

The presentation offered an overview of the structuring of the Research Field 01 research. This has been articulated across three thematic “clusters” under which museums can be categorised (not necessarily exclusively): “Placing the Nation”; “European Cities and their Others” and “Peoples, Borders, Movement”. The research team visited a number of European museums grouped within these clusters and identified one major case study museum for each, intended to be the site of significant data collection.

Chris Whitehead briefly summarised the first phase of data collection comprising *in situ* display analysis in a number of European museums. It then showcased qualitative data from the second phase of the research, focusing in particular on work undertaken at the Amster-

dam Museum, the case study for the cluster “European Cities and their Others”. Here the research team conducted semi-structured interviews with museum staff and a number of focus groups with “native” Amsterdammers and others with a migrant background, with whom we also conducted accompanied visits.

From the staff interviews a clear sense of the political agency of the museum and its role within the construction of civil society was evident. Focus groups with migrant visitors revealed complex place attachments and ambivalent attitudes towards the museum representations, which nevertheless provoked nuanced discussions about identities, personal experiences, history and contemporary social relations. Finally, the presentation touched on comparable qualitative research to be undertaken in two other case study museums (National Museum of Scotland and Silesian Museum Goerlitz), and on the use of the findings to respond to the question: should/do museums’ representational practices regarding people-place relations change? If so how?

In the previous page: Musée de l’Histoire de l’Immigration, Visitors in the exhibition “Reperes”. © Nathalie Darbellay / Etablissement public du Palais de la porte Dorée.

→ An **extensive brochure** reporting on the main findings of Research Field 01 will be available from March 2014 at: <http://wp1.mela-project.eu/>

→ **Final book:** Whitehead, C., Eckersley, s., Lloyd, K, and Mason, R. eds. 2014. *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

The volume aims at exploring issues of identity, citizenship, iniquity and tolerance, at the core of the research activities promoted within the MeLa Research Field 01, building on the main findings ensuing from the qualitative data collection carried out by the research team and, at the same time, offering a range of different perspectives through the contributions from selected museums scholars and practitioners. With contributions by: Gözde Çerçioğlu Yücel, Anna Chiara Cimoli, Susannah Eckersley, Ullrich Kockel, Kylea Little, Katherine Lloyd, Rhiannon Mason, Jacob Parby, Cathy Ross, Tuğba Tanyeri Erdemir, Iain Watson, Chris Whitehead, Annemarie de Wildt.

→ **Iain Chambers, “L’Orientale”, Naples RF02 – The Archive, the Museum and Migrating Modernities**

The central idea here is that migration is irreducible to merely a social or economic phenomenon. It is rather a central characteristic

of modernity: from the forced transportation of enslaved Africans to the Americas, to the exodus from rural poverty in the peripheries of Europe, to the present movement from the south of the world. This is encapsulated in the idea of migrating modernities.

So, how we understand migration clearly impinges on how we come to understand the institutional organisation and national narrations of memory that are displayed and exhibited in the modern European museum. This renders both the concept of the archive (what, where, when and how are things, documents, lives identified, collected and explained) and the cultural and political authority of the museum extremely problematical. At this point, we believe that the museum here lends itself to becoming a crucial site for understanding modernity. The migrant’s story, both yesterday and today, is also the history of those rendered “objects” by the critical and institutional apparatuses that sustain and reproduce our mechanisms of knowledge (and power). This stretches from anthropology and the museum display case to government policy and the response of the European Union to contemporary migrations from the extra-European world.

At this point we would argue that the museum no longer “translates” the other into a domestic discourse, but rather becomes a site of mutual translation in which the encounter with other histories and cultures also transform and interrogate us. Rather than endorsing a neutral exercise in scientific taxonomies of knowledge and taste the museum can here offer the opportunity for an altogether more extensive exercise in historical justice and cultural democracy.

→ An **extensive brochure** reporting on the main findings of Research Field 02 will be available from March 2014 at: <http://wp2.mela-project.eu/>

→ **Final Book:** Chambers, Iain, Giulia Grechi, and Mark Nash, eds. 2014. *The Ruined Archive*. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.

Through diverse contributions by selected scholars and experts in a wide set of disciplines, and extensive essays by some of the MeLa researchers, the book explores the most topical and complex issues emerged by the investigations carried out within the MeLa research field “Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernity and Museum Practices”. The book will be published before summer 2014 within the MeLa Book Series and will be thus available as open access digital publication on the MeLa website. With contributions by: Fernanda Al-

buquerque, Chiara Baravalle, Giuseppe Biscottini, Francesco Cabanzo, Iain Chambers, Lidia Curti, Alessandra De Angelis, Olga Fernández López, Beatrice Ferrara, Jessica Fiala, Giulia Grechi, Celeste Ianniciello, Maria Inigo Cla-vo, Mark Nash, Mariangela Orabona Claire Pajaczowska, Michaela Quadraro, Elizabeth Stanton.

→ **Perla Innocenti, University of Glasgow RF03 – Migrating Heritage: Strategies and Practices of Cultural Networks in Europe**

We are witnessing a shift from the identity-marking heritage of European nations to a contemporary migrating heritage. Cultural identities, which define what represents cultural heritage for us, are not written in stone but continuously evolve and reshape themselves, adapting to new contexts determined by the contact with our own and other cultures. Such encounters not only allow assessing but also creating one’s cultural identity. Findings of MeLa Research Field 03 research suggest that the key feature of (multi)cultural heritage is the drive to unbound identities and let them interweave in networks, in pathways of exchange and contamination. Migrating heritage in Europe and beyond encompasses not only

the migration and mobility of post-colonial artifacts, but also migration of people, technologies and disciplines, crossing boundaries and joining forces in cultural networks and partnerships to address new emerging challenges of social inclusion, cultural dialogue, new models of citizenship and national belonging.

Cultural institutions (museums, libraries and further cultural organisations) typically address public knowledge and memory, and deal with the need to create a coherent narrative, a story of a society and its cultural, historical and social contexts. In the last decades, cultural networks played an increasingly important role in supporting transnational, cross-sectoral cooperation and cultural dialogue, and creating cultural value. UNESCO's notion of cultural diversity and the Council of Europe's holistic definition of heritage leave the dimension of interactions and exchanges between cultures to be further explored and defined. The usage of digital technologies is further changing the dynamics and scoping of cultural networking. Through theoretical and field research including twenty-four real-life case studies, forty-three interviews, meetings with stakeholders, an international workshop and international

conference, MeLa cultural network research investigated innovative experiences and effects of cooperation and networks around the core activities of archiving, preserving and displaying history and artefacts; roles, dynamics and assessment of networking and cooperation at transnational and crossdisciplinary level; how cultural networks can define innovative practices, spaces and policies that reflect the challenges of building an inclusive Europe in an age of migrations.

→ An **extensive brochure** reporting on the main findings of Research Field 02 will be available from March 2014 at: <http://wp2.mela-project.eu/>

→ **Victoria Walsh, Royal College of Art - Research Field 04**

Curatorial and Artistic Research in an Age of Migrations

This presentation summarised the original key objectives of the MeLa's Research Field 04 focused on Curatorial and Artistic Research and provided an overview of the project's research methodologies and emergent findings, and importantly discussed what new research questions have emerged during the interim

period of analysis of the fieldwork data gathered during the last two years. In particular, the presentation highlighted how the project now understands the need to consider its research as a form of collaborative "problem-solving" in order to address the complex interface between museological and curatorial practices of curating immaterial practices (sound, performance, film and video), education programming, collection acquisition, documentation and archiving on – and offline.

Acknowledging the exhausted language of representation, identity and post-colonialism in relation to the display and interpretation of such artistic and curatorial practices, the presentation highlighted, through the case study of the Tate Modern Tanks and the work of the artist Leo Asemota, how the construction of the category of the "Contemporary" in relation to the Global and Digital now needs to be radically questioned and concluded by outlining the RCA's project's proposition in the term of the "Post-Contemporary".

In June 2014 the RCA's fieldwork into curatorial and artistic research will culminate in the research exhibition of the work of curators from the Whitechapel Gallery (London), Ste-

delijk Museum (Amsterdam), and Betonsalon (Paris) and of artists including Kader Attia, Lawrence Abu-Hamdan, Camille Henrot, Leo Asemota. The exhibition will focus on artistic, curatorial and museological issues of immaterial practices, display and archiving in relation to diasporic artists and culture. The exhibition will be co-curated with senior staff at MACBA (Barcelona) where the exhibition will take place. Under the working title "Transfigurations: Curatorial and artistic research in an age of migrations", the exhibition will also feature lecture/performances, archival and online presentations in relation to the forthcoming MeLa research actions and will be accompanied by a publication with contributions from each of the artist/curator collaborations.

→ **Art exhibition:** *Transfigurations: Curatorial and artistic research in an age of migrations*. Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), Barcelona, Spain, June 2014.



Contents overview: Afternoon Sessions

Moving from the registered need and high utility of sharing and debating experiences and ideas between academics and practitioners, and considering the rarity of these opportunities because of the lack of funding for museums to attend these kind of events, a consistent effort has been devoted to support the participation to the event of selected curators and directors from different types of institutions across Europe.

The afternoon sessions have been thus devoted to the presentation of different European museums, which have been selected for the innovative initiatives aimed at involving new audiences. In particular, the first session focused on the practices that have already been implemented, and was meant to report and evaluate findings and results; the second concerned the future strategies which some new or renovated museums are planning to actualise, and was intended to envision further questions and perspectives.

→ Museum of London, United Kingdom

Founded in 1976 from the merging of earlier institutions, the Museum of London aims to document the social history of the city and its inhabitants from prehistoric to modern times. Since 2000, the museum has gone through several renovation projects, which have promoted the revision of its mission, narrations and practices, the redesigning of several galleries, as well as the opening of new museum venues (i.e. the Museum of London Docklands and the Museum of London Archaeology). The institution promotes innovative educational programmes and temporary exhibitions, with the aim of problematising the history of the city and dealing with contemporary issues related to identity, diversity and migrations.

Cathy Ross – Director of Collections and Learning, Museum of London.

Cathy Ross has had a thirty-year career in museums. After working in curatorial roles in museums in South Yorkshire and Tyne & Wear Museums, in 1993 she joined the Museum of London, where she has worked as Head of Later London History, chief curator for the Galleries of Modern London and, latterly, as

In the previous page: Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervure, Belgium. Photo by photo JVan de Vijver RMCA.

Director of Collections and Learning. Her interest on museums, cities and contemporary collecting, focused on the challenges of representing the complexity of cities within the walls of a city museum, has been the subject of several conference presentations and publications.

→ *Mediating the Global City: Representing migration in the Museum of London*

The presentation illustrated the approach of the Museum of London toward the representation of diversity and migration in its galleries, exhibitions and programmes. The Museum of London, one of the most multi-cultural European city, is dealing with issues of migrations, cultural identity, differences and intercultural dialogue since the Nineties, through the promotion of diverse initiatives and projects. The experience gained recently resulted in the *London, Sugar, Slavery* gallery at the Museum of London Docklands (2008); in the new *Galleries of Modern London* at the Museum of London (2010), where migration is a topic embedded in the whole story; in the semi-permanent collaborative project *Our Londinium* (2012), as well as in many other recent and ongoing projects.

Cathy Ross presented these projects and offered a preview of the future plans, aimed at exploring in a even more broad and thought-provoking way the implication of migrations on the London's and the Londoners' identity.

→ **Écomusée du Val de Bièvre, Fresnes, France**

The Écomusée du Val de Bièvre is an urban ecomuseum, articulating its mission around contemporary societal issues (e.g. immigration, work, citizenship and identity) concerning the community inhabiting the southern area of the Île-de-France region. Established in 1979 in the Ferme de Cottinville in Fresnes, and originally focused on the promotion of the territory's historical heritage, in the 1990s the institution underwent profound transformations which led to the removal of the original permanent display and the development of innovative exhibitions, education activities and participative programs, enhancing its role as a preeminent cultural and social agent, mirroring contemporary urban society, and reflecting with the local population on its own future.

Alexandre Delarge – Director, Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.

Alexandre Delarge is the Director of the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre, and Deputy President of the Fédération des Écomusées et des Musées de Société (FEMS). Throughout the foundation and direction of several institutions – e.g. Écomusée Salazie à la Réunion and the Musée Portuaire – and the constant engagement in the elaboration of cultural projects, exhibitions, publications and management practices, he has been fostering a reflection/action on heritage issues such as participation, the dissemination of knowledge in the contemporary context and the relationship with the museum publics.

→ *An Overview of the Experiences of the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre*

By illustrating the distinctive experience of the Écomusée de Val du Bièvre, which stands among other ecomuseums for the active engagement with urgent societal issues such as globalisation, cultural diversity and cross-cultural exchanges, Alexandre Delarge illustrated the commitment of the institution in experimenting with innovative participative practices aimed at offering an inclusive representation of the local heritage.

These experiences, which range among participative forms of collection, content production and heritage fruition, are intended to prove the development of shared, debated and concerted decision-making processes based on the collaboration of actors and curators.

→ **German Emigration Center, Bremerhaven, Germany**

The Deutsche Auswandererhaus Bremerhaven is Germany's first and only museum that permanently presents both emigration from and immigration to Germany over the past three centuries. Opened in 2005 and extended in 2012, the museum preserves, studies and exhibits the tangible and intangible cultural heritage which is part of German migration history in a comprehensive sense. The rich collection, including a variety of life stories and biographical documents representing the historical, sociological and ethnological contexts, is exhibited in reconstructed historical settings, which allow the visitor to experience, and reflect on, what it specifically meant and generally means to migrate, whether in the past or in modern times, whether out of or to Germany.

Christoph Bongert – Curator, Science Communication, Deutsche Auswandererhaus Bremerhaven.

Christoph Bongert has been working in the field of science communication at the German Emigration Center Bremerhaven since 2013. He studied philosophy, modern history, general linguistics and German philology at the Universities of Tübingen and Berlin (HU). After receiving his degree in 2010, he worked freelance as an editor of academic writings and as a research assistant at the Spandau Citadel, Berlin.

→ *“Passage.” The German Emigration Center as Immigration Museum: Some reflections on the new permanent exhibition*

The museological and museographical strategies leading the recent expansion of the German Emigration Center have been presented through the exploration of the conceptual commonalities and differences between the original permanent exhibition on emigration from Bremerhaven and the new section dedicated to the history of the immigration to Germany. Christoph Bongert illustrated the process that guided this passage, building on the necessity to maintain homogeneity and to connect the

two sections, but also to overcome some founding elements so as to activate the role of visitors and raise political awareness.



© German Emigration Center Bremerhaven / photo: Kay Riechers.

→ **Galata Museo del Mare, Genoa, Italy**

Galata Museo del Mare is one of the major maritime museums in Europe, standing out for the quality and the innovative character of its exhibitions. In 2011, the museum expanded its permanent display with the inclusion of a new section, MeM – Memory and Migrations, dedicated to the historical emigration and the contemporary immigration phenomena which characterise the port city. Through a wide range of exhibition, collection and education activities, the institution aims at illustrating

and valorising the themes dealing with the relationship between the city and the sea, and its role as a vehicle for cultural exchange and cross-fertilisation among different cultures, populations and generations.

Pierangelo Campodonico, Director, Galata Museo del Mare.

Pierangelo Campodonico is Director of the Institution Mu.MA – Maritime and Navigation Museums. Since 1988 he has been contributing to the renovation and promotion of several institutions managing and promoting the maritime heritage of Genoa. Over the years, his research and passion for navigation and museums resulted in the publication of various catalogues and books. He is a member of the International Council of Maritime Museum and member of the secretariat of the Association Museums Maritime of Mediterranean.

→ *Building a Migration Heritage. Yesterday and today, in Italy and in Europe*

Pierangelo Campodonico introduced the social and political context on which grounded the construction of the “Memory and Migration” exhibition at the Galata Museo del Mare – the first permanent section dedicated to “migration”

among Italian museums. The presentation illustrated the galleries of the MeM and their exhibition and communication strategies, in relation with the museum’s double aim to promote the conservation of the memory of the national historical emigration and, at the same time, to raise awareness on the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of Italian society, in order to foster social cohesion and the building of a supranational and multicultural identity.

→ **Historisches Museum Frankfurt, Germany**

The Historisches Museum Frankfurt is the oldest municipal museum in the city (founded in 1877/78) aimed at preserving and presenting historical objects and images illustrating the trade-fair town. After a number of upheavals and renovations, the institution is currently changing its conceptual orientation once again. Evolving from a specialised historical museum to a contemporary city history museum, it is intended to promote information, reflection and discussion about Frankfurt, to offer multifaceted explanations and backgrounds of the city’s past, present and future, and thus to become a museum of and for the city.

Angela Jannelli, Curator, Historisches Museum Frankfurt.

Angela Jannelli, Ph.D., works as curator at the Historical Museum Frankfurt since 2010. She is responsible for the “Bibliothek der Alten” (Library of the Elder), an artistic reminiscence project. She is also the project coordinator of “Frankfurt Today!” and “Stadtlabor,” exhibitions based on the principle of participation and focussing present day Frankfurt.

→ *The “Stadtlabor” (City Lab) of the Historical Museum Frankfurt. A participative research tool for the investigation of the many senses of place*

Angela Jannelli introduced the major renovation project which the city history museum of Frankfurt is currently currently going through: the project, along with other improvements, will enlarge the museum’s venue with a new building and a large exhibition on present-day Frankfurt. The presentation focused on the City Lab Project, which will constitute an important part of this new gallery. It will be located in an empty space at the core of the gallery, hosting twice a year a different exhibition on specific topics and emerging issues. While the new museum spaces are under construc-



A collection of objects belonging to a wide variety of people and institutions residing in the Ostend provided a many-faceted view of the district (c) hmF, photo: P. Welzel.

tion, the City Lab is already active: so far three exhibition have been organised in three different significant city’s venues, each of them were conceived with a very participative approach, collaborating with local associations and communities. By presenting these experiences, Jannelli ultimately illustrated the very concept of the City Lab: a research tool to investigate the many different senses of place of the diverse population living in Frankfurt today.

→ **Kulturhistorisk Museum, Oslo, Norway**

The Kulturhistorisk Museum at the University of Oslo is one of Norway’s largest museums of cultural history and, in addition, a university

department equal in status to UiO’s faculties. Its activities draw on a remarkable archaeological collection from pre-history and the Middle Ages, an ethnographic collection of artefacts from all continents, as well as Norway’s largest collection of historic coinage. The museum has recently carried out a comprehensive strategy process building on the interaction and synergy between three main pillars – research, dissemination and heritage management. On this basis, the museum plans to change all exhibition areas over the coming seven years in order to focus on cross-disciplinary and research driven exhibitions.

Peter Bjerregaard - Senior Adviser of Exhibitions, Kulturhistorisk Museum.

Peter Bjerregaard has specialised in material culture and museums over the last 15 years. Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Ethnography of the Kulturhistorisk Museum, his work has focused on rethinking the museum institution, both theoretically and practically, and on the implementation of experimental approaches to exhibiting. Over the years, he has been active in taking his ideas into public debate, both as speaker at museum seminars and panels, columnist and board member

of the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Ethnography. Since 2001, he has carried out a wide range of activities at Moesgård Museum, and in 2010 was appointed Head of the UNESCO School Collections.

→ *A House for Untamed Thinking: re-connecting research and display at Museum of Cultural History in Oslo*

The presentation illustrated the vision behind the major institutional changes that are taking place at the Kulturhistorisk Museum. Peter Bjerregaard focused on a sequence of cross-



Oslo Kulturhistorisk Museum; the first experiment with the academic setting in the occasion of the opening workshop of “Death, Materiality and the Origin of Time”, where the conventional setting of the academic paper session were broken, and participants were placed around a lush dinner table laid with objects from the museum backstage. Photo: Lill-Ann Chepstouw-Lusty.

disciplinary design experiments, developed in connection to the research project “Death, Materiality and the Origin of Time” and aimed at opening new perspectives on the relationship between knowledge and exhibitions. Drawing on these issues, he developed a wider reflection on the role of scientific thinking and practice in XXIst century museums – and, in general, in a contemporary world.

→ **Musée de l’Homme, Paris, France**

Founded by Paul Rivet in 1938 as a department of the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle (National Museum of Natural History), the Musée de l’Homme inherited the collections of the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro. The institutions gathered in a new venue at Palais de Chaillot an inestimable patrimony of prehistoric, anthropological and ethnographic artefacts, which were arranged to contemplate the human species as an indivisible whole along the spectrum of time and place. The museum stopped his expositive activity in 2009, and started a process of profound renovation to reflect the redefinition of the scientific programme and mis-

sion of the institution, and to include a cultural laboratory for dissemination and research.

Cécile Aaufaure - Curator, Musée de l’Homme. Cécile Aaufaure is Curator at the Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, where in 2012 she is has been appointed as Director of the team programming the renovation of the Musée de l’Homme. Her experience within the museum realm included the direction of several local museums (from 1991 to 2004) and the engagement in institutional roles (as consultant for the Directions régionales des affaires culturelles de Picardie and, subsequently, d’Île-de-France, from 2004 to 2011).

→ *The New Musée de l’Homme: Collections, research and public*

The presentation was conceived to illustrate the intensive renovation work of the Musée de l’Homme: the project indeed ensues from the development of a new project around the museum’s anthropology collections from a biological, physical and cultural angle, and aims at asserting its fundamental vocation as a science museum – rather than a museum of civilisations. This renewal, related with the enhance-

ment of research and education activities, has been conceived to potentiate the museum’s multi-dimensional approach to the study of mankind: by highlighting the diversity and, at one time, the universality of humanity in space and time, the institution aims at promoting a modern and anti-racist vision, which lays at the core of the museum mission.

→ **Musée des civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée, Marseille, France**

Inaugurated in June 2013 in Marseille, MuCEM offers a new focus on the cultures of the Mediterranean, analysed from a compara-

tive and multi-disciplinary perspective aimed at reflecting the “world culture” that characterises the area. Ensuing from the metamorphosis of the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, established in Paris in 1937, the museum disciplinary focus on ethnographic heritage has been extended to include all the social sciences. Through a rich program of temporary exhibitions, seminars and performances addressing major contemporary issues, MuCEM operates as an open cultural centre, fostering dialogue and exchanges on historical and artistic debates, questions of culture and belonging, and the relations between the Mediterranean and the world.



View of the MUCEM and the boardwalk to Fort Saint-Jean. Project By Rudi Ricciotti. Photo by Francesca Lanz.



“The Gender Bazaar” exhibition at MuCEM (displays designed by Didier Faustino, curated by Denis Chevallier).

Denis Chevallier - Director of the Department of Research and Education, Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée. Doctor in Ethnology, Denis Chevallier has been actively involved in the cultural sector, operating within the Ethnological Heritage of the Ministry of Culture and the Inventaire Général du Patrimoine Culturel. Since 2000, he has cooperated to the evolution of the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires into the Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, leading the team in charge of the reconfiguration of the new museum in Marseille and promoting several pilot research and collection programmes concerning the Mediterranean area. In 2009 he was appointed Deputy Director of the National Service of MuCEM, where currently he operates as Head of the Department of Research and Education.

→ *From the French Museum of Ethnography in Paris to the National Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations in Marseilles*

The presentation illustrated the evolution from a “museum of rural France” to a “citizen museum”, aimed at depicting the social and cultural dynamics at play in the various societies

around the Mediterranean. Denis Chevallier described the new challenges ensuing from the extension of the museum's scope and objectives, as well as from the redefinition of the research, collection and exhibition policies. Through an overview on the methodologies implemented to interpret a complex system of cultural interrelations, he explained the ongoing attempt to actualise the new founding paradigm for museums of society, moving from cataloguing specific cultural characteristics to researching the various forms of cultural change.

→ **Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium**

The Royal Museum for Central Africa is a scientific institute and a research centre devoted to Africa, founded in 1898 to represent the “Congo Free State” (which, at that time, was under the Belgian king Leopold II). The museum promotes a wide range of innovative collection, research, exhibition and educational practices on the past and present African societies and natural environments, in order to foster a better understanding and interest in this field.

Since 2001, the museum has actively worked with international experts, civilians, researchers and migrants associations to renovate its permanent exhibition and to contextualise critically the colonial origins of the building and its collections. In 2013 the museum closed its doors for a three-year major renovation process.

Bambi Ceuppens - Curator at the Department of History and Anthropology, Royal Museum for Central Africa.

Since 2007, Bambi Ceuppens has been working at the Royal Museum for Central Africa on such issues as western representations of Africa and Africans, Belgian and Congolese colonial history, colonial and post-colonial popular cul-

ture in Congo as well as autochthony, interculturalism and multiculturalism in the Flemish Region. Ph.D. in Social Anthropology, she has been Senior Researcher at the African Research Centre in the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Catholic University of Leuven, and previously cooperated with the University of Gent.

→ *Drawing on the Renovation of the Royal Museum for Central Africa.*

Through a particular focus on the representation of Belgian colonial history in the Congo and Congolese diaspora, Bambi Ceuppens illustrated the ongoing renovation which is intended to accomplish the evolution of what was defined “the last colonial museum in the world” to a postcolonial institution. This process was conceived realise a shift in the interpretation of the objects on display, in relation with the advanced research, education and cooperation activities promoted by the museum in the last decade; its overall aim is thus to offer a sharper focus upon contemporary Africa and operating as a contact platform between Belgians and Africans.



Original Display at the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

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Department of Design
- CIID – Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design, Denmark
- CNR – Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Italy
Institute for Industrial Technologies and Automation (ITIA)
- GU – University of Glasgow, United Kingdom
History of Art, School of Culture and Creative Arts (HOA)
- MACBA – Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain
- MNHN – Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, France
Musée de l'Homme, Département «Homme, nature, société» (DHNS)
- RCA – The Royal College of Art, United Kingdom
Department of Curating Contemporary Art (CCA)
- UNEW – Newcastle University, United Kingdom
The International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS)
- UNO – L' "Orientale", University of Naples, Italy
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MeLa – Museums and Libraries in/of the age of migrations

MeLa is a four-year research project funded by the European Commission under the Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities Programme (Seventh Framework Programme). MeLa, adopting the notion of 'migration' as a paradigm of the contemporary global and multicultural world, investigates the role of museums in the twenty-first century Europe.

Two years and a half after the Kick-off Meeting in Rome, which inaugurated the beginning of the MeLa Project activities, the Midterm Seminar has represented an important milestone fostering introspection, dissemination, collection of new stimuli and planning of further tasks, as well as gathering new key findings through the coalescence of theories and practices. By triggering a multi-disciplinary and multi-perspective critical debate about the transformation of the contemporary museums, the Seminar aimed at capturing the complexity of these processes by facilitating a cross-fertilisation between the scientific outcomes developed by the scholars involved within the MeLa Project and the innovative experiences promoted by some pioneering museums, illustrated through the words of the directors and curators who conceived and actualised them.

The heterogeneity of the reported experiences highlighted the richness and the variety of the approaches, tools and strategies which are being experimented to afford the challenges posed by this "age of migrations".

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