ADVANCING MUSEUM PRACTICES

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Acknowledgments

This book grew out of a series of conferences, seminars and events promoted by Project MeLa - *European Museums in an age of migrations*, a four-year interdisciplinary research project funded in 2011 within the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) by the European Commission under the Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities Programme.

Adopting the notion of 'migration' as a paradigm of the contemporary global, multicultural reality, MeLa has been analysing the role of museums in 21st century Europe. The mission, strategies and tools of these institutions are being significantly challenged by the complex phenomena that characterise contemporaneity - such as the significant changes in demographic flows; the accelerated mobility and the resulting layerisation and hybridisation of 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 related to the creation and consolidation of the European Union. By considering their evolution both as cultural spaces and physical places, the main objective of the MeLa Project is to identify innovative museum practices that aim to enhance mutual understanding and social cohesion, as well as to build a sharper awareness of an inclusive European identity.

Since its launch in March 2011, during a symposium held at the Musei Capitolini and MAXXI in Rome, MeLa has been promoting a widespread circulation and use of the knowledge advancement produced by the research, by providing open access to all its publications and facilitating dialogue and exchange through the organisation of several events. A number of conferences, seminars and brainstorming sessions have brought together scholars and museum practitioners from different countries, in order to help sharing various experiences, findings and perspectives, to favour the dialogue between people from diverse cultural and geographical backgrounds, and to foster the coalescence of theoretical and practical problems, tasks and outcomes.
Among the events promoted by MeLa, the Midterm Seminar at the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration in Paris ('Let the Museum Speak', 24 September 2013) represented an important milestone fostering introspection, dissemination, and a collection of new findings and stimuli. By triggering a multi-disciplinary and multi-perspective critical debate about the transformations of contemporary museums, the Seminar was conceived to capture the complexity of these processes, while favouring a cross-fertilisation between the scientific outcomes developed by the scholars involved in the MeLa Project and the innovative experiences promoted by some pioneering museum directors and curators who conceived and updated them.
This volume offers an overview of the most innovative experiences that were gathered through the exchange opportunities promoted by the MeLa Project.

The editors would like to thank all the scholars who contributed to this book with their ideas and suggestions, as well as all the museums and their staffs who made the realisation of these events and this publication possible.

A Reflection on Innovative Experiences in 21st Century European Museums

Francesca Lanz, Elena Montanari

It is widely believed that the turn of the twenty-first century is a particularly challenging time for museums. The increased importance and acceleration of a wide range of phenomena, which may be called 'globalisation', are deeply affecting the museum's mission, structures and practices of representation, collection and communication (Prösler, 1996; Karp et al., 2006; Rectanus, 2011; Basso Peressut and Pozzi, 2012; 'Museums in a Global World', 2013). As Sharon Macdonald pointed out in the Introduction to Part V 'Globalization, Profession, Practice' of her *Companion to Museum Studies*: 'there are different interpretations of what might be meant by "globalization".' However, as she remarks, by referring to it as to 'an intensification of relations and movements at inter- and transnational levels, and to a greater consciousness of what happens in other parts of the world and of their ramifications, both global and local... [g]lobalization... has considerable implications for the workings and even the future of museums, for the nature of exhibitions, the museum profession, and museological practice' (Macdonald, 2006, p.378).

An inherent characteristic of the present 'global' age is the fluid circulation of population, goods and information, which is nowadays happening with unprecedented speed and resonance. Although the movement of people, cultures and knowledge has always accompanied and fostered the evolution of the various civilisations of the world, nowadays 'migration (forced or selected), diaspora and transience [have] become commonplace (at least in the developed world)' (Schofield and Szymanski, 2011, p.3). Ongoing crucial political and economic processes, such as the creation and consolidation of the European Union, or the raise of new conflicts and socio-economic imbalances, the improvement of travel opportunities and facilities, and the strengthening of worldwide networking in many different fields, are fostering movements to and within Europe (and beyond), including forced displacements of entire populations, as well as people choosing to move in search of better job, living or education opportunities. The contemporary world is thus far from being characterised by evenness and cultural homogenisation - as some supposed a global world would be - rather it is characterised by a high level of cultural encounters (and clashes), hybridisations, and the mutation of common markers, cultural systems and identities (Rutherford, 1990; Bhabha, 1994; Appadurai, 1996, Welsch 1999; Bauman, 2011; Chambers, 2012). This scenario necessarily has deep and far-reaching consequences for museums. In the last twenty years indeed the mission and *raison d'être* of museums has been broadly discussed in relation

to this framework by a number of scientific publications, national and international research programmes, conferences and seminars, which have sought to explore the actual, potential and possible part of museums in contemporary society, and to evaluate the implications of the ongoing social and cultural transformation for their narratives, practices and tools[1] (Vergo, 1989; Clifford, 1997; Gregorio, 2002; Sandell, 2002; Karp et al., 2006; Marstine, 2006; Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge, 2007; Watson, 2007; Chambers et al., 2014).

At the core of these studies lies a new understanding of museums as public services and social agents, which do not only have a preeminent conservation role, but also, and primarily, an important educational, political, social - and definitely not neutral - role. These theoretical contributions stress the power that museums have 'to play an important role in helping contemporary societies navigate the perennial question of identity, belonging, sameness and difference' (Mason, 2013, p.60) thanks to their 'flexible' and 'adaptive' nature (ibid.) and the possibility of re-presenting objects from their collections 'in new, perhaps more connective' ways (Macdonald, 2003, p.11). Most of these studies advocate the inclusion of subjects, stories and topics that have been traditionally excluded (or eluded) by museums, and the implementation of the plurality of voices, identities, and points of view which characterise present-day societies. Moreover, several claim that it is the duty of museums to be relevant for the societies and communities in which they stand; this entails the necessity for them to deal with contemporary issues, even though they may be difficult or contested, without avoiding frictions but rather fostering discussion and building on dissent.

On the other hand, various museums are registering and reacting to the chances and challenges posed by such a political, social and cultural context and by the related theoretical debate and ideas so far developed. Several pioneering museums are indeed reassessing their purposes, approaches, and practices in order to accomplish their role in proactively supporting and even driving these changes, acknowledging their potential to construct social values, and assuming a clearer political and social responsibility. The commitment, investments and efforts that they are making in this direction can be detected in the proliferation of innovative experiences, in the experimentation with new practices and tools, and in the implementation of a high number of renovation projects, ranging from major radical ventures to small-scale or step-by-step projects.

As demonstrated by the experience of several European museums that were recently renewed or that are currently under renovation, this revision impetus is being implemented in different ways in accordance with the mission, tasks, context and resources of the different institutions. In general, it is interesting to notice that most of these museums are somehow representative of the raise of a new type of museum which is, as recently described by Ciraj Rassool, 'not about the collection [...] [but] about something else, and it might be about a different way of telling a history of something' ('Museums in a Global World', 2013, p.188). Indeed, as highlighted by the reported experiences, despite the fact that the collection remains at the core of the museum's work, we are

witnessing an overall shift from an object-focused to a content- and message-oriented approach. This shift widely impacts on the museums at large. It may affect museums' collections, encouraging to rethink collecting policies, furthering the implementation of new cataloguing and archiving practices, and eventually leading as far as radical reinterpretations of their historical collections. At other times, it encompasses a review of the museum's common curatorial practices, which often includes the development of new models and approaches based on participative, top-down, outreaching and community-based practices. It occasionally nurtures the conception of innovative programmes and strategies ultimately aimed at widening the museum's cultural offers and audiences, including new educational activities tailored to different audiences, cooperation with schools, lifelong learning programmes, as well as the promotion of a rich programme of temporary exhibitions and events. Finally it also impacts on the museum's spaces and, now and then, it is even conceived as part of a spatial renewal and re-organisation project.
The aim of this publication is to provide an overview of this ongoing transformation, by presenting an in-depth insight into some innovative and paradigmatic experiences recently developed by selected European museums, through the words of the directors and curators who conceived and actualised them.[2] The museums presented here are characterised by a noticeable diversity in their main focus and mission (encompassing ethnographic museums, migration museums, city museums, *musées de société*, eco-museums, etc.) as well as in their approaches and geopolitical localisation - although they are concentrated in a relatively limited geographical area (Italy, France, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom and Norway), basically the Western Europe zone. The highly heterogeneous selection of examples has been driven by a plurality of objectives: on the one hand drawing on the consistency and the quality of the illustrated experiences; on the other trying to offer a wide outlook on the different practices that are being experimented by contemporary museums within the scenario outlined above, and to highlight some pivotal recurrent strategies and trends.

For several museums this venture is resulting in the museological and museographical reinterpretation of their collections, based on a reassessment of the framework through which they depict past - and present - to acknowledge further implications, connections and perspectives, and thus eventually to more efficiently use the potentialities of the collections themselves. This effort, which has spread widely in the last decades, is calling into question such aspects of their work as collecting strategies, methodologies and tools. Since the 1990s, the collection managers of several museums, curators and directors have been engaged in the reshaping of collection practices through laborious and accurate work, and occasionally also through cooperation with artists, the implementation of temporary practices, or the involvement of local communities.
An exemplary case of the development of new collecting practices is being developed by the *Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration* where the 'Galerie des Dons' was conceived

as an in-progress participative archive dedicated to the narration of personal memories and life stories documenting the culture and history of immigration in France, continuously nourished through the objects and testimonies donated by immigrants and their descendants. This commitment to the reassessment of collections can also be detected in the increased frequency and a more critical approach to the periodic revisions of permanent exhibitions, which are often used as an occasion to profoundly review the representation strategies, the narrative focus and, accordingly, the interpretation of collections and that are occasionally even affecting the design of some exhibition spaces. In some cases, for example, it can trigger an enhanced interaction with the use of the archives, for example, through the development of accessible storages, operating as additional museum spaces, such as in the case of the MuCEM; it may end up with the revision or even the gradual replacement of the former permanent galleries with shorter-term thematic and issue-oriented exhibitions - as illustrated here by the *Écomusée du Val de Bièvre* - through the demission of the permanent exhibits and the predisposition of new adaptive exhibition spaces. In general, it can lead to a more strict selection of the displayed objects, in the reduction of their number, and in the conception of more flexible installations and unconventional exhibition strategies and design. In fact, as exemplified here by the experience of the *Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo*, the initiatives related to the periodic reconsideration of the subjects and the display of the museum's permanent exhibition can be exploited as an opportunity for testing experimental projects focused on the development of cross-disciplinary and research-driven exhibitions, and in the implementation of innovative practices challenging the traditional knowledge-generating processes.

In the case of some specific museums, the collections' reinterpretation is required by the development of new cultural approaches to the topics and contents they convey. This issue particularly concerns ethnographic museums (now more often defined as 'world cultures museums'), which have been called into question by the spread of post-colonial stances. Challenged by the claim for identity recognition and, at the same time, the demand for an egalitarian representation of cultural differences, these institutions have embarked on overall renovation projects aimed at rethinking of their mission, strategies, tools and spaces in order to abandon their colonial roots and exploit their potential as instruments for the recognition of diversity (Pagani, 2013). The ways in which ethnographic museums are facing this far-reaching evolution may vary according to their history, reference context, tasks and resources. Some of them are responding through major revisions - as exemplarily illustrated here by the *Royal Museum for Central Africa*, which is going through a major renovation process redefining its position as a 'contact zone' (Clifford, 1997) and as a bridging platform between Belgians and Africans. Some other museums are moving this process forward through the implementation of other kinds of projects, which do not operate definitive transformations but progressively update the cultural offer of the museum by means of educational activities, participative workshops, artistic performances, temporary exhibitions, etc. These initiatives often

entail work on and with the historical collections, revising the main narratives and superimposing new interpretative layers – as clearly depicted here through the experience of *Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico 'Luigi Pigorini'* (Grechi, 2014).
In some cases, the reviewed interpretation of a museum's collection may also be generated by external and unplanned factors, such as the transformation of the museum's institutional situation or the mobility of its collection, for example due to loans or travelling exhibitions, repatriations and restitutions. The remarkable case of the *Musée de l'Homme* – related also to the evolution of the *MuCEM* – is presented here through an overview of the challenges ensuing from the reallocation and reorganisation of its original heritage (Isnard and Galangau-Quérat, 2014) and of the resulting major renewal project, which was built around the development of a new biological, physical and cultural angle on anthropology collections, and the enhancement of a distinctive multi-dimensional, modern and anti-racist approach to the study of mankind (Galangau et al., 2013).

As highlighted by the current debate, the ongoing evolution of contemporary museums frequently results also in the broadening of the themes they deal with. This task may arise from the inclusion of topics which have previously been excluded, or that have at times been regarded as unrepresentable, or purposely distorted and instrumentalised to support particular political stances, as well as from the implementation of matters related to contemporary and emerging issues. This shift in the focus of museums represents an important impetus for their enhancement, but also a major challenge. It requires and entails experimentation with and development of new approaches to their presentation (and, furthermore, the ways they handle the disapproval they may arouse), to the highlighting of multiple positions and the fostering of debate. At the same time, this increasing focus on contemporaneity raises questions about whether and how to represent something that is in the here-and-now – processes that are ongoing, rapid and unpredictable – and how to prevent the rapid obsolescence of the museum's message.
Beside the implementation of new tools and technologies, one the of the most crucial means through which the inclusion of these 'new' subjects is finding an expression is the mounting of temporary exhibitions, which are standing out as strategic instruments helping to widen, enrich and differentiate the cultural project of the museum.[3] It is indeed by means of a rich programme of temporary exhibitions that the recently inaugurated *MuCEM* is trying to throw new light on the different issues which connote the civilisations meeting in the Mediterranean Sea, also acknowledging controversial aspects and topics (e.g. related to inequalities, gender, etc.). Temporary exhibitions have also been used by the *Écomusée du Val de Bièvre* to strengthen its role as preeminent cultural and social agent. In this museum in fact, the dismantling of the permanent exhibition and the refocusing of its overall mission around temporary practices has empowered the institution in engaging with urgent societal issues such as globalisation, cultural diversity and cross-cultural exchanges (Montanari, 2013). Although the possibility of archiving these events and of consolidating their contribution in the long

term still remains a problematic question, sometimes they have a crucial impact on the museum's evolution. Indeed temporary exhibitions can operate as catalysts for the overhaul of an outdated approach to its contents, and for the creation of a new message or display strategy. In this regard, paradigmatic experiences can be observed at the *Royal Museum for Central Africa*, whose overall revision was triggered by a sequence of temporary exhibitions (started several years before the conception of the renovation), and at the *Museum of London*, where the new 'Galleries of Modern London' and their innovative approach to cultural diversity, resulted from a process of reflection on the identity and history of the city which originated in the 1990s and was marked by some major milestones, including several temporary exhibitions.[4]

The integration of new or controversial topics, or the renovation of their presentation, is having a profound impact also on permanent exhibitions: several museums are embedding new stories into their main narratives, acknowledging aspects which had previously been overlooked, and trying to offer different points of view on the contents. This trend is particularly crucial for the topics related to war or conflict heritage (Basso Peressut, 2013). As illustrated here by the museological and museographical programme of the *Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux*, these 'sensitive' subjects are being approached from a renovated perspective. Indeed, by combining reflections on history and critical debate, exploring the causes and consequences of war through a focus on the anthropological side of violence, placing events in context and making links between past and present, and eventually encouraging creative and unbiased discussions, the museum ultimately expands its mission beyond the mere remembrance and commemoration tasks. A similarly revised approach can be detected in the presentation of other 'difficult' topics, such as genocide and Holocaust, or human rights themes. The *International Slavery Museum in Liverpool*, for example, is challenging traditional representation practices concerning slavery, forced labour, trafficking or deportation, by including often marginalised parts of history or current events, as well as calling into question prevailing or existing attitudes and actions related to these legacies; this shift is meant to turn the museum into an 'enabler', providing audiences with the tools required to deal with issues that affect them personally or the communities in which they live, offering pathways of engagement with complex subjects, and triggering political and social debate among the population.

Another emerging aspect in the development of new museum models concerns the redefinition of their relationships with society at large and, in particular, with source communities. This task, which relates to the ability of museums to establish mutual connections with the people and to stand towards them as a relevant reference point, today depends on discovering 'how to recognize, display, and interpret the contemporary complexities of identities, cultures and histories in ways that are intelligible, engaging, and resonant with contemporary museum audiences' (Mason, 2013, p.42). This issue is now especially relevant in the European context, where 'museum audiences may

themselves become increasingly internally heterogeneous, differentiated and, in some cases, cosmopolitan in terms of their values, experiences, and expectations precisely because of the same pressure arising from current forms of globalization and postnationalism' (ibid.). Several authors have already widely investigated and discussed this matter by means of historical, critical and analytical speculations, and by drawing attention to it as the basis of the experimentation and consolidation of new museum forms and practices, and actually as a midpoint in the future of museums. The relevance of this issue is highlighted in this volume by an extensive and transversal presence within the reported experiences where the intention of placing people at the core of the mission of the renovated or newly realised museums appears indeed as a clear *leitmotiv*, although this task is being implemented in different ways.

This trend reflects, for example, the spread of practices aimed at fostering the direct involvement of the community in museum activities, and particularly in those which develop outside the museum walls. The broadly diffused experimentation of outreach programmes, which encompass a wide array of participatory and community-based projects (travelling temporary exhibitions, public workshops and debates, etc.), are aimed at incentivising the active involvement of a larger and more differentiated audience in the fruition, production and sharing of the contents. These practices are illustrated in this publication by the paradigmatic example of the *Frankfurt Historisches Museum*, which, while seeing through the construction of the new building, is operating through a 'Mobile City Lab' producing and promoting an innovative exhibition series in cooperation with various groups: these activities allow the museum's message to be conveyed in unusual venues (e.g. a harbour, an open-air swimming pool); to provide the local society with a centre for information, reflection and discussion; to collect opinions, testimonies and documents (e.g. photos, postcards, newspaper articles and everyday items) from residents and passers-by; and thus to contribute to fostering in-depth investigations and gathering different perspectives on various complex urban themes, which will later coalesce in the new permanent exhibitions documenting the present-day city (Gerchow, 2013). In general, participative practices are playing an increasingly crucial part in developing the role of museums: by enabling the visitors as co-producers and co-curators within the planning, finalising and realisation of museum projects and contents; these initiatives entrench the museum more strongly in municipal society, and turn it into a forum promoting far-reaching and mutual understanding of local traditions and various cultures - and thus transform an institution that is still often perceived as hermetic and hegemonic into a space for dialogue and exchange. In fact, a fundamental facet of the new museum model, growing out of the shift in its self-conception and objectives, is that it is no longer so much a place 'about something' as a place 'for someone', as asserted by Angela Jannelli and Sonja Thiel.

The potentialities of these practices are also being broadly investigated and experimented by implementing the development of the guiding principle of participation in a variety of areas, including the programming of activities and the selection of topics; the setting

or testing of knowledge-generating processes and tools (e.g. the *Museum of Cultural History at University of Oslo* is furthering audience-interaction to use people's responses and reactions to challenge conventional academic reasoning and engender new ideas and research questions). The production of contents (e.g., as illustrated by the experience of the *Pigorini Museum*, new forms of collaboration in the construction of updated narratives or in the reinterpretation of the subjective values of the collected objects can promote a new vision of the museum's significance); the setting up of temporary exhibitions (e.g., as widely experimented with by the *Frankfurt Historisches Museum* or the *Écomusée du Val de Bièvre*, which promotes exhibitions illustrating the outcomes of participative activities, as well as exhibitions curated by the people); and eventually the renovation of permanent exhibitions.

Practices aimed at repositioning the visitor in the museum, from the role of 'consumer' to that of 'co-producer', 'actor' or even 'author' (Rivière, 1989, pp.164-165), seem to be particularly focused on the engagement with people from different cultural backgrounds, and especially with those who may have been previously excluded in the development of shared, debated and concerted decision-making processes, and those who don't feel they are represented or 'allowed' to speak in a museum, in the belief that establishing new forms of cooperation with community members from a wide range of social and cultural groups supports the museums in overcoming their perception as cultural institutions of 'established' society, and in reaching the many new and different inhabitants of the present society.

These efforts mostly cohere in the growing emphasis on the role of migrants and migration issues in contemporary museums. This trend is being extensively confirmed by the observation of the ongoing development of European museums - and is widely illustrated in the present volume, where the reference to this topic recurs transversally. The rising relevance of this issue can be seen in the exponential growth of the number of migration museums in Europe in the last decade (Baur, 2009; 2010; Cimoli, 2013), and especially in the evolution of their original forms: from local institutions mainly focused on small-scale mobility phenomena and, in particular, on the representation of the historical emigration from the specific place or country, they have expanded their perspectives and mission by gradually integrating the history of immigration, including the narration of contemporary migration phenomena, contextualising local issues within a global framework, and investigating their effects on different societal and cultural aspects, in the past as well as today. This progression is clearly illustrated here by the upgrade of the *Deutsche Auswandererhaus Bremerhaven* - whose passage from German Emigration Center to a migration museum (ensuing from the integration of immigration history in its narrative) is documented through an insight into the implementation of the new exhibition, and into the difficulties in establishing the relationship between the two chapters of the museum narrative - and by the evolution of the *Galata Museo del Mare* - which widened its original structure as maritime museum by complementing its permanent exhibition with the new Gallery 'MeM - Memory and Migrations',

exemplifying and stressing the potential role of museums in illustrating the themes related to connection and cross-fertilisation processes among different cultures, populations and generations, in broadening the common understanding of migration, illustrating the historical and present inter- and transcultural exchanges, and raising awareness of an inclusive identity.
Looking at most of the experiences reported in this publication, it is possible to register an attempt - which is yet desirable and should be encouraged - to broaden and deepen the common understanding of 'migration' by acknowledging migration, cultural diversity and intercultural encounters not as a prerogative for a 'type of museum' (i.e. migration museums) but rather as a 'topic for museums' - as Cathy Ross, curator at the Museum of London, points out in her essay. In fact, the matters related to the mobility of people and cultures are entering into the scientific programmes of an ever widening range of institutions, even though their main focus may lie on different specific fields (e.g. city museums, national and regional history museums, ethnographic museums, art museums). According to their particular tasks and target audiences, these other institutions are integrating migration topics into their representation and narration practices, by acknowledging the contribution of migrants in the social, economic and cultural development of a place (i.e. a neighbourhood, a city, a region or a Nation) and their role in shaping (and reshaping) communities and cultures in the past as well as today (Ferrara, 2012; Innocenti, 2012; Basso Peressut, Lanz and Postiglione 2013; Gourievidis, 2014, Whitehead et al., 2012; Whitehead et al., 2014).

The overview provided by this book demonstrates an experimental ferment extensively developing within contemporary European museums, and already progressing in many institutions regardless of their scale - including local, regional and national institutions, without exception - or main thematic focus - encompassing history museums, ethnographic museums, city museums, natural history museums, etc. While their heterogeneity highlights the richness of the practices that are being experimented with, at the same time it leads to a reflection on the remarkable differences existing in the understanding and evolution of museum practices, their role and mission across Europe. On the one hand, as Luca Basso Peressut points out in the concluding essay, 'we must not forget that there exists a hiatus between the dynamics of theoretical reflection and what can actually be done: a hiatus that has to do with the times and ways in which things are actualised, and with possibilities, desires, available resources, and the capacity to give shape to proposals.' On the other hand, these differences are engendered from the particular founding statute, structure, focus, or socio-cultural and political context of each museum, as well as from the particular museological and museographical traditions and models from which it originated, and the specific approaches and choices of its director and curators. However, this gap is also entailed by difficulties in sharing ideas, theories and the outcomes of innovative practices beyond the specific contexts, due to language barriers, as well as to significant differences in availability and access to funds,

mobility programmes, training and refresher courses, which hinder cultural operators from remaining constantly updated about the latest debates, insights, and experiments.

It is nowadays particularly important and even culturally strategic for a united Europe to stimulate and support opportunities for the directors and curators of museums to meet, share and exchange ideas; to nurture the cooperation between museums and universities by promoting transnational cooperative projects, and by facilitating the participation of museums and other cultural institutions in research projects; to devote additional funds to experimental projects, exhibitions and actions, developed at both large and local scale, whenever they prove to be highly innovative, thought-provoking and aimed at challenging the traditional approach of the museum itself. The objective of this publication is the culmination of a series of events promoted by the MeLa Project since 2011, with the same aim. Considering the issues emerging from a contemporary social configuration, deeply transmuted by the multicultural reconfiguration of the composition of communities - and by the related cross-fertilisation, complexification and layerisation of cultures, ideas, habits, values and identities, which represent the most characteristic (and also potentially fragile and thorny) features of contemporary society - museums can promote familiarisation with 'the other', explode myths, and induce a change in stereotyped perceptions and attitudes, and they can set the framework for a democratic development of a transcultural European identity.

[1] Several nationally and internationally funded research projects, run by academics, networks of museums and other cultural institutions, have been focusing recently on the role of museums in fostering intercultural dialogue, mutual understanding and acceptance of differences. Examples include, but are not limited to: Born in Europe (2000-2005), a five-year project funded by the European Commission under the Culture 2000 programme, which focused on issues of migration representation, identity and citizenship in contemporary Europe, and resulted in the project for an exhibition series (Ipsen and Olesen, 2003; Gößwald, 2007); Map for ID: Museums as places for intercultural dialogue (2007-2009), a project supported by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union, coordinated by the Istituto per i Beni Artistici Culturali e Naturali della Regione Emilia Romagna, with the collaboration of several cultural institutions, which aimed to develop the potential and practice of museums as places for intercultural dialogue, and to promote a more active engagement with the communities they serve (Bodo et al., 2009; www.amitie.it/mapforid/index1.htm); Migration in Museums: Narratives of Diversity in Europe (2007), a research programme conducted by the Network Migration in Europe in cooperation with ICOM Europe and the Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines (Luxemburg), financed by the Capital City Culture Fund (Hauptstadtkulturfonds) with the support of the European Union (Ohliger, 2009; www.network-migration.org/pr_migration_museum_eng.php); and two projects funded by the EU under the Seventh Framework programme: Eunamus - European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen (2010-2013), and MeLa - European Museums in an Age of Migrations (2011-2015) which involved several leading European universities and research centres. Eunamus explored the creation and power of European national museums, focusing on understanding the conditions for using the past in negotiations that recreate citizenship, and on the understanding of layers of territorial belonging (Knell et al., 2011; www.ep.liu.se/eunamus). MeLa, adopting the notion of 'migration' as a paradigm of the contemporary global and multicultural world, was conceived to reflect on the evolution of museums' role in the twenty-first century Europe, and to identify innovative museum practices that respond to the challenges posed by accelerated mobility, the fluid circulation of information, cultures, and ideas, and the political, economic and cultural creation and consolidation of the European Union (Basso Peressut and Pozzi, 2012; www.mela-project.eu).

[2] Most of these museums have been investigated within the preliminary survey of the MeLa Project. The resulting analyses are reported by the publications included in the MeLa* Book Series, and in particular in the volume European Museums in the 21st Century: Setting the Framework (Basso Peressut, Lanz and Postiglione, 2013).

[3] Temporary exhibitions offer a number of benefits. Beside their potential to encourage return visits, thus also fostering the building of enduring relationships with the public, their temporary dimension provides the possibility of a higher level of experimentation in the topics they tackle, since they 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, p.338). They may host the investigation of special, controversial or 'difficult' topics, as well as ways of proposing or testing different interpretations, points of view or striking propositions. At the same time, temporary exhibitions allow one to experiment with different curatorial approaches to the presentation of these topics, and to explore innovative ways to display them: they are flexible, allow the development of new communication and exhibition strategies which can inject new life in the traditional museum practices, and their relatively short duration and flexibility can contribute to avoiding the risk of the rapid obsolescence of the museum's messages and contents, in particular when these are strongly related to contemporary (and sometimes difficult) issues.

[4] The Galleries of Modern London, opened in 2010, depict the story of London from 1666 to the present. Their overall narrative aims at illustrating London's contemporary and distinctive features, which are described as being the consequence of the encounter of different cultures resulting from the migration of people to and within London throughout history as well as today, thus presenting cultural diversity as part of the city's identity and ultimately promoting, with clear political implications, a positive view of migrants and migration (Ross, 2013; Lanz, 2014).

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Passage. The German Emigration Center as Immigration Museum: Some Reflections on the New Permanent Exhibition

CHRISTOPH BONGERT, German Emigration Center, Bremerhaven, Germany

The museological and museographical strategies leading the recent expansion of the German Emigration Center are presented here through the exploration of the 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 illustrates the process that guided this passage, drawing on the necessity to build homogeneity and connections between the two sections, but also to overcome some founding elements so as to activate the role of visitors and eventually raise political awareness.

In 2012, only seven years after its opening, the German Emigration Center Bremerhaven expanded its permanent exhibition significantly. While the initial permanent exhibition shows the history of the emigration from Bremerhaven to the New World between 1830 and 1974, the newly added wing presents the history of the immigration to Germany over the last three centuries.

Following I would like to highlight some considerations that led to the current approach of the new wing. For that reason I will take a short walk through the original permanent exhibition (see the first paragraph of 'The Original Permanent Exhibition')

Fig. 1. The two buildings housing the German Emigration Center designed by Andreas Heller Architects and Designers, inaugurated in 2005. © German Emigration Center Bremerhaven. Photo by Kay Riechers.

and briefly describe the museological concept behind it (see the second paragraph of 'The Original Permanent Exhibition'). Then I shall discuss why this concept could not be considered equally adequate to serve in an exhibition about immigration history (to Germany), and develop some demands for an adequate concept (see the 'Discussion: Should an Exhibition of Immigration Be Designed Similarly?'). Finally, I will take a stroll through the new permanent exhibition in its present form (see the first part of 'The New Permanent Exhibition'), demonstrate its museological concept (see the second part of 'The New Permanent Exhibition'), and, in conclusion, reflect how it fulfils these demands (see the 'Conclusion').

The Original Permanent Exhibition

At the beginning of the tour, visitors receive the so-called 'Boarding Pass', which includes one of eighteen authentic biographies of German emigrants. The visitors will accompany 'their' emigrant, insofar as they access all the biographical information at several interactive media stations throughout the exhibition. The exhibition presents itself as a voyage from the wharf at Bremerhaven's New Harbour to the United States of America. Reaching the Quay, the visitors are surrounded by several emigrants from different times, waiting to board the steamship in front of them. Before entering the gangway, visitors pass the 'Gallery of the 7 Million', which collects life stories from some of the 7.2 million emigrants from Bremerhaven, but also expands on the structural reasons to emigrate from Germany in the 19th and 20th century. The voyage continues by embarking the ship. The visitors experience the Atlantic crossing on board of three different types of ships: the sailing vessel 'Bremen' from 1854, the steamship 'Lahn' from 1887 and the ocean liner 'Columbus' from 1923. Finally, they arrive at Ellis Island, and turn from being merely emigrants to immigrants to the USA. Here, they learn about the conditions of immigration to the USA around 1900.

At this point, we should interrupt our tour to examine the museological concept of the original exhibition. Firstly, there is an obvious 'grand' *narrative*: that of the voyage. Please note that the narrative is not a chronologically consistent one: visitors start on the wharf around 1890, travel through different times before and after, and eventually arrive at Ellis Island in 1907. Secondly, this narrative is structured by a *dramaturgy* according to the components of a voyage: the parting, the crossing and the arrival. On the one hand, this dramaturgy serves to facilitate the visitors' empathy with 'their' emigrant, but on the other hand, it also integrates sites of reflection that disturb the mere *Einfühlung*. The 'Gallery of the 7 Million', for instance, functions as such a site of reflection. One could put it as follows: the dramaturgy is dialectical in combining Lessing's *Hamburg Dramaturgy* and Brecht's Epic Theatre. Thirdly, the narrative is visualised by means of detailed reconstruction of historical places and *mis-en-scène* with costumed mannequins, both meant to create an illusionistic atmosphere of the historical alienness.

These three elements are based on the conviction that you cannot exhibit the topic 'emigration' by putting objects into glass cabinets, because what is essential to the phenomenon is not its material, but its immaterial aspects: the decision to leave, the expectations, the hopes and sorrows, the pains of parting, the good prospects and so on. By going through these feelings the visitors should recognise something familiar in the alienness they experience. That leads to the fourth and final point: the visitors are treated as passive beings, as ones who are taken along, who follow the steps of 'their' emigrant, whose relicts they find.

Should an Exhibition of Immigration Be Designed Similarly?

Now it is possible to discuss this museological concept with regard to an exhibition of immigration history. During the planning of the new permanent exhibition, two aspects had to be considered: while on the one hand it was impossible to base the immigration section of the German Emigration Center on an entirely new museological concept, it was on the other hand necessary to overcome at least *some* of its founding elements. More precisely, the two sections of the permanent exhibition had to have something in common to maintain the museum's homogeneity. It was decided that the immigration section should resort to the reconstruction of historical places as the emigration section does. This decision immediately raised a problem: the emigration section could work with the narrative of a voyage, because there is a beginning and an end connected with the place in which the museum is situated. Bremerhaven serves as the starting point (which most of the biographies have in common) and the New World - be it the USA, Argentina or Brazil - functions as arrival point. But regarding immigration to Germany, there is, neither in the region nor throughout Germany, a historical or mythological arrival point that could serve as a place to present immigration history. Moreover, there is obviously no starting point of such a narrative, for there have been more than one group of immigrants to Germany over the past centuries. The conclusion had to be to forego a 'grand' narrative in order to preserve historical reconstruction.

Furthermore, against the background of the recent and ongoing political discussions in Germany about immigration, it seemed highly inadequate to didactically treat the visitors as passive creatures. Instead, they should be treated as active contemporaries with political awareness: the visitors are not, to put it in a formula, to recognise (*wieder-erkennen*) something familiar in the alienness, but to acknowledge (*an-erkennen*) the alienness in the apparent familiar. In addition, since the visitors are active, they should recognise themselves as such, recognise themselves as precisely the ones who recognise by walking through the exhibition, as the ones who identify the museal objects and differentiate them from other kinds of objects. The history of immigration to Germany is not only a distant past one can and - especially in Germany - must learn about, but it also has an impact on the very present one has to learn about. The visitors should recognise themselves and their own life stories as a small part of the greater history of

Fig. 2. Full-scale reconstruction of the New York Grand Central Terminal. © German Emigration Center Bremerhaven. Photo by Ilka Seer.

immigration. The conclusion had to be to forego both a dramaturgy and a *mise-en-scène* with costumed mannequins, as well.

To sum this up, there were at least three demands for an adequate exhibition of immigration to Germany: firstly, a way - both metaphorically and literally - must be found to connect the emigration and the immigration section of the permanent exhibition; secondly, a time and a place must be identified where different types of immigrants over the past centuries could be presented; thirdly, a mode must be developed to change passive visitors into active ones.

The New Permanent Exhibition

In order to take a look at the actual new permanent exhibition, I should mention that two rooms were added to the original permanent exhibition simultaneously. After arriving at Ellis Island, the visitors now reach the so-called 'Office of the New World'. Here they can see the picture of the geographical and political territory that the immigrant had in mind before and while travelling to the 'New World'. Then they arrive at New York's Grand Central Terminal set in the year 1921, where they learn about how 'their' emigrants made it in the New World, and about the history of German immigration to the USA since 1683.

After that, visitors pass a narrow bridge to reach the new wing, welcomed by a huge German flag and the fourth movement of Schubert's String Quintet in C major.

In doing so they approach a kiosk, offering newspapers, magazines and postcards, ice cream, drinks and cigarettes. All that should look familiar to them – a part of daily life for most Germans – but nevertheless they will be disturbed. Disturbed, because the goods that are offered and the whole design of the kiosk itself look outdated. To be more precise: as the newspapers show, the visitors find the date to be November 24, 1973. The headlines tell them that this was the day of the so called 'recruitment stop', the act by which the German government ended the recruitment of foreign labourers. From then on, with only a few exceptions, no foreign workers were allowed to immigrate to the Federal Republic. At the kiosk, a booklet containing the life story of one of 14 immigrants is handed over to the visitors. Thus provided, they turn around the corner, and enter a shopping mall with several shops: an ice-cream parlour, a hairdresser, a second-hand bookshop, a travel agency, a camera shop and a department store. While strolling along they take a look at what is displayed in the shop windows: they find, as expected, relevant merchandise, but also, unexpectedly, memorabilia of immigrant families next to it. For example, the department store displays a commercially available drinking bottle – and the worn and battered drinking bottle of an immigrant to the Ruhr Area of the 1950s.
On the ground floor, the visitors enter a local council office, where they get both some general information about immigration to Germany between 1685 and today, as well as specific summaries of current debates on the subject. Finally, there is the possibility to visit the 'Roxy' cinema. From the cinema – audible throughout the shopping mall – some popular soundtracks from movies of the late 1960s and early 1970s reverberate.

Once again we should pause and analyse the museological concept of this new permanent exhibition. I want to point out three principles. Firstly, the visitors should be able to compare the German immigration to the USA with the immigration to Germany. By following 'their' emigrant through the old permanent exhibition, they turn (at Ellis Island) into immigrants to the USA and face (in the new part of the old exhibition) the problems of 'integration'. And exactly because of accompanying some German immigrant to the USA, the visitors are able to take over the perspective of some foreign immigrant to Germany in the new permanent exhibition. This could be called the *'Principle of Analogy'.*

Secondly, the visitors do not find the three-hundred-year history of several groups of immigrants to Germany presented as a compact uni-perspectival narrative of the history of immigration to Germany. Instead, they are confronted with the multi-perspectival meeting of some everyday objects and fragmentary narrations which go with them. One might phrase this as the end of the 'master' or 'grand narrative' for the benefit of the fragmentary narrations of individual immigrants themselves. It is the shopping mall that serves as the place where these objects and narrations can be assembled. To reflect on what happens to the collected objects of a museum when placed, within the museum,

Fig. 3. The newspaper kiosk at the beginning of the exhibition dedicated to immigration. © German Emigration Center Bremerhaven. Photo by Kay Riechers.

Fig. 4. The reconstructed shopping mall located in the immigration wing. © German Emigration Center Bremerhaven. Photo by Kay Riechers.

in a shop-window, might be worth a whole philosophical essay. However, while the shopping mall as the classical locus of the denial of historicity somehow paradoxically returns to basic commodities their historical, biographical *aura*, the dating of the setting to 1973 functions as the very moment, the *Augenblick*, which unites all the disparate, non-identical life stories to the dialectical image of 'immigration to Germany'. This could be put thus: by means of the alienation of the familiar, the visitors are able to see how and to which extend the alienness has already become familiar. That's why this component of the museological concept could be named the '*Principle of Alienation*' (*Verfremdung*).

Thirdly and lastly, these two principles require the visitors to be active ones. They would not even grasp the museal nature of the exhibited objects, if they did not ask questions like 'Why is this object presented to me here and now?', 'What does it tell me?', 'Why should I listen to what it might tell me?', 'What am I doing here while listening to what these objects tell me?' and so on. They are no longer following the traces of 'their' migrant, but searching for them - in the need to identify ordinary life's signs of usage (as for example on the 1950s water bottle) as traces of an immigration (hi)story. Instead of being taken along an extraordinary voyage, they stroll around in an ordinary shopping mall. At the same time, instead of finding some anonymous mass-produced articles designed to satisfy their needs, they search for priceless commodities on which an individual story has left its marks. For that reason the third museological principle could be called the '*Principle of Activation*'.

Conclusion

How does the new permanent exhibition along with its three museological principles fulfil the raised demands? How did the German Emigration Center also become a museum of immigration? Firstly, the way to connect the emigration and the immigration section of the permanent exhibition is to analogise the emigration to the New World with the immigration to Germany. Secondly, the place and the time to assemble the different groups of immigrants is the historical reconstruction of the apparently unhistorical every-day-life shopping mall, serving to alienate the displayed familiar commodities. And thirdly, the mode to change passive visitors to active ones is to let them search for the museal objects themselves and their connection with the topic of immigration.
I would like to conclude with the play on words in the title of this essay: the *passage* from an emigration museum to a museum that comprises both emigration and immigration was enabled via the *Passage*, which in German, as in French, means 'shopping mall'.

Building the Migrant Memory

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By introducing the social and political context which grounded the construction of the MeM - Memory and Migration Gallery at Galata Museo del Mare, Pierangelo Campodonico illustrates the strategies implemented to enhance the museum's role in promoting the conservation of the memory of the national historical emigration, in raising awareness on contemporary immigration phenomena, and thus in tackling stereotypes and prejudices, and fostering social cohesion and acceptance of the increasing cultural diversity which characterises Italian society.

This essay is intended to share some critical reflections on the mission of the Galata Museo del Mare (Galata Sea Museum), and in particular of its new gallery, MeM - Memoria e Migrazioni (Memory and Migration). In Italy MeM is the first, and currently the only, permanent exhibition about 'migration'. It is important to emphasise that its focus is not 'emigration' (in Italy there are already many regional museums concerned with emigration) but rather 'migration'.

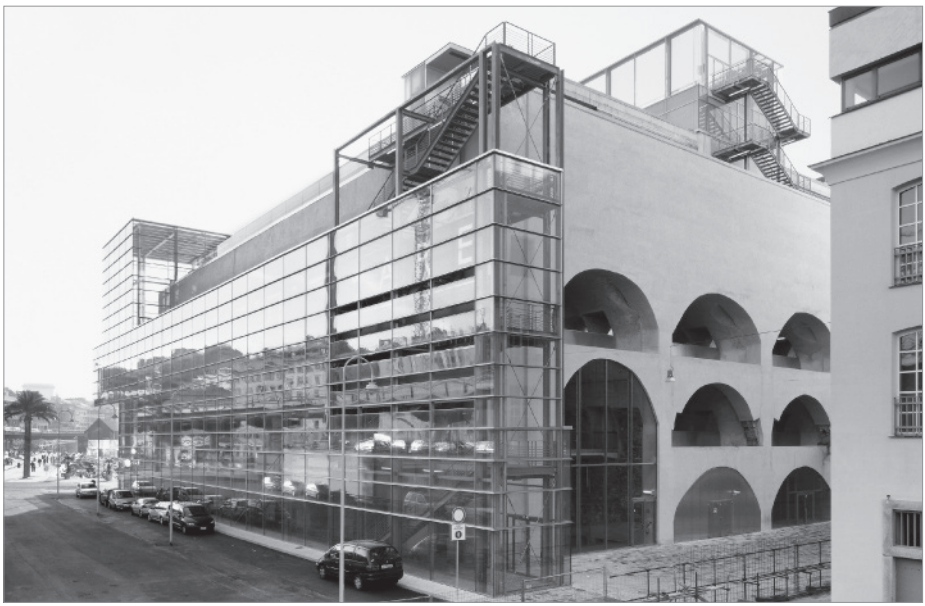

Fig. 1. The renovated museum building designed by Guillermo Vázquez Consuegra, 2004. Courtesy of the Estudio Vázquez Consuegra. Photo by Duccio Malagamba.

Since ancient times, due to its geographical position in the Mediterranean, Italy has been a 'land of passage' where populations with different languages and cultural backgrounds have come and gone, leading to a multifaceted civilisation. However, the role of migration in the last two centuries is a little known period of Italian history.

Following National Unity in 1861, Italy became one of Europe's largest workforce reservoirs. Between 1861 and 1971, about twenty-nine million men, women, and children – including the elderly – left Italy; over fifteen million people never returned. However, for other million people, emigration was a temporary situation, a moment in their lives, which often contributed to the urbanisation of large metropolitan areas in Italy.
Emigration has created another Italy abroad, indeed 'more than one Italy' in the meaningful definition of Maddalena Tirabassi, a leading expert on migration in our country. 'More than one Italy' since they are different declinations of Italy, in Argentina, the United States, Brazil or Australia – with different characters conditioned by people's roots, i.e. Piedmontese, Tuscan, Venetian or Lucan roots. Sometimes these regional roots have not been capable of preserving the language or the identity of these people, which have faded and got lost in the melting-pot of new nations; people know that they descend from immigrants, but do not know exactly which country, city, or region they come from. Italian migrants who have lost their migrant identity.
Some Italian historians such as Ercole Sori, Emilio Franzina, etc., analysed the 'Great Migration' that took place during the period from the Unification to the First World War. It was certainly the most severe and epoch-making time: a mass exodus of biblical proportions which caused the depopulation of mountain regions and the thinning-out of the overcrowded countryside. This phase was followed by the problematic migrations of the period between the two World Wars – influenced by Fascism, economic crisis, restrictions imposed by the hosting countries – followed by 'modern' migrations in various directions, especially towards European countries such as Belgium, Germany, France, and Switzerland.
Then, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, something unexpected happened. Italian emigration abroad was still strong, especially from the South (marked by unemployment and the failure of industrialisation policies), mainly to European countries where Italian emigrants were mostly employed in mines, factories and later in catering and other services. During this period, some observers (journalists, sociologists, clerics) noticed a change: the arrival, at first sparse, then more consistent, of foreign workers – Tunisian fishermen, North African farm labourers, African hawkers, Indian and Pakistani shopkeepers, Chinese restaurant-owners and artisans.
This silent movement became directly visible to all in 1973, when one of the main demographic indicators, the net migration rate, changed. For almost a century – with the exception of the war period – the balance had been negative; it suddenly turned positive and remained that way until recently. Suddenly, without any preparation, a country that was a symbol of emigration found itself transformed into 'a land of immigration'.

At the same time the migratory movement to other countries slowed down, becoming an emigration of professionals, technicians, students (the 'Erasmus' generation), and part of the wider globalisation phenomenon.
In Italy people had difficulties in understanding the change. The working classes began to perceive foreigners as a threat and as competitors. The settlement of little groups, and later of families, in the suburbs raised new problems of integration that replaced similar ones related to when people from Southern Italy had moved to northern regions during the 1960s and 1970s. Northern Italians had become 'accustomed' to these new presences from other regions, however, now they had to face new immigrants: Africans, Latin Americans or East Europeans. This caused reaction and outbursts, sometimes of racist nature, often channelled into forms of xenophobic political participation, of which the most distinct example is the Lega Nord (Northern League) of Umberto Bossi. This political leader of the Right-wing, in coalition with Silvio Berlusconi, promoted and established one of the strictest and most questionable migration laws (the Bossi-Fini law), still on the statute books and unlikely to be reformed soon.
Despite the predominance of the Right-wing party in Italy in recent years, the migration process has not stopped, bound as it is to the structure of the Italian labour market that continues to ask for low-cost and low-skilled positions, especially related to agriculture, industry, and services. Migration in Italy, as elsewhere, is related to jobs. Today, foreign residents make up about 7.5 of the population, aligned with the European average percentage. However, if we analyse the Italian labour market, we find out that employed foreigners are about 14 percent of the total. And most importantly, they hold jobs no one else wants, those that in Italy are called 'physically demanding jobs': foundry work, cleaning services, taking care of the elderly and of sick people.
This trend, which increased in the 1990s, has been deteriorating since 2008 due to the social and economic crisis. Since foreigners occupy more precarious positions, they were among the first to be affected by the crisis: many have permanently lost their jobs and are no longer able to get back into the production process. This has been the case especially for individual workers, mostly males, who did not have a family safety net. Today, for the first time in years, the immigrant flow is shrinking and we see an increasing number of immigrants returning to their country of origin, as well as relocating to other countries which offer better opportunities.

In only a few decades, Italians have started experiencing memory loss and losing their collective identity. In the 1960s, people from both northern and southern Italy knew that traditionally, they were part of a 'poor' population, i.e. that they descended from, or were still related to, emigrants. Each family boasted an 'uncle in America' and, more or less unconsciously, lived in the myth of someone suddenly returning home or of a legacy that would change their life. Many people, in that period, resorted to 'internal migration', i.e. moving from the rural south of Italy to the factories of the northern regions.
During the following years - after the 'economic boom' of the 1960s - the situation in

Italy, despite all difficulties, changed. Many cultural and economic gaps between Italy and other European countries were filled. However, this suddenly acquired 'well-being' caused amnesia, a deletion of 'historical memory'. For example, I'm thinking about the Veneto region, which used to be a land of emigration until after the Second World War, and now has become, in a few decades - thanks to a very large number of small and medium-sized companies - a vibrant and profitable industrial district known as 'the North-East'. This area has attracted a large migrant workforce while, at the same time, promoting harassing bureaucratic practices and anti-integration policies, and becoming an outpost of the Lega Nord.

Based on these considerations, the first task of our Museum is to 'remember' the history of Italy's migration and promote, through a network of regional museums, a 'local' memory of migration. We are a nation of 'migrants', the children and grandchildren of migrants. This is the first message.
Our second task is to highlight that the history of Italian migration is, as all stories of migration, marked by successful stories as well as by painful events, prejudice, racism and rejection. At the same time, we acknowledged that the history of Italian emigration also includes such stories as that of Francesco Castiglia, better known as Frank Costello, and other thieves, crooks and, sometimes, murderers.
However, the Museum cannot simply look at the past. I would like to say that it is significant that the exhibition on migration opened in 2008 was publicly acclaimed. This public approval pushed us to focus on migration today, starting with the 'illegal' ones',

Fig. 2. Entrance to the MeM - Memory and Migration Gallery. © Galata Museo del Mare.

migrants crossing the Mediterranean and for whom the Sicilian island of Lampedusa represent the most dramatic and disturbing symbol.
Migration in Lampedusa is a dramatic and striking phenomenon. Therefore, it is no surprise so that it has become the target of Right-wing governments that do not hesitate to proclaim restrictive immigration policies while the European Court of Justice has ruled against Italy that jailing migrants contradicts a EU directive.
On this issue, in order to obtain two boats coming from Lampedusa we wanted to include in our Collection, we launched a battle also including the Ministry of Internal Affairs. When a boat that has been used to transport illegal immigrants from the coast of northern Africa, it is confiscated by Italian police, and then destroyed.
We wanted the boats to be included in the Museum as symbols that preserve and carry on the memory of the historical period that began in the 1990s and is still far from being over. Tens of thousands of people have died only in the Strait of Sicily; about 2,000 in 2011, the year of the Arab Spring.
Provocatively, we can ask: Is Lampedusa the Italian Ellis Island? Certainly, just like the small island off the coast of New York, it deserves to be known as the Island of Tears. However, there is another aspect to be considered: Ellis Island was able to 'regulate' acceptable and controlled migration, while Lampedusa is the symbol of the impotence of Italy and Europe[1] to control migration flows and to promote inclusion policies.

I would like to draw some conclusions from all this.
Each of us refers to a different national context and interacts with his/her own history. These different histories do, however, have a common denominator: the migrant - no matter if Irish, Italian, Polish, North African or Latin American - lays the basis for the concept of Europe, which is founded on the concept of the free movement of people and goods. Europe has found redemption from the madness of nationalism, thanks to its policies on migration. Not many decades ago, France welcomed and protected anti-fascist political migration which subsequently proved to be important both for France and for the liberation of Italy.
We can affirm that to be a migrant is to be a true European, or at least as European as a German, a French, a Brit, or an Italian. So what can we and must we do?
The cohesion policies of the European Union cannot ignore the presence of migrants and, indeed, they must focus on establishing standards for their acceptance, as well as for social security, health, and education. Many nations already do so while others, such as Italy, are less advanced. But this is not enough. Let me repeat: to ensure education, social assistance and labour rights to migrants is not enough. It is necessary to recognise and accept the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity - not only of migrants but of the children and grandchildren of migrants - and, at the same time, have the farsightedness to define a common space.
If I had been born in Lima or Marrakech, I would be able to relate to the history of the region where I live, be it Liguria or Pas de Calais, only through a cultural operation

that allow to acknowledge my being 'born elsewhere'. But, although I was 'born elsewhere', I grew up here in Europe, in a family of migrant workers, in a class with other migrants. My father and mother had several jobs and my brother earned his bachelor's degree with a lot of sacrifices. We moved from house to house but, today, we are happy to live where we live.
This story is my story, whether I am a 'new Italian', 'new French' or 'new European'. If we do not recognise the value of this story, valorise it, and acknowledge its innate fragility (all migration stories are fragile, because they are essentially oral, based on words, on memory) we will simply lose it.
Therefore, we believe that today is important to collect stories of migration, and build a 'migrant memory' aimed at building social cohesion and a supranational European and multicultural identity. This memory develops as the continuation of old memories (i.e. the migrations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) and collects them while specifying their purpose, their strong points as well as dark sides.
The MeM Gallery at the Galata Museo del Mare aims at preserving these stories which constitute a collective memory; a fragile memory, because it's migrant.

The Galata Museo del Mare and the MeM Gallery: Technological Approach and Apparatus

In recent years, Galata Museo del Mare has established a definite preference for multimedia and interactive tools, which present content to the public in an active way through an 'immersive' experience. This approach is based on the concepts of 'know through doing' and 'recognise by touching', and on creating synergy with artwork and gallery environments. In this way, academic and social groups, from school children to adults, parents, and pensioners, will dynamically relate to the immersive visitor experience. The visitor shouldn't remain impartial or neutral, as we want him/her to go from his/her personal world to another era. Interactive tools enable content to be offered to visitors who have different levels of understanding.
To provide the visitor each time with a new and engaging experience, the Galata Museo del Mare has decided to progressively renew its permanent installations, by employing the best and most recent technological devices. Selected technology must be intuitive and easy to use, for people of all ages who are more or less accustomed to technological tools. Devices must also be sturdy, since they need to last long and be able to include new content for future visits.
Currently are available HD and 3D video content - both with glasses and autostereoscopic - integrated and interactive new-media software content, touch and multitouch screen technology, augmented reality, gaming simulation, hologram technology, RFID (Radio Frequency IDentification), voice or movement activated features, and QR (Quick Response) code connections.[2]
The MeM - Memory and Migration Gallery, opened in November 2011, tells the

Fig. 3. Full-scale reconstruction of the immigrants accommodation aboard an ocean liner in the emigration exhibition. Photo by Francesca Lanz, May 2012.

history of emigration from, and immigration to, Italy by presenting real stories using over forty multimedia installations. The exhibition begins with Emigration (the past), where visitors experience a voyage departing from Genoa on a transatlantic liner. Migrants sailing to Ellis Island (New York), Brazil, or Argentina provide first-hand testimonies, pieces of writing and photos. Each visitor receives a personal passport at the beginning of the voyage, which is then used at each interactive stage of the journey. The results of tests, plus the answers given at an immigration interview, will affect the outcome. Visitors are thus provided with the opportunity to reflect on the experiences of migrants. The area dedicated to immigration today shows the stories and the travels of migrants to Italy. Other multimedia installations offer some examples of multicultural society in workplaces and at school, as well as cooking recipes from the five continents.

All the installations were conceived to increase visitors engagement and interaction with migration issues.

As a museum of migrant memory, we think it is necessary to play our role as researchers and collectors of memory, to establish common work methods, to circulate and promote existing ones and, above all, require the European Union to reflect on the theme of migration in contemporary Europe, and on its impact on social cohesion.

Fig. 4. A boat donated to the museum by the Municipality of Lampedusa and displayed in the exhibition dedicated to contemporary immigration phenomena. © Archivio Galata Museo del Mare. Photo by Merlofotografie. Courtesy of Costa Edutainment.

[1] The complex debate currently going on about such actions as MARENOSTRUM and FRONTEX is representative of this situation.

[2] Multimedia exhibits in the MeM Gallery were realised by ETT s.p.a., an ICT company based in Genoa which has been cooperating with the Galata Museo del Mare since 2010, contributing to the creation of an immersive visitor experience, and using innovative technologies (high-resolution monitors, interactive touch-screen interfaces, 3D reconstructions, proximity sensors, gaming simulations, augmented reality and interactive projections with on-screen actors).

The Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration and Civil Society: The Example of a Collection Under Construction

HÉLÈNE DU MAZAUBRUN, RAMZI TADROS, Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, Paris, France. Interview by MARIE POINSOT

By discussing the conception and implementation of the Galerie des Dons, and the related collaboration with the communities and institutions operating in the museum's network at a local and national level, this contribution aims at highlighting the innovative approach of the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration to understanding, collecting and exhibiting the immigration history and cultural heritage.

The Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration (formerly known as the 'Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration') aims to collect, preserve, present and valorise the cultural heritage relating to the history of immigration in France. Since its foundation in 2007, its mission has been centred on the evolution of the focus on immigration through the enhancement of an innovative cultural, educational and civic approach to its exhibitions and collections, and to its outreach and networking activities.

This three-way interview was conceived to offer a multifaceted insight into the development of the museum's current activities, through the comparison and intersection of the different points of view of Hélène du Mazaubrun, project manager for the Ethnographic Collection at the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, Ramzi Tadros, Co-Director of the association *Approches Cultures et Territoires* (ACT)[1] and Coordinator of the network *Mémoires des Immigrations et des Territoires en Région PACA*, and Marie Poinsot, Editor-in-Chief of the journal published by the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, *Hommes et Migrations*, who chaired the conversation.
The interview took place in December 2013, in the context of the completion of the *Galerie des Dons*, the exhibition space dedicated to the personal stories which illustrate the history of immigration in France through a rich collection of objects and documents.

Marie Poinsot: *What are the specific features of the* Galerie des Dons *which distinguish it from those pertaining to history museums with a national focus?*

HÉLÈNE DU MAZAUBRUN: *The Galerie des Dons* stands out as a special collection; we may even say it is a unique case for national museums in France. It was conceived at the time the Museum was founded to meet a request coming from civil society.

In particular, some associations solicited the creation of a space dedicated to the memories of immigrants. Thereafter, we asked several people to tell us about their experiences, and bring an object to be included in the national heritage. As a result, those responsible for defining the aims and the contents are not the curators anymore, but rather the people themselves. This is a completely new practice within national museums, and it has allowed the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration to develop a new method to enrich its collections.

The first consequence of this practice, as it develops in accordance with the mission of the Museum, appears in the modification of the way immigration is looked at. Quite unexpectedly, the heritage produced is not only constituted of languages and passports, but also of unusual and unexpected objects, rarely to be found in a history museum – especially if it is also an immigration museum.

The second remarkable and original consequence ensuing from this collection concerns the acknowledgement and inclusion of the history of immigration within the history of France. The evolution of the Museum's name from *centre des mémoires* to *musée de l'histoire de l'immigration* has also been an important milestone, because it has ensured the inclusion of these objects within the national heritage and inventory. Through this we have produced a statement of intent and asserted our interest in encompassing the history of immigration within the history of France; we actualised it within a legal and administrative perspective for our common good. This process has taken some time within the museum itself. Nevertheless, now the scope of this special collection is evident.

These objects are always associated to a personal story, as we collect at the same time both objects and memories. This represents an atypical approach. In this regard, within the museographical context developed at the end of the twentieth century, our work distinguishes itself from what has been carried out in the field so far in France, although, before us, other countries have included the history of immigration as a consistent part of their national history. I refer here in particular to Canada and the United States, which have been important sources of inspiration for the Museum in Paris.

Marie Poinsot: *How was this project received in Marseille?*

RAMZI TADROS: In Marseille, many individuals and associations, as well as civil society at large, had expressed the will and the need to discuss this memory and history. In the past, several groups of associations as well as regional and local networks had encouraged PACA in this task, although it had never been possible to carry it out, the main obstacle being the absence of a framework for collective reflection and, in particular, of an institutional commitment for the creation of such a structure. Therefore, at the time of its conception, the project for the *Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration* was welcomed with great enthusiasm. It engendered high expectations and, later on, disappointments. We acknowledge the difficulties of such an initiative on a national

scale. But we feel we have not been truly included in the reflection that has accompanied it. Regarding the constitution of the collection and the involvement of the PACA region, together with other regions, I expected preliminary work by the team in charge of the development of the project and the training of regional volunteers on a national level, in order to determine the kind of contribution regions were expected to provide to the integration of regional histories within the national history. No need to say that the evolution of this structure into a museum has gone through different processes.

Marie Poinsot: *Since 2007, the date of the creation of the institution, how has the plan for the gathering of objects and stories from the migrants, which today constitute the collection of the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, been implemented?*

Hélène du Mazaubrun: At the time of the creation of the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration we launched a call for contributions. Subsequently, we have been wondering about the way to include the objects associated with personal memories within a national museum. We bring certain objects into the museum because they give us the opportunity to talk about culture in a generic way. Some other objects are chosen because they approach the question of individual history. Nevertheless, the purpose of the history of immigration is not to focus on the collection of individual histories for their own sake. The ones included in the *Galerie des Dons* convey a message to the society they emanate from by communicating that the objects which are contained within the shared heritage belong to everybody. This strategy allows us to foster awareness

Fig. 1. The Palais de la Porte Dorée. © Mathieu Nouvel.

among the visitors about the importance of their memories, as well as enabling us to increase the collection of witnesses. This awareness should be transmitted to associations, communities, archives, etc.

In addition to the question of collecting oral histories and objects, we see another problem arising: that of the exhibition display. How is it possible to explore and valorise this collection through exhibition design? At the moment, we are working on the revision of the part of the permanent exhibition dedicated to the *Galerie des Dons*, which was conceived as the complement to the gallery named 'Repères'. While this permanent exhibition is aimed at depicting two centuries of immigration in France through a chronologic and thematic approach (by exploring the different aspects related to the culture of immigration, the work immigrants have done, the relationship with the State, etc.), the *Galerie des Dons* is primarily focused on the narration of life stories on an individual scale. Its conception is based on the possibility of allowing visitors to understand the participative approach developed by the Museum, and is aimed at enhancing awareness and involvement.

For this reason, we decided to include in the new exhibition design an *arbre à dons* (a tree of gifts). This is meant to highlight the approach to this particular collection, and to encourage the visitor to leave a personal witness or object, in the museum or in other spaces dedicated to the collection of memories. Also the symbolism of the tree helps to convey the concern about identity related to migrants or, by extension to future generations, as children or grandchildren of migrants. Indeed we realise that, often, the 'contributors' (or those who carry the memory) are not those who migrated. The same strategy is exploited to give a place within the history to the descendants of migrants. In order to illustrate this to the public in a pedagogical and accessible way, we imagined a displaying device aimed at highlighting the fact that everyone has a story to contribute to this construction.

Moreover, we are also acknowledging the activities and the work of the members of the Network of the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration who participated in the setting up of the *Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration*. The visitors will be able to see the list of the different initiators from civil society, of the communities and the associations whose contributions have permitted the constitution and understanding of this history of immigration in France.

Marie Poinsot: *How do you think the PACA region may be able to enrich the initial collection of gifts which has already been donated to the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration?*

Ramzi Tadros: As a matter of fact, the question rather refers to the opportunity of creating a cooperative process between the regions and the Museum that would make it possible to work with museums and regional structures also on a local level. According to us and to the experience we have developed, it is the personal witness that really

brings the history of migrations to life. For several decades we have been speaking about groups, and now about communities, to represent immigration. Thus we risk to erase the quintessence of immigration, which is a life urge. The individual story presented in a museum such as the *Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration* embodies this reality. For example, within the framework of the initiative *Marseille Provence Capitale Européenne de la Culture*, the project *Les Chercheurs du Midi* was conceived to ask the citizens of Marseille to contribute images from their holidays, spare time, etc. According to my mediator, some pictures of a family who used to live in l'Estaque appeared in the exhibition which was produced by this collection. After some time, a family from Marseille went to visit the exhibition and recognised their grandparents. Afterwards, all the family members, including umpteen grandchildren, visited the exhibition. As a result, through these pictures which had been exhibited by chance, they understood the aim of the exhibition, although at the origin of the project, the general call for contributions had touched that family only indirectly. The case of these pictures illustrates very well the statement by Hélène du Mazaubrun concerning the importance of the acknowledgement that individuals expect from the society they live in. This does not mean that other people cannot envisage themselves within these pictures or objects. The contribution of the PACA region must be inherent to the global project. A national museum of the history of immigration is a national museum for all immigrations. And PACA, as all the south-western region of France, has a place in it.

Marie Poinsot: *Within this reflection on individual stories, what is the status given to the words of witnesses?*

RAMZI TADROS: In the framework of the work we are developing at ACT, we aim to give a voice to those people who haven't been given the right to express themselves within the national narrative. Specifically, these people are firstly immigrants. Therefore, the means of expression they are offered are different. They encompass the collection of memories and witnesses as well as, as far as possible, the collection of documents and other things that has been produced in the past twenty to thirty years in their neighbourhoods, villages and cities. In this way, every day we discover new publications, films, etc. This material is handled separately by institutions, communities, perhaps by some associations. Nevertheless, it remains in the margin, in the drawers or on the shelves. It is necessary to integrate all the stories into the national narrative, though, when an association communicates to us that they want to publish a book about a city, we know that specific skills are required for collecting memories and presenting them through a book. Sometimes we have to deal with clumsiness, and the documents collected in this way may not have a scientific or artistic value. Nevertheless, it is this diversity in the production of knowledge which fosters the desire to look further. To give voice to the people requires putting their words into the hands of an historian or an anthropologist

Fig. 2. The permanent exhibition. © Nathalie Darbellay.

who will give them a certain meaning. Likewise, the voice must be multiple. Today, the collision between 'we' and 'they' is becoming more and more clear. Also in the context of certain associations – such as the associations of immigrant workers – it is possible to find controversial discourses. To integrate these specific histories within a shared history thus requires being very attentive and not giving way to categorisations.

HÉLÈNE DU MAZAUBRUN: I am very sensitive to the topics highlighted by Ramzi Tadros. The role of individual histories is essential as is the inclusion of these memories within a shared history. The activities promoted by the associations and the partners of the network convey the impression that there is still an enormous amount of materials to be collected. We have come to the same conclusion within the Museum. I think that, if some subjects have not been given a voice, this is also due to the fact that the national narrative has been built in this way. This issue challenges us to start a reflection on the history of immigration. It seems important to rebalance the point of view and the discourse on this topic by redefining the place of these histories and memories within the national narrative. This is the reason why our institution decided to foster the conception of the *Galerie des Dons* as a process, pertaining to these individual histories by presenting to the visitors the development of immigration as if it were mainly an interior process. The presentation is composed of four sections. The first one, *Hériter* (Inheriting), poses the question of the memory of immigration. Examining its roots, parents and grandparents, this section focuses on the past, on the places where people came from. The second one,

Partager (Sharing), questions the connection between the self and the other, between 'we' and 'them'. Here, in particular, 'we' is conceived as a desire to share the culture and the customs of the host society without losing one's own identity. The section *Contribuer* (Contributing) raises the question of the place immigrants have within the host society, and the time it takes for their contributions to be recognised, as for example by entering the army, joining trade unions, or being employed. The last section, *Accepter* (Accepting), envisages the theme 'here and now'. Once the immigrants have arrived in the host country, how do they make it their own? And how can they accept its distinct nature in order to move forward? The same concern also applies to the host society, which has to accept and welcome this specific history in order to advance towards a common future.

RAMZI TADROS: There needs to be no guilt in the national narrative. It is only necessary to acknowledge that it was created in France and thus, as in other contexts, has worked against specificities, against regional cultures and against minorities. The process of the constitution of the Nation itself entails the construction of a stereotyped image. The experience we have developed with PACA suggests to me that it is necessary to bring in the margins, the suburbs, the periphery, in order to redefine the sense of national history and its narrative. Through the above mentioned different sections, the *Galerie des Dons* reflects on an actual 'we'. We can all clearly recognise ourselves because we are all involved in this research for sharing, building a heritage, contributing and accepting each other. In particular, to display these memories and these objects in a national museum means to embed them in the territory while refraining to treat them as marginal or outside the history of a country. From this point of view, the *Galerie des Dons* could be considered as belonging to the whole community.

Marie Poinsot: *To be slightly provocative, do you think that to place an object in a showcase is sufficient to make it part of a heritage?*

RAMZI TADROS: I don't know how it is possible to make an object speak. This is not my job. But I know how an object speaks to me. Museographers, anthropologists, and artists are in charge of transforming this object into something which speaks. It seems to me that this is the role of the *Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration*. An example of a way of thinking about this desired dynamic between regional and national issues is to present a tile produced in the tileries of Marseille as an object manufactured by an Italian worker who arrived there at the end of the nineteenth century: this kind of practice attributes to a local event a very important value on a national level, because the object is contextualised within a national museum.

HÉLÈNE DU MAZAUBRUN: To this provocative question, I would respond with a provocative answer, at least as far as it concerns the curatorial domain. As a matter of

fact, to place an object in a showcase is not sufficient to create a heritage. What I try to preserve is not simply the mere object, but rather the relationship that the person previously had with the object within his/her family. The main tasks of conservation and transmission we develop are not focused on the object itself but rather on this connection. It is evident that we need a showcase for reasons of security and conservation, but ultimately we could do without it. I'd even prefer to speak about an *objet-nœud* (a node object), because this is exactly what defines this type of patrimonial object, at least in the space of the *Galerie des Dons*. To clarify this, the exhibition design has been developed around the idea of a node or a knob, which on the trunk of a tree is where shoots grow from. So, we can say there is an organic dimension which is alive and never the same. Showcases do not quite look like showcases in order to allow objects to become a means of mediation between the narrative and the visitor. Hence, we paid a lot of attention to the training of the museum mediators, as these objects are not only museum objects but also, intrinsically, objects of mediation. This is a totally different way of approaching the history of immigration, in contrast to for example, the 'classical' history of immigration which may be taught at school. Indeed, the contextualisation operates as a counterpoint to individual histories; it puts them into a more general perspective of sweeping historical events which cause great upheavals in people's lives. Actually, I see these two approaches as complementary. By promoting this new way to consider the heritage and the history of immigration, I hope that everywhere it will be possible for memories, objects, and people that have been invisible to be revealed and valorised within the public realm.

Marie Poinsot: *How can we strengthen in the future the connections between the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration and the partners of the Network?*

RAMZI TADROS: I will repeat myself by saying that the regional contribution to national history is essential. It allows us to measure the contribution of immigration to history. However, it is necessary to find a two-way dynamic between personal stories and history at large, as well as between the national and the regional issues. Every day we discover more objects, memories and people that have been completely forgotten. For example, we have recently been researching the history of people with Indochinese origins living in our region. This doesn't mean that historians hadn't already recorded this issue within the history of Provence, but that we progressively find extremely interesting people and objects concerning the topic. This is a relevant contribution to the national narrative if you also consider the geographical position of the city. Paris is not Marseille. Marseille has its own history which is part however of our national history. Regional economies are particular, too. Historical, economical, social, and political dynamics are everywhere connected to populations moving across territories. In this way, between general history and particular histories there is a further dimension which

Fig. 3. A display case in the 'Travail' section of the permanent exhibition. © Lorenzö.

hasn't been caught so far. This regards the circulation of migrants within the national borders. When long-standing immigrants in their sixties or seventies come to us, they often talk about the regions they crossed when they moved from their countries of origin to the mines of Northern France or the tileries in Marseille. Everyone has his/her own journey and possesses a heritage with multiple facets.

Marie Poinsot: *The Mediterranean aspect of France cannot be properly perceived without visiting Marseille. And which better place embodies the colonial history and the history of immigration in France? Yet, one has the impression that museums in Marseille do not want to approach these questions, which they probably consider too controversial.*

Ramzi Tadros: This situation is evolving but in two different directions. The first one confronts the elitist vision of globalisation to the urban project EuroMéditerranée, which entails the transformation of a part of the city, including the port, into an enormous business centre. The other trend, which seems more interesting to me, can be detected in the complete renovation of the *Musée d'Histoire de Marseille*. In its archive, the old museum included only few of the traces of this multi-faceted history. Today, it explores new ways to integrate this history of immigration within the history of the city. We are participating in a debate about this topic with the *Institution patrimoniale et relations interculturelles*, an association interested in science. At the same time, since the first

Biennale of the *Histoires et Mémoires des Immigrations et des Territoires en Région PACA* Network up to the 2013 edition, the number of events has increased from 64 to 110. It is true that at the time we were within the particular context of the programme *Marseille Capital Européenne de la Culture*, nevertheless we were able to create a dynamic process. This entails the development of contacts, meetings, research meetings, study workshops, and education programmes, sometimes in cooperation with the *Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration*, concerning the problems faced by associative or cultural structures. For example, within the framework of this Biennale, we invited several guests such as the Barbès Café from Paris and *Le Gymnase*, one of the largest theatres in Marseille. The company was very worried that they would not have a large audience for their performance which had been scheduled for seven days in a row. However, every evening the theatre was full. Now we are trying to envisage how to work with *Le Gymnase* on a more elaborate project for the next Biennale. This will entail two years of work, because within the 2015 event we are particularly interested in the whole 'hand-knitting' process which will ensue.
It is very important that the Department 'Réseau et Partenariats' at the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration develops a partnership with the other regions. However, for us it is also important to establish a more global relationship, rather than bilateral ones, with all the other services within the institution. We are interested in exploring what contributions can the different participants bring to the network *Histoires et Mémoires des Immigrations et Territoires en Région PACA*. The Department has established a framework programme with the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, but it is necessary to go further. We need to work together and stop contributing to the fragmentation of a history which is itself already fragmented in many respects.

HÉLÈNE DU MAZAUBRUN: The revision of the *Galerie des Dons* signals this will for cooperative working. This three-way interview starts a new process. Indeed it is necessary to build specific spaces to foster discussions and exchanges about our shared experiences. As institutional operators, we also have a lot to gain from this. Since the beginning, the *Galerie des Dons* has been imagined as an evolving space which is continuously and systematically being renovated and discussed. Exchanging and sharing ideas with people from different regions is a crucial element in accomplishing this task. The regional dimension will be partially included in the *Galerie des Dons* in the section dedicated to migratory movements which will show where migrants come from and the places they move through; although they will not always be tracing a direct line between the starting and the arrival points, the name of the place where they arrive in France will always be specified. At the time of the inauguration we have also left empty showcases inside the exhibition to represent the intention to further expand and develop the project.

RAMZI TADROS: It's well-known that it is hard to find local contributors. So you can imagine how hard it is for them to accept that their beloved objects will be donated to

a museum in Paris. This is why it would be necessary to think about these objects as a circulating heritage which may travel to Marseille, then go to Paris and later come back to the Museum, within a network of a museums focused on these themes. Eventually, a dedicated website could also be an effective vehicle fostering the exchange and the construction of these 'migrating collections'.

[1] This Marseille-based organisation aims to foster mediation on topics related to cultural diversity in the Region of Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur (PACA).

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Lessons from the New World

CATHY ROSS, Museum of London, United Kingdom

Drawing on her long-lasting experience at the Museum of London, which since the Nineties represents a forerunner institution in dealing with issues of migrations, cultural identity, differences and intercultural dialogue, Cathy Ross develops a thought-provoking reflection on the issue of representing migration in museums. Through a critical overview on some paradigmatic recent experiences, she reasons out on the issues and potentialities incidental to this topic and its value in enhancing museums' role and narratives.

This short paper offers a few reflections on the MeLa Miterm Seminar that took place on 24 September 2013 in the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration in Paris.[1] At that Seminar I spoke about the Museum of London and the practical strategies that the museum has pursued since 1992 in its efforts to represent migration and diversity within its galleries (Ross, 2013).[2] Rather than duplicate that text, I would like to use this opportunity to share some personal thoughts and observations, stimulated by the Seminar papers and the surrounding discussions. These thoughts are also informed by a recent flurry of interest in the possibility of creating a migration museum for the United Kingdom. The promoters of this initiative, the Migration Museum Project,[3] point out that the UK is unusual in not having a major migration museum and that although many UK museums, large and small, are striving hard to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of the UK's population, the story of migration to and from the UK remains somewhat hidden; in museum-provision terms, it is a gap waiting to be filled.

The Migration Museum Project initiative raises the question of whether migration is more usefully dealt with in subject-specific, dedicated 'migration museums', or dispersed into other types of museums looking at broader social and historical stories about particular places. The MeLa Midterm Seminar did not explicitly discuss the question of the type of museum best placed to look at migration, but the issue was raised indirectly, not least by the variety of types of institutions and case studies represented in the programme, so it does feed into my thoughts here.

The presentation that provoked the most thought in my mind was the paper given by Christoph Bongert from the German Emigration Center Bremerhaven, a true migration museum. The paper outlined what seemed to me to be a remarkably interesting initiative: extending the museum's original 'emigration' story (a very successful presentation that won the Museum the 'European Museum of the Year' award in 2007) to

include a second chapter on 'immigration'. This second chapter was designed to mirror the themes found in the first chapter, and encourage visitors to see the two narratives as both part of the same broad story of people choosing to move to a new place in order to find a better life. The project had been pursued with clear museological and practical objectives in mind – that visitors should be encouraged to draw sympathetic analogies between German emigration to the New World in the late 19th century and Turkish or other immigration into Germany in the late 20th century, the 1970s in particular. The presentation of the two stories was consistent, both pursuing an imaginative and experiential approach that required visitors to actively empathise and which promised to engage visitors hearts as well as their minds. In some ways it was surprising to hear from Christoph Bongert that the second 'immigration' section of the museum visit was attracting less enthusiasm from visitors than the first 'emigration' section. But, for the purposes of the Seminar discussions, this added to its interest as a museum case study.

Bremerhaven's presentation of 19th century emigration and 20th century immigration side by side as two chapters in the same visitor journey is fascinating on a number of levels, not least for setting out the two basic stories about migration that museums tend to tell. On the one hand, there is 'the journey story' which focuses on the act of moving; on the other, 'the settlement story', which is all about impact on and adjustment to the new place, after the journey. Typically, the journey story tends to be about the past, and in particular the great 19th century migration from the Old World to the New World. Museums telling journey stories tend to be located in evocative historic buildings, at the point of departure or arrival: Bremerhaven is typical in this respect, but the archetypal journey-story museum is New York's Ellis Island in the United States.

The settlement story tends to be more contemporary in focus. Typically, this way of imagining migration invites visitors to contemplate the challenges and rewards of living in today's modern, multicultural society, where people from different backgrounds and with different sense of identities rub up against each other. As was well illustrated by Seminar speakers, this type of post-migration, settlement story can be found in museums that are not solely focussed on migration: historical or city museums for example. Such institutions as the Historisches Museum in Frankfurt and the Galata Museo del Mare in Genoa outline their activities around migrant communities as part of their broader missions to reflect the character of their respective cities.

The Museum of London is of course another example of this approach to the subject of migration. As a city museum we have been less interested in re-telling the journey stories of individual groups and more inclined to explore the kind of society that many centuries of settlement has helped shape and which, today, all Londoners share in common. Typically, settlement stories are told with a civic mission in mind and form part of wider civic efforts to promote community cohesion and trust.

The German Emigration Center Bremerhaven had been bold in bringing the two stories together in a single visitor journey. And this seems a particularly bold step from

the UK perspective where museums, if they do tell both types of story about human mobility, tend to separate the two.

At Liverpool, for example, the journey story is dealt with at the emigration gallery in the Maritime Museum, and the settlement story in a completely separate building, at the new Museum of Liverpool. Liverpool is fairly typical of UK museums in devoting far more space and resources to exploring the nature and identity of the contemporary home population rather than recounting the story of those who chose to leave. The Museum of London is also typical in this respect and it must be said here that Liverpool is to be congratulated in devoting at least some gallery space to the story of emigration. In England emigration is the great absent story in museums (unlike museums in the Irish Republic, or course). Despite British emigration being a story of profound and unique significance to the world - 'one of the greatest movements of humanity in modern history' as one historian has described it (Richards, 2004, p.ix), and despite London being at the heart of the phenomenon, it's a story that the Museum of London does not currently tell.

Christoph Bongert's paper implied that the linking of the two types of story at Bremerhaven had not been altogether successful from the point of view of visitor-engagement: visitor feedback revealing that people received the immigration / settlement story much less warmly than the emigration / journey one. If this is true, I am sure that it is no reflection on German Emigration Center's presentation - which looks imaginative and well-realised. But it does raise some broader and more theoretical questions about the nature of these two migration stories, and whether they have got far less in common than curators would like to think. Perhaps the belief that emigration and immigration are two different ways of looking at the same human-mobility story is an illusion, despite the obvious common traits that both types of migration share. Both are about transnational journeys and both tend to be presented by museums in similar ways, using human interest as the 'way in' to the subject, foregrounding the experiences of named individuals in an effort to humanise what could otherwise be received as a dry academic lesson. There are also commonalities in the academic vocabulary used to discuss both types of population movements ('sending societies', 'receiving societies', etc.), all of which reinforces the idea that emigration and immigration are essentially, as the German Emigration Centre proposes, part of the same human story. The belief that the story is universal leads naturally to the assumption that it is relevant to all people, whatever the family background: everyone could and should be able to engage sympathetically with the idea of moving to find a better life.

But do visitors see it this way, or are the stories of journey and settlement so disconnected in people's minds that asking them to engage sympathetically with both on the same visit is just too much to ask? It is conceivable that there is an emotional disconnect between the two stories which visitors find it hard to overcome. One is a story about new horizons and hope, the other about change and fears; one is a romantic saga, the other a gritty documentary; one promises a happy ending, the other an uncertain future; one can be enjoyed purely as a story, the other may look suspiciously like political propaganda.

On this (admittedly caricatured) analysis, the journey story offers the visitor a highly-charged romantic saga of personal transformation with Biblical overtones. Ellis Island, again, provides the archetypal look and feel. From the beginning Ellis Island presented itself as a kind of sacred site, the gateway to the promised land, a 'front door to freedom', an 'Isle of Hope, a brief stopping point on the way to a better life' (Hamblin, 1991, p.5):

> When the great steamships of the early 20th century sailed into New York Harbour, the faces of a thousand nations were on board. A broad, beaming multicolored parade, these were the immigrants of the world: there were Russian Jews with fashioned beards, Irish farmers whose hands were weathered like the lands they had left, Greeks in kilts and slippers, Italians with sharp moustaches, Cossacks with fierce swords, English in short knickers and Arabs in long robes. The Old World lay behind them. Ahead was a new life, huge and promising. Gone were the monarchies and kings, the systems of caste and peasantry, of famine and numbing poverty. But also left behind were friends and family, as well as tradition and customs generations old. (Hamblin, 1991, p.11)

By contrast the settlement story, however well done, tends to offer visitors an interpretative framework that looks and feels more mundane - either a 'getting-to-know-your-neighbours' insight into the customs and traditions of a newly-arrived cultural group; or a broad appeal to people's sense of decency and empathy towards others who are already defined as different. Settlement stories also, crucially, tend to remind visitors of their own personal views and values - which some visitors welcome and others find aggravating. Mixing the two sorts of stories is undoubtedly a challenge and doubly so if, as at Bremerhaven, the two chapters deal with different periods in time. If the story of 19th century emigration to the New World, and the story of 20th century immigration into Europe are already so far apart in visitors' minds before they visit, maybe any attempt by a museum to weave the two together in an emotionally coherent way is doomed to failure. So should museums just accept that emigration and immigration are separate subjects, impossible to bring together in a single interpretative framework and requiring completely different story-telling strategies if the museum is to deliver what it wants say effectively? On the contrary, I feel that museums should rise to the challenge. It would be immensely interesting if more European museums followed Bremerhaven's example and presented a holistic view of human migration over time, imagining places as simultaneously places of sending and receiving, and making the historical stories resonate with the contemporary debates in a way that's emotionally meaningful for the collective 'us' in any one particular place. This is of course all far easier said than done, given the political minefield that debates about contemporary immigration have now become across Europe. Nevertheless, it is worth reflecting on the challenge, even just as a purely theoretical exercise.

Thinking about how migration might be imagined holistically in a museum setting, two points struck me. The first is to question whether our tendency to tell stories through

the experiences of named individuals - may not be as effective as we think: at best reducing the scope of the story to an accumulation of personal tales and at worst, undermining what the museum is trying to say about society. Although migration is unquestionably 'about' people, it is also a bigger story than the experience of any one individual, or community group can encompass. As contemporary debates about migration demonstrate all too clearly, it is a story about ideas and national choices, about the growth of the welfare state; about economics, skills and wages; and about the way nation states choose to define citizenship in a global and interconnected world. Asking visitors to approach the subject primarily through the perspective of empathy and human interest may not be quite enough. It would be a foolish museum that dispensed with its human interest angle altogether, but perhaps for this particular subject, the overall narrative needs a more ambitious framework. The thought also arises that in this age of unrelenting exposure to other people's life stories through social media and blogging, life-stories on their own, however interesting the personal journey, are a less powerful currency than they once were.

As the quote from Ellis Island above suggests, what makes a story compelling is the combination of individual lives caught up in the sweeping scale of a Big Story, a collective and sweeping romance whose roots and impact stretch across the world and across time. In the case of Ellis Island, the Big Story is nation building, but it could be many other things. Migration is tailor-made for Big Story-telling: it is one of the big themes of history, and particularly European history - 'the anthill of European humanity was seething with movement' as one historian imagines it (Richards, 2004, p.10). It is exciting because of its importance, bound up as it is with other Big Stories - the growth of capitalism, human ingenuity and enterprise, religious beliefs, the rise of the modern nation state, and all the other long-term forces that have shaped today's world.

Although in museum terms this level of history might be categorised as national history to be tackled only by national institutions, there is no reason why the power of Big Story-telling should not be deployed in a local museum setting, as a framework for more local detail. 'Bigging up' the way migration is imagined for visitors, may not of course suit every museum, particularly those local museums whose existing strategies for engaging migrant communities are working well. But it might be interesting to experiment with a less people-centred approach to the subject, one which focuses not on individuals or specific groups but on the national and international context of ideas and events that shape people's choices to move and people's views on how the changes that result should be accommodated.

The Ellis Island booklet quoted above is also worth contemplating in this respect for its overt inclusiveness. Ellis Island makes it clear that it is celebrating immigrants from every nation in the old world, noting their national origins and cultural baggage, but setting these aside as things to be left behind. All nationalities were welcome, it says, thereby implying that all visitors, whatever their background, are also welcome and can own this remarkable and colourful story. Admittedly, this sentiment fits comfortably

with America's well-established sense of national identity, and has less currency in a European situation. Nevertheless, it suggests a more general point, that by taking the migration story up to a bigger and broader level, a museum may allow more space for the story to be embraced by all sections of the community, rather than just being perceived as a story about particular groups with limited relevance for others.

My second and final thought about reconnecting the (largely historical) journey story and the (largely contemporary) settlement story, also draws a lesson from the Ellis Island booklet quoted above, but this time the lesson is what not to do. Ellis Island's rosy picture of immigration as an unadulterated good news story for everyone is a smoothing-over of history. This is understandable, and not unusual. All museums - including the Museum of London - tend to smooth over the historical stories we tell, but when it comes to migration, perhaps we are smoothing things over a little too much. We relentlessly emphasise the past contribution made by migrants in an earnest desire to make the past demonstrate that migration is 'a good thing', using the past to counteract the myths and stereotype that bedevil the contemporary debate. But adding more nuances and shadows into the story of the past we tell might not go amiss. Acknowledging that migration like any human phenomenon has a problematic and indeed an illiberal side to its past, seems to me to be a preferable way of connecting past and present in a convincing way. European history throws up many examples of migrant groups disadvantaging previously-settled groups and posing disturbing challenges to existing values: it was ever thus and museums should not treat this as dangerous knowledge to be kept from visitors.

The role of museums is surely to help people understand that challenging situations have been and will continue to arise but that resolution always follows: a clear lesson from the past is that people were resourceful, predicted catastrophes seldom happened, places adapted, and in the long term nations continued in the direction of travel that they were already following. In her presentation to the Seminar, Victoria Walsh used the phrase 'the flattening effect of the contemporary' (Walsh, 2013) which I understood her to use to describe the homogenisation of contemporary art, but which seems to me to express the tendency to flatten out the awkward bumps of the past in the belief that a simple and un-nuanced message is what is required for effective museum communication. For the subject of migration, where the contemporary debate so often degenerates into opposed polarities, telling stories about the past in a way that emphasises nuances and 'muddling through' might be quite a cathartic contribution.

My final thought from the Seminar was that there is no obvious answer to the question of whether migration is more appropriately dealt with in a subject-specific migration museum, as at the Deutsches Auswanderhaus in Bremerhaven, or in a place-based museum, such as the Galata Museo de Mare in Genoa. Coming from a city museum background, where there is no standard formula and city museums can and do develop

their own idiosyncratic characters, the conclusion is probably that the question misses the point. Migration is unquestionably an important subject for museums to tackle and the point is less what sort of museum tackling it; and more what the presentation says and the impact it has on its visitors and users. Museums have great opportunities to connect past and present in inspiring ways, and migration can be one of the most inspiring stories in any institution's repertoire.

[1] Whitehead, C., Eckersley, S., Lloyd, K., and Mason, R. eds. 2014 (forthcoming). *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
Editors' note. The Seminar, promoted by the research programme MeLa - *European Museums in an age of migrations*, marked the midterm milestone of the project. Focusing on the transformation of contemporary museums, as cultural spaces and processes as well as physical places, the conference aimed at stimulating reflections and exchanges about innovative museum practices and projects in a age characterised by the enhancement of cultural encounters and cross-fertilizations. For more info visit: <http://www.mela-project.eu/events/details/let-the-museum-speak-european-museums-in-an-age-of-migrations> [Accessed April 2014].

[2] The substance of that presentation will be published as a chapter in the forthcoming publication 'Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe' (Whitehead, et al., 2014), another output of the MeLa research programme.

[3] See www.migrationmuseum.org.

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Let French People Speak: The Experience of the Écomusée du Val de Bièvre

ALEXANDRE DELARGE, Écomusée du Val de Bièvre, Fresnes, France

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

The Écomusée du Val de Bièvre is a very peculiar institution: an urban ecomuseum, one of the first in France, and in the world. Founded in 1979, it is located in Fresnes, in the southern suburbs of Paris. Because of this location, we have been challenged to deal with matters of globalisation, cultural exchange and modernity, acknowledging that we must not only look behind us, but also understand what is going on nowadays. Hence, we have been urged to approach a lot of the new questions museums have to face, the ones that lead one to say that within contemporary society museums are in crisis – the questions that ensue from the debate about the role of museums in contemporary society, and the crisis that currently seems to affect their mission. We will analyse this issue by studying a particular case. Twenty years ago we created an exhibition called 'Rassemblance: un siècle d'immigration en Ile-de-France' (*Rassemblance*: A Century of Immigration in the Ile-de-France, 26 January – 12 December 1993), using a neologism which puts together 'meeting' and 'being alike'. The exhibition was about immigration and, incredibly, it was only the second one on this subject to be organised in France. The first one had taken place at the Musée Dauphinois in Grenoble, few years before. This demonstrates that museums often seem to neglect issues that matter in contemporary society, as they have only lately begun to deal with subjects concerning people living on their 'territory'.

The question that is raised by choosing a theme such as immigration is: what kind of people can be presented in a museum? As a matter of fact, and until recently, the general opinion has been that strangers have no place, because museums only deal with autochthons. This of course, has to do with the history of museums, which were created to be the sanctuaries and the custodians of national identities and traditions. What is to be French according to popular perception? It means that you have at least three

Fig. 1. The courtyard of the Ferme de Cottinville, an ancient farm housing the ecomuseum, the local theatre, and a national school of music. © Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.

generations buried in French soil. To be white is also considered to be French. This way of thinking used to greatly influence the way we worked in museums, however, in recent years many things have changed.

In 'Rassemblance' we tried to understand why and how different groups of people came from Asia, Africa or Europe to live in Fresnes. First we focused on their differences as strangers, because we thought that it was important to start taking these people out of the shadows and removing their social invisibility. So invisible were they that the museum couldn't even see them. It was our first experience and probably there was no other way to start tackling this issue, because non-recognised social groups first need to claim their difference and exaggerate similarities inside their own group, at least until they obtain recognition.

However, very quickly we understood that, if we wanted to make clear that immigrants were actually part of French society, we had to adopt a different approach; we had to change the way we talk about them. But we also had to consider who could be allowed to talk about them.

At this point, we decided to organise our general exhibitions so that visitors would discover immigrants 'by chance', avoiding differences between the way them and French people were going to be presented. For example, in the exhibition 'Au plaisir du don'

(Grateful Gift, 25 January - 30 July 2006) we displayed different types of objects lent by inhabitants of Fresnes, each accompanied by a short excerpt taken from the interview with the owner of that object. A young boy, whose parents were Algerian, suggested us to talk about how he had collected money to help the victims of the 2004 Tsunami in Thailand. He lent us the collecting box he had used. In the text from the interview it was mentioned that he had done so because of his Muslim faith. His name, 'Salah', appeared at the bottom of the text. These were the only elements that could suggest visitors that this boy was the son of immigrants. At first glance visitors could think that the display referred to anyone, to someone like themselves. Only after looking more carefully they would find out that the boy's parents were immigrants.
Through those interviews we started to bring in people from different backgrounds, but the exhibition was still entirely under our control. Although this was of course coherent with museums' tradition of knowledge transfer, we wondered if our voice could take account of the wealth and specificity of the subject, if we could be accurate spokesmen of the immigrants while being French, white, and educated. As a matter of fact, I think it is always very difficult to express complexity and diversity inside an exhibition, no matter what the subject is. For this reason, I think we must try to find ways of including different voices.

It appears that the best way to do this is to allow immigrants (or other communities who are not usual museum visitors) to express themselves inside the museum. However, it is not as easy as it may sound because the public perception about museums is that they are made by, and for, natives (the 'autochthons'), who are considered as 'the nation'. Nevertheless, the nation does not only include people who have been French for generations, but also people whose parents or grandparents were foreigners - as we discovered when we created a participative collection, asking everyone living in Fresnes to lend or give an object. When we started, we knew it would not be easy to collect items related to the heritage of other cultures. That is why we realised a poster with a mint teapot and the tagline 'Vos objets au musée' (your object at the museum), in which we were asking inhabitants of Fresnes to come and add objects to the collection. We thought that the message was pretty clear. Nonetheless, not a single person of the non-native-French-community came to see us, although eighty people came to lend us one or more objects. Afterwards, we analysed the method we had used and concluded that the only way we could succeed was to organise face-to-face conversations with members of the community. They did not think they were supposed to take part in an event about the heritage of Fresnes because, even though some were born in France, they did not consider themselves French, or at least not French enough to take part in an exhibition on French heritage.

This issue does not only concern immigrants, but also other people living in France who have little or no representation in museums, such as low-paid workers. It demonstrates

once more that museums exclude from their research and initiatives subjects that appear to be irrelevant, in spite of their social relevance. This lack of interest, together with the tradition of museums, is so strong that even the people who are excluded by museums do agree about this exclusion.

Therefore, we thought we should invite people who do not feel the museum belongs to them to participate in a different way. This would apply to immigrants as well as other people who are not usual museum goers. We initiated participative projects, the first being the already mentioned 'Vos objets au musée racontent Fresnes' (Your Objects Inside the Museum, 10 January – 4 February 2001); we organised workshops, called 'Ateliers de l'Imaginaire' (Imaginary Workshops), which aim at helping schoolchildren, youngsters, and adults to create a photographic art work about subjects related to heritage. Every workshop has a one-year duration and ends with an exhibition. Sometimes we exhibit the outcomes of these workshops alongside the main exhibition, as in 'Paysages de banlieue' (Suburb Landscapes, 20 March – 15 December 2013). These workshops are participative in the sense that the group members decide what they will do in collaboration with an employee of the Ecomuseum, artist Evelyne Coutas, whose mission is to help each member to create in a personal way. She doesn't teach, although, of course, she gives artistic and technical advice to drive ideas forward.

Fig. 2. The room dedicated to participative exhibitions, where the outcomes of the annual 'Ateliers de l'Imaginaire' are displayed. In the picture: *Lieux d'écrits*, 8 December 2010 – 13 February 2011.
© Écomusée du Val de Bièvre.

Another participative project we have organised, in collaboration with the Friends of the Ecomuseum, is a book about the history of Fresnes which mainly consists of photos and captions. Inevitably, the result, was neither what the Friends would have done if they had been working on their own, nor what we would have done by ourselves.

In September 2013 for the 'European Heritage Days' we planned and carried out visits on the topic of suburban landscape with the 'Friends of the Ecomuseum', who guided groups of visitors.
We believe that it is possible to manage almost every aspect of the museum's mission in a participative way, from inventory to events. This is possible if you consider that inhabitants come from a wide range of social and cultural groups and therefore they have various skills we can count upon. Up till now we have put together a collection, published a book, created artworks, organised visits, and installed exhibitions. The real change in the Ecomuseum policy occurred when we decided to dismantle our permanent exhibition, which was hosted in a small room of 90 square metres, to create a room for participative exhibitions. This took place in 2005 with an exhibition organised by the archaeological society of Fresnes to celebrate its thirtieth birthday.
Since then we have mounted four or five exhibitions a year, each one created by non-professionals, generally a group of people or sometimes single individuals. The process starts by discussing with them about the subject, the exhibition design and organisation. If required, we give them assistance although they do the actual work.
The idea for an exhibition can come from local residents or from the Ecomuseum team, and it can be realised by anyone living in the area - poorly educated people as well as graduates - because we want the Ecomuseum to be 'an instrument conceived, fashioned and operated jointly by a public authority and a local population', as described by Georges-Henri Rivière in his 'evolutive definition' of the ecomuseum institution (Rivière, 1985, p.182). We consider it to be a very good way to interact with those people who feel that museums do not concern them.

Working in a participative way is not easy, as people don't consider museums as places they can actively be involved in, except possibly being benefactors. The main reason is that traditionally museums are places to visit, places where people are consumers.
Before I describe in greater detail two participative exhibitions we promoted, I have to mention our participative city tours. We organised visits to different parts of the town, with residents acting as guides to their own areas. Out of all the collected material - recordings and photos taken during the tour - we created an exhibition, 'Parle ma banlieue - Le Val de Bièvre vu par ses habitants' (Talking Suburb - Val de Bièvre as Seen by its Inhabitants, 23 May 2007 - 6 January 2008). The content had been assembled by residents of very varied ages and origins during the tours. It was therefore a participative process although the exhibition itself was organised in a professional way by the Ecomuseum's team.

Fig. 3. A group of inhabitants who guided the participative city tours and later collected the materials that were used to make the exhibition 'Parle ma banlieue / Le Val de Bièvre vu par ses habitants'(23 May 2007 / 6 January 2008). © Monde mosaïque.

In 2010, we created the exhibition 'Lieux et histoires de vies' (Places and Life Stories, 8 December 2010 / 13 February 2011). It all started when the director of a socio-cultural centre informed us that a group of women, who had worked for several years with them on social inclusion, wanted to initiate a cultural project. We met with them and suggested to put on an exhibition. The theme was chosen by the socio-cultural centre, and concerned 'topics of the town'. The women had no academic qualifications and were mostly immigrants. During eight months we worked together to create an exhibition in which every woman had to illustrate two places in town that were for her particularly significant. She had to take pictures, choose an object, and write a short text as well as the captions that would accompany the displayed documents. Since they weren't able to do all that by themselves, we organised small workshops at every stage of the work: how to take pictures, how to interview and write summary papers, which kind of object should be chosen, how to promote an exhibition, etc. They eventually also organised the opening, the buffet, the speeches, and the exhibition tours.

In 2012, we suggested a youth socio-cultural centre to organise an exhibition with a group of youngsters. At the beginning there was no theme, only the desire to make an exhibition. For ten months we worked together with eleven young people, from 16 to 23 years old, living in a working-class neighbourhood. The parents of most of them were immigrants although they were all born in France. However, because of their skin colour, they are often not considered French. Once they had chosen the theme, they all started to work on the exhibition employing their skills. Some made graphs, others took

pictures or wrote texts, songs or shot videos. They managed to get the exhibition done. 'Des jeunes s'exposent' (Youngsters Talk to You, 30 May - 31 July 2012) was visited by plenty of their friends and acquaintances. During the opening they made a speech after the mayor had talked. At the opening of participative exhibitions the curator at the Ecomuseum usually does not make any speech, and presentations are given by people who have worked on the exhibition.

The philosophy of participation is that participants and professionals both play their part in decision-making. We decide together what we want to do and how to achieve it; always sharing the power. For us the aim is to help participants to feel that they have full citizenship, and furthermore, full control of their lives.
Of course, it is difficult to evaluate participative projects, which need a lot of energy and cannot be considered only as a different way of making an exhibition. As a matter of fact, the process is the most important aspect of this kind of activity. That is why we believe that a qualitative approach is the best way to evaluate them. Let me give an example. In the process of putting on 'Lieux et histoires de vies', an educated woman, born in France, started to teach another one, who was an immigrant, to speak and write well. Another woman was paid by the socio-cultural centre to carry out an evaluation

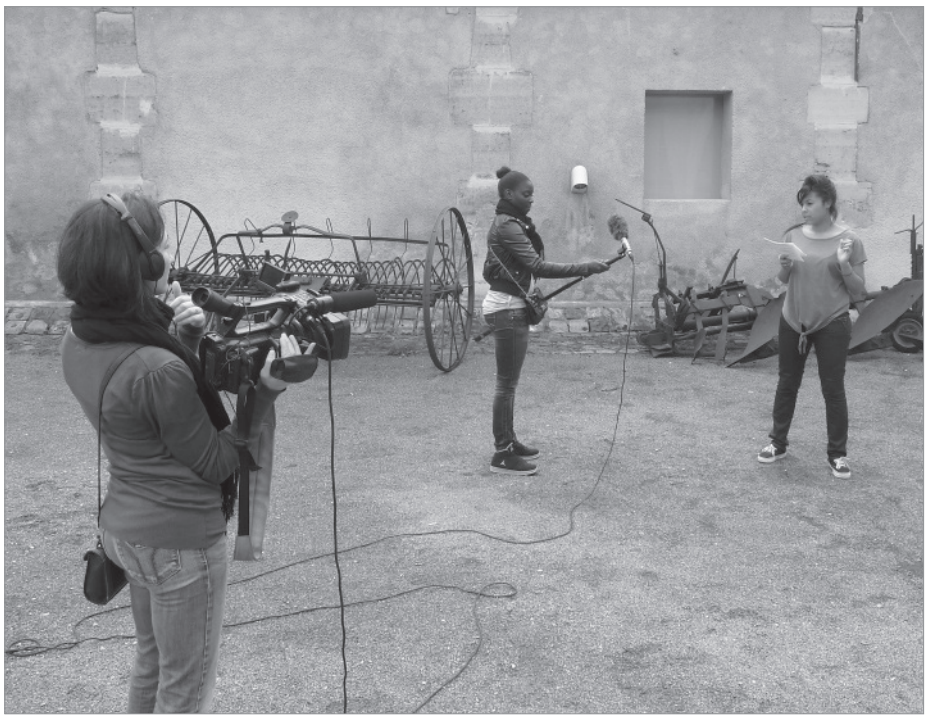

Fig. 4. Interview and shooting for the participative exhibition 'Des jeunes s'exposent' (30 May - 31 July 2012).

of the activities of the centre. Two youngsters, who had worked at the 'Des jeunes s'exposent' exhibition, were asked to coordinate a new group which was going to organise the next exhibition at the Ecomuseum. So their status had changed. More generally, all of them felt proud to be making an exhibition, their exhibition, in a museum, and also to be working with the curator.

As highlighted by the work done by Sophie Aouizerate, a student who has analysed the impact of participative action on immigrants, by collaborating with very different people within a French museum, this experience helped participants to become French. But while they feel French, they also feel they belong to the country they come from, or their ancestors came from. Therefore, if museums wish to start involving broader audiences and to allow people to express themselves in a more formal environment, they have to learn how to deal with new subjects. Eventually, this process helps people to feel more French, whether they are immigrants or the children of immigrants.

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The *Stadtlabor* (City Lab): A Participative Research Tool for the Investigation of the Many Senses of Place

Angela Jannelli, Sonja Thiel, Historisches Museum Frankfurt, Germany

Angela Jannelli and Sonja Thiel introduce the major renovation project which is enhancing the social role of the City History Museum of Frankfurt, turning it from a place 'about something' to a place 'for someone'. In particular, the shift of the museum's conceptual orientation is illustrated through the projects carried out by the 'Stadtlabor', which is operating as an outreaching branch, a research tool and a platform for citizens' self-representation, exploring the many different identities coexisting in the contemporary city.

Frankfurt is a quite small but at the same time global city. As important centre of trade and finance – the headquarters of the European Central Bank and several other banks are located here – and due to its international airport, Frankfurt is an important hub within the global financial, business and traffic network. Nearly 30% of the roundabout 700,000 inhabitants are foreigners belonging to more than 170 different nationalities and more than 50% of all the children born in Frankfurt have a migratory background.

For Frankfurt, the fact that the European urban society of the twenty-first century is shaped to an ever greater degree by transculturality and growing diversification of lifestyles, is more than true. Based on these fundamental social transformations, city museums face a major challenge, since very often they are perceived as cultural institutions of the 'established' society and hardly reach the many new inhabitants.

Today the aim is to address persons of increasingly differing cultural backgrounds and to be the city museum for all of them. To achieve this objective, the Historisches Museum Frankfurt (Frankfurt City History Museum) is currently changing its conceptual orientation. It increasingly adopts participative strategies to become a more and more inclusive museum. The *Stadtlabor* (City Lab), an exhibition series based on the principle of co-creation, is one of the major tools within this process of transformation.

Becoming a City Museum

The Historisches Museum Frankfurt is the oldest museum in Frankfurt operated by the town itself. It owes its founding in 1878 to the initiative of wealthy and dedicated residents who joined to form a museum association. Their aim was to preserve the memory of Frankfurt's sovereignty as a Free Imperial City, a status it lost in 1866. Numerous prominent private collections going back as far as the early fifteenth century were

Fig. 1. A section perspective of the new museum building designed by Lederer Ragnarsdóttir Oei Architects. Courtesy of LRO.

assembled to form the basis of the new municipal museum. By founding the Museum, the town's civil elite had created a romantic place of commemoration where they cultivated and preserved the traditions of Old Frankfurt. The Museum served as a means of jointly securing the old values and identities and protecting them from loss. The 'stakeholders' of the Museum have been changing dramatically during its history. After a number of upheavals and changes – including the decision in the 1970s, which attracted much attention and controversy, to concentrate wholly on the Museum's educational role and open it up to all strata of society as 'a place of learning, not a temple of the Muses' (Spickernagel and Walbe, 1976) – the Historisches Museum Frankfurt is about to change once again. It now wants to become the Frankfurt City Museum. The idea behind the new concept is to entrench the Museum more strongly in the municipal society, to make it an institution acknowledged by as many people as possible as a relevant partner for questions concerning the past, present and future. The new city museum is conceived as a forum for the discussion of the mutual tolerance of local traditions and various cultures. Participation and networking are fundamental elements of the Museum's new conception: the concern is with the persistent opening of an institution still often perceived as hermetic and hegemonic to a place of dialogue. The Museum's self-conception and objectives are shifting in the sense that the museum is no longer to be a place 'about something' but a place 'for someone'. For a museum in the municipal context, such as the Frankfurt City History Museum, this means that it bears responsibility for 'inquiring into the demographic, cultural and societal diversity, and thus for being inclusive, i.e. integrative and pluralistic. For municipal museums, it means that they have to encounter this diversity with initiative by making and undertaking a conscious endeavour to present the knowledge, experience and customs of all the persons making up the municipal population' (Meijer-van Mensch, 2011, p.83).

The Stadtlabor *(City Lab)*

One of the new permanent exhibitions (which will number 7 in all) will be 'Frankfurt Jetzt!' (Frankfurt Now!). In this exhibition the guiding principle of participation will be developed most fully, and in a whole variety of ways. Through 'Frankfurt Now!' we want to make room for the implicit knowledge about the city that is gained from everyday experience, to create a forum for 'closer looks on the city' that exist outside the parameters of scholarship (history, sociology, urban planning...), and thereby to arrive at a broader and more far-reaching understanding of Frankfurt and what makes it what it is. 'Frankfurt Now!' is designed to give the people of Frankfurt an incentive and an opportunity to explore their own city, engage with it and its residents and think about how the city is experienced by them personally and by others.

The *Stadtlabor* is a central part of 'Frankfurt Now!' It is the 'label' for a series of exhibitions, based on the participatory principle of co-creation. The exhibitions are developed within a context of close collaboration with changing groups of the municipal society. Citizens thus become the exhibitions' co-curators. One important premise of this exhibition format is the active involvement of the population in its museum, and the integration of various - and often highly individual - perspectives and outlooks on the city, its history, present and future. The *Stadtlabor* team works directly and intensively with the participants in order to involve not only the usual educated middle-class public but also persons for whom a museum is not the first place they turn for orientation. Even if the Historisches Museum is not moving into its new building until 2017 and the ideas for its new conception will only then fully come to bear, the participatory, present-oriented exhibition format is already being applied now. Until the *Stadtlabor* has its permanent exhibition space at its disposal in the museum, its shows are realised at various other locations in the city, many of them very 'un-museum-like' in character. So far there have been three such exhibitions, which have differed greatly both in subject and in

Fig. 2. The *Stadtlabor* construction trailer. © hmf. Photo by Katja Weber, 2011.

the nature of the co-operating partners. The following examples illustrate the concept of the *Stadtlabor*.
The pilot exhibition in the series, 'Ostend // Ostanfang. Ein Stadtteil im Wandel' (East End // East Beginning: A District in Transition), was on show from spring to summer 2011.
Its subject was the Frankfurt district of Ostend, which is undergoing major changes. The exhibition was able to look at this transformation of the district - from an industrial area to one of service providers - from a great variety of perspectives. During the eight months that it took to prepare and show the exhibition, more than 200 people of all ages were involved, including both those bringing about change and those affected by it. In 38 very different contributions they presented their view and their experiences. We as curators created the framework within which this process of reflection could take place. Together with the participants, and using techniques suitable for conducting large-group discussions, we worked out what the subject of the exhibition was to be. We made ourselves available to discuss questions of content, finance and curating in relation to the development of individual contributions, and, in conjunction with a team drawn from the large group, organised the design and construction of the exhibition. This was finally held in an exhibition space of 600 square metres in a disused office building close to one of the docks in Frankfurt's *Osthafen* (Eastern Harbour).

The second *Stadtlabor* exhibition opened in May 2012 and ran until October of that year. It was an exploration of a very special place and its 'visitors': the *Stadionbad* (Swimming Pool). This open-air swimming pool is part of a sport centre, now a listed monument, which opened in 1925 in connection with the Workers' Olympics. The exhibition 'Mein Stadionbad' (My Swimming Pool) was created in collaboration with a small group of partners. Four members of the *Verein der Freunde des Stadionbades* (Society of Friends of the Swimming Pool) - all of them keen early morning swimmers - initiated the project and later two more people joined the team. Further additions to the team, who joined at the stage of actually designing and building the exhibition, were a group of students from the Exhibition Design course in the Faculty of Design of the Hochschule Darmstadt. This exhibition and 'Ostend' were developed in completely different ways. In the case of 'My Stadionbad', the contact with our partners in this co-operative project was far closer and more frequent, and continued for a year and a half. Our job as curators was to provide our partners with information and help on matters such as identifying topics, conducting research, implementing the ideas underlying the exhibition, and legal questions (especially regarding image rights and personal rights). Because of the small number of participants, the *Stadtlabor* team also developed some of the actual content of the exhibition.
We also implemented some participative elements in the exhibition: visitors could give their feedback and became therefore part of an ongoing exhibition process. They could for example mark their favourite place in the swimming pool on a map or 'classify'

Fig. 3. The underwater exhibition part of 'Mein Stadionbad' (May 2012). © hmf.
Photo by Katrin Streicher, 2012.

themselves in playful typology of swimming pool users like 'morning swimmer', 'water lover', 'diver' or 'sun worshipper'. We also invited them to give short interviews about their relationship to the pool, which were incorporated in the exhibition. We also attempted to launch an online-platform where users could upload a picture of themselves in the pool, using the same playful typology as mentioned above. It turned out, that this kind of participation did not work out very well - participation needs an actual counterpart, someone who communicates and explains the meaning and aims of the participatory offers. After these experiences, it was clear that to realise a participatory project, a lot of work, communication and personal commitment is required.

A Closer Look: G-Town - Wohnzimmer Ginnheim

'G-Town: Wohnzimmer Ginnheim' (G-Town: Ginnheim Living room) was the third exhibition in the *Stadtlabor* series. Bridging generations and cultures alike, it was a multi-faceted exploration of what it means to live in Ginnheim: a residential area that is rather not in the thick of the action. The exhibition dealt with the question, why people would call Ginnheim their home, ending up with a huge variety of different contributions, each of them highlighting another aspect of the vibrant district and its quality of life. Two hundred inhabitants of Ginnheim contributed to this successful exhibition that ran from March to July 2013: 36 events accompanied the show, mostly organised by the co-curators and more than 5,000 persons visited the exhibition and the framing

events. We took a multi-layered approach to explore the 'Ginnheim Living Room' because of its heterogeneous population and building structure. 15,000 people from all over the world live here, whether in the historic village centre with its half-timbered houses, traditional inns and old-established family businesses, or in the housing estate called *Höhenblick* that was planned by Ernst May, a Frankfurt based avant-garde architect of the 1920s, or even in the *Platensiedlung*, an estate built in 1955 as housings for the US troops based in Frankfurt and their families. After the Allies' departure when the housings were transformed in rental units, many families moved in and about fifty per cent of them were immigrants. In Ginnheim, interculturality is a common experience and part of everyday life: The highest percentage of German citizens with a migratory background live here; about 25% of all the 'Ginnheimer' are foreigners.

The Individual Contributions

The exhibition included 18 contributions by overall 200 co-curators and collaborative partners. One group with a special interest in the history of Ginnheim, researched the history of the *Roter Block*, a tenement constructed in 1913. They also explored where people were working and living under one roof - today and in the past. How children and adolescents experience their district and engage with their environment, formed the subject of the contributions by children's day-care and youth centres. The *Astrid-Lindgren-School* had a project week on 'The Street I Live In'. The children at three day-care centres reported what places and non-places play a significant role in their daily lives. These contributions were developed in response to the wish for stronger links between the inhabitants of the different housings, a wish voiced by some of the participants at the beginning of the process. To create together an exhibition turned out to be a good means to foster contacts between the 'old' and 'new Ginnheimer'. The many accompanying events helped to keep in touch and deepen the relationships. Another important subject in the context of a 'living room' is food and eating. There were two projects dealing with this topic, initiated by a youth centre and the staff of a primary school: they organised cooking sessions for groups, shared recipes and discussed how people ate in different countries. In this way, new contacts between Ginnheim residents of different cultural backgrounds and from different residential areas were created and intensified.

Various groups that have come together under the roof of the *Bundesverband der Migrantinnen* (Federal Association of Women Migrants) based in Ginnheim, participated in the exhibition with several contributions. Taking either an artistic or a documentary approach, the women explored the different meanings of the concept of 'home' - the flat or house one lives in, one's homeland, or where one feels at home - and reflected on the role their own particular place of residence and living conditions play in that context. Ginnheim's future was the subject of contributions dealing with the plans for urban densification in the district, and on community gardening as a way in which people can actively take ownership of and shape their own environment.

The Participative Process in Ginnheim

This exhibition project was especially extensive, concerning the contact to the co-curators, the support for finishing the contributions and even the process of designing the exhibition. This was probably the most consequent, but also the most laborious City Lab exhibition we realised so far. In many fields we asked for participation – and we always got some of it, sometimes unexpected: the participants helped building the exhibition; they were in charge of the exhibition, they built autonomous groups who realised their own projects – sometimes without the help of the Museum, but very often with an enormous need of communication.

We experienced that building a participative community takes some time, at least one year, until everybody knows which story to tell or which questions to ask. Furthermore, people need a few meetings to get to know each other – if so, the working process can be very productive because they help each other and develop new ideas. The preparation of the exhibition set free a considerable creative potential and encouraged people to start some long-awaited projects, such as an urban gardening project in a public space. This was special, because it was part of the exhibition and also part of an ongoing debate about public space. A group of about twenty-five persons took care of different planting pots on a church square. With the garden, the square became a social space, were people met, sat down and had a good time. Very different people and groups met there while taking care for their tomatoes or flowers: young children with their kindergarten, students and elderly inhabitants, ambitious and amateur gardeners – that made the project very communicative and charming.

Fig. 4. A public discussion held in the 'Kirchplatzgärtchen', an urban gardening project realised during the *Stadtlabor* in Ginnheim. © Alex Urban, 2013.

What Comes Next

The fourth *Stadtlabor* project will take place in a park called *Wallanlagen*, developed on the grounds of the former city fortification that was demolished in the early 19th century and first converted into private gardens. In the 20th century, it was transformed to a public park, which now surrounds the inner city of Frankfurt. The exhibition deals with this space and will open in May 2014. About 60 different contributions show different perspectives on this public park. It turned out, that the park is a highly sensitive place for the citizens of Frankfurt. Nearly everyone uses the park, at least once a week – it is a central mobility area for walkers and bikers, people who go to work or spend their free time. For some, it even is their home. This 'Central Park' means something different to almost everyone.

This *Stadtlabor* is again very different from the exhibition projects realised before. Here, fifty different people will present their opinions of a five kilometres long green area. The exhibition will be organised inside the park. Being the area right in the heart of the city, it is a sensitive space and the exhibition has to deal with new challenges such as permissions and technical requirement for outdoor installations in a public space.

For the first time though, we had to face some political and administrative opposition and media-related controversies which showed how the consequences of participation such as free expression of different opinions, are not always welcomed or valued by everyone. Nevertheless, the participatory approach works very well and proved to be the right way. The fifty co-curators are very engaged with the project, and have spent a lot of time, energy and even some money to make the exhibition happen. For the Museum, the concept of co-curating exhibitions with different people turned out to be right and very fruitful, even if it is very time-consuming. Raising ideas, working together confidentially and getting satisfying collaborative results in the end needs lots of time. To conclude, the participants bring in a lot of energy to the Museum work – and they trust the Museum to be a strong partner.

Why a City Lab?

Each of the *Stadtlabor* exhibitions focused both on particular places, with their characteristics, and on people's own experience. We think that as a city museum of today, we have to take account of these individual experiences; we have to consider them as a form of knowledge worth being collected and exposed. We no longer can explain the city in an authoritative manner. We consider everyone living in Frankfurt as an expert of the city. This means that theoretically, we have about 700,000 potential co-curators for the *Stadtlabor* exhibitions. Their expertise is not based on scientific knowledge but on the empirical, practical knowledge acquired through every day experience. This knowledge or the different perspectives and interpretations, the different meanings and senses of place can be expressed with the *Stadtlabor*. By working in a participative manner, we are confronted with topics that we might never have thought about, like

the swimming pool for example, and we learn a lot about our city and its inhabitants. We get to know the many different 'Frankfurts' coexisting in our city. With this approach, we take a step further to our aim of being an integral part of the city's society: we become part of a social network, a social network growing with each exhibition realised in the *Stadtlabor* series.
And what is the benefit for the co-curators? The *Stadtlabor* provides them a platform for self-representation. To realise an exhibition together with us, gives them an opportunity to reflect upon their neighbourhood and their local identity, to investigate the history of their house, their school, their association and so on; sometimes it even encourages them to change something – as was the case with the urban gardening project in Ginnheim: due to this project, a discussion about the design of the central square was set off. But people did not only complain about the empty and unpleasant place: with the little gardens they created a literally blossoming new meeting place in the neighbourhood.
By participating in a *Stadtlabor* project, creative potentials can be awakened. The leader of a Women's Migrants Association told us that she and the other participants of the Association were very pleased to discover how much unknown creativity they had and – what is even more important for us – they said that with the *Stadtlabor* exhibition they felt accepted and felt they really belonged to the city.

The *Stadtlabor* exhibitions give us the opportunity to connect with many different people who would never think that a museum could be their partner or could even be interested in their life. Thanks to these initiatives, people start thinking that our Museum has something to do with their lives and that it is a culturally relevant institution. Eventually, we believe this is quite a good side effect of our work! Especially since we live in a society that is constantly changing.

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The Pigorini Museum in Rome Facing Contemporaneity: A Democratic Perspective for Museums of Ethnography

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By presenting the commitment of the Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico 'Luigi Pigorini' in operating as a multicultural arena and a participatory space, Vito Lattanzi illustrates the different activities recently carried out by the museum, including cooperation with artists, contribution to international research projects, and collaborations with Universities and other cultural institutions. The essay highlights the distinctive approach of the museum in interpreting cultural diversity as a key element in the comparative reading of history and anthropology, and in employing material culture as a resource in developing inclusive heritage practices.

Luigi Pigorini created the Museum that is now named after him, cultivating in his mind the idea of a national museum of 'primitive societies', intended for the new capital of the Kingdom of Italy. The historical body of the seventeenth-century collection of Father Athanasius Kircher, housed in the Jesuits' Palace at the Collegio Romano in Rome, laid the foundation, more than a century ago, in 1875, for his ambitious project, which was modelled after the large-scale comparative museums of prehistory and ethnography that he had seen in Northern Europe. His project placed itself in direct opposition to the antiquarian passion that until then had been the driving force of collecting. It was based rather on the concept of a national museum that emerged

Fig. 1. The museum building. Courtesy of Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico 'Luigi Pigorini'.

from the French Revolution: a research laboratory at the service of science but, most importantly, a public space open to the pleasure of discovery and learning, through the representation of the world and the many facets of its cultural diversity.
This view, which today, in the light of contemporary globalisation and migration, we could define as 'transnational', presents the museum as a resource to be appreciated, rather than simply an irksome burden from the past.
The Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico 'Luigi Pigorini' has recently undertaken a great number of activities that mark a new path in its history and that provide an indication of the mission that our institution has developed over the past thirty years: (a) to interpret cultural diversity as a key element in the comparative reading of history and anthropology; (b) to employ material culture as a resource in knowing about and developing heritage practices.
The distance that separates us from the time and space of the collections' formation has not prevented the development of a reflection on the Museum's modernity, regarding the various possible cultural meanings of its heritage on display, as well as the general potential of Luigi Pigorini's and his successors' legacy - a legacy that may also be of use in today's metropolitan contexts, which, culturally speaking, tend to be increasingly composite.

Many museums of anthropology have also started to experiment with critical discourses around value-adding to cultural heritage and in-depth reflection on the impact of ongoing change in knowledge and communication processes. The place of the contemporary lies in the interpretative game that has several voices regarding the meaning of heritage. In the second half of the 20th century, the conservative vocation of ethnographic museums had crossed the experiences of identity construction of the native or local communities and diasporas.
In 1997 James Clifford suggested the idea that the museum could be viewed as a 'contact zone'. The inspiration for this reflection, as he recalls, came from an experience he had while staying at the Portland Museum of Art (Oregon, USA). The director of the Museum had organised a meeting between the curators and the Tlingit elders, to gather suggestions about the arrangement of a corpus of objects coming from southern Alaska and the western coast of Canada (Clifford, 1997). The expectations the Museum had were completely unheard: the Tlingit elders were eager to talk about something completely different, such as the constraints and the oppression the State and federal agencies had inflicted upon their community. The Museum curators were faced with dilemmas that went well beyond strict museographical and museological issues. The Museum found itself to be something other than a place for consultation and research; it had become a 'contact zone', a place for encounter, a place where different subjects interact and bring to the fore different questions, a place for dialogue where all the parties involved (museum, community, institutions) are engaged in the process of recognising and negotiating cultural heritage. In post-colonial times, the arrival of newcomers - especially migrants - in the cities gives rise to power relationships between old and new

citizens, producing negotiations between centre and periphery. Within this 'cultural arena' (Hannerz, 1998) the imaginative experience of the cultures of diaspora (Hall, 1990; Gilroy, 1993) is central and very significant. These global fluxes have involved museums, which have thus become important centres for recognition and mutual dialogue (Karp, et al., 2006).

In my experience, the Pigorini Museum became a 'contact zone' during the making of an exhibition about the ethnographic collections from Morocco. This exhibition, 'Tracce. Raccolte etnografiche dal Marocco' (Traces. Ethnographic collections from Morocco), was displayed from 11 December 2005 to 2 February 2006. I invited a Moroccan woman to identify the objects of the collections stored in the museum deposit, and together we did indeed identify many objects of the historical collection and rediscovered their meanings. This collaboration thus gave space for personal memories and remembrances, which were then developed in interviews and used in the exhibition (Di Lella, 2005).

This project wholly embraced the idea for a collaborative museum, already put into practice by Ruth Phillips at the Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia in Vancouver (Canada), to create a 'collectivity' for the inclusion of diversity. Our project aimed at the involvement of the city and the Roman citizens so as to create a new reference public, alongside the schools that had represented the most consistent number of visitors until then (Lattanzi, 2005).

Two further projects established in the summer of 2007 added substance to this idea. The two significant initiatives we planned for the year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)[1] were: 'Il museo incontra le comunità della diaspora extraeuropea' (The museum meets the communities of non-European diaspora, November 2007 - February 2008), and 'Saperci Fare. Educazione e comunicazione inter-culturale al museo' (To show one's skills. Inter-cultural education and communication at the museum, 4 April - 8 June 2008). The first initiative launched a series of encounters between the Museum and the representatives of the Mexican, African, Moroccan, Chinese and Peruvian Diasporas.[2] The second initiative, based on these encounters, was part of a project of the Ministry of Art and Culture called 'Mosaico. Insieme per i colori d'Europa' (A Mosaic of Colours. Together for Europe).

The aim of the Museum in the latter initiative was to install different exhibition spaces so as to allow for the realisation of a series of activities among the representatives of different cultures. Four exhibits about Asia, Africa, the Mediterranean and the Americas were organised. The idea was to recreate a multi-cultural arena where it would be possible to experience - thanks to the exhibition display - the real life of migrant communities. Each exhibit reproduced, through the display and the recreation of particular atmospheres, a specific cultural dimension.[3] We planned thematic workshops and guided tours for schools, each run by different diaspora representatives. We also organised book presentations and film screenings, and hosted performances, readings for children and

Fig. 2. The initiative promoted in cooperation with the Mexican Association to celebrate the 'Dìa de Muertos' (3 November 2007). Courtesy of Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico 'Luigi Pigorini'.

educational activities for families. The emphasis on inter-cultural dialogue allowed us - and the public - to interpret the Museum contents from present-day stories, and to create space for inclusion and participation in the Museum.

The encounter has thus been between people of different cultures, with their stories, ideas, needs and dreams. Beyond abstract principles, which are often recalled when talking about an 'inter-cultural agenda', this dialogic experience has underlined one of the main goals of the museum: to give rise to new forms of citizenship and to shareable ideas about cultural heritage.

In 2007, we were invited by the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale (MRAC) in Tervuren (Bruxelles) to participate in the READ-ME network - Réseau Européen des Associations de Diasporas & Musées Ethnographiques. The project was developed in collaboration with the Musée du Quai Branly (Paris) and the Etnografiska Museet (Stockholm); the MRAC was the project leader. In the framework of READ-ME 1 the anthropological exploration of the mask was proposed. The project's leading museum identified a contemporary and highly relevant pathway while suggesting the institution as the correct political arena for the negotiation of museum strategy. The presence of diaspora representatives of African associations on specific advisory bodies[4] in the MRAC provided concrete evidence of a real attempt at dialogue intended, on the one hand, to overcome the frictions in inter-cultural relations caused by the colonial past and, on the other, to look forward to transforming the museum into a participatory space for the revaluation of cultural heritage.

In exploring the relationship between diaspora and mask, READ-ME 1 was able to identify one of the major struggles of contemporary institutional politics: diaspora

Fig. 3. Performance of Peruvian dancers during the exhibition 'Saperci fare' (4 April ⁄ 8 June 2008). Courtesy of Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico 'Luigi Pigorini'.

needs to find expression and aggregation in the museum, to promote and display histories and experiences, perspectives and political stances. The general theme of the mask has allowed us ⁄ thanks to a semantic shift quite predictable but not so obvious in a museum context ⁄ to reflect on the ambiguity and the paradox of recognising each other, and building a new identity through reciprocal knowledge.[5] The ethnographic museum has, in this sense, fully revealed its natural tendency to 'mask' identity ⁄ be⁄ cause the museum displays by hiding, removing the contextual truth ⁄ but at the same time has also revealed itself as the ideal tool to 'unmask' what has been hidden and the hiding processes.

Amongst the objectives of READ⁄ME 1, there were at least a couple that deserved more in⁄depth work because of their complexity: certainly not to be resolved in a two⁄ year project. I am referring, especially, to the wish declared by the network to (a) invest in the valuable human resources found among the migrant population to present to the museum public a different view of the collections; (b) to propose to the diaspora associations a platform of dialogue and comparison on topics such as immigration and active citizenship, through a better understanding of the museum's role and of cultural heritage.

Starting from the statement of these two declarations of intent, it seemed appropriate to continue the collaborations begun with READ⁄ME 1 and re⁄launch the network programme from Rome, centring on the collections of the Museum and on the critical discussion upon the status of the ethnographic object. In the autumn of 2010 the project READ⁄ME 2 was therefore launched. The Pigorini Museum assumed the role of lead museum in the project, while the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale in Tervuren, the

Musée du Quai Branly in Paris and the Museum für Volkerkunde in Wien became the associate partners.

The project '[S]oggetti migranti: People Behind the Things' / READ/ME 2 aimed to re/examine our cultural background and that of the diaspora through direct encounter with the Museum's collection and by comparing, with the representatives of diaspora associations, the contemporary value of ethnographic objects now stored in the Museum. The aim of the READ/ME 2 project has thus been to give back to the objects a subjective value and to reconnect the experiences of the contemporary diaspora to the Ethnographic Collections found in the Museum in the modern era. The passive 'migration' of the objects stored in the Ethnographic Museum Collections that took shape during European exploration, conquest and colonisation has taken those objects from their lands and reassigned them under the label of generic humanities, removing the subjectivity from which they derived their socio/cultural meaning. In practice, they come from travels that embody deep experiences and the human and cultural histories of those who handled or took care of them. They are therefore vehicles of belonging and emotionality; they deal with memories and contribute to better defining the bounds of contemporary identity (Appadurai, 1988; Clemente and Rossi, 1999; Bodei, 2009).
During the project, the working group initially identified some objects from the collections, chosen because of their cultural histories, reflecting on their historical and contemporary meanings.[6] In the second phase, the group approached the development and the layout of the exhibition display, in which the associations involved could choose to 'adopt' objects with a view to eventually analysing their own 'migrant objects' according to both social and individual representative criteria. The adoption of objects by the diasporic associations was the pretext to build narrative tours around the journey that each object and people made.
The challenge of participative planning of the exhibition installation in Rome has given to the entire process a common goal, which united the working group in valuing the relationship between the Museum and the diaspora, and also the richness of a plural discourse about the Museum's heritage.[7] The dichotomy between us and them / a logical consequence of the anthropological discourse and display style of the whole of the 20th century / is by now a thing of the past and has given way to new interpretative approaches, based on dialogue and on reflexive analysis of the different interpretations of who we are (Bouttiaux and Seiderer, 2011).
The exhibition '[S]oggetti migranti: People Behind the Things' insists on that repositioning of the Museum in relation to the rationale of the modern era and redefines it in terms of a work open to historical evolution and to the interpretations of curators and visitors, with a special eye to the contemporary 'double gaze' of, on the one hand, those who are custodians of the cultural heritage and, on the other, those who recognise in it something of their own (Munapé, 2012).[8]

The Museum had thus rediscovered, under a different light, its mediating role in the processes of cultural production based on the memory of the past and its social uses. In some cases it began to rethink its mission in the name of a more direct involvement of the public and of its suggestions. This perspective – considered as being more 'collaborative' – has encouraged some interesting experiences, which can promote a new vision of the significance of the Museum and its collections and exhibitions, because the people involved have begun to claim the role of co-protagonists, alongside the curators, in the production of *expertise*. In this way, the ethnographic museum is offered to the public as a concrete space of recognition of diversity, an arena for comparison and negotiation between parties that are interested in the symbolic role of cultural heritages (Ferracuti, Frasca and Lattanzi, 2013). The paradigms of the new international order which we should focus our attention on today are two: dialogue (inter-religious and inter-cultural) and democracy (Allam, 2008). Museums (especially anthropology ones) can definitely play a strategic role in this context. The dialogue between museums and the public (and between museums and diasporas in particular) may help to come definitively out from the representation of culture as a shaped and defined universe, and may help us to see it as a multi-vocal and dynamic building process.

This is the specific goal of the ongoing project *Al Museo con... Patrimoni narrati per musei accoglienti* (At the Museum With... Narrated Heritage for Welcoming Museums) launched in February 2013 in cooperation with the National Museum of Oriental Art 'G. Tucci'. The aim of this project is to develop innovative strategies for the respecting of heritage and original ways to visit museum collections. It also wants to enhance the relationship that the two Museums, Pigorini and Tucci, enjoy with the different areas of the city of Rome, and with new audiences, in order to build and disseminate alternative and plural narratives.

The project is intended to foster a visit to the collections of the two Museums through six narrated paths, organised according to specific themes that will be created within specific narrative and writing workshops, conceived as a point of contact between cultural heritage and technological innovation, which the public will access through tablets and innovative forms of communication, including virtual reality and QR code technology. In this way, the users will be able to make an exciting personal journey, made up of a combination of real elements and three-dimensional elements, merged into a single communication channel.

Al Museo con... intends to increase the accessibility of the Museums by promoting alternative forms that allow the visitors to discover the permanent collections, enhancing the participatory and multi-vocal approach to the knowledge of the heritage. In such a way, there will be created a real model for participatory management through innovative methodologies and contents for cultural enjoyment, with the active contribution of diaspora communities, young students from a multicultural school and the community of deaf people, all active in Rome.

The strategies applied by the working team will be explained, such as:

- The *Narrative Approach*. Students, representatives of diaspora communities and associations of deaf people will take part in specific storytelling and writing workshops. Along with other qualitative strategies, the workshops aim at building narrated paths to visit the museum collections. The narrated paths will allow the goals of the museums to become more relevant and to bring the museums close to the intellectual and emotional experience of the people involved, giving value to the subjective views of the museums' visitors.

- The *Participatory Approach*. The project aims at promoting dialogical and relational ways to build heritage values and museum communication methods. The participatory process creates a bridge between different stakeholders who rarely have the chance to exchange views. This also allows a more democratic and inclusive access to the Museum collection and tends to increase forms of joint heritage preservation.

If heritage is 'the way in which individuals interpret past evidence *for present purposes*; one of which is the definition of themselves' (Matarasso, 2006, p.53), then the museum is one of the places where this process takes place thanks to the dialogue with its different audiences. Of course it is important not to misunderstand the social mission of the museum; invite, welcome, offer, listen and communicate, while placing the visitor at the centre as the protagonist of the experience (Turci, 2008). We must acknowledge that, above all, anthropology museums have been able to translate this aspect into good practice, in line with the aim of representing cultural diversity by filling the gap between objects and contexts and by involving natives and diasporas. The transformation of museum visitors from passive users into heritage agents is a strategic step towards creating active citizenship, that is at the heart of modern democracy.
In the museum's democratic space the dialogue between numerous voices on the meaning that should be assigned to cultural heritage is seen as a necessary goal: access, participation and representation/communication practices (Sandell, 2006) in the museum connect to the multi-cultural dimension of social life; the museum's purpose is to include and not exclude the people from the processes of patrimonialisation; the museum is an opportunity for creating relational cultural identities; the contemporary is a field of representations with objects and stories of the present (Bodo and Cifarelli, 2006).
The investment in dialogue and the liberation of a multiple view of cultural heritages gives strength to the reasons for our actions, especially in times of economic crisis like the one we are experiencing. Furthermore, given the critical juncture of our time, which has prompted many museum curators to take refuge in a self-referential relationship with the collections preserved in the storerooms they are responsible for, our approach at least does not betray the noblest functions of the museum.

As we know, democracy - of which the museum is one of the fundamental tools - has considerable costs, but an ongoing investment in human resources is necessary to increase the symbolic capital of civil society, and it can give hope for a change for future generations.

[1] Further information about the promoted events can be found at www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu [Accessed February 2010]

[2] Each encounter focused on a specific topic and had a specific title: 'Dìa de Muertos' (3/11/2007), 'The Museum and African Diasporas' (17/11/2007), 'The Moroccan House' (1/12/2007), 'Shaolin Mania'(16/02/2008), 'The Andean world enclosed in a retablo' (24/02/2008).

[3] Asia was represented by the 'Chinese Chadian', the teahouse, a typical place for encounter in which to meet and freely discuss; a meeting place in which to play cards; *mah-jong* or *weigi,* a space where it is possible to attend small theatrical pieces or musical entertainments. In the exhibition space for Africa ('Africa of the Heart') several objects related to non-verbal communication were put on display: objects involved with the transmission of knowledge and that are related to the telling of myths, ritual formulas and kinship genealogies. The exhibition space for the Mediterranean displayed a domestic environment ('Fatima's Living Room'), in which several activities took place such as: rituals of hospitality, the tea ceremony, textile works, and body art (*henna*), stressing their social and symbolic values. The Americas were exemplified by the recreation of a Peruvian context (*Huaylash*, the agricultural cycle), to illustrate the ideal bridge that connects the pre-Columbian Andean world with contemporary historical realities, including Diaspora..

[4] In 2004, the COMRAF (Council of MRAC - African Associations) was founded at the Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale in Tervuren. It is made up of members elected by the African associations who reside in Belgium, of people chosen among the different African communities and of the museum personnel. The COMRAF was established to help the renewal process of the Leopoldine Museum. It first started with the making of the permanent exhibition 'Congo: le temps colonial', a concrete and deep reflection on Belgian colonialism. Along with that, the COMRAF was key in the realisation of 'Africa-Tervuren', a biennial event from and about African culture. The READ-ME project itself stems from the collaboration between the Museum and the African diaspora in Tervuren.

[5] I am referring to the scientific workshops promoted by the network in Rome, Stockholm and Paris. 'Museum, Diaspora and Plural Identities', the first of this kind, took place in Rome in June 2008.

[6] While getting ready to install the exhibition in Rome, the curators of the Pigorini Museum shared the project and met with representatives of the following diasporic associations in Rome: *Buudu Africa, Ke'l Lam onlus, Associna - Association of Second Generation Chinese, Comunidad Peruana de Roma* and *Comunidad Catolica Mexican de Roma*.

[7] '[S]oggetti migranti: People Behind the Things' focuses on the migration journeys of objects that are stored in ethnographic museums. The exhibition included a section entitled 'Migrant Ideas': a space open to collateral events, installations and performances for the entire duration of the exhibition. The section has extended the project challenges to civil society, thus revealing its ambition to be an 'open work'. The museum welcomes plural perspectives and representations of contemporary issues, so as to attract and create the basis for a constructive dialogue with generally 'distant' publics.

[8] We planned the exhibition's itinerary on the basis of our dialogues with the representatives of diaspora associations involved. The itinerary starts at the Mother Earth that gave us birth, and ends in the Land from Across. It crosses places and times of the great journey that shapes the history of all people and things - a journey in which we all are migrants. Migration is seen from an historical angle, but also from an entirely contemporary and human point of view. These perspectives are exemplified by the exhibition scenography display, which gives expression to the potentialities of the topic of migration, and at the same time strengthens the plurality of views.

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From Colonial Subjects/Objects to Citizens: The Royal Museum for Central Africa as Contact-Zone

BAMBI CEUPPENS, Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium

Through a particular focus on the representation of Belgian colonial history in the Congo and Congolese diaspora, Bambi Ceuppens presents the renovation project which aims to accomplish the evolution of what was defined 'the last colonial museum in the world' into a postcolonial institution. The renewal of the Royal Museum for Central Africa is illustrated through the shift of 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, which have offered a sharper focus upon contemporary Africa and enhanced the role of the museum as a contact platform between Belgians and Africans.

On 1 December 2013, the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren, Belgium, closed its doors for the first time in its history for a three year renovation process. The scenario for the new permanent exhibition has changed quite fundamentally since the publication of an article by Camilla Pagani (Pagani, 2013) and in its current state gives, at most, an indication of the final result. Before presenting the current version, I will give a brief overview of the history of the RMCA and explain why it is so controversial. Next, I pay attention to a few seminal temporary exhibitions

Fig. 1. The emptied permanent exhibition spaces at the start of the renovation project in December 2013. © RMCA. Photo by J. Van de Vijver.

that have paved the way for the renovation, and give a brief summary of a few highlights of the current scenario. I end with a consideration on the relations between former colonial museums and diasporas from former colonies.
The fact that I deal only with the human sciences displays in the RMCA, risks reinforcing the erroneous impression that the RMCA is an ethnographic museum. However, this choice is informed by my training as an anthropologist, the relative lack of scholarly literature on the history of natural science collections and displays within the RMCA, and the focus in the academic literature on the RMCA on Belgian-Congolese colonial history and representations of Africans.
With the exception of the plans for the current scenario, the ideas expressed here are my own and do not necessarily reflect those of the museum director and my colleagues.

'The Last Colonial Museum in the World'

The origins of the RMCA go back to 1897, twelve years after Leopold II founded and became King Sovereign of the Congo Free State. When a world exhibition was held in Brussels in 1897, he seized the occasion to organise a pendant exhibition on the Royal Domain of Tervuren near Brussels, with propagandist and commercial aims. Whereas the world exhibition in Brussels displayed the marvels of the Industrial Revolution (Couttenier, 2010b, p.124), the neoclassical Colonial Palace in Tervuren with its art nouveau interior showed Congolese ethnography, geology, biology, industrial products and the military actions of the Congo Free State. In the park, visitors could watch 267 Congolese enacting scenes from everyday life in Congolese villages. Seven of them died; their bodies were first dumped in a communal pit and finally buried in seven graves around the village church (Wynants, 1997).[1]
With more than 1.2 million visitors, the exhibition was an enormous success. Transformed into a permanent exhibition, it received some 150,000 visitors annually. As the collections grew, Leopold decided to create a new museum, which he financed through the income generated by the *Fondation de la Couronne*, his royal private domain covering 25 million hectare in the Congo (Couttenier, 2010a, p.15; Couttenier, 2010b, p.124). The particularly brutal exploitation of rubber in the Congo Free State allowed the king to make an enormous fortune on the back of his Congolese subjects. In 1908, he was forced to hand over the control of his private fief to the Belgian state. He died one year later, before the Museum of the Belgian Congo opened its doors in 1910. It remained for a long time the most popular museum in Belgium (Couttenier, 2010a, p.155).

A Royal Decree of 1910 stipulated that all objects from the Belgian Congo should be assembled in the Tervuren Museum. When Rwanda-Urundi became a Belgian United Nation trust territory after World War I, this did not affect the name of the museum, but objects from the territory started entering the museum collections, albeit in much smaller numbers than objects from the Congo (ibid., p.71).

Two months after the museum celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in April 1960, the Congo became independent (ibid., p.55). Given the lack of a transition period, Belgian society did not quite well know how to adjust to the new situation. Scientific interest in the Congo quickly deteriorated and the Colonial University in Antwerp and the Africa Institute at the Catholic University of Leuven closed their doors (ibid., p.55). One may assume that the museum was too big to close, but since it was no longer under the auspices of the Ministry of the Colonies, its funding decreased dramatically.[2] Simultaneously, however, many scientists working for national colonial institutions in Belgium and the Congo were transferred to the museum. As it ceased to be an instrument of colonial propaganda, the RMCA, as it became known, lost its initial *raison d'être* and struggled to reinvent itself. While it legitimised its continuing existence by foregrounding its scientific mission (Van Impe, 2003, p.12), it failed to keep up with developments in the world of museums.

The RMCA has been called an ageing anachronism (Ewans, 2003, p.170) and the last colonial museum in the world (Gryseels et al., 2005; Hasian and Wood, 2010). The latter expression can be interpreted in two ways. First of all, the RMCA is one of the only colonial museums that survive in its original form as both a museum and research institution in the human and natural sciences with a primary, albeit not exclusive focus upon the colony that inspired its existence.[3] Historically, its scientists, like their colleagues in similar museums elsewhere, set themselves the task of classifying and inventorising all natural and human phenomena they could find in overseas colonies, considering collecting them a primary goal that took precedence over observing people and things *in situ*. Secondly, the expression 'the last colonial museum in the world' is used to refer to the museum's permanent exhibition which retained its colonial spirit right up to the RMCA's closure. The last major renovation was undertaken at the occasion of the last world exhibition that took place in Brussels in 1958, two years before Congolese independence.
Throughout the museum's history, various scientific departments were in charge of different rooms (Rahier, 2003, p.76), which means that the permanent exhibition was never conceived as a single, coherent, integrated whole, reflecting a single vision. 'In the absence of a conscious renovation tackling the whole permanent exhibition simultaneously, scientists of different sections replaced objects by new acquisitions and the accompanying insights' (Couttenier, 2010a, p.133, my translation; Couttenier, 2010b, p.147). As a result, different generations left traces as in a palimpsest (Couttenier, 2010a, 131). The permanent exhibition remained a jumble of the different exhibition manners that were at one stage fashionable throughout much of the 20th century (Wastiau, 2000, p.45) and the original storyline with its colonial message remained stable over time (Couttenier, 2010a, p.137), albeit not in the same form. For instance, ethnographic objects were initially used as colonial propaganda, later became mediators in the formation of a popular image of the Congo and its inhabitants, and subsequently were used

to illustrate 'primitivism', 'authenticity', and 'style' (Wastiau, 2000). In other words, while the objects remained the same, their interpretation changed, but in such a way as to leave the gap between (ex) colonisers and (ex) colonised intact.

Many critics read the last permanent exhibition as a text or stage which starts in the main rotunda that served as the museum's entrance (Rahier, 2003, pp.65-66; Saunders, 2001, p.22). Many visitors were struck by the contrast between the golden statues high above the ground conveying the message that Belgium brought 'civilisation' to the Congo and the dark statues representing Congolese indulging in different 'traditional' activities underneath (Rahier, 2003, p.115; Saunders, 2001, pp.22-23). In fact, the latter statues were added much later and the main rotunda only became the major entrance during the 1980s (Couttenier, 2010a, p.115; Rahier, 2003, p.69). In other words, in some instances, the museum has become more colonial as the colonial past has faded further into the distance.

Before the creation of the new history room in 2006, the physical and symbolic violence that characterised Leopold II's and Belgium's rule over the Congo and Belgium's rule over Rwanda-Urundi were kept outside the museum's walls (Couttenier, 2010b, p.125), while the role the RMCA had played as an instrument of colonial propaganda (museum) and as providing a scientific basis for the colonial administration (scientific institution) was never explicitly mentioned in the permanent exhibition. Consequently, the RMCA has been called a monument to denial (Adam Hochschild, cited in Hasian, 2012, p.477), a place of false memories (Boris Wastiau, cited in Ewans, 2003, p.170) and has been much criticised (Asselberghs and Lesage, 1999; Aydemir, 2008; Bragard and Planche, 2009; Hasian, 2012; Hasian and Wood, 2010; Morris, 2003; Rahier, 2003; Saunders, 2001; Saunders, 2005; Silverman, 2013).[4]

Against those who claims that Belgian society suffers from colonial amnesia as far as the brutality of Leopold II's reign is concerned (Ewans, 2003; Hasian, 2012) or that this period is the subject of a historical taboo (Van den Braambussche, 2002), I consider it more useful to argue that what happened in Leopold II's Congo has long been the object of what Benjamin Stora has called a 'cloistered remembering': cloistered memories are truncated, skewed and fragmentary, made up of legends and stereotypes elaborated out of the fear of telling the truth (Derderian, 2002, p.31). Following on from Stora (Stora, 1998), one could argue that the violence that went on in the Congo Free State has never been forgotten but that memories of it have long been dominated by narrow, simplified, mythologised forms of cloistered memory, associated with ex-colonials for whom Leopold II remains to this day the founding father of Belgium's colonial history, the visionary genius who 'gave' little Belgium an enormous colony (Derderian, 2002, p.39).

As former colonisers grow old, younger authors who have no direct memories of the colonial past have come to dominate public discourses on this period. This could be seen as marking a shift from communicative to cultural memory, i.e. from the interchange

of direct (biographical) memory of the recent past between contemporaries, to recalled history (Jan Assmann, cited in Pearce, 2007, p.26; cf. Van Doorslaer, 2003), where it is not that some of these young authors seem to express a continued nostalgia for the colonial past (Ceuppens and De Mul, 2009a; Ceuppens and De Mul, 2009b).

Temple or Tomb?

The RMCA has been likened to a church (Saunders, 2005, p.79) and a temple, built to glorify Leopold II and his 'pioneers', and to legitimise the colonisation of the Congo (Morris, 2003). It has also been compared to a tomb for colonial subjects whose material culture was put on display, and described as 'a repository of relics, of stuffed animals, of clothes removed from murdered bodies, of skeletons, and of items dug out of burial sites' (Morris, 2003, p.iii). The 'ethnographic' displays were put together in accordance to a salvage paradigm (Clifford, 1987): they privileged pre-colonial 'ethnographic' objects which would supposedly become extinct under the influence of colonisation. Anthropologists studying 'ethnographic' objects shared their methods with their natural history colleagues: they established taxonomies and classified objects that would be evidence of the evolution or diffusion of culture, by identifying and comparing them on the basis of material (and aesthetic) properties that could be attributed to them without recourse to the contexts in which they were produced, used and gained meaning (Fabian, 2004, p.49; Saunders, 2005, p.75). Taken from their original setting to which no visible reference was made, these objects remained mute, at times literally, e.g. musical instruments exhibited as soundless objects, but always symbolically, since being exhibited as objects for mere contemplation, they no longer performed the functions for which they were created. The RMCA was thus a site of absence: displaying anonymous objects and casting 'every identity into a pre-fixed static ethnotribal category', it kept their creators 'out of sight and out of history' [...] 'fixating them in a timeless past, denying them action and change' (Saunders, 2005, p.91). It was also a site of absence insofar that the violence that gave rise to its birth and postcolonial African cultures were not represented (Morris, 2003, p.iii; Saunders, 2001, p.26).

The RMCA 'thrived on forgetting Africa, that is, refusing to recognise "traditional" Africa's contemporaneity' (Fabian, 2007, p.70; Saunders, 2005, p.75). During its first decades, the museum acquired objects that showed the impact of the west on Congolese culture and society, which were seen as indicative of the susceptibility of colonial subjects to European 'civilisation' (Couttenier, 2010b, p.133). Few of these objects were on display in the last permanent exhibition; the 'ethnographic' displays largely gave the impression that colonialism and indeed decolonisation had never taken place. This apparent paradox can be explained by 'imperialist nostalgia': 'Someone deliberately alters a form of life and then regrets that things have not remained as they were prior to his or her intervention' (Rosaldo, 1989, p.107). Such nostalgia is always self-serving: only the

existence of 'uncivilised' colonial subjects justifies the ongoing presence of 'civilised' and 'civilising' colonisers. 'Regrets about change can be interpreted as regrets about loss of domination' (Dembour, 2000, p.148). As a form of imperialist nostalgia, 'forgetting Africa' reinforces an ahistorical perspective on the colonised's 'primitive' cultures and justifies ongoing colonisation.

The Interplay between Science and Popular Culture

Colonial museums like the RMCA were shaped by the relations between human and natural science disciplines that tended to be generalising in their focus insofar that they aimed at the representation of a type and its insertion in a developmental sequence for display (Bennett, 1988, pp.87-88). But for all their scientific pretensions, such museums managed to extend their ideological reach by tapping into popular culture, displaying colonial subjects in 'human zoos' that drew inspiration from circus shows (ibid., p.96). In addition to exhibiting real colonial subjects at the occasion of the 1897 universal fair, throughout its history, the RMCA has exhibited statues of Congolese acting out scenes from everyday life. Sculptures of Europeans commemorating historical figures differed from sculptures of Africans representing a timeless present in terms of a clear racialised and gendered dichotomy: always anonymous and half-naked, at times weak, savage or dominated, African (wo)men engaged in particular, traditional and mundane activities stood in sharp contrast with clearly identified, individual, fully-clothed, powerful, civilised, dominant western men undertaking a task that was at once, modern, universalist and heroic (Morris, 2003; Rahier, 2003, p.69; Saunders, 2001, pp.22-23).

By means of this type of statues and through the exhibition of real Africans and their 'ethnographic' objects, colonial subjects themselves were transformed into object lessons of evolutionary theory. The rhetoric of progress from the relations between stages of production was accompanied and superseded by a similar taxonomy based on the relations between 'races' and nations. Colonial subjects were represented as occupying the lowest levels of both material culture and 'racial' development (Bennett, 1988, p.95). In line with Hegel's assertion that 'Africa has no history' (Saunders, 2005, p.91), historians working on Africa long equated the absence of written documents with the absence of history as such (Couttenier, 2010b, p.130). The RMCA has long represented colonial subjects as if they had 'dropped out of history altogether in order to occupy a twilight zone between nature and culture' (Bennett, 1988, p.90; Aydemar, 2008; Saunders, 2005, p.91) and limited history to the activities of westerners from the end of the 19th century onwards.

Museums Versus Exhibitions

Many visitors and new employees were often struck by the sharp contrast between the time capsule they seemed to enter when visiting the permanent exhibition and the

activities behind the scenes. The last permanent exhibition was out of step with the scientific research undertaken within the institution, with the educational activities for school children and adults, with the development programmes and collaboration projects with partners in Africa and with the cultural projects undertaken with African diasporas in Belgium.

As far as temporary exhibitions is concerned, the renovation process started in 2000, with the temporary exhibition 'ExitCongoMuseum: A Century of Art with/without Papers', which aimed to bring into focus the first voyage of a number of the RMCA's tradition-based objects, considered 'treasures', from the Congo to Tervuren, by emphasising the physical and cultural violence that underscored this journey (Wastiau, 2000). The juxtaposition between tradition-based objects (by Boris Wastiau) and contemporary art (by Toma Muteba Luntumbue, the first curator of African descent in the history of the RMCA), was critically acclaimed (Arnaut, 2001; Brincard, 2001; Corbey, 2001; Saunders, 2005), but drew the ire of a former curator (Corbey, 2001, p.26) and prompted a parliamentary question (Boutmans, 2001, pp.8-9).

The temporary exhibition 'The Memory of the Congo: The Colonial Time' which opened in 2005, at the occasion of the 175th anniversary of Belgian independence, was the first exhibition to address the colonisation of the Congo in the museum's history. Hugely successful with the general public, it was also hugely controversial (Castryck, 2005; Castryck, 2006; Chrétien, 2005; Gewald, 2006; Vanderpoel, 2006).[5]
The year 2010 marked a double anniversary for the RMCA: the centenary of the opening of the current museum and the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I curated 'Indépendance! Congolese Tell Stories of Fifty Years of Independence', the first exhibition in the museum's history that tried telling Congolese history from a Congolese perspective and dealt with the presence of Congolese in Belgium. Roughly 90% of all objects, images and aural sources shown were created by Congolese or for an African market and belonged to the domain of popular culture (Enwezor, 2001). Only a small fraction of all these objects came from the RMCA's collections: most of the museum's collections were put together during the colonial era, many show a Eurocentric and male bias, few pertain to popular culture and fewer still relate to Congolese post-colonial history. We borrowed objects and songs from some 75 institutions and individual persons in Belgium and abroad. This rather put into perspective the RMCA's claim to holding the largest collections from Central Africa. This small exhibition did not have the same public success as 'The Memory of the Congo' and was all but overlooked by academics visiting the museum at the time (Silverman, 2013), but it was much appreciated by Congolese visitors and external museologists who evaluated the RMCA's 2010 temporary exhibitions and by the one scholar who reviewed it (Bragard, 2011).

Finally, mention must be made of 'Congo Far West: Arts, Sciences and Collections' (2011), the first exhibition in the RMCA's history that was based upon the works of two African artists in residence, the Congolese Sammy Baloji and Patrick Mudekereza (Baloji and Couttenier, 2014; Lagae and Cornelis, 2011).

However, drawing on Tony Bennett who highlights a fundamental distinction between public museums, which institute an order of things that is meant to last, and exhibitions, which inject new life into the exhibitionary complex (Bennett, 1988, p.93), Rahier argues that temporary exhibitions represent a form of tokenism (Rahier, 2003, p.77). From this perspective, the renovation of the RMCA was long overdue.

Reorganisation and Renovation

In 2002, at the invitation of the RMCA, the well-known Congolese artist Chéri Samba painted a painting that he called *Réorganisation.* It shows a tussle between Belgian employees of the museum who are trying to keep the sculpture of the infamous Leopard Man in, while the Congolese try with equal determination to get it out. Commissioned for the RMCA by the Ministry of Colonies in 1913, the Leopard Man is emblematic for Belgian colonial representations of Congolese. The scene is played out under

Fig. 2. The painting *Réorganisation*, 2002, by Congolese artist Chéri Samba. © RMCA.

the watchful eyes of the current museum director, Guido Gryseels who stands in the middle, but does not take a position.
Rather than summarising the whole renovation process, which was instigated by Gryseels more than ten years ago, I will limit myself here to the current version of the scenario of the new permanent exhibition. The RMCA has and will retain an exclusive focus on Africa and will increasingly focus on historical African diasporas resulting from the transatlantic slave trades and more recent diasporas. Africa is the oldest continent in terms of human history and the youngest in terms of its current population and the importance of its diasporas throughout world history cannot be underestimated, yet in Belgium, the public's general knowledge about the continent' cultures and history remains limited. Most Belgians are first introduced to Africa through a visit to the RMCA on a school trip or during a family visit, but a poll conducted by the Visitors Observatory of the Federal Scientific Institutions has shown that, while those who can be expected to take an interest in visiting the RMCA have a good grasp of African geography and biology, their knowledge of African cultures and history is poor. A study has established that Flemish secondary school students know next to nothing about Africa but are not embarrassed to express clear opinions on the continent (Kindt, 2006). Many Belgians deride the lack of attention paid to colonial history at school; many Belgian Congolese bemoan the absence of African history and cultures in the school curriculum (Remy, 2010, p.23; Theus et al., 2011, p.112) and blame Belgians for ignoring these subjects (Jamoulle and Mazzocchetti, 2011, p.84).
While the temporary exhibitions can deal with the whole African continent and all its diasporas, both historical and contemporary, the former Belgian Africa (Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda) and its historical and contemporary diasporas will be at the core of the new permanent exhibition. The focus upon diasporas is important to reject the colonial idea that colonial subjects were 'rooted' (Malkki, 1992).

The museum building is protected, as are some of its more contested colonial objects, including the four golden statues in the rotunda, the plaques commemorating Belgians who died in the Congo Free State, and the old glass cases that were created to parcel up Congolese nature and culture on a taxonomic basis. The museum thus faces the immense challenge of creating a postcolonial exhibition in what remains essentially a colonial building.
The visitor will start his/her visit in a new entrance pavilion. This will be connected with the main museum building by an underground passage, where temporary exhibitions and the first part of the new permanent exhibition, on the RMCA, will be shown. The visit to the permanent exhibition on the ground floor will start in the small rotunda where the geographical focus will be introduced. Throughout the exhibition, the focus will be on contemporary Africa, moving from the present to the past if necessary. The new exhibition will be interdisciplinary, put human beings at the centre, and privilege African perspectives.

Fig. 3. The museum building designed by Charles Girault, 1910. On the left: the new reception pavilion designed by Stéphane Beel Architects, 2009. © TVBeel.

The itinerary has been reduced and is now closer to the original one. The four corner rooms will no longer be part of the permanent exhibition. Instead there will be a music and language corner, a creative studio, an archive corner and a science corner where visitors can interact more directly with various collections.
The zones 'Arts, Expressions and Representations' and 'Societies' (Pagani, 2013, p.295) have been abolished and replaced by a single zone, 'Central African Societies', which is carved up in two parts on either side of the small rotunda – 'Everyday Life: Global, Urban, Rural' and 'Celebrations, Rituals and Ceremonies' – which shows the marked events that punctuate everyday life.[6] To the left of the small rotunda, one room will be dedicated to colonial history, starting with the transatlantic slave trade as a precursor to colonialism and ending with decolonisation, and another will deal with Central Africa's long (human) history from roughly 70,000 years ago to the 19th century; the 'crocodile room', which is still closest to its original conception in 1910, will remain as a 'museum in a museum'. The zones with reference to the biological and earth sciences retain their focus on 'Landscapes and Biodiversity' and 'Resources' respectively (Pagani, 2013, p.295). One of the lateral galleries in the same wing will be reserved for temporary exhibitions, so as to encourage visitors to move up from the cellar to the ground floor.
It must be stressed the scenario remains a work in progress and has continued to change at the time of going to press.

A number of major tensions have been identified. For example, given that the RMCA's collections tell us a great deal more about the institution than about Africa, how do we get the right balance between the perspective of the museum and of the Africans? Will the collections or the narrative shape the permanent exhibition? How do we create an exhibition on contemporary Africa with colonial collections? How do we match visitors' expectations with the messages that the museum wants to bring across?
If former permanent exhibitions offered an encyclopaedic view on Central Africa (in actual practice, mostly the Congo) as part of a scientific effort to contribute to the physical control of Belgium's overseas territories, a permanent exhibition in a postcolonial

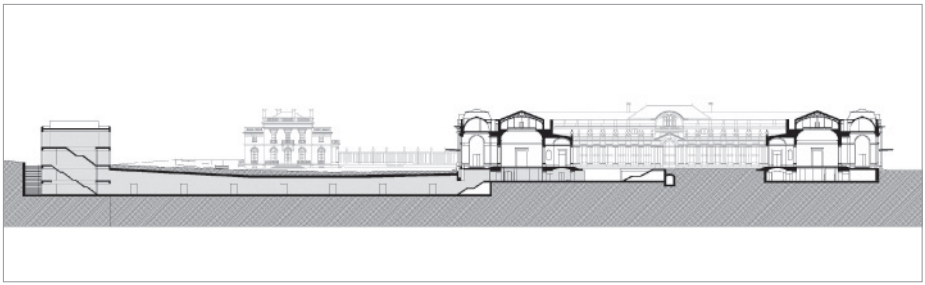

Fig. 4. A transversal section illustrating the connection between the old and the new buildings. © TVBeel.

museum cannot create an illusion of artistic and scientific completeness (Saunders, 2005, p.78). It might be tempting to say that since all knowledge is by definition partial and contingent, it suffices to create an exhibition that offers only partial and contingent knowledge on a selection of topics. However, it is precisely *because* all knowledge is partial and continent that the RMCA must clearly position itself and be explicit about its position. Moreover, if various scientific departments continue to be in charge of different rooms, there is a very real danger that some rooms will consciously or unconsciously retain a colonial spirit. Instead, the new exhibition must have a strong, historical storyline (Wastiau, 2000) and present a single, coherent vision.

The RMCA as a Contact-Zone

While very few Africans live in Tervuren and neighbouring villages, the RMCA has set itself the task of becoming a 'community museum' for Africans in Belgium. In 2003, Comraf, the RMCA's African commission for consultation, was set up. In the wake of 'The Memory of the Congo', a new history room was created in 2006, in collaboration with Comraf. For the preparation of 'Indépendance!', a member of Comraf joined the scientific committee for the first time in the museum's history, while another member worked as a consultant on gender and popular culture. Between 2008 and 2010, a member of Comraf was heavily involved in developing the storyline for the new permanent exhibition. In 2014, Comraf elected six experts of African descent to work in close collaboration with the project team.

In 2007, the then ethnographic section of RMCA set up READ-Me, 'Réseau Européen des Associations de Diasporas et Musées d'Ethnographie' (European Network of Diaspora Associations an Ethnographic Museums), a two-year programme financed by the European Union. The section was also involved in the European project RIME, 'Réseau International de Musées d'Ethnographie' (International Network of Ethnographic Museums) that set out to rethink the place and role of ethnographic museums that equally pays attention to diasporas and cultural dialogues.

Mary Louise Pratt has illustrated the contact zone as a social space 'where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today' (Pratt, 1991, p.33). The distances implied in the contact zone can be social as well as geographical. Thus, the concept can be equally applied to cultural relations within the same state, including the centre of (former) empires, where they are not only constituted through reciprocal movements of objects, messages, commodities and money, but also people, i.e. the arrival of immigrants (Clifford, 1997, p.195, p.204). Congolese in Belgium are a case in point.[7]
During the colonial era, tradition-based objects travelled freely from the colony to the metropolis, but the movements of their makers themselves and other colonial subjects were severely restricted (Wastiau, 2000). The immigration of Congolese to Belgium is largely a postcolonial phenomenon. Officially, there are now some 70,000 inhabitants of Congolese descent in Belgium. Approximately 50% live in Brussels, with the others being roughly equally divided between Flanders and Wallonia.
The Congo was the *raison d'être* for the foundation of the RMCA and the majority of the museum's collections come from that country. However, while Congolese generally take a huge pride in their country's cultural heritage, their relation with the RMCA is complex. Many think that it still represents the interests of ex-colonials rather than Congolese, accuse it of having looted Congolese cultural heritage, and basically consider it a lost cause: an institution that is beyond repair or redemption.

Among those who do take an interest in the museum, there appears to be a generational shift. While older Congolese demand that the museum does not exhibit tradition-based objects as art objects, but in their local contexts of production, usage and meaning, younger Congolese stress the importance of showing their country's long history. This suggests a difference between communicative and cultural memory (as previously illustrated).
My research on this topic is still ongoing, but thus far, neither the elder nor the younger generations seem to consider a proper representation of the violent origins of the Congo Free State and the RMCA as their primary concern. Some Belgian Congolese are baffled that many westerners are so obsessed with Congolese who died more than one hundred years ago while the international community seems wholly indifferent to the millions of Congolese who lost their lives in the two recent Congo wars and to the ongoing violence, including sexual violence as weapon of war in the East of the Congo.

The Contact Zone: Neo-colonial Collaboration?

James Clifford stresses that '[n]either community "experience" nor curatorial "authority" has an automatic right to the contextualisation of collections or to the narration of contact histories. The solution is inevitably contingent and political: a matter

of mobilised power, of negotiation, of representation constrained by specific audiences' (Clifford, 1997, p.208). It is not sufficient for museums to merely consult diasporas; for as they continue to control museum collections and the actual planning of exhibitions, 'they will be perceived as merely paternalistic by people whose contact history with museums has been one of exclusion and condescension' (ibid., pp.207-208).
Pratt uses the term autobiography to refer to 'a text in which people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them' (Pratt, 1991, p.34). Inviting Congolese to engage in such autobiography in the context of the RMCA's displays may only reinforce the museum's power to call the shots, by 'creating' and defining others in its own terms, leaving them only the option to respond. Nor is Congolese involvement a matter of ethnomimesis, the performance of culture and tradition (Robert Cantwell, 1993, cited in Clifford, 1997, p.200).

'ExitCongoMuseum' was a first attempt to reinvent the RMCA as a contact zone (Luntumbue, 2001, p.15), whose 'organising structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship - a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull' (Clifford, 1997, p.207, emphasis in original). While Clifford does not suggest that the model of the museum as a contact zone is based on reciprocity, Robin Boast concludes that the concept is neo-colonial insofar that museums continue to be in control and set out the terms and conditions of any type of collaboration (Boast, 2011; Pratt, 1991, p.38). Museums remain asymmetric spaces of appropriation, sites were others come to perform for, rather than with museum staff and have, at most, become 'platforms for a neocolonial positioning [...] in relation to the ex-colonial Other' (Boast, 2011, p.65).
Inviting Congolese as (co-)curators or artists in residency does not make for a true reciprocal working relationship. There are inevitably unequal power relations between long-term staff who have direct access to, expert knowledge on and curatorial control over collections and short-term Congolese collaborators who largely depend upon the former for access to archives and collections.
Reciprocity will always remain an unattainable ideal; the only way to establish more equitable relations between the museum and 'host communities' in Belgium and beyond is to transform the latter from guests into insiders, i.e. by employing them as decision-makers as far as museum management, curatorial control, scientific research and exhibition organisation are concerned. The notion of 'shared cultural heritage' is equally problematic insofar that the ownership by Africans remains largely symbolic, while the control by the museum itself is all too real. The French expression *patrimoine culturel partagé* (shared cultural heritage) does better justice to the relationship insofar, in that *partagé* can simultaneously refer to what is shared and what is separated.
As necessary and indeed inevitable it is that Africans become more directly implicated in the RMCA, it must be remembered that the institution itself is marginal within the

wider context of Belgian society. It follows that Africans will remain marginal within mainstream Belgian society if they are not simultaneously involved in more prominent public institutions.

Conclusion

Established as a colonial institution for creating ordered representations that contained, controlled, objectified and reduced the colonised world for the gaze of metropolitan citizens (Boast, 2011, p.63), the RMCA must decolonise itself by engaging in contact histories, becoming a border crossed by objects and makers and serving as a platform between Belgians and Africans. In order to 'remember' Africa, these contact histories must counter colonial perspectives on Africans which contrasted colonised 'primitive' and 'barbarian colonial subjects to colonisers' civilised societies', compared African 'tradition' to European history from an evolutionary perspective, equated 'civilisation' with individualisation, ascribed objects to whole groups ('races', ethnic groups and/or 'tribes'), reduced colonised peoples to legal subjects and passive objects in relation to active metropolitan citizens and exhibited 'ethnographic' objects that were identified and compared on the basis of material and aesthetic properties and seen as evidence of the evolution or diffusion of culture. A postcolonial perspective denies colonial evolutionary perspectives, and puts in the foreground Africa's long history, African societies' long history of exchange with other societies, African individuality, agency and perspective and the history of objects' local production, usages and meanings.

While western criticisms of the RMCA focus mainly upon the violent colonial past that created it, transforming it from a temple conceived to celebrate Leopoldian and Belgian colonialism to a tomb denouncing them, would maintain an almost exclusive focus upon western agents and reduce Congolese to bystanders in their own history; they would merely be transformed them from colonial subjects who should be grateful for western intervention, to victims of that same intervention.

The RMCA should not only recognise the violence to which Congolese were indeed subjected through much of their history since their first contacts with Europeans from the end of the 15th century onwards; it should first and foremost highlight what they have been denied for so long in the museums' permanent exhibition: the common humanity that they share with those who inflicted different types of physical and symbolic violence upon them. This can be best done by highlighting their artistic mastery, creativity, humanity, ingenuity and resilience as actors in their own history and creators of their own cultures, and by involving Congolese actively in the creation of the renovated museum.

[1] Since 2002, a delegation of representatives of African associations has intermittently paid homage to these men and women on 1 November, All Saints Day, when Catholics (Belgium is predominantly Catholic) honour their dead relatives.

[2] It was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1960, to the Ministry of Education in 1962 and finally to the Ministry of Scientific Policy in 1992 (Couttenier, 2010a, p.55).

[3] This observation is important in order to challenge the misconception that the RMCA is only an ethnographic museum (Dias, 2000).

[4] In this contribution I limit myself to reviews published in academic journals.

[5] I did not work in the RMCA at the time and devoted a critical newspaper column to it. However, as stated previously, I limit myself here to academic reviews.

[6] All these working titles remain open to revision.

[7] Since my research focuses on Congolese, I will not deal with Burundians and Rwandans here. I will not distinguish between those who have and those who do not have the Congolese nationality. For the sake of brevity, I use the term 'Belgians' to refer to 'whites' *vis-à-vis* Congolese in relation to the colonial past. This does not mean that I consider only 'whites' as 'real' Belgians.

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From the MNATP to the MuCEM: From a Museum of Rural France to a 'Citizen Museum' of Mediterranean Societies

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By illustrating the evolution of a 'museum of rural France' into a 'citizen museum', aimed at depicting the social and cultural dynamics at play in the different societies around the Mediterranean, Denis Chevallier highlights the 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. The overview on the methodologies implemented by MuCEM to interpret and represent the complex system of cultural interrelations connoting this context brings out the attempt to actualise a new founding paradigm for museums of society, moving from cataloguing specific cultural characteristics to researching the various forms of cultural change.

Several among the two million people who visited the new Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations (MuCEM) during its first eight months, between June 2013 and February 2014. were unaware of the institution's one hundred years of history, that began in the Trocadero Palace in Paris.

The *Salle de France* room was opened in 1897 as part of the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro*. It would later develop into t*he Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires* (MNATP), established in 1937 by Georges Henri Rivière. In 1970 it moved into a dedicated new building in the Bois de Boulogne, in West Paris. Along with the *Centre d'Ethnologie Française*, the ethnology research laboratory it housed from 1966 to 2005, the MNATP was long considered a model for its revolutionary exhibition design which inspired many ethnographic museums around the world.

However, after the first two decades in the new building, from 1970 to 1990, the institution had to come to terms with failure on two fronts: a steady and sustained drop in the number of visitors and an increasing gap between the research carried out by the CNRS team and the interests of the museum curators.

In 2000, against this backdrop, the French Ministry for Culture approved a proposal by the curator Michel Colardelle, conceived to radically transform the institution and move it to the Mediterranean coast in Marseille, extending its field of interest to all Europe and the Mediterranean Basin.[1]

This text looks at the transformation of this ethnographic museum and the re-evaluation of its collections from a dual academic perspective - ethnology along with history/geography - and from the perspective of its identity - a shift from a museum of French culture to a self-proclaimed *musée de société* focusing on the Mediterranean.

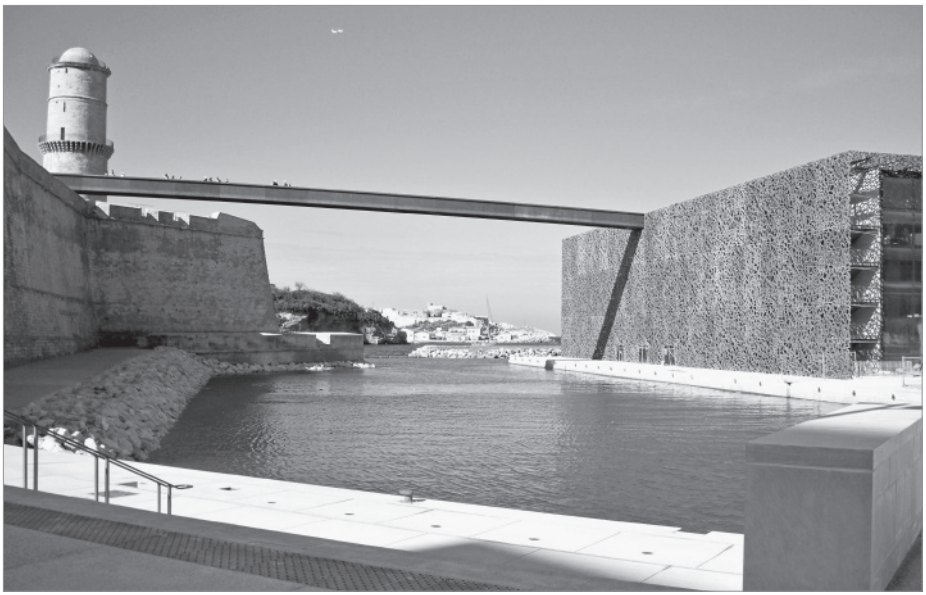

Fig. 1. View of the southern front of the MuCEM and the footbridge to Fort Saint Jean.
Photo by Luca Basso Peressut.

Fig. 2. Visitors queueing at the entrance of the Museum during the opening of the 'At the Bazaar of Gender' exhibition. © MuCEM.

New Focus, New Challenges for a Citizen Museum: Debating Cultures and Societies of the Mediterranean

The change created by expanding the museum's scope to the whole Mediterranean Basin provided the opportunity to redefine the museum's scientific and cultural content. What research and which collections would serve the institution's new objective of shedding light on the social dynamics in different countries around the Mediterranean? Which disciplines and methodologies should be used to move from presenting established criteria that create a sense of regional or national identity to interpreting whole systems of cultural interrelations? What are the boundaries of the Mediterranean region in a globalised world where flows of trade, travelling, cultural influences and migration are interrelated? Also considering that the area of interest extends far beyond the strict geographical limits defined by the Mediterranean Basin?

MuCEM is defined as a museum of 21st century civilisation, that aims at establishing a new founding paradigm for *musées de société* by moving from cataloguing specific cultural characteristics to researching the various forms of cultural change.
This paradigm shift is more than just a change from a 'Museum of the Self', typical of European *musées de société* built to affirm or even exaggerate (and sometimes invent) the distinctions that underlie cultural diversity, to a 'Museum of the Other' (L'Estoile, 2007) which aims, as the ethnographic museums of yesteryear, to present supposedly irreducible cultural differences and distinctive features. The shift is also reflected in the MuCEM's aim of becoming a citizen museum dedicated to researching and fostering different ways of being citizens in the Euro-Mediterranean area, and a place for intercultural relations, exchanges and debates. This radical shift of paradigm is consistent with the observation made by Arjun Appadurai, who asserted that: 'Around the world [...] groups are no longer tightly territorialised, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious or culturally homogeneous. We have fewer cultures in the world and more internal cultural debates' (Appadurai, 1996, p.48). MuCEM is thus a new *musée de société*, aiming to develop an identity as a 'citizen museum' in both senses of the term: this highly popular institution - whose success is witnessed by the huge number of visitors[2] - plays a significant role in the enhancement of the image of Marseille, and organises cultural events which intend to spark a wide debate on the meaning of citizenship across the Mediterranean.

A Research and Collections Policy that Serves the New Focus

As with any *musée de société*, collections[3] alone cannot fill the area of interest of the museum. They merely serve as one element of the museum discourse which aims at building a cultural and scientific frame to the collected items. For this reason the MuCEM extensively uses a lot of documentary photography, contemporary posters, films and the full range of digital communication tools such as interactive maps and animations. The

artefacts illustrating the social dynamics at play in the Mediterranean area are displayed alongside the 250,000 objects and hundreds of thousands of documents (photos, images, posters, maps).

The widening of these collections is developed first and foremost through a scientific approach typical of *musées de société*, which is based on field surveys. Since 2000, when it was decided to broaden the Museum's interest to the rest of Europe and the Mediterranean, the MuCEM has launched around fifteen survey campaigns focusing on compelling contemporary themes – such as AIDS care and how the disease is socially perceived; changes in gender-related rituals; job salaries in contemporary cities; wearing veils and headscarves; football fan culture;[4] aspects of worship and pilgrimage shared by the various monotheistic faiths;[5] waste-based economies,[6] etc.

This work has spawned scientific publications and virtual exhibitions,[7] as well as thousands of hours of audio and video recordings, photographs and objects which are being stored by the institution and will be made available to the general public at the Resource Centre and on the Museum's website.[8]

All the documents also feed into the museum's major exhibitions. For example, the AIDS campaign around Europe and the Mediterranean has formed an internationally-unique collection of over 15,000 items related to different public policies and private risk prevention practices to fight the disease. A number of these objects were included in the 'At the Bazaar of Gender' exhibition to illustrate how battles for the recognition of sexual minorities have influenced perspectives on homosexuality.

In addition to collecting documents and objects, the Museum promotes initiatives and exchanges with international networks. Agreements have been made with research centres in France and abroad, in order to draw on the expertise of researchers and specialists. Since it is impossible for a single museum to have in its staff experts of all different cultures and disciplines, we decided to establish international partnerships with universities, research centres, and museums in different countries.

Through these research and collection strategies, the MuCEM envisions the Mediterranean as a place for interactions of all kinds, leading to comparative and multidisciplinary approaches.

Exhibitions as Promoters of Discussions and Debate: the MuCEM as a Forum

MuCEM has a dual vocation: it is a place for developing and exploring new forms of citizenship, and a forum for contemporary cultural debate within its field of reference. The programme for 2013 clearly reflected these goals. All the exhibitions were designed to meet the first objective of documenting and making accessible to a wide audience new social developments in the Mediterranean: the long-running exhibition 'Gallery of the Mediterranean', that will be on display for three to four years; two temporary exhibitions, 'The Black and the Blue, a Mediterranean Dream' and 'At the Bazaar of Gender, Feminine-Masculine in the Mediterranean';[9] several exhibitions about contemporary

Fig. 3. Inaugural exhibition 'At the Bazaar of Gender, Feminine⁄Masculine in the Mediterranean' (7 June 2013 ⁄ 6 January 2014). Curated by Denis Chevallier, Exhibition Design by Didier Faustino. © MuCEM.

artists dealing with challenging issues of Mediterranean societies (such as migration or the 'Armenian question'); in addition, a specific area was dedicated to the screening of archived television broadcast material related to the Mediterranean.[10]
Alongside the exhibitions, a busy programme of performances, film screenings, and lectures was conceived to fulfill our second goal: transforming the museum into a forum for all forms of intellectual and artistic expression, willing to investigate compelling social issues related to the Mediterranean area.[11]

By enriching the cultural offer of other existing French institutions such as the Musée des Confluences in Lyon,[12] the Musée du Quai Branly and the Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration in Paris, and operating as part of an international network of museums and research centres focusing on popular culture related to European and Mediterranean civilisations, this new national museum is set to provide an essential contribution to the ongoing debate in contemporary society. Eventually, it will play a key role in the cultural growth of Marseille, which has historical connections with many different cultures and is naturally inclined to host and promote dialogue and exchange among peoples, who are so different and, yet, so alike.

[1] This initiative is illustrated in the Scientific and Cultural Project approved by the French Ministry of Culture in July 2012.
[2] The visitor monitoring service provides information on visitors' profiles.
[3] This in spite of the extensive collections of the European Department of the Musée de l'Homme, transferred to the MuCEM in 2005 and including over 35,000 artefacts, over half of which relate to Southern Europe.
[4] Exhibitions planned for 2016.
[5] Exhibition planned for 2015.
[6] Exhibition planned for 2016.
[7] Many exhibitions can be viewed on the Museum's website, including the one on Mediterranean rites of passage.
[8] Many of these campaigns have provided a basis for virtual exhibitions that have become part of the Ethnologic Research Multimedia Collection. For example, 'La cornemuse', 'Voyages du verre' or 'Féminin/Masculin: Histoires de couples et construction du genre'.
[9] During the opening period, which lasted 7 months, these exhibitions received 600,000 visitors, a record-breaking number for the city of Marseille.
[10] This area was named *Médinathèque* with reference to the partnership with the *INA Méditerranée* institution which supports the project.
[11] Between the opening in June 2013 and the end of the year, over 250 live shows, concerts, performances, film screenings and other events were organised.
[12] Opens at the end of 2014.

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The New Musée de l'Homme and Its Public

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Cécile Aufaure presents the intensive renovation work of the Musée de l'Homme, ensuing from the development of a new project around the museum's anthropology collections from a biological, physical and cultural angle, and asserting its fundamental vocation as a science museum. This renewal, related with the enhancement 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.

The Musée de l'Homme, located at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris and part of the Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle, was closed to the general public in March 2009. The Museum is undergoing a major renovation process, aimed at renovating its architectural organisation, as well as its scientific and cultural structure; it will reopen in Autumn of 2015.

The Musée de l'Homme was founded in 1937. At that time, the aim was to bring together, on the one hand, collections from the former Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro founded in 1882, and, on the other hand, the Anthropology and Prehistoric collections from the Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle founded in 1793. The vision of the Musée de l'Homme's founder, Paul Rivet, was to create a multi-dimensional approach to the study of mankind, contemplating the human species as an indivisible whole along the spectrum of time and place.
This modern, anti-racist and pluridisciplinary vision was ahead of its time and still shapes our mission today.
However, starting from the 2000s the collections of the Musée de l'Homme have undergone great changes. The Non-European Ethnography collections have been transferred to the new Musée du Quai Branly in Paris, which opened in 2006; the European Ethnography collections have gone to the new Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM), which opened in Marseille in June 2013.

As a consequence, the Musée de l'Homme now has the opportunity to build a new project around its Anthropology collections from a biological, physical and cultural angle, thus asserting its fundamental vocation as a science museum rather than a museum of civilisation, and its aim to explore the evolution of the human species from the

beginning to the present day. Thus, two principles declared by Paul Rivet back in 1937, are still at the core of the philosophy of the renovation project:

- *a museum dedicated to the education of the public at large*, i.e. in contemporary language, a museum accessible to all population groups, preference being given to none;
- *a research laboratory museum* ensuring a connection between the scientific community of researchers and the public at large.

Let us now take a look at how both these ambitious concepts are being included in the Musée de l'Homme renovation project, and how the institution intends to give public access to the museum collections.

The Museum Collections: Connecting with the Public

A museum is above all constituted of the collections that justify its existence. Therefore, these collections should be made available to the general public as they belong to the people. The Museum is the guardian of state-owned collections, part of an inalienable and statutory national heritage, in accordance with French Law and applicable to all collections in national or regional museums. It should be said, however, that this interpretation of the law is not always shared unanimously by everyone. For instance, the community of researchers allege that they have, in certain circumstances, 'ownership' rights for the noble purpose of carrying out research work. This is particularly the case in the area of unusual human fossils and, to a lesser extent, in the area of those most ancient artefacts made by man.

Nevertheless, inasmuch as the driving force behind our project is to make available our collections for viewing by the general public, the question arises of how to treat the collections at the core of the Musée de l'Homme renovation project. These are the Prehistory and Physical Anthropology collections of the Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle, which were gathered mainly during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. They are remarkable in that they are a witness to the then emerging scientific studies in the areas of prehistory, anthropology and ethnology.

We would like to illustrate this point with the following examples:

- The 600 plaster busts from the collection of Professor Franz Joseph Gall and his student, Pierre Marie Dumoutier, which were used to defend the phrenology theory promulgated by Prof. Gall at the beginning of the 19th century. According to this theory, soon after to be rejected, the shape of the skull was a means of identifying the characteristics and aptitudes of humans.

- The biface stones excavated in the Somme River Valley by Jacques Boucher de Perthes in 1859 and annotated by him. These stones enabled him to construct a chronological frieze that illustrated the contemporary presence of Man living

alongside now extinct species. Such artefacts are a remarkable witness to the birth of prehistoric science.

- The ivory slab from the so-called Madeleine Cave in Tursac, Dordogne which was discovered in 1864 by Edouard Lartet, a palaeontologist and historian. This slab is deemed to be part of the foundation pieces giving rise to what is now known as the period of Prehistory. It illustrates a mammoth carved on a fresh ivory slab, undoubtedly from the tusk of a recently slain mammoth, thus confirming de Boucher de Perthes' theory and so enabling prehistory studies to take their rightful place in science.

- The so-called 'Laugerie-Basse Prehistoric Venus', part of the collection of the Marquis Paul de Vibraye. It was discovered in 1864 and exhibited among many other items from the aforesaid collection at the 1867 World Exhibition, in what was known as the 'History of Labour Gallery'. Actually, in keeping with its function as an archaeological exhibition, this gallery exhibited artefacts coming from different peoples known to have existed up to the 18th century. The section devoted to what were then called 'ante-historic works' caused repercussions inasmuch as the subject became part of the on-going debate relating to the High Antique Period of Mankind. Hence, the 1867 World Exhibition is considered to be the first to include prehistoric items for viewing by the general public.

- A collection of bones excavated by Denis Peyrony between the years 1909 and 1921 in what is known as the 'Ferrassie Cave'. These bones were identified as belonging to seven Neanderthal individuals, and among them was found a magnificent skull. From photos taken at the time of the dig, it seemed clear that the excavation site was an ancient burial place. This discovery was a step forward in the process of 'rehabilitation' of Neanderthal Man, contributing little by little to the removal of the 'Brute' image he had been saddled with.

- Cro-Magnon fossil remains, among them a skull that was identified as belonging to an adult male said to have lived 28,000 years ago. It was uncovered in a dig carried out in 1868 at the Eyzies-de-Tayac cave in Dordogne by Louis Lartet (Edouard Lartet's son). The dig revealed many other human bone remains, artefacts such as decorative necklaces made of shells, and also some lithic tools. These fossilised human remains, the first to be excavated in Europe, were used by anthropologists Armand de Quatrefages and Ernest-Théodore Hamy in 1874 as a base to define Cro-Magnon Man. Thereafter, this was the terminology used to designate all fossilised human remains excavated throughout Western Europe of what is considered to be Modern Man, known today as *Homo Sapiens*. This, the species we descend from, saw the light of day in Africa some 200,000 years ago, making an appearance in Western Europe about 40,000 years ago, at a time when Neanderthal Man was still present and both species lived alongside each other.

As a consequence, all the above mentioned items, belonging to the Museum collections, contribute to the building of the present project and act as strong evidence to uphold the concept 'History of Science'.
However, the question is whether this evidence is sufficient to support the underlying theme of the permanent exhibition gallery to be built around it. Should the new museum be turned into a 'Science of Mankind' museum? This would have been possible and coherent 'on paper', but would it then have been possible to create a museum for everyone? Not really!
Looking into the study of the history of science retrospectively, it's obvious that a Science of Mankind Museum would require prior knowledge by the visitors. Such an approach would undoubtedly be of special interest to researchers, teachers and informed amateurs on the subject. Nonetheless, should these categories be our only target? This is not our opinion and not what we have set out to do. We sincerely believe that the extraordinary task entrusted to the new Musée de l'Homme in the area of education should be aimed at all categories of visitors, irrespective of origin or age; that is to say, the idea of a Musée de l'Homme targeting a specific category cannot be upheld.
Hence, the new Museum, in constructing the message to be passed on to its visitors, cannot base its conception on its collections alone. Clearly, in wanting to target the population as a whole, it must of necessity include current reflections on the origin and the future of the human species. No French museum up to now has opted for this approach, which was chosen to tell the story of the human species from its origin up to the present, permanently exploring the social, cultural and biological dimensions of living beings so closely intertwined.
Within this scenario, the history of science shall not be absent; it will, however, be introduced at a second level, for example in showcases or through other transversal scenarios where the aforesaid collection items will be given their true value.
Finally, in targeting the public at large beyond geographical borders, the choice has been made to put into perspective our own vision of mankind and its environment (obviously influenced by our Western World approach) together with other cultures and conceptions concerning relationships between humans and non-humans.

Research in the Museum and the Public

Returning to the foundation concepts of the Musée de l'Homme, the second of these was that it should be a research laboratory museum. Thus, the Museé de l'Homme, in keeping with the vocation of its parent museum, the Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle, will be endowed with the function of being both a research centre and a museum. This is quite original within the French concept of museums. The project will include a Research Institute dedicated to the study of Human Evolution. Here, 150 university graduates will undertake research work dedicated to a variety of subjects in the areas of social, human and natural sciences. Practically speaking, on the one hand,

4,000 square metres of the building will be given over to offices, research laboratories, a university library containing 65,000 publications in the areas of prehistory and anthropology, classrooms for Master-level students, and about 500,000 referenced collection items dedicated to research studies. On the other hand, the permanent and temporary exhibition halls will occupy 3,500 metres of the building. The aim is to present to the public research work in progress and to give information on the latest discoveries or hypotheses in the area of Human Evolution. However, this will be done figuratively speaking. The research laboratories and the reserve collections will not be directly accessible to the museum visitors except on special open days, or eventually by appointment on request. Rather, the choice has been made, given the architectural complexity of the Palais de Chaillot building, to illustrate through museographic use of space, as clearly as possible, data emanating from research projects along with the methods of investigation used. The idea is to associate several areas and appropriate tools to this effect.

The Balcony of Sciences

Concretely, the concept of openness connecting the research work and the visitor's experience will be embodied in an architectural and museographic space to be called 'The Balcony of Sciences'. It is to be located at the core of the museum building, precisely at the intersection between the temporary exhibition hall and the research laboratories, and visitors will be able to see it immediately on arrival through the staircase after purchasing tickets at the ticket office. The Balcony of Sciences therefore will be visible both from the entrance hall and at the end of the permanent exhibition.

This Balcony of Sciences will have in fact a dual function. In the first place it will enable the visitor to be more aware that the Museum is also a Research Institute on the subject

Fig. 1. The 'Aile Passy' (West Wing) of the *Palais de Chaillot*, home to the Musée de l'Homme and the Musée de la Marine. © Jean-Christophe Domenech, MNHN.

of Human Evolution - the visitor will actually be invited to become acquainted with the research teams, the themes under study, the research laboratories, the collections under study, the different subjects being taught, the University Library, and all this by a diversity of tools such as videos, interviews and artefacts.
Its second function will be to keep the visitor updated on the research being currently carried out in Human Evolution, results from field work, genetics, analyses, archaeological findings, and new data furthering knowledge on ancient collection items. Information deriving from seminars and study groups will be communicated in a simple and interactive transversal way using digital maps, movable retractable video screens and showcases. Through such a straightforward and clear museographic presentation, the visitor should be able to access easily all such data.

The Data Centre

The Data Centre, located near the entrance hall, will afford the visitor other means of access to documentation, mostly through audiovisual aids. Here will be available information on the history of the Museum and on the building, together with documentation relating to the various themes developed in both the permanent and temporary exhibitions. It will also be a place where one can sit down and take stock of the information in a relaxed fashion, and where museum personnel will be on hand to assist and explain as necessary.

The University Library

This library will be dedicated to research work specialising in such subjects as prehistory and anthropology. However, the decision has been made *not* to reserve its use only for researchers and post-graduate students but for it to be accessible to all. Right of access will just require a simple registration procedure: access to knowledge should be unrestricted, although we are conscious that merely by turning a key one will not necessarily open the door to knowledge for all. Thus, the Balcony of Science will clearly signpost the library for the visitor and mention the availability of its extensive documentation to the general public, leaving it to the individual to act upon this.

Auditorium, Classrooms and Pedagogic Workshops

Here the general public will have a more human contact with all the researchers associated with the Musée de l'Homme through a series of conferences, debates and public lectures given by them. This proposed openness between the Research Institute and the Museum will function at different levels and also behind the scenes.
Our ambition is to develop the concept and organisation of the Museum in such a way that the skills of both the museologist and the researcher will come together to build a

Fig. 2. The in-progress renovation of the Balcony of Sciences. © Jean-Christophe Domenech, MNHN.

cultural programme strongly connected with the research in progress. It will thus be necessary to put in place an administrative process enabling efficient interdepartmental decision-making.

Already, the Museum's researchers in human sciences have been asked to collaborate in the selection of contents both for the permanent exhibition and for the Balcony of Sciences, and their proposals and collaboration will also be solicited and more than welcomed in the development of the temporary exhibitions and cultural programmes to be set up shortly.

Conclusion: The Musée de l'Homme and Its Public

The collections will be made available to the public at large, as specified by the Museum's founder, Paul Rivet, for whom the aim and mission of the Musée de l'Homme was to awaken the interest of and inform all social groups. To this end he wished that the Museum should stay open in the evening so that the workers could come. He said 'all can be explained easily by a simple language', and the name Musée de l'Homme, suggested by André Schaeffner in 1933, was immediately adopted by him, and his assistant Georges-Henri Riviére, as a fitting name for a museum that covers all disciplines, excluding none. It is the aim of the Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle, throughout its different sites, to combine scientific requirements and accessibility to the general public, especially families. For the Musée de l'Homme this means a first approach through the permanent exhibitions that illustrate the essential

Fig. 3. The Phrenological Collection of the Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle/Musée de l'Homme.
© Jean-Christophe Domenech, MNHN.

steps in the history of Man, followed at a further level by the history of science. The Musée de l'Homme talks to us, because it talks to every woman and every man about all women and men.

'Putting the visitor at the centre of the Museum'. That could be said to be our slogan, and it is certainly our aim. Visitors will be able to buy a book or an object in the shop, to do research in the library or the Data Centre, to assist at a conference, to enjoy a meal, but they will also be encouraged, during their visit, not only to admire the objects but to take the initiative in choosing how to look at and respond to what is presented.

Furthermore, they will be encouraged to ask the questions they wish answered in future events, questions such as: What is a human being? What kind of animal are we? Since when have humans appeared on earth? How has the human race evolved? What is the future of our species in this world we have shaped and are now putting in danger?

All biological, cultural and societal elements must be taken into consideration to study Man as a whole, and this demands the widest possible multidisciplinary approach between human and natural sciences. That this multidisciplinarity already exists in the Research Institute on Human Evolution - paleoanthropology, primatology, prehistory, geochronology, ethnology, social and biological anthropology, demography, ethnoecology, ethnomusicology, ethnolinguistics, geography - is what makes the Musée de l'Homme different from other museums. Whatever the theme studied, whatever the way it will be communicated to the public (exhibitions, conferences, seminars, films),

these elements must always be taken into consideration. Man cannot dispossess himself of his biological state or the society in which he lives. He is, to quote Edgar Morin, '100 per cent biological, 100 per cent individual, 100 per cent social.'

Another strength of the Musée de l'Homme is its capacity to adopt a large chronological perspective, from the origins of the earth to the present. Thanks to this perspective we can better evaluate what is at stake today on the basis of long-term evolution.
A research, laboratory and a teaching centre alongside a museum with its collections open to the general public; a venue that enables up-to-date research to be presented to the public with the help of the researchers, museographically and through conferences and related events: this is what the Musée de l'Homme Project has set out to accomplish. The 150 or so researchers will be working here in the various areas of Human Evolution, past and present, endeavouring to come up with responses to questions connected with genetics, paleoanthropology, anthropology, ethnobiology, and prehistory. These researchers will transmit the results of their findings in collaboration with their museographic and cultural development colleagues. It will be a venue for debate, conferences, exhibitions, research work and study. It will be a sort of tool box aimed at the understanding of the human species through related artefacts from the Museum's collections, and through the discourse of those doing research work.

A House for Untamed Thinking: Re-connecting Research and Display at the Museum of Cultural History

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The essay illustrates the vision behind the major institutional changes that are taking place at the Kulturhistorisk Museum in Oslo. By focusing on a sequence of cross-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, Peter Bjerregaard questions the role of scientific thinking and practice in 21st century museums - and, in general, in a contemporary world.

This text describes major institutional changes which are currently taking place within the Museum of Cultural History at University of Oslo (Kulturhistorisk Museum, KHM). It introduces a project - still very much a *vision* - that is currently in the planning phase and still ongoing. Therefore, this essay does not aim to present an analysis neither suggests any specific recommendation for 'best practice'. It rather wishes to address one of the major goals of our institution (and in general of a university museum), i.e. the process pertaining to the production of knowledge. What we are asking ourselves is: what is the role of scientific thinking and practice in contemporary society? The following considerations are closely related to the political premises underlying the current debate on contemporary migration and multiculturalism involving the City of Oslo as well as other European cities.

The Situation in Brief

The Museum of Cultural History is a university museum under the University of Oslo, located at the *Historisk Museum*, one of Oslo's major Jugendstil buildings, which opened to the public in 1904. The contemporary institution is, however, a fairly recent construction comprising three institutions which until fifteen years ago were separate entities: the Antiquarian Collection, The Museum of Ethnography and The Coin Cabinet. As they were all housed in the same building, it seemed reasonable in 1999 to gather them in one institution: the Museum of Cultural History (Kulturhistorisk Museum - KHM).

However, in spite of the institutional restructuring, the fusion of the three original museums never really took effect in practice. The research departments carried on their regular activity and the Museum permanent exhibitions today still represent the three original institutions, comprising an archaeological display of Norwegian pre-history,

Fig. 1. The Museum of Cultural History, Oslo. © Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. Photo by Nina Wallin Hansen.

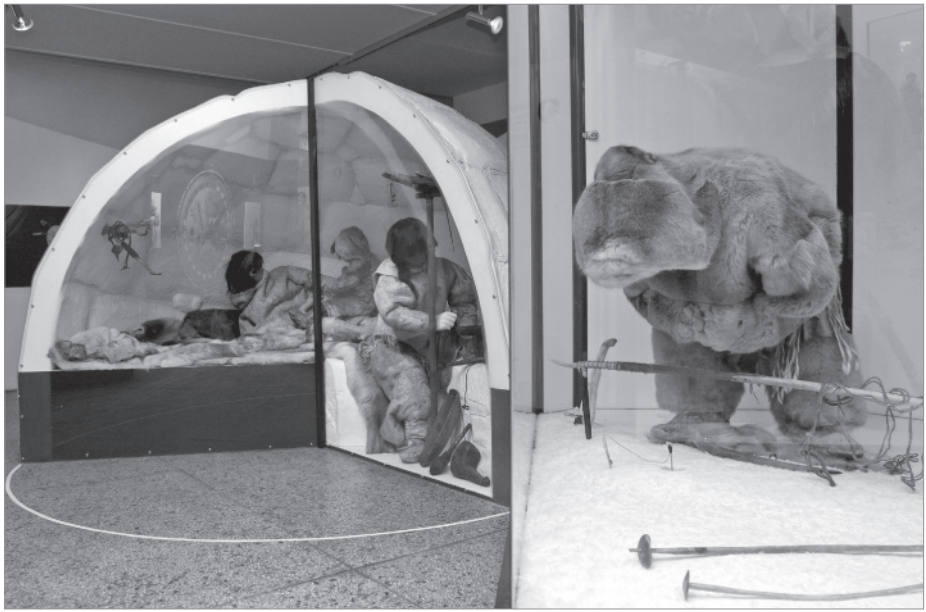

Fig. 2. Installation view of the Arctic Exhibition. © Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. Photo by Ann Christin Eck.

ethnographic regional displays (of the Americas, the Arctic, East Asia and a group of Egyptian mummies) and a coin collection.
Over the last two years KHM has worked towards creating a model that will integrate the three pillars of museum practice: research, heritage management and communication. In Norwegian, this is the three Fs: *Forskning*, *Forvaltning* and *Formidling*. Since the reunion of the three original institutions, a profound professionalisation of the Museum has taken place: communicators, conservators and researchers have increasingly marked their territories, distributing responsibilities but only rarely sharing perspectives. In this sense the museum's machinery has consisted of dispersed practices and a considerable division of labour. Now our aim is to establish a museum model, where the three pillars are seamlessly interconnected with the overarching purpose of challenging and developing knowledge.

Knowledge in Contemporary Society

One key question we need to face in this process concerns the meaning, the role and the relevance of knowledge in contemporary society, and which positive impact research in the humanities can offer to society at large. In the Autumn of 2012, we had a group of design students who reflected and worked on our exhibitions as part of their course. Their immediate response was summed up by some students asking: 'What do you expect from us? You already said all there is to say, there's no space for engagement and intervention.' This comment describes extremely well the approach we used to have to exhibitions and the notion of research dissemination. We thought that knowledge was the privilege and possession of the museum and, since our audiences did not have the same access to it, the art of exhibition design was intended at reducing complexity in order to make knowledge accessible to the layman.
Over recent years such an approach to knowledge has been constantly challenged, mostly due to the explosion of new information technology. One pivotal concept related to this phenomenon has been the idea of 'convergence' (Jenkins, 2006), i.e. the manner information is constantly re-shuffled and increasingly de-centralised by moving between different media.

Simply put, we may compare the 'old' and the 'new' regime to 'Star Wars' and 'The Matrix' (Ibid., pp.95-174). In 'Star Wars' the movie was the anchor. Of course, you could find 'Star Wars' (1977), being represented through different media, however these were all directly related to the movie. With 'The Matrix' (1999), things changed. To be able to get a better grasp of the movie, audiences had to cross different media: online comics, computer games, wikis etc. The movie was then no longer a fixed and constant reference, but merely the starting point for a constantly expanding universe that worked for a number of different templates. In terms of exhibition making, our old paradigm may resemble 'Star Wars'. There was a time we knew what we needed

to know beforehand; exhibitions just had to make knowledge accessible to audiences, and what we presented simply referred to the knowledge resulting from our research. However, could we take inspiration from 'The Matrix', not in order to turn the museum into a digital phantasmagoria, but rather to think of the exhibitions as an extension of a universe of knowledge that extends various media? This would entail that the aim of exhibiting is not making the most adequate representation of an underlying research, but rather raising new questions through (and thanks to) an exhibition.
This leads us to analyse the defining characteristics of an exhibition. Visual theorist Irit Rogoff from Goldsmith's College in London has proposed the term 'criticality' as a way to point to the situationist and idiosyncratic forms of knowledge.

> *Criticality*, as I perceive, is precisely in the operations of recognising the limitations of one's thought, for one does not learn something new until one unlearns something old, otherwise one is simply adding information rather than rethinking a structure. (Rogoff, 2006)

In contrast with the approach applied in the past, which offered the visitor a place as objective observer to look at the Other, 'criticality' points to the specific and contextualised characters of knowledge. Knowledge is in the concrete space, the concrete situation we inhabit at a given moment, and cannot be decontextualised from that.

> Contemporary cultural theory, which I call 'criticality' (perhaps this is not the best term but it's the one I have right now), is taking shape through an emphasis on the present, on living a situation, on understanding culture as a series of effects rather than causes, on the possibilities of actualising some of the potentialities of culture rather than revealing its faults. (Rogoff, 2006)

Such an approach renews the importance of exhibitions. Can we think of exhibitions – not only art exhibitions, but also cultural-historical ones – not as a space that re-presents the 'real world' outside the museum, but as a place where real things and relationships between people and objects happen? The critical point in focus is thus the exhibition space visitors experience, and its ability to produce effects rather than explanations.

Translated into museum practice, at KHM we ask ourselves: how do we create environments that allow us to share problems with our audience?
We think the answer should be elaborated through research – in a convergence system – as one way of addressing a larger issue. In terms of exhibit making the question at stake is, does our research intersect issues taking place outside the museum? As far as exhibition making concerns, it is not about reducing information, but about producing an abstract presentation of knowledge in order to share common issues with our audiences. In practice, exhibitions become the breeding ground for the museum philosophy, where the presented knowledge is deprived from the relationship with a specific field or context

and is illustrated in abstract terms; this approach allows to highlight its connections not only with the researchers who produced it, but also with the audience at large. Nevertheless, how do we make it work?

Three Abstraction Steps

How should we present our research material in order to share it with our audiences, and not merely explain them our insights? At KHM we have been working with different methods and tools, some based on informal seminars, others on larger workshops focused on the Museum's cross-disciplinary potential. I will illustrate here our activities by presenting the progressive steps which, although they have not been conceived in relation to each other from the start, have contributed to develop the process of knowledge abstraction we wanted to reach.

Step I: Magic Circles

The first step in re-thinking the relation between research and exhibition making was to consider the role of research as such. When rumours started to spread at KHM that future exhibitions should be research led, I believe many researchers thought that this could be an opportunity for presenting their works in detail. However, the idea of research-based exhibitions was never thought of as a one-to-one relation between field research and exhibitions. It was a particular idea of research that we wanted to induce in the museum; namely, the kind of savage (according to Lévi-Strauss) or untamed thinking that makes good research worthwhile. While the kind of research connected to museums has traditionally been one of ordering and classifying, we wanted to do almost the opposite: to transgress classification and follow our capacity of thinking to its brink, to the point where we cannot be sure of what we know anymore. The idea is that good research is based on the resistance to accept that knowledge has conventional limits. Rather than adding details to our knowledge of objects and cultures, good research may radically challenge our sense of the world and, so to say, drag us out of our common-sense perspectives.

In order to induce such kind of thinking, we have introduced a number of 'Magic Circles'. 'Magic Circle' is a format which contrasts conventional academic seminars. In a 'Magic Circle' we are not interested in hearing a fully-fledged academic paper, and we are not looking for the weak points of what is presented to us. So, 'Magic Circles' can be about 'How can I understand what this New Guinean man means when he argues that his ancestors are a spear?', or 'Is the main power of objects actually their resistance to our projects?' or 'I have been studying coin findings in Medieval churches for 10 years, so how can I develop an interesting research project on this?'. In other words, 'Magic Circles' can be about anything and involve any part of our museal practice. The most important thing is that they raise issues rather than providing explanations and that they are open to inputs from all directions. In these 'Magic Circles' we aim at burgeoning

ideas that may still just be a hunch, and we invite listeners to engage in these ideas and develop them further through different perspectives. To be honest, this kind of seminar format is not that sensational or new, nevertheless it is sorely down-prioritised in many institutions where interactions are mostly addressed to efficiency and problem solving. What the 'Magic Circle' format allows for is the creation of ideas that have the character of basic research, since they are not driven by external needs (i.e. audiences' wishes and expectations, political agendas, possible funding sources) but rather by the curiosity and obsessive thinking that allow us to transgress our common sense approach to the world. Furthermore, 'Magic Circles' allow us to create a way of interacting among disciplines which is not based on participants sharing a certain thematic focus, but thrives on diversity through which the discussion sparks.

Step 2: Experiments

If 'Magic Circles' hopefully produce cross-disciplinary ideas, somehow developing philosophical considerations about museums, the next question is how such ideas may take shape. As highlighted by Irit Rogoff's insights on inhabiting problems and making effects, in contemporary exhibition making we cannot simply follow the conventional route, establishing a synopsis in a written document and finding the proper container - a design - to present the contents. What exhibitions offer is a non-textual way of pursuing problems, i.e. imposing an aesthetic perspective to our research. Therefore,

Fig. 3. The opening workshop of 'Death, Materiality and the Origin of Time' was an opportunity to experiment with the academic conventions: the traditional setting of the academic paper session was broken, and all participants were placed around a lush dinner table laid with objects from the museum backstage. Courtesy of Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo. Photo by Lill-Ann Chepstouw-Lusty.

exhibitions present and pose problems in a radically different way compared to conventional academic textual recording. As a consequence, we cannot rely on the same kind of correspondence to the empirical world we used to refer to (Bjerregaard, 2013).

In connection to the research project 'Death, Materiality and the Origin of Time',[1] we have conducted a number of design experiments, where researchers, communicators, designers, conservators, and artists have been asked to work together on a number of installations. For each experiment we have developed a title (e.g. 'Accumulation and destruction' or 'Containing and transporting soul') to which all participants should be able to relate, either through field research or their everyday work. Before each experiment, researchers were gathered to discuss potential overlaps or points of collision in their findings, and museum communicators and conservators were invited to discuss possible approaches to the theme. In order to prepare for the experiment, we asked all participants to contribute with short texts, articles they have found inspirational, or visual material that could be associated with the selected topic. When we met for the experiment, we conducted miniature fieldworks (some kind of common *in-situ* experience) in and around Oslo, and we had discussions that allowed us to present each our perspective on the theme.
While the participants were invited on basis of their expertise, the role of the experiment was to ask them to let go off what they knew and present some compelling issue in a new mode. For instance, one important parameter in these experiments was that researchers were not allowed to bring original artefacts. All installations had to be based on materials available at the Museum (coming from the workshop, the conservation laboratory, etc.) and materials that researchers had previously asked for (e.g. eggs, blood, jelly, candles).
The whole point of the exercise was not to produce elements that would be just placed in an exhibition, but rather to transfer the results of our research into a material shape that could suggest new interpretations or raise questions that we wanted to present in the exhibition.

Audiences

Where does such an approach place audiences? 'In the centre' is our claim!
We want audiences to become co-producers rather than consumers. We do not want to provide the public with given answers. Instead, we want to raise questions that we do not have the ultimate answers for, and therefore invite visitors to investigate with us. This requires on the one hand a straight framework in order for audiences to be able to collaborate and, at the same time, a large amount of tolerance from our side in terms of leaving space for audiences to take our exhibitions in directions that are different from what we expected. Eventually, in terms of researchers, it means that they should be willing to engage in exhibitions where the display of their knowledge is not the main goal.

While such an approach has almost become mainstream in contemporary museum practices, our actions are *not* motivated by the wish to promote the development of diverse political representation strategies or the inclusion of wider audiences, aimed at 'democratising' the museum. We want to engage visitors according to the above mentioned ways, because we believe this may help to extract the full potential of the museum as a knowledge-generating institution.

We do not have any clear methodological answer on how to access this potential yet, but for the time being we think of audience-interaction both as a sort of testing and as a way of generating new ideas. In a gross simplification, we may argue that the old model of exhibition making was based on correspondence as its measure of validity, i.e. if the information was right, and the details were corrected according to the empirical records or the theoretical framework (evolution, diffusion, relativism, etc.), the exhibition might be said to be valid. However, if we want to make exhibitions spurred by the effects of 'criticality', i.e. experiencing a problem in a situated 'now', what we really test is whether the theory underlining the design and our take on the problem *causes an effect*. Do audiences engage? Do they respond to the display? Are they in any sense *changed* by the experience?

As a way of generating new ideas, the relation to audiences may turn out to be a great privilege for museums. While most scientific practices evolve within the confines of academia, having a relation to a larger audience means that the museum may evoke responses and reactions from people who are not familiar to the conventional biases and ways of reasoning of academia. In this sense, while we certainly aim at challenging our visitors' conventional thinking, we also want them to transgress our conventional academic reasoning.

These two ways of engaging audiences are certainly not easy to implement. They require new methods for making exhibitions and interacting directly with audiences, in order to make them react and think about new questions to investigate. We wish that such kind of interaction will contribute to creating a research-loop through which exhibitions may become an integrative part of the museum's knowledge generating process.

Conclusion: Museums and the Challenge to our Categories

One observation during the presentations in Paris which really struck me, was that the problem of contemporary exhibitions is really a question of categories. Museums will not be reclaiming an important role in society if they do not realise that their objective is to challenge the established categories through which we understand our world.

This observation, which I totally agree with, points to a radical challenge museums are facing. Conventionally, museums have been places of ordering, of making the variations of a vast world of differences meaningful. In museums we have been able to explain strange cultures, practices, and events. We have been able to see behind what is exotic and explain it with well-known terms.

However, perhaps we should rather carefully think of a point Walter Benjamin made many years ago, quoting the German translator Pannwitz: 'The basic error of the translator is that he represents the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue.' (Benjamin, 1992, p.83) The point here is that far too often we allow the perspective of the present to 'colonise' all the potentialities which are in the non-present and the non-local. Regimes of interpretation, pedagogy and concern about visitors numbers have thrust museums into being far too attentive to audiences' demands and ways of communicating to them.

While museums of cultural history should not turn themselves into *avant-garde* art galleries catering only to a selected audience, the scope of a museum – holding collections of a temporally distant past or a geographically distant present – is not to confirm present identities either. As a matter of fact, I think museums need to get rid of the idea that they deal with maintaining and creating identities. I rather think that museums are one of the very few contemporary institutions that have the potential of constantly confronting identities, and thus opting for a broader and more inclusive perspective on the world. This perspective would allow us to acknowledge what we think is not part of us as a part of ourselves, even if only for the brief instant of an experience. This entails exactly that we challenge our conventional beliefs and the relations among them.

[1] The project 'Death, Materiality and the Origin of Time' (August 2011 – September 2015) was conceived to explore how, in different historical periods and different geographical settings, human beings relate to time and death through various practices.

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The Museum as Enabler: Constructing and Contesting Futures

RICHARD BENJAMIN, International Slavery Museum Liverpool, United Kingdom

Drawing on the vision and the strategies implemented at the International Slavery Museum, Richard Benjamin argues the necessity for contemporary museums to act as beacons of change and to operate as 'enablers', offering pathways of engagement with complex and often difficult subjects, supporting the construction of memories and identities, fostering historical consciousness and place identity, and possibly promoting social justice and soliciting the fight for cultural, human and civil rights.

Museums need to be accountable and they need to provide their audiences with the tools required to deal with issues that affect them personally and in the communities in which they live, offering pathways of engagement with complex, and often difficult subjects. Museums can construct memories and identities, provide a platform for historical consciousness and place identity, and through collections, programming and exhibitions can promote social justice and fight for that family of rights - cultural, human and civil. Should museums be doing this? As Olivia Guntarik notes:

> To survive museums must cast their net wide. They must work harder than ever to ensnare the complexity and multiplicity of visitors' needs and the publics they seek to serve. (2010, p.11)

Museums have the power to be beacons of change, to be part of movements towards change. Inaction and nonchalance are inexcusable, especially when narratives of the past can be maliciously interpreted and, as noted by James Campbell, 'used to licence atrocious conduct in the present' (2009).

Museum Background

The International Slavery Museum (ISM) opened on 23 August 2007, the annual UNESCO International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition, in the year of the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. The International Slavery Museum is located in Liverpool, on the third floor of the Merseyside Maritime Museum, and is the successor to the original and hugely successful Transatlantic Slavery Gallery, which opened in the Merseyside Maritime Museum in 1994.

Fig. 1. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. building in Liverpool.
© National Museums Liverpool.

ISM is made up of three galleries: 'Life in West Africa', 'Enslavement and the Middle Passage' and 'Legacy'.
'Life in West Africa' explores the story of Africa and its peoples, who although central to the story of transatlantic slavery had a rich history and culture prior to the arrival of Europeans. 'Enslavement and the Middle Passage' reveals the brutality and trauma suffered by enslaved Africans on the voyage across the Atlantic; the oppression of their lives on plantations in the Americas, and their fight for freedom. 'Legacy' details the continuing fight for freedom and equality; contemporary forms of slavery and enslavement, racism and discrimination and the achievements of the African Diaspora.
Plans are also underway to open a new education and resource centre in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. building adjacent to the current display galleries.

Who do you think you are?

For this essay, I am focusing on our current strategies and vision at ISM, and the related collecting, programming and exhibitions which arise from that. I also make a distinction, a very simplistic and subjective one, between the museum as 'enchanter', 'enthusiast' and 'enabler' – the latter which I see as including ISM, is the main focus of this essay. Any form of grouping such as this will never be fixed but it encapsulates my

experiences as head of ISM when interacting with other museums professionally and as a visitor. This is how I define each group:

'*Enchanter*'. The museum as a must-see attraction, a *bona fide* member of the tourist trail, often the creator of blockbuster exhibitions. In the UK this could include the British Museum, the V&A, Natural History Museum and the Science Museum. There are several national museums outside of London - such as the family of museums which is National Museums Liverpool and National Museums Northern Ireland, the National Railway Museum (York) and the National Media Museum (Bradford), the latter two part of the Science Museum Group - but a slight drawback is the number of tourists, in particular international tourists, who visit them. Nevertheless, they might still be enchanters within their locations.

To put this into context, the British Museum notes 'one in four overseas visitors to London, and one in ten overseas visitors to the UK now visit the British Museum as part of their trip' (2012). This is not to say that several towns and cities in the North of England, such as Liverpool and York, are not well established tourist destinations but they are not in the same league as London (Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, 2013). As such, it could be argued that London's larger museums do not have to, quite literally, work as hard as other smaller, niche, regional museums to get visitors.

In mainland Europe, the Louvre, the Uffizi, Rijksmuseum, the Prado and Guggenheim Bilbao come to mind, as would the Guggenheim NYC or the Cairo Museum on a global level. The list is long and most countries and capital cities will have at least one 'jewel in the crown'. They encompass great swathes of history, art and culture and have become as much an attraction as any object, archive or painting which they may contain. People often visit these museums because that is what they are expected to do, such is their profile and prestige.

However, many enchanter museums, or family of museums, will also show traits of what I will later describe as enabler museums but this is not what they are primarily known for, or often how they see themselves. An initiative such as the British Museum's free community previews of major exhibitions (particularly welcome for audiences unable to pay to see an exhibition) (British Museum, 2013, p.13) is both positive and enabling to a degree - particularly for audiences who might not regularly engage with museums.

'*Enthusiast*'. A specialist offer and distinctive experience. The visitor engages with the museum often on a specific topic or object, and as such the institution might be one of a handful or the sole educator within this sphere. For instance, the recently opened Abba The Museum in Stockholm, The Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising in London, The Tank Museum in Bovington or the Post & Tele Museum in Copenhagen. Social history and city museums might also be included.

'*Enablers*'. Can have the enchanter collections, successful exhibitions, and produce world-class research; they can also be rather specialist, such as the numerous First and Second World War related museums. However, they might knowingly or unknowingly be vessels for political and social debate and dialogue, which for some can often put them at odds with other museums, funding bodies or government departments. They will take the museum experience - the content, exhibitions and programming - that few steps further, enabling the visitor to do more. It may be a call to action, offering an experiential route for people to engage with campaigns or initiatives as well as seeing the museum as a resource in itself. Many members of the Federation of International Human Rights Museums (FIHRM) - which encourages museums that engage with sensitive and controversial human rights themes, such as transatlantic slavery, the Holocaust and other instances of genocide, to work together and share new thinking and initiatives - would fall into this category.[1]

One manoeuvre of an enabler might be to create an exhibition, an event or an educational programme to specifically attract communities which had not previously engaged with the museum. For example, our latest exhibition called 'Brutal Exposure: The Congo' was endorsed by members of the local Congolese community; a French speaking community in one of the more economically deprived areas of the city of Liverpool that had not previously engaged with National Museums Liverpool to any degree, even though they have had an established community within Liverpool for more than ten years and number several hundred. It was also noted by a visitor during the opening week that the exhibition should be displayed in Belgium, who had annexed the Congo Free State, the fiefdom of King Leopold II of Belgium, and governed the Belgian Congo from 1909-1960.

Exhibitions

'Brutal Exposure: The Congo' follows in the footsteps of earlier exhibitions within the Campaign Zone. The zone is located within 'The Legacy Gallery', and was developed with the express aim of hosting exhibitions which link to contemporary campaigns, with accompanying community and education programmes. Previously this space has hosted the 'Home Alone: End Domestic Slavery' exhibition (2010), in partnership with Anti-Slavery International, who were at the time involved in an international campaign which led to the International Labour Organization's 2011 Convention No. 189, protecting the rights of domestic workers, and which came into force in September 2013 (International Labour Organization 2013). By March 2014, Italy and Germany were the only European countries which had ratified the treaty. This was followed by 'White Gold: The True Cost of Cotton' exhibition (2011); a collaboration with the Environmental Justice Foundation which highlighted the abuse of labour rights in the cotton industry, primarily in Uzbekistan. Simple steps, small steps but steps nonetheless, that have given several NGOs a platform to potentially reach thousands of people.

On the face of it, 'Brutal Exposure: The Congo' focuses on historical archives and photographs but legacies are given equal focus. The exhibition consists of photographs chiefly taken by missionary Alice Seeley Harris which document the exploitation and brutality in the Congo Free State, in one of the first human rights campaigns. The campaign led to public pressure and international scrutiny of Leopold's rule which came to an end in 1909, although the legacy of Belgian violence and exploitation would tragically re-emerge after the Congo gained independence in 1960, with the murder of the country's first legally elected Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba. Mark Sealy, Director of Autograph ABP, contacted the Museum to see if we were interested in collaborating on an exhibition of these images, which are owned by Anti-Slavery International. Autograph is based in the Rivington Place Gallery in London, and was established in 1988 to promote historically marginalised photographic practices (Autograph ABP). They developed a partner exhibition to 'Brutal Exposure: The Congo', called 'When Harmony Went to Hell: Congo Dialogues'.

The subject matter of the exhibition was in itself of great interest to me and we already use one of the Anti-Slavery International images in a display case titled 'Impact on Africa'. The case sits next to an interactive of the 19th century 'Scramble for Africa', in an attempt at getting visitors to think about some of the factors which arose post-transatlantic slavery in Africa, with regards to the continuation of European trading in other goods, such as palm oil or rubber, in areas where transatlantic slave trade networks had been developed (Law, 2002). Regardless of how well 'Brutal Exposure' works with the current narrative of the Museum displays, the fact that the exhibition would be an ideal opportunity to engage with members of the Liverpool French speaking community was at the forefront of our thinking, along with the opportunity to highlight current campaigns centred on DR Congo. That is, we aimed to be of value to the Congolese community both in Liverpool and in DR Congo by using the Museum to raise awareness, and to stimulate debate and dialogue.

One of the associated events was a panel discussion I chaired, 'Congo: Now and Then', which featured Vava Tampa from Save the Congo, Carron Mann, Policy Manager at Women for Women International, and Petronelle Moanda from the Congolese Association of Merseyside. The session discussed the Congo in the 1900s and present day perceptions; an example of a contested past used to construct a dialogue in the present - an instance of the Museum adding value to society. Indeed, Dr. David O'Brien, an expert in the field of cultural value, writing on a blog devoted to the theme of museums and value noted that 'Museums, like most cultural spaces, are contested sites' (2014).

At ISM we believe our value lies in our relevance to contemporary people and communities and the issues which affect their day-to-day activities and experiences. Focusing on the common theme of human rights and violence in the Congo might not have been the Merseyside Congolese community's first choice for an exhibition. Nevertheless, when we noted that there would be associated programming such as a panel discussion and

events for a younger audience, it was understood why the Museum had taken these steps and that we had not taken the easy option. Enabler museums see opportunities where other museums might focus on the enchanting aspect of displays or the exhibition, the object rather than the object's story, or its contemporary dialogue.

Furthermore, an enabler museum might be seen as such more from the outside than from the museum itself. In March 2014 I spoke at the 'Exhibiting Violence' workshop in Péronne, organised by the Imre Kertész Kolleg Jena and hosted by the Historial de la Grande Guerre, located in the heart of the battlefields of the Somme. The museum explains the historical and social dimensions of the First World War and includes many thought-provoking and insightful displays, such as shallow display pits exhibiting uniforms, military equipment and personal objects of the soldiers. Delegates included museum professionals and academics from across Europe, including Austria, Belgium, Germany, Poland and Romania who chiefly specialised in the First and Second World Wars and the Holocaust. I described the different types of violence we have on display at the International Slavery Museum and the ethical issues the team have to deal with on an almost daily basis. It seemed to me that many of the delegates were looking at ways to move away from displaying very disturbing and visceral images of violence, without lessening the impact of the subject matter. Not an easy thing to do.

No contemporary issue-based educational or community programming was presented by the other museums present, looking at contentious and sensitive issues such as racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia for example. I personally saw an opportunity for these museums to act as enablers not only as enchanters or enthusiasts. A member of the education team from the State Museum at Majdanek discussed the difficult work that they carry out but did not specifically mention any campaign focused programming. I believe there is an opportunity to challenge attitudes which echo those that tolerated and assisted the development and operation of such Nazi death camps in German-occupied Poland and across Europe in the mid-20th century. For me, it is not just about remembrance and commemoration - issues which we also deal with here in Liverpool - but offering opportunities to challenge contemporary issues which exist, particularly within the museum's locality. Whether the State Museum at Majdanek wanted to or not, it has now been drawn into a discussion surrounding the far-right in the Lublin area and in Poland generally by the despicable actions of one of its own employees (Gardner, 2014).

Can we also learn from other non-European countries which have had to deal with deeply divisive histories? President Nelson Mandela in his inaugural speech declared:

> Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another... Let freedom reign. (Mandela, 1994)

These are profound words which clearly state that South Africa would move forward, out of the shadow of the apartheid system. Indeed, museums and historic sites in South

Fig. 2. Swastika on a wall of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Building, previously operating as the Dock Traffic Office. © National Museums Liverpool.

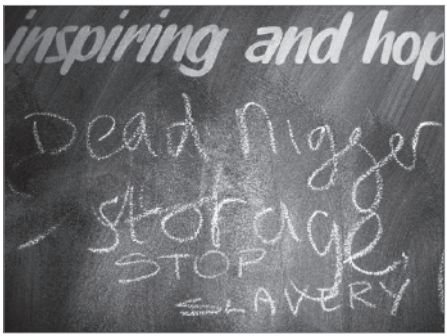

Fig. 3. Offensive comment on International Slavery Museum's chalkboard. © National Museums Liverpool.

Africa both play an important role and are indicators of how a diverse South Africa has come to terms with its complex (and often troubled) history, and how that manifests itself publicly. South Africa's museums and galleries have faced a significant challenge to establish and justify their role in the democratic era (Davison, 1998, p.148). Truth and reconciliation was a mantra often carried into the cultural and heritage sector as well as the country as a whole. Indeed the Apartheid Museum opened in 2001 focusing on 20th century South Africa, 'at the heart of which is the apartheid story... The museum is a beacon of hope showing the world how South Africa is coming to terms with its oppressive past and working towards a future that all South Africans can call their own' (Apartheid Museum). The District Six Museum in Cape Town was opened in 1994 and is located in an area associated with forced removals (Rassool and Prosalendis, 2001).

In Péronne, one of the images that was particularly striking was included in a presentation by Petra Bopp, which looked at photographs from the private collections of German soldiers during the Second World War (Bopp, 2009). This particular image shows a woman wearing a headscarf, wading through a river on a sunny day, a tree reflected in the water; a rather innocuous, pleasant photo, until you read the caption on the back, 'Clearing landmines' and only then are you confronted by the violence. For ISM, this type of image, which unlike many of the images within the display galleries is not overtly graphic, allows a different way of engaging individuals, through similar images of what one could call 'benevolent violence', for example, images depicting racist graffiti aimed at ISM, comments made on a chalkboard within the response zone area of the Museum, a swastika daubed on the rear of a building adjacent to the display galleries and graffiti written on a bus stop poster.

Education Resources

Educational resources are also a valuable museum tool in the fight to develop a greater understanding of social and cultural shifts, the creation of identities, and for people, especially young people, 'to play a full and active part in society' (Department for Education, 2013). To support the teaching of Britain's involvement in the transatlantic slave trade in the national curriculum in the UK, ISM developed a number of classroom resources to support learning activities and visits to ISM. The *History of Transatlantic Slave Trade and Abolition Teaching Resource* is aimed at key stage 2 pupils (between the ages of 7 and 11) and has been phenomenally successful. However, more recently, the Museum has produced several educational resources which reflect current areas of research and collection development such as the *Contemporary Slavery Teachers' Resource* for key stage 3 students (aged 11–14), in particular those studying Citizenship. A practical response to the matter of what we call the legacies of transatlantic slavery, which is covered in our Legacy Gallery at the Museum, was the development of our most recent educational resource *Legacies of Transatlantic Slavery: A Teachers' Guide to the Legacy Gallery and Object Handling Session for KS3 and KS4 Students* (International Slavery Museum, 2014a).

The resource looks at the development of racist ideologies and stereotyping, racist discrimination, ongoing forms of enslavement, financial gains made by European traders, and ongoing global issues of exploiting resources. Indeed, the handling session includes a diverse array of objects, from a mobile phone, highlighting the dangerous and often illegal mining of minerals such as cobalt in DR Congo, to toothpaste with a grinning caricatured Black face peering out. The *Legacies* resource is born out of the needs and necessities in a city where changes in attitudes and actions are still needed.

Representing the Unrepresentable

I will now briefly discuss what the ISM team has learnt from developing exhibitions and permanent collections around subjects that have at times been regarded as the unrepresentable. I will also focus on the ethical and moral dimensions which we had to negotiate when considering how we displayed and interpreted sensitive issues and objects, particularly those used as a form of violence. One might at first assume that an International Slavery Museum, located at the centre of a World Heritage site and only yards away from the dry docks where 18th century slave trading ships were repaired and fitted out, would largely focus on objects associated with the transatlantic slave trade, such as objects of physical restraint, shackles and whips. Such objects are of course central to the Museum's collection, but we do not collect for the sake of collecting. The collection – in terms of numbers of objects – is relatively small compared to other museums within the organisation; however, it has deeply profound objects. The World Health Organization defines violence as:

> The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation. (2002)

This allows the Museum to think broadly about our collecting and exhibitions and not only focus on overt forms of violence towards the human body, but also sexual and mental violence, for example towards trafficked women, or the trauma of children forced to work in sweatshops or pick cotton which deprives them of an education. The Museum's collections thus cover a wide array of objects. After discussions with some of our human rights organisation partners, such as Anti-Slavery International, we developed a contemporary collecting strategy alongside more established collections, for instance The Transatlantic Slavery Collection; one that would collect objects associated with contemporary slavery, bonded labour, forced labour, trafficking and child labour. It was felt that if it was done sensitively, in partnership with law enforcement, NGO's and indeed, whenever possible, the families of individuals themselves, then we should consider collecting such objects (Benjamin, 2012, pp.191-93).

The first accessioned object within this newly developed collection strand was a series of photographs of flats, brothels, and massage parlours showing the reality of sex trafficking and prostitution. Called 'Missing' (International Slavery Museum, 2014b), the photographs were by the artist Rachel Wilberforce who donated the artworks after taking them out of a private sale when the Museum showed an interest in acquiring them for its collection. Rachel and I first met at an open table discussion on 'Slavery Today in a Political, Social and Economic Context' in 2007, as part of the BOUND project - a group exhibition which explored human and contemporary enslavement (Criticalnetwork, 2007).

By 2010 the Museum had also acquired several slavery-related anklets from Anti-Slavery International which had been 'worn' by a young girl in Niger who was the victim a form of descent-based slavery. The anklets represent the importance of the work of ISM in developing its collections in contemporary slavery and supporting associated campaigns to fight it. Alongside the anklets, we placed personal stories of the enslaved which humanised the objects and individuals and as a result might make the visitor want to get involved: these are unflinching objects which aim to galvanise support for the associated campaigns. There are also occasions when the Museum is contacted by a member of the public who is in possession of an object which they quite simply don't want but who realises there might be some educational aspect to the object. Two examples in particular come to mind - a Ku Klux Klan outfit that was donated weeks before we opened the Museum in 2007, and a rather grotesque pseudo-scientific object in 2014. The Ku Klux Klan outfit is a central exhibit of the Legacy Gallery, which also includes objects and multimedia that depict racist and stereotypical imagery of Black people, as well as far-right organisations, scientific racism and racist murders such as

the young Black British man, Anthony Walker, in 2005 (Benjamin, 2012, pp.188-93). In February 2014 the Curator of ISM received an email titled 'Possible piece for museum display':

> I have a box of antique microscope slides, and one of them may be of interest to the public as it is a piece of skin from the days when it was considered in some way desirable to study black people as if they were specimens first and people second... The slide has the title 'scalp of negro'. Clearly this is a distressing subject, but I feel this slide may be useful as part of an exhibit to show the attitude that European explorers had toward people they encountered.

So we have a dilemma: risk being seen as a collector of macabre curios or have the conviction to try and speak for an individual who may have been scalped? Provenance will be difficult to ascertain but that does not mean we will rule it out as being too difficult or controversial. The intention is not so much to display the object within the galleries but possibly to embark on a new type of proactive accession which would ultimately lead to the object's disposal or reburial. It could indeed be problematic, most human remains are, but do we not owe it to the individual to try as hard as we can to find out the story behind the object, to unobjectify and humanise?

The ISM education space is now named after Anthony Walker and I am a trustee of the Anthony Walker Foundation. I believe that, when Anthony's sister once called the Anthony Walker Education Centre 'my brother's room', there had been a very thought provoking shift of ownership and a graphic example of place identity (Uzzell, 1996). Indeed, place identity can be highly charged at ISM for some members of the Black community in particular. There is of course no homogenous Black community in Liverpool; it is diverse and has multiple identities which come with their own nuances, histories and cultural traits, which we as a local museum must recognise. That said, there can be consolidating factors such as experience of racism and, to a lesser degree, a belief in an ancestral connection with enslaved Africans, which can create a genius loci, 'a sense of place' (Brakman, 2011, p.121).

An example of this connection and feeling towards ISM can be seen in the development and delivery of 'Toxteth 1981', a community photographic exhibition of the civil disturbances referred to as the 'Toxteth riots' or 'uprising', on display outside the Anthony Walker Education Centre from 2011 to 2014. Members of the Merseyside Black History Month Group (MBHMG) approached ISM in 2011 to discuss the initial exhibition proposal. From the outset, MBHMG members wanted the exhibition to be displayed within ISM rather than other National Museum Liverpool venues, even though the exhibition offered a broader narrative of Liverpool's often troubled social history. ISM was seen as an enabler museum which actively promotes anti-racist activities and projects; a conduit to current events rather than it displaying a static historical event.

Conclusion

From the outset, any museum which at its core focuses on the subject of slavery and enslavement, historical or contemporary, must be prepared to tackle some sensitive issues in the development of collections, exhibitions and programming. At times this can take its toll, but it is through the sharing of ideas and experiences, both positive and negative, with colleagues from the museum sector – such as the FIHRM initiative and conference – that you are able to move forward with conviction and resilience. The successful development of 'Brutal Exposure: The Congo' and our growing partnerships with Anti-Slavery International and other human right organisations are due to the fact that all parties want the same thing: to highlight often marginalised parts of history or current events and at the same time challenge prevailing or existing attitudes and actions. Museums must humanise the actors and agents and place people within history and their legacies within the present. At ISM we are at a stage on our journey where we must take stock of our progress since 2007. We were born out of a transatlantic slavery gallery but expanded the remit of the Museum by adding two new galleries; 'Life in West Africa' and 'Legacy', placing Africa and Africans at the centre of the narrative, regards the transatlantic slave trade, whilst at the same time broadening our remit to include other forms of slavery and enslavement. By no means extensive, the recent focus has been on more contemporary agendas, such as the legacies of transatlantic slavery including racism and discrimination, trafficking and forced labour.

As a result of this the Museum's profile has grown within the field of human rights, to such a degree that it is now a member of the Human Trafficking Foundation's special advisory forum, which meets quarterly and brings together Members of Parliament of the United Kingdom, NGOs and policy makers within the field of trafficking. ISM is the only museum represented and as such has unprecedented access to the individuals and organisations at the frontline of the battle against trafficking in its many forms. One meeting in 2014 was attended by members of the cross-party Joint Committee on the Draft Modern Slavery Bill (Joint Select Committee, 2014), focusing on final amendments to the draft Modern Day Slavery Bill of 2013 (Home Office, 2013). This Bill aims to be the most comprehensive piece of legislation to date in fighting various forms of modern slavery by bringing together a number of agencies (law enforcement, government, and NGOs) to create tougher sentencing for those trafficking people for sexual exploitation or forced labour, by seising assets and by creating the role of Anti-Slavery Commissioner. However, the feeling of many NGOs is that the Bill is still not victim-focused enough.

Before the Museum widens its remit even further, exploring a range of human rights issues in its collections and programming, we must not lose touch with our audiences locally, such as members of the Liverpool Black community, many of whom still see ISM as a museum of transatlantic slavery – and, as such, still actively develop our transatlantic slavery collections when possible. We must also recognise that the study of this

area of research is not static, not definitive. As Co-Director of the Centre for the Study of International Slavery, its conferences and colloquiums allow me to do this. Even though we have started a well-received foray into other areas of slavery and enslavement, we must not forget we are already the leading museum on the subject of transatlantic slavery and as such have a degree of responsibility. That said, to grow and to move forward the Museum must closely align itself with contemporary issues and campaigns, with the Museum taking a leading role, not just within our sector, but nationally.

[1] A map of the partner and support institutions involved into the of International Human Rights Museums can be seen at <http://www.fihrm.org/about/partners-supporters.html> [Accessed 27 March 2014].

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The Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux

MICHEL ROUGER, Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux, France

The Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux is a brand new war museum, characterised by a catching architectural project and latest-generation exhibition design. Michel Rouger presents the story, the tasks and the strategies behind the conception and realisation of the museum, highlighting the implementation of a distinctive approach intended to develop a new perspective and understanding of the First World War through advanced research, museographical and mediation practices and tools.

The Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux opened on 11 November 2011. This new facility, created from scratch, falls within the scope of a project that began in France in the 1990s to promote understanding of the First World War among a larger audience. After the time of 'memory' (before the end of the war and in the interwar period) and after the time of 'remembrance' (mainly carried out by war veteran associations in the 1960s), came the time of 'history' with the creation of museums and documentation centres. The process of time, the fading of memories of the conflict and the inevitable passing away of survivors, together with advances in research and historiography and the evolution of museography, have led to new ways of presenting the First World War. The Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux has thus found its place within this evolution, bringing its own perspective to this historical period and its contribution to already established centres.

Fig. 1. The museum building designed by Atelier Christophe Lab, 2011. Photo by Philippe Ruault. Courtesy of Atelier Christophe Lab.

Geographical Legitimacy

Meaux is the furthest point of the German advance in World War I and the centre of the Battle of the Marne in September 1914. Together with its neighbouring municipalities, it is home to a historical heritage that is little known among the general public which usually doesn't associate the Great War to the Île-de-France region. The Museum is indeed a reminder that the front lines of the conflict extended outside of Paris and that 'the Miracle of the Marne', just a month after the outbreak of the war, was the victory that determined the evolution of the conflict. Therefore, the Museum has full legitimacy to be located here and, like other social infrastructure facilities, to promote the development of the region. It also contributes to moulding a new image while rallying different stakeholders around a common cultural project that everybody will benefit from, as well as helping to promote tourism and organising networks.

The Passion of a Collector

The Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux was born from one man's passion: Jean-Pierre Verney, a fascinated and fascinating self-taught historian who, for over 45 years, accumulated some 50,000 items and documents on the First World War building up one of Europe's largest private collections.

His first contact with Meaux dates back to 2004. On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the First Battle of the Marne, Verney exhibited part of his collection at the Bossuet Museum, the town's Fine Arts Museum. He explained to the mayor that, since he could not find a place in France which would display this coherent collection on a permanent basis, he was going to sell it abroad as people in the US and in Germany had already shown particular interest. The idea that this remarkable heritage could leave France led the town councillor to take the plunge and purchase the collection, and eventually create a museum about the First World War. Thus, in 2005 the Conurbation Community of Pays de Meaux (18 municipalities, 85,000 inhabitants) decided to buy Verney's entire collection. The conurbation was a natural choice for this project, since some of the villages still contain visible traces of the Battle of the Marne such as monuments, cemeteries, necropolises, etc., including the grave of the French poet Charles Péguy who was killed on 5 September 1914.

A Unique Collection

The collection's computerised inventory reveals great diversity. Divided into around 20,000 objects and 30,000 documents, the collection narrates the instances of a soldiers' life (through uniforms of the different nations at war, equipment, weaponry, everyday objects, medical equipment, etc.), as well as life behind the lines (through posters, newspapers, letters, patriotic games, etc.). Photographs, stereoscopic glass plates, artworks (prints, lithographs, oil paintings, etc.) all share a ground-level approach which

aims to convey the atmosphere of the endless trench stalemate. This collection was put together in order to tell the story of the Great War as well as the stories and fortunes of the men and women living on opposite sides. There is a startling humanity contained in the series of displayed objects; pieces of evidence of a period which seems distant but actually is still very present.

Museum or Memorial?

In 2006, the scientific council, led by historian Marc Ferro, was set up in order to define the Museum's aim and the visitor itinerary, based on the available collections. This preparatory work would constitute the basis for creating the Scientific and Cultural Project. The question of whether it would be about designing a museum or a memorial was raised immediately. The decision to set up a museum was naturally defined, also considering the existence of the original collection. The fear that we would reinforce *clichés* about a place which was inherently boring, covered with dust and dated, was cast aside in favour of the challenge of creating a lively, interactive place rooted in its time on a subject which is admittedly difficult to access, while providing numerous ways to discover the historical period which greatly influenced the 20th century. Thus, beyond the duty of preserving memory, the Museum has the duty to present history. Placing events in context, putting them into perspective and making links between the past and present are essential elements to provide today's visitors with the keys for understanding a complex conflict.

Far from being a museum of the First Battle of the Marne, or even both Battles of the Marne, the Musée de la Grande Guerre is a museum of the First World War from the point of view of a history and society museum, enhanced by the richness and the diversity of its collections. Therefore, the exhibition itinerary takes visitors from the First Battle of the Marne in 1914, up to the Second Battle of the Marne in 1918 near Château-Thierry. Between these two battles of movement, which symbolically represent the beginning and the end of the conflict, the war of position took place in a no man's land, among the battlefield trench lines. From one Battle of the Marne to the other, the shift from the 19th to the 20th century is the common thread that helps to understand this period.

Therefore, the museographical challenge was to find the correct distance to enable events to be put into context and to promote understanding while plunging the visitor into the heart of the conflict by offering a ground-level approach, thus stirring up emotions and activating memories. Although it is commonly recognised that the 20th century began with the First World War, for the first time the Musée de la Grande Guerre conveys this concept by means of its museography. The implemented strategies implicitly encourage the visitors to face the question of whether our societies have experienced an event bringing them into the 21st century.

A Gateway

Conveniently located in the Île-de-France, the Musée de la Grande Guerre has become known as a gateway to north-eastern France, and as the missing piece of the puzzle aimed at re-establishing links and reopening a perspective on the historical continuity and richness of this region. The Museum collaborates with a network of other institutions dedicated to the Great War acknowledging that each place handles the conflict in a different way. Eventually, this benefits the public by offering the possibility to combine different approaches and the experience of various visits, thus enriching the knowledge gained on the subject. The concept of 'remembrance tourism' comes into its own inviting visitors to discover other landscapes and other places, both in France and abroad, thus weaving together the threads of memory which enable the visitors to take ownership of their history.

This reminder of the Museum's origins is significant, as it is not a usual museum. Major museums created in recent years are either extensions of already existing museums (Louvre Lens and Pompidou Metz), regional placements of national collections (MuCEM in Marseille), reorganisations of old museums (Musée des Confluences in Lyon), or facilities established by artists themselves (Musée Soulages in Rodez). The purchase of a private collection by a regional authority and the construction of an exhibition building is so rare that it is worth mentioning. It is also undeniable that if the decision had been taken today, it would have been completely different from the one taken before the economic crisis of 2008. The fascinating nature of the collection, the determination of its owner and the local politicians created such a favourable process that the Museum was created in just six years. This atypical creation has left a significant mark on the institution as it is today: a place that's different from other museums, which takes paths where no one else dares to go, talks differently about the Great War, and reaches as many people as possible.

From Concept to Reality

A New Building

The Museum's location has been a natural choice. Since 1932, the year of its inauguration, in the north of town there is the memorial monument the 'Liberté éplorée' (Weeping Liberty), commonly referred to as the 'American Monument'. A gift from the United States to France, in memory of all the soldiers who lost their lives in the First Battle of the Marne, this sculpture is the work of American artist Frederick MacMonnies; 26 metres tall, it towers over the Meaux countryside. It was clear from outset that building the museum in the immediate vicinity was the right choice - the monument would be the place of memory and the museum that of history.

Architect Christophe Lab won the competition and built the Museum. The building, which is made of concrete, glass and metal, is deliberately contemporary; integrated into

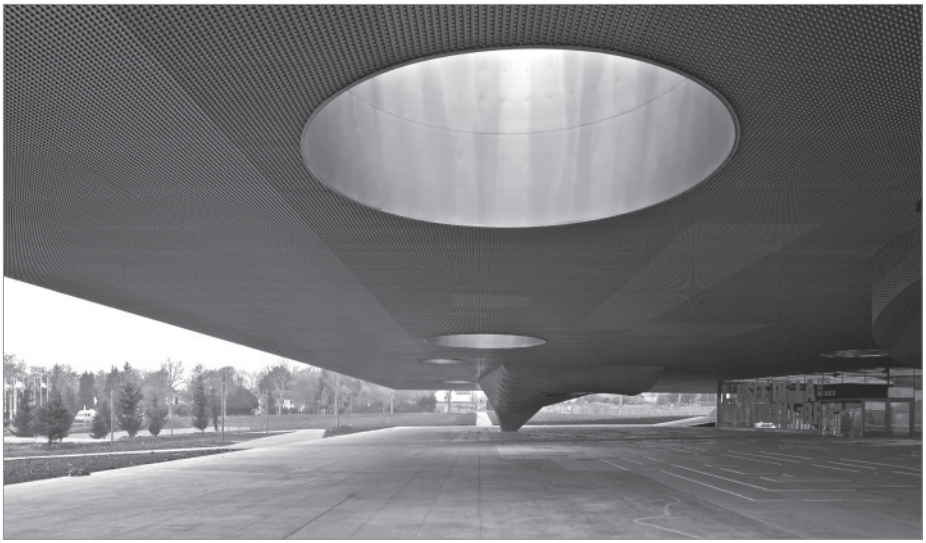

Fig. 2. The covered square shaping the entrance of the museum. Photo by Philippe Ruault. Courtesy of Atelier Christophe Lab.

the natural gradient of the land, it creates a permanent dialogue with the monument. Comprising 7,000m², including 3,000m² for the permanent exhibition, the building was designed to enhance the collection and the visitor itinerary while integrating in its structure the display of emblematic pieces such as domes for aeroplanes, the pit for the tank, and space for the reconstruction of a battlefield.

A Journey Through Time

The underlying theme behind exploring the Museum is the shift from the 19th to the 20th century, between 1914 and 1918: a time of great upheaval as well as the dramatic beginning of an era of economic and industrial globalisation. The challenge was to demonstrate this approach through museography, while showing the evolution of technology, mentalities and societies, in order to understand how this conflict became the basis of the 20th century and still moulds our present. Raising the interest of the 21st century's public in a one-hundred-year-old conflict is the challenge that the Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux faces every day.

This is why travelling through time is a starting point for discovery. From the introduction area, a real time machine taking visitors back to 1870, to the timeline at the end of the tour, the itinerary develops connection with today's world in order to highlight that it is the result of the Great War and that history is a sequence of events all linked to each other. From the beginning, visitors therefore understand how the Great War is the matrix of the last hundred years and how the consequences still influence our modern world.

The introduction room was conceived to start the visit with what visitors already know about the Great War (a monument to the Fallen, a street sign, a large-format original

drawing by graphic novelist Tardi, a cinema costume, etc.). These familiar objects make visitors aware that the First World War is a lot more present in daily life than they may think. This transition reassures and prepares them to find out more. Given that they have reference points, they are not frightened away by the idea of plunging into an unknown history with the risk of getting lost. With the same logic in mind, the film takes visitors back in time: edited images and sounds of the major events which punctuated the 20th century are a way of placing the Great War into a historical perspective, in order to prepare and guide visitors through the visit that they are about to undertake.

An Immersive Museography

With the collaboration of museographer Bruno Crépin, a member of the project team, the selection of the objects to be displayed as part of the permanent exhibition (only 15% of the whole collection) was made at the same time we selected the mediation tools we wanted to employ: whether to use handwriting, iconographic choices, writing contained in texts, and whether to create audiovisuals, multimedia terminals or ambient sounds ambiences. The objective has always been to maintain, in spite of the diverse range of media, the underlying theme of the discourse: a clear and pedagogical approach which provides visitors with the main tools for understanding the conflict and the shift from one century to the next.

Thus, the museography had to be up for this challenge. Influenced by the approach of other war museums (Imperial War Museum and National Army Museum in London, In Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres), the Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux offers a new kind of museography within the context of French history museums. Without using reconstructions, which get old all too soon, or dioramas, the Museum has chosen to use formats that create an overall atmosphere in which collections, archive footage, sound and mediation materials, interact with each other. Thus, the pre-war classroom, the barracks, the battlefield, and the American camp are based on the same principle: to dramatise the collection against a neutral decor in light grey shades. This way of displaying collection pieces in context, thus making each one a memory-piece, enables visitors to develop a closer connection during the visit, while, at the same time, it is perfectly clear that objects are being dramatised, since the museography codes are explicit. This is also the case of the mannequins, a highly sensitive subject in museums especially in history museums. Unrealistic, fake-looking mannequins (be them both realistic or abstract) prevent visitors from relating to and empathising with the subject. Therefore, the choice was made to display expressive, realistic faces which convey the historical period and the geographical origins and which are neutral in colour (light grey), thus fading into the background when put in contrast with the evocative power of the uniforms and the equipment. By giving them movement and making them hold objects, the mannequins look realistic and not as they were coming from a wax museum, where their sole aim is to look ultra-realistic. Here, the scenography works in favour of the Museum's theme and its textile collection.

The immersive experience visitors are offered would not be complete without images and sound. Before entering the building, visitors are greeted by ambient sounds – horses hooves, soldiers singing, a plane engine and bombings – while projected on the ground of the Museum's forecourt are animated maps that show the advance and retreat from the front in the two Battles of the Marne. In this way, the two events are immediately introduced in the itinerary. Within the exhibition, sounds accompany and give rhythm to the itinerary, which explains why the multimedia standpoints are silent and subtitled; also the audio guide is not delivered by means of headphones. Therefore, the sound immersive experience becomes a fundamental part of the itinerary. Archive footage is also present in all areas of the Museum: large format photographs blended with handwriting, big screen projections of archival films and short clips on screens which two or three people can watch at the same time, etc.; a range of media platforms that consistently aim at placing the collections in their historical context.

This alliance of sound and image reaches its peak in the 'virtual trench' area. This little room is characterised by the images projected on three walls, and an illuminated ceiling and mirrors which reinforce the feeling of being immersed in this environment. In this deliberately anxiety-provoking space, are being projected touching daily life portraits in the trenches: the cold, the dark, mud, rats, dead bodies... The reactions of some visitors, who are unable to stay in the room, prove that the Museum has achieved its goal. Although the most modern technology will never be able to truly represent what the soldiers went through during four years of war, nonetheless it was necessary for the Museum to tackle this issue.

Fig. 3. The 'A World War' Section. Photo by Philippe Ruault. Courtesy of Atelier Christophe Lab.

Every immersive experience should have an underlying theme which provides visitors with a point of reference. Here the common thread is the cartel book that is present throughout the whole itinerary; this large format editorial project comprises a double-page spreadsheet combining a short text, translated into English and German, and an emblematic illustration. Around, one hundred books are spread out in showcases, each one open at one specific page. Beyond the book being a symbol, each page turns while a voice narrates the story of the Great War. The display is quite innovative since the books integrated in the showcases become collection pieces, actively contributing to the overall museographic project.

An Experience to Be Lived

From the very beginning, the Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux has been conceived to speak to all kinds of visitors. Its daring architecture and contemporary museography, which is educational, sensitive and immersive at the same time, thus contribute to making the Museum accessible to as many people as possible. The choice of being so close to the visitors can be partially explained by the desire to treat the conflict from a ground-level point of view: soldiers' everyday life, of course, but also the lives of the women and children constantly moving back and forth between the two fronts and behind the lines. All the nations that were involved in the war are also represented, notably in the Uniform Collection, as they convey the universality of suffering and violence, regardless of which side the person was fighting on. Therefore, the Museum offers an experience in which anyone can find something interesting, knowing that experience is the best way to absorb information.

The itinerary is deliberately open and free. This allows each visitor to follow their own path as if they were building their own history. The main itinerary, which depicts the shift from the 19th to the 20th century, ends with a themed section: eight areas present cross-cutting aspects of the conflict (a new war, the body and the sufferings, globalisation, augmented mobility flows, etc.). Each of these areas is specifically characterised through the implementation of a distinctive museographic strategy, so that the visitor's curiosity is constantly stimulated. Of course, collection pieces are at the centre: they make sense, derive their sense from their relationship with the space, dialogue with all mediation media until they eventually get in contact with the visitors and question them on their own memories. As interest is awakened and curiosity is aroused, the Museum leads everyone to question themselves about their personal history.

Objects that can be touched punctuate the whole itinerary. These objects – which come from the collections and are called 'martyr objects' – allow visitors to comprehend materials and shapes. Originally designed for the disabled community, this facility is now used by everybody. Other mediation tools serve the purpose of transforming visitors into main players: 3D stereoscopic glasses; objects that can be weighed such as a package or a roll of barbed wire; educational games which help visitors to learn about the financial impact of the war on the nations that were involved; interactive terminals to explore the

collections in more detail, etc. There are countless ways to make the visit more attractive and dynamic, and to immerse visitors in an experience conveying a complex subject. All these tools are technically simple as their complexity lies in their ability to spark dialogue with the 'museographised' objects. They are not mere extras, but truly part of a coherent and complete visiting experience which is both sensitive and immersive.

A Cultural Facility Open to Everyone

A museum for everyone. This expression is often used. However, it does not always meet the expectations that it implies. The Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux thus endeavours to implement this approach and all its full potentialities.
The deliberately educational itinerary reaches out to people who don't know anything about the Great War or who think that this subject could not interest them. The specific approach of the Museum to the subject, recurrently referring to societal issues, enables this preconception to be overcome. Moreover, the quality of the collection and the rarity of certain pieces also offer experts something interesting to explore.

An Adapted Educational Facility

Particularly addressed to younger generations, especially through the cooperation with schools – since the First World War is studied in France in Primary School, 1st and 3rd classes – the Musée de la Grande Guerre has implemented a programme of original educational activities which facilitate exploration and understanding of the Museum.
Guided themed tours and educational workshops offer children the opportunity to create objects so that knowledge can be quickly and more easily absorbed. Students are active players while discovering the Museum: they analyse archival documents, create propaganda posters, draft letters or draw cartoons. The richness of a subject such as the First World War stimulates students to learn many things like history, geography, sciences, arts, languages, and so on. Hence, the vast array of co-curricular activities which can be done.
We created an itinerary through the permanent exhibition for children 8 to 12 based on the book of games 'Creatures of War'. This itinerary employs animals in each of the Museum's themed areas. For kids 12 to 15, there is a special audio guide which addresses historical facts and present the available tools in order to understand the museography including exclusive behind-the-scenes access to the Museum.

A Living History

By encompassing contemporary art, music, cinema and theatre in its programming, as well as experimenting with social media (i.e. project 'Léon 1914' on Facebook), the Museum is constantly seeking to highlight the relationship between the Great War and the modern world. Although the visiting itinerary presents a journey through time and history, the spaces at the beginning and at the end display their connection to contemporary society. Since this conflict is still close to us, learning about the Great War and

its consequences allows for a better understanding of the world in which we live today. Dramatised tours and regular visits organised by reconstruction associations in the Museum's park and in the galleries also contribute to bring history to the general public by using a sensitive mediation method. The success of family workshops and exhibition visits proves that the Museum can be a place of intergenerational exchange. Visiting the Museum encourages discussion on visitors' family histories. The fact that new collections have been added thanks to many private donations shows that people still have fond memories of the Great War and keep letters and objects tied to their ancestors. The practice of donating personal objects to the Museum has existed since its opening, however, it has increased significantly during the commemorations that marked the centenary of the conflict. The level of awareness about the importance of the Great War has certainly increased among the public. Whether or not inspired by visiting the Museum, these donations are the outcome of this increased awareness. Donating to the Museum is a way of ensuring the permanence of family memories.

Reaching Out to New Audiences

The Museum has duties as a public service. Besides being a museum about the First World War, the Musée de la Grande Guerre is first and foremost a cultural facility. By reaching out to younger generations, it contributes to their cultural education. A child who has a positive memory of his/her visit, once he becomes an adult will feel more comfortable going to see other museums. This goal is also fostered through a diversified cultural programme, conceived to enable visitors to discover and to learn to appreciate theatre and music.

However, besides the people that come to the Museum, there are all those who do not come. The Museum has the aim to involve them. Therefore, we decided to create a multi-sensory kit that brings the Museum 'outside its walls' to audiences who cannot come to the Museum – for example disabled communities, who require adapted mediation methodologies – as well as for people who plan on coming to visit it. The kit offers materials to touch – such as posters in relief – sounds to hear, and scents to smell. The Museum also addresses so-called 'prevented' audiences' while organising initiatives in hospitals, prisons, social and leisure centres, so that everyone can be involved in cultural activities. Thus, the Museum contributes to people being reintegrated into society, demonstrating that culture plays an essential role in city life.

The Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux is a testimony of the history, a testimony of the memory, and, as a museum of history and a museum of society, it is rooted in the present while looking towards the future. Its arrival on the French museum scene has somewhat shaken up usual ways of thinking, notably encouraging established First World War museums to rethink their museography. It provides tools for understanding and opens up channels for reflection; perhaps it raises more questions than it gives answers. Museums must therefore trust the intelligence and curiosity of the

visitors which allow them to take the necessary steps to go further and keep thinking about their own history.

Future commemorations of the conflict will spark a regained interest in the period. What will happen after 2019? Will the Great War fall into memorial oblivion like the French Revolution after all the splendour of its bicentenary celebrations? It is highly doubtful. The First World War caused such an upheaval that, in ten or twenty years' time, our societies will still be reflecting upon its contribution in shaping 20th century reality. It is in this context that the Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux will continue to play a major role.

Contemporary Museums between Theory and Practice

Luca Basso Peressut

Museums are *real* places: architectural and display spaces in which the physical conditions are created for exhibiting artworks, artefacts, installations, and performances. Museum exhibitions are the physical framework that enables the interpretation and representation of tangible and intangible heritage. In museums, narratives are *staged* through the practices of curatorship and architectural and exhibition design, and *truths* - different, uncertain, contested - (Fromm et al., 2014) are handled in the different narratives they are related to (e.g. history, science, art, nature, technology, etc.). It is taken for granted that these truths are corroborated by the authenticity of collections, artworks, objects, and documents; when displayed in a museographic setting, they are presented to the eye and intellect as manifestations of a defined relationship - at that time and in that space - between theory and practice.

The question of the relationship between theory and practice in museums is not new, and rather it is part of their history (Genoways and Andrei, 2008). Nevertheless we can say that in our present era, in which the relationship between the museum and society is becoming increasingly complex, new theoretical concepts and practices are needed (Marstine, 2006) to cross the social, cultural, and disciplinary borders which have been at the core of the construction of the theoretical frame of museum narratives over the past two centuries. This should be done by comparing different positions and points of view, and critically investigating how power is exercised - the power of organisational structures, internal hierarchies, political influences, or the pressure of public opinion, which are confronted with the rationales of scientific research. In relation to the question of 'Who is speaking on behalf of whom?' in museum exhibitions, James Clifford has written that '[t]he solution is inevitably contingent and political: a matter of mobilized power, of negotiation, of representation constrained by specific audiences' (Clifford, 1997, p.208). As the outcome of this negotiation, the museum setting represents a provisional step forward in the process of knowledge advancement, and can be used either briefly or over a longer period as a tool for communication and convincement, stating a position that is legitimated by the institutional and statutory nature of the museum.

Today, the relationship between theory and practice is not only related to the 'academics-museum professionals' polarity. In fact, many of the figures involved actually have a foot in both camps. In many respects, university research and research in museums

come across using disciplinary structures that back to a long time ago but which are increasingly interacting and intertwining so as to create new configurations. In particular when it comes to conceive, organise, and create a display or a new museum, the interdisciplinary feature of work in museums is reshuffling the relationship between theory and practice, in the light of those actions which are *par excellence* design-related and, consequently, creative and prefigurative.

Theories relating to the contemporary museum provide a horizon of reference for exhibition design practices and outline the objective of these activities through a two-way tension that is addressed to the continuous re-founding of this institution in relation to the transformation of society. Since museums can no longer be ascribed only to the Foucaultian category of heterotopia (which, as institutions responsible for the dissemination of the dominant ideologies, historically favoured their development as privileged places for the allocation of economic resources), and because they now are in the 'arena' of the cultural and social conflicts of the modern world, they have lost the *aura* stemming from their role as guarantors of history. At the same time, museums have acquired a new democratic and pro-active role in the construction of identities and social memories, as well as in the development, production, and transmission of knowledge, which may be useful for the 'being in the world' of the citizens of a global territory that is undergoing profound transformations.
As an institution 'at the service of society' (according to ICOM's statutes), the museum must first ask, and then re-ask, itself about the social structures it should represent, the type and composition of its public, and its expectations in terms of operation and proposals. Half a century after the studies by Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Dardel, new systematic research at the European level may be required to understand the ethnic, religious, generational, cultural, and gender features which characterise the contemporary museums' visitors. This initiative could be developed through the construction of a co-ordinated network, based on common and comparable formats collecting information and data about these aspects, building up a database at the European scale. These tools would significantly help to understand current trends and outline the new tasks for a cultural institution that is so strategic for the formation of social and community values. Nevertheless, we must not forget that there exists a hiatus between the dynamics of theoretical reflection and what can actually be done: a hiatus that has to do with the times and ways in which things are implemented, and with possibilities, desires, available resources, and the capacity to give shape to proposals. The museum world has long been stabilised by its historical roots and the inertia that is inherent in all institutional structures, as well as by the physical solidity of museum buildings; and these are amongst many factors that inevitably slow down, or even obstruct, the processes of change. It follows that addressing the theory-practice relationship in museums, does not only mean to investigate the purpose of the museum in society, but above all to find out how to concretely pursue that purpose in a way that society can perceive and understand. This

also means looking at the outcomes and effectiveness of the museographic representations once they have been completed. As Iain Chambers recently wrote, '[b]eyond mere adjustment and modification, the museum as a critical space needs to become something more, something else' (Chambers, 2014, p.243). That may be so, but can all of it be possible without deconstructing and rethinking the meaning of the museum as an institution? And how should this be done? This is certainly one of the most significant challenges that museums already have to deal with and that will have to continue to be addressed in years to come.

As stated in the program of the European Research Project MeLa - Museums in an Age of Migrations,[1] the redefinition of the museum's role in contemporaneity is a key component of current political agenda, because the museum institution emerges as the one that can hold together the tensions between local and global, self and other, inclusion and exclusion. It is here that the complexity of our inter/multi/transcultural society acquires a visible form. This is especially true for those museums that focus on such themes which were born out of the post-colonial and post-industrial age, when great national narratives have given way to a multiplicity of stories and voices. Yet, as the consequences of migrations and globalisation are so pervasive of all aspects of present day life, the whole museum world seems to be called into question, involving history museums, ethnographical, archaeological, identitarian, art, science, local, city museums, and many more at once.
In the light of the global transformations occurring in this new millennium - migration, mobility, the nomadism of people, ideas and things - museums are scheduling a very hectic agenda including the recognition and representation of minorities and 'other' cultures (for instance, in ethnographic and anthropological museums, and in *musées de société*), the inclusion of 'difficult' or 'hot' topics (e.g. wars, racism, slavery, diaspora, violence, human rights, etc.), and the participation of social groups in running the museum, or in 'co-creating' exhibitions and events.[2] More generally, it is also possible to perceive a growing need to enable visitors from different origins and cultural backgrounds to recognise values and narratives in *all* kinds of museums, irrespective of how deeply (in relation to the genealogy of the institution) their organisation and content are rooted in Western history and culture.

Within this scenario, it is becoming increasingly clear that museums are powerfully committed to the theme of representing contemporaneity and its complexity. In general, complexity now affects every field, from sciences, to politics and knowledge. Thus, it is necessary to develop a culture of complexity. In particular, in museums complexity should be dealt with as an area of investigation that is continuously in progress, and is not limited to amassing information but repeatedly redesigns the network holding together knowledge and skills that are always moving.
It is true that the use of the past in museums has always been *in the present*, serving

ideologies that were active when they were first set up. Nevertheless, when dealing with compelling contemporary issues (what is happening at the moment or has recently happened), museums have to tackle with significant theoretical and practical issues concerning the selection of heritage and the related narratives. Within the framework of a condition which, by compressing the period it covers, annuls the historical perspective that has been the analytical and interpretative paradigm of the traditional museum, a new perspective needs to be developed on a different basis. In such areas as the arts, the physical sciences, the social sciences and the historical disciplines, it will be important to implement interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches, that tend to intertwine multiple points of view and reasoning processes. To mention some examples: several city museums have added new sections that address not only the physical changes but also the social transformations occurring in the metropolis; some natural science and technology museums have included new issues related to sustainability, pollution, climate change, and the impact of scientific discoveries on society and lifestyles. For example, as reported by Denis Chevallier, MuCEM in Marseille deals with such matters as 'AIDS care and how the disease is socially perceived; changes in gender-related rituals; job salaries in contemporary cities; wearing veils and headscarves; football fan culture; aspects of worship and pilgrimage shared by the various monotheistic faiths; waste-based economies.'[3]

As was recently discussed during an international conference held at MuCEM,[4] the question is: how can museums create ways of exhibiting contemporaneity that are active tools reflecting the *becomingness* of the events and transformations that are taking place? In other words, how can museums respond to the challenge of contemporaneity? What should they put on display? What should a museum be narrating?
And moreover, what sort of contemporary material should be collected? In this regard, the selection criteria for defining the inclusion or exclusion of artefacts and documents pose new problems of merit and method, especially when dealing with the immediacy of representing everyday life. In 1992 the Director of the Science Museum in London, Neil Cossons, was already raising the acquisition policy issue: 'I suspect we should actually be collecting a lot more contemporary, perhaps ephemeral in the long term, material, having what I call a "transit shed" approach to acquisition. [...] We don't have either the natural selection of the past which has left us only a small portion of its relics from which to collect, nor do we have the perspective of time with which to determine what is, and is not, significant in the longer term. What we have got is the real stuff, immediately available to us, and for virtually nothing. We could put it into a store for a very, very low cost per cubic foot and leave it there for as long as we like for very, very little cost. Then, at the end of twenty five years or fifty years or whenever we feel like it, we can get it out again, evaluate it and so on, and it is still new.' (Cossons, 1992, p. 129)
The wide-ranging approach to acquisitions described by Cossons is now being applied in various museums, for instance, as in the experience of the Écomusée du Val

de Bièvre,[5] through specific calls for the donation of objects from the community, in relation to the areas covered by the museum, in order to promote temporary exhibitions or expanding existing collections.

These issues raise the question related to the role of the curator when selecting material that might be extremely heterogeneous and of unpredictable value. Furthermore, they introduce the problem of the creation of special buildings provided with adequate storage spaces to hold these collections, which have become so important that their integration in the new museums' project has become an architectural paradigm.
For example, in parallel with the construction of the main museum building, the realisation of MuCEM included a separate site, the 'Centre de Conservation et de Ressources (CCR)', which is a 13,000 square metre storage and archiving space designed by Corinne Vezzoni and André Jollivet. This building houses 'a total of almost 250,000 objects; 130,000 paintings, prints, and drawings; 450,000 photographs; almost 100,000 books and periodicals, as well as paper, audio and audio-visual archives.'[6] In the United States, the Cultural Resources Center in Suitland, Maryland, completed in 1998, serves as the storage and archive facility for the Native American collections, providing two museums - the George Gustav Heye Center in New York and the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington[7] - with exhibitions and events. This space can be considered an interesting example for the organisation of participatory projects, not only in relation to the promotion of events but also in architectural terms. In Switzerland, the Schaulager at Münchenstein in Basel is presented as 'a new kind of space for art,'[8] serving not only as storage for the collections of the historical Kunstmuseum, but also as an innovative place for temporary exhibitions.
At the dawn of the new millennium, one important issue in the organisation of museums concerns the relationship between museological disciplines, museum design and museography, against the background of a reflection on the theory and practice of colonialism in the modern age, and on the possibility to overcome them within the context of the multi- and transcultural condition which is affecting every area of thought and social action.

Today nationalism, meant as theory and practice of the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983), still represents a way of 'being in the world', although it is obviously not the only one. Another is localism, intended as a sense of belonging to a more or less extensive community that is strongly rooted in a territory and its traditions. Other ways of belonging are now becoming more visible. In a context characterised by diaspora, migration, nomadism, mobility, being in the world today may be ascribable to the Heideggerian condition of *Unheimlichkeit*, to a sense of disorientation or 'not feeling at home' (Heidegger, 1927). This state may be intended as a fundamental aspect of the ceaselessly moving human condition. It brings about the need to *appropriate* the places in which we find ourselves living, though temporarily, and thus to claim our entitlement to be visible,

to declare our existence, and to be recognised as individuals or members of a group or community (Taylor, 1992). Indeed, compared to just a few decades ago, the concepts of identity and citizenship among individuals, groups or communities now consist less of similarities and more of differences; they have become composite and contaminated, and have hybridised into the multiplicity of possible affiliations and differences.

Moreover, museums are places that are 'inhabited' by their visitors. By using the museum spaces, they manifest their presence as active subjects, and develop particular relationships with the exhibited content, and with its relevance in their everyday activities and experiences.
The decolonisation of museums, the recognition and representation of the various cultures, which were the subject of subjugation and are now part of a multiethnic Europe, have become core topics in the process of constructing the European identity. The ongoing post-colonial transformation of ethnographic, anthropological and 'colonial' museums is related to a specific social stance concerning the message these museums convey to a globalised public, which is now tending to overcome the superseded Eurocentric vision of the world (Thomas, 2010). Since 'far from being "negotiated", "reinvented" or "forgotten", the colonial past is just transferred and re-written into a present global concern', as stated by Nélia Dias (2008, p.309), the conception of a post-colonial museum in our 'age of migrations' requires historical and critical reflections on museographic theories and practices. These reflections may be developed, for example, by means of innovative strategies fostering involvement and participation, in relation to the fact that, when those 'colonised others' move to Europe, they become part of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities that claim their own entitlement to be recognised as social actors (Chambers et al., 2014).
Anyway, the post-colonial museum cannot be separated from its point of origin. In one way or another, every historical museum in the Western world originated from colonial beginnings that were both internal and external to the nations that were colonised: conquests, despoliations, acquisitions poisoned by strongly unbalanced power relationships, and so on. In general, contemporary museums, particularly those dedicated to 'other' cultures, suffer from that 'original sin' of having been historically created and grown up in the shadow of the colonial theories and practices developed by European states (as illustrated by the Musée Napoleon, or the thefts of works of art which took place in early nineteenth century Europe and during the Second World War) (Wescher, 1976; Nicholas, 1994), as well as by the non-European countries that were conquered and colonised *manu militari* (Barringer and Flynn, 1998; Bennett, 2004).

This issue raises an important question: the undermined approach to the colonial facet of the European cultural and political history, which some museums have already implemented or are implementing, may conceal the possible deletion of such important aspect. Undoubtedly, the history of the colonial era is not an easy topic to deal with, but

the ways in which these museums once represented the colonies and the relationships between the settlers and the colonised are part of what we know about the policies and ideologies of that particular era (Dias, 2000). In the post-colonial representation of the history of colonialism, this story should be kept and critically re-interpreted. In practical terms, the former colonial museums that have been reorganised in a post-colonial sense should still have space in which to retain at least parts of their original displays, which bear witness to that specific past and to the ways in which it was trumpeted in Europe in relation to an ideology we now abhor, by creating a sort of 'museum of the history of colonialist ideology' within post-colonial museums. As stated by Susan Legêne, the ethnographic and colonial collections cannot only be used as sources of information about non-Western cultures, but can also be considered as 'archives documenting how European societies and their ideologies were established, which may thus have a role to play in post-colonial societies' (Legêne, 2000, p.101).

On the other hand, museums are also representations of *themselves* in the historical facet or their organisation and structures. They are in fact a heritage that testifies the culture of an era which has materialised in the particular 'form of the museum', in its organisation, its exhibition devices, its *décor*, typology, and architecture. Therefore, why should these museums not recount the colonial past and the strategies of communication used by colonialism, perhaps also re-reading and re-interpreting the original displays? Would that not be the best way to sustain a critical discourse on colonialism, on its heritage, and on contemporary forms of colonialism and imperialism, thus activating an intercultural dialogue without deleting the history of a representational model that is now considered obsolete? (L'Estoile, 2007).

In Paris, the conversion of the colonial museum first opened in 1931 (as the *Musée des Colonies*) into a museum of the history of immigration, together with the renovation of another important anthropological and ethnographic museum (*Musée de l'Homme*), and the related transfer and relocation of parts of their collections into a new museum (*Musée du quai Branly*), represent in my opinion an exemplary case study in the contradictions between what it is desired to do, what can practically be done, and what actually happens in the framework of the post-colonial renewal of contemporary museums, particularly in view of the considerable financial resources and the richness of the collections that are available. As if to demonstrate how controversial the strategies are for transforming the post-colonial legacy, a clash that took place entirely within the theoretical debate on the new characteristics and themes of the new museum made it impossible to give the Musée du quai Branly a meaningful name other than that of the street that passes in front of it (Clifford, 2007; Dias, 2008).

The end product of the Musée du quai Branly is an aestheticising exhibition space which looks like an 'Ark of Cultures', an initiatory journey through time and space immersed in the kaleidoscopic setting designed by Jean Nouvel. Although it has met with great success in terms of visitor numbers, this outcome does not seem entirely effective.[9]

I find the *Pavillon des Sessions* at the Louvre (opened in 2000) a more convincing alternative to the Musée du quai Branly – rather than a mere 'antenna', as it has been called – because of the clarity and consistency in the selection of artefacts and the quality of the installations designed by Jean-Michel Wilmotte, which are free of any metaphorical and ideological redundancy.

At the same time, the decision to restore and maintain the colonial architectural character of Albert Laprade's *Palais de la Porte Dorée* and its extraordinary decorations, as the setting for a new narrative, was certainly a positive way of creating a dialogue between past and present – and had the unforeseen effect of creating a sense of identification between the *sans-papiers* immigrant workers who occupied the museum at the end of 2010 and the colonial frescoes in the central hall, against which the workers photographed one another, sending the pictures to relatives in their countries of origin as if to say 'here we are, represented in these paintings!'.

Yet, the *Palais de la Porte Dorée* still has no section dedicated to the 1931 Colonial Exhibition, of which the traces can still partly be seen in the Bois de Vincennes, nor to the history of the Musée des Colonies, that was intended to remain as the only permanent element of the 1931 Exhibition (Morton, 2000). Had this been done, the dialogue between past and present would have been more precise and better documented.[10]

The impression remains that the new post-colonial condition has actually been acting as censor, by trying to use the narration of the history of immigration to avoid any need to discuss the often tragic aspects of the French colonial period. As underlined by Camilla Pagani, this may be symptomatic of the fact that 'in French cultural policies there is still no awareness of our colonial history' (Pagani, 2014, p.343).

Another worthwhile example of the new approach to post-colonial stances is the Royal Museum for Central Africa at Tervuren, near Brussels, often referred to as 'the last colonial museum.'[11] Within the ongoing extensive renovation, which includes the complete preservation of the building and 60% of the original exhibition settings, the historical architecture and displays are becoming 'evocative of colonial memories as a testament to the museographic culture of the time.[12] The physical distance this project leaves between the historical building and the new wing, containing the entrance and the spaces for temporary exhibitions, emphasises the critical distance between past and present – but does not erode the memory of the museum's past. If the project is developed according to this approach, we shall have an interesting example of how a new model for the post-colonial museum can be installed within a former colonial museum and can exist alongside it.

Against the crisis of rating systems based on clear separation between disciplines, as adopted by modernity to organise knowledge and the political structures relating to power hierarchisation and social class differentiation, nowadays museums have to travel – through 'inclusions' and 'exclusions' – new roads to exhibit and tell stories. This involves enacting practices that draw on a number of design and communication

disciplines, while highlighting the need of an ever-changing museum model, where some elements are more stable - the architecture, the collections - whilst others - the exhibitions - are more mobile.
Hence, contemporary art enters the historical-anthropological or naturalistic museums to 'undermine' well-established knowledge and interpretations, while science and technology open up new visions within fine arts museums, the photo reportage conveys life immediacy to city museums, and theatre performances involve the visitors' participation in knowledge appropriation (e.g. cultural events held in the National Museum of the American Indian's rotunda in Washington) (Lonetree and Cobb, 2008). All of them are practices geared towards breaking up settled interpretative models, stimulating new points of view, and encouraging different ways of creating culture.

Identifying the temporary exhibitions as past and current integral part of that renewal process affecting the idea of museum that has occurred over the last century, today we see that the temporary exhibition models can be the expression of exciting cultural investigations, actual workshops[13] operating in the front line within a dialectic interchange between the stability of museum spaces and the research of new forms of representation. Theme-based temporary exhibitions and multidisciplinary practices have become experimental forms of museum-related communication, which have the potential to investigate and test new ways to represent a number of themes connected with contemporary museums. Among others, the following are worth mentioning, such as the 'Le Musée Cannibale' exhibition, organised in 2002-2003 at the *Musée d'Ethnographie de Neuchâtel* (MEN), which displayed the historical desire to feed on others, that led to the creation and development of the museums of ethnography (Gonseth et al., 2002); the contribution of artists, such as Mark Wilson at the Maryland Historical Society in 1992 ('Mining the Museum'), soliciting 'a more open, inclusive relationship between cultural institutions and the communities they serve' (Corrin, 1994), and Mark Dion at the Oakland Museum of California in 2010 ('The Marvellous Museum: Orphans, Curiosities & Treasures') examining how museum practices have shifted over time (Dion et al., 2010); to conclude with the examples presented in a recent essay by Marco Borsotti, who highlighted these lines of research (Borsotti, 2013).
It is no accident that the most challenging aspects of the Musée du quai Branly programme are connected with the relevant content conveyed by temporary exhibitions, conferences, films and performances. The sequence of about sixty temporary exhibitions that were held so far, starting from the very first, 'D'un regard l'Autre' in 2006 (Le Fur, 2006), evidences the role these initiatives played in implementing and integrating the permanent exhibitions' narratives, thus turning the museum into a privileged place for research and experimentation, and fostering the continuous renovation of its mission.
Museums should be increasingly organised as spaces designed for ever changing exhibitions, that is as a mere frame for works to be exhibited in rotation, characterised by uninterrupted rebuilding of the exhibition structures that are actual *narrative theatres*,

where space, time, body, movement, memory, emotion make up the substratum for the various levels in which communication operates.
We may also wonder: how crucial is the museum's exhibition dimension, as traditionally seen in its physical expression of architecture and installations, or rather is it still the best way to communicate? Should we not devise new forms of representation which may go beyond the traditional museographic form?

Immaterial heritage, oral and visual evidence, document digitalisation techniques are now part of a new collection and exhibition typology, which requires strategic approaches to archiving, management and transmission of information, and lead to a completely new interpretation of the museum physical structure. All of the settled products and heritage belong to that 'archives of the world', making up the substratum from which museums draw documents. They are the words required to build multiple discourses and narratives, ranging from those of individuals, families, groups and communities, up to those concerning the History of peoples and countries. The *Memory of the World* Unesco Programme, states that 'the world's documentary heritage [the documented, collective memory of the peoples of the world - their documentary heritage - which in turn represents a large proportion of the world's cultural heritage] belongs to all, should be fully preserved and protected for all and, with due recognition of cultural mores and practicalities, should be permanently accessible to all without hindrance.'[14]
All tangible and intangibles collections should be considered as complete archives from which to extract the documents required, from time to time, for the creation of new communication campaigns, the development of new curatorial practices, and the conception of new narratives.
The opportunities offered by research on the fields of advanced technologies find practical applications in the creation of exhibitions that allow intersections and cross interpretations, recreating dynamics that pass over the fixity of architecture and display. The use of ICT may foster multiple approaches to exhibitions (also those more sedimented from a historical point of view), as it allows building tailored and subjective routes, provides new information layers from which an individual selection of new routes and multidisciplinary investigations is available, creates new types of relationships between geographically remote museums, and finally brings together different information, documentation and knowledge.

Today, it is already possible to exhibit real objects and, at the same time, to connect them (their images, information, documents) through multimedia and network communication devices, to build connections with the objects included in other museums, as well as to represent and process the progress of research on them. From this point of view, a case is particularly revealing, that of the Parthenon marbles scattered across Athens (Acropolis Museum), London (British Museum), Paris (Louvre), Copenhagen (National Museum of Denmark), Munich (Glypthotek), the Vatican Museums,

the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and the University of Würzburg. In fact, it would be possible to organise exhibitions and installations with reproductions (maybe holographic) that could complete the original versions from different museums, thus creating an organic reading of split fragments.
Beside the initiatives promoted by the British Museum (i.e. the 2003 virtual reality exhibition of the Parthenon Marbles and the 3D modelling of the Olympian gods of the frieze), a little though meaningful example of the use of ICT can be found in an initiative promoted by the Nationalmuseet of Copenhagen, where the archaeological section today includes two small heads which were part of a metope that is now in London. Here, a video presents the story of the acquisition, shows the virtual re-composition process of the whole element that was possible due to an initial laser-scanner survey of the separate parts, and illustrates the likely original hue according to recent archaeological studies. Implemented on a large scale, this exhibition solution could offer a comprehensive and comparative view of all the sculptures of the ancient monument, and contribute to new reflections concerning the long-standing disputes about repatriation of such finds to Greece. Many other cases can be treated the same way, and not only in the archaeology and art fields, for example through strategic projects aimed at virtually reunifying scattered collections or links of knowledge between types of objects that cannot be moved from where they are (because they are strictly related to local communities or museums, or are part of the architectural heritage).

Architecture has always played a distinctive role in moulding the museum experience. Its forms and languages have characterised the institution identity: the classical style of the very first art museums, or the regional style of ethnographic museums in the late nineteenth century; the 'Modern Style' of the twentieth-century museums; the architectural 'extravaganza' of colonial museums, the redundancy of certain global contemporary museums, above all in the contemporary art field, the so-called museums of hyper-consumption, spaces of the 'new conformism' as well as of the 'conflict' between artistic production and economic interest (Purini, 2006, p.55).
Actually, architecture is a form of sensitive-rather-than-discursive narrative (Psarra, 2009) which, when it comes to museums, takes on a specific connotation depending on the content. It is indisputable that, in such cases as the Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux,[15] the Museum of quai Branly, the Jewish Museum of Berlin and so on, the symbolic role of architecture is a key component of museum communication and of its influence in the relationship with visitors.
Referring to what Michael Ames wrote twenty years ago concerning museums, that 'are undergoing further changes which will likely produce a new kind of museum by the twenty-first century resembling only vaguely what we know today' (Ames, 1992, p.11), the issue related to museum-form and museum-space as tangible expressions of a new way for the museums to be in the civil space, is increasingly of great interest. From an architectural viewpoint, the nineteenth century-styled hall and gallery (with

the typical use of *décor,* colours and upholstery), the modernist white cube (with its minimal aesthetics and ideology) and the multimedia black box, leave the way open to free experimenting with the functional reuse of existing buildings' space (warehouses, power stations, disused factories) where the current cultural production finds its expression through new relationships between object, subject and space, and define now (and in future) the museum as a place for action and activity, rather than a place for aesthetic contemplation.
If we consider the relationship between architecture, interior space and exhibition design in new museums, it is as if we were in front of a double 'shell': the external fixed part corresponding to the architecture of the city and its image, and the changeable, adjustable one, corresponding to interior space (or spaces), that is the modifiable frame (as if it were theatrical machinery) containing different exhibition sets or artists' installations. The idea of the museum as a *stage set* for a collective drama, which becomes itself a new advanced form of representation, is increasingly catching on.
Furthermore, today museums express their positioning in the public place sector as 'machines' aimed to intensify the experiences shared by the city life based on a network of mixed, erratic, net-like relationships, according to a dot-like morphology of lifestyles, spaces, objects and new architectural configurations. As mobility redesigns social structures as well as contemporary landscape forms, the museums are delocalised on the territory or at the infrastructure junctions themselves (railway stations, airports, underground stations), intersecting the connection networks that make new - even cultural - centres possible and geographically diffused.
Similarly to what happens with contemporary art, that appropriates urban spaces through interventions in abandoned areas, on the buildings' blank walls, within the disused factories' fences and in public squares, by means of installations, shows and combining their own messages with those of advertising mega-posters, museums exhibition spaces migrate to discover new references between 'interior' and 'exterior'. Museums located at different sites become a socially valuable strategy of intervention. They have proved to potentially be an urban and regional re-generation tool, according to a line of 'border-crossing or rather, involvement of all visual practices' (Celant, 2008, p.3), geared towards a cultural and aesthetic project applied to the environment surrounding us.

Within the current global communication context, the museum aspires to go 'out of itself' so as to stage the metropolitan and regional spaces with fragments and splinters of its no longer operating historical typology. The 'sprawling' museum interweaves a map by strategic points, bringing the 'art of exhibiting' in again as an ongoing and fruitful search for a close relationship between artefacts and humanised contexts, that leads us to new connections between theory and practice in museums, and thus to their institutional and architectural metamorphosis.

[1] Wescher, P., 1976. *Kunstraub unter Napoleon*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann Urlag.

See the MeLa Project website: <http://www.mela-project.eu> [Accessed March 2014].

[2] Jannelli and Thiel, here pp.64-72.

[3] Here p.103.

[4] See the International conference held at MuCEM (5th - 7th December 2013), 'Exposer, s'exposer: de quoi le musée est-il le contemporain ?/ Exposing, exposing oneself: what are the museum's contemporaries?'. [Online] Available at: <http://www.mucem.org/fr/node/1643> [Accessed March 2014].

[5] Delarge, here pp.56-63.

[6] [Online] Available at: http://www.mucem.org/en/mucem/one-museum-three-sites/centre-conservation-and-resources-ccr> [Accessed March 2014].

[7] 'The architectural program and design for the building were the result of numerous consultations and collaborations with NMAI staff, design professionals, and a cross-section of Native peoples from throughout the Western Hemisphere and Hawai'i.' The architectural program, 'The Way of the People' was developed by a team of consultants led by Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates. The architectural design was developed by the Polshek Partnership of New York, Tobey + Davis of Virginia, and the Native American Design Collaborative, a consortium of Native design professionals and cultural consultants.' See website: <http://nmai.si.edu/explore/collections/crc/> [Accessed March 2014].

[8] The Schaulager project by Herzog & de Meuron was completed in 2002. See website: <http://schaulager.org/en/index.php?pfad=schaulager/konzept> [Accessed March 2014].

[9] As the designer stated: 'In a place inhabited by symbols of forests and rivers, by obsessions of death and oblivion, it is an asylum for censored and cast off works from Australia and the Americas. It is a loaded place haunted with dialogues between the ancestral spirits of men, who, in discovering their human condition, invented gods and beliefs. It is a place that is unique and strange, poetic and unsettling.' (Nouvel, 2006) To James Clifford, Quai Branly 'is making theater, not writing theory' (Clifford, 2007, p. 6), to Herman Lebovics the museum is above all 'a performance' (Lebovics, 2006).

[10] The two great Paris exhibitions of the Thirties, the *Exposition Coloniale Internationale* (1931) and the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* (1937), appear to be complementary events, epitomising myths and values of that time: the scientific and technological progress connected with the colonialist practices of resource appropriation in non-European countries, disguised as modernisation ideologies, according to the colonialism-civilisation-progress triad, with a unique theme interchange between the two whose heritage we can see in the following museums: the *Musée des Colonies*, now *Musée de l'Histoire de l'Immigration* at Port Dorée and the *Palais de la Découverte* at Grand Palais.

[11] Ceuppens, here pp.83-99.

[12] 'The museum building is protected, as are some of its more contested colonial objects, including the four golden statues in the rotunda, the plaques commemorating Belgians who died in the Congo Free State, and the old glass cases that were created to parcel up Congolese nature and culture on a taxonomic basis. The museum thus faces the immense challenge of creating a postcolonial exhibition in what remains essentially a colonial building.' Ceuppens, here p.91.

[13] See the Stadtlabor of the Historical Museum Frankfurt, in Jannelli and Thiel, here pp.64-72.

[14] See website: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001256/125637e.pdf> [Accessed March 2014].

[15] See Rouger, here pp.137-147.

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By reporting on a selection of innovative museological and museographical practices that are being experimented by some major European museums, the volume offers an overview on the revision of their mission, strategies and tools to enhance the approach towards the contemporary multi-cultural society.

With contributions by
Cécile Aufaure, Luca Basso Peressut, Richard Benjamin, Peter Bjerregaard, Christoph Bongert, Pierangelo Campodonico, Bambi Ceuppens, Denis Chevallier, Alexandre Delarge, Angela Jannelli, Vito Lattanzi, Hélène du Mazaubrun, Marie Poinsot, Cathy Ross, Michel Rouger, Ramzi Tadros, Sonja Thiel.

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Exhibition spaces under renovation. © Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Bordeaux.

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