

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

Book of Proceedings

CAMOC Annual Conference 2020 (2021) Krakow, Poland

Conference organisers:

ICOM international
council
of museums

M CAMOC ICOM
international committee
for the collections and activities
of museums of cities



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The Right to the City

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Book of Proceedings



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CAMOC Annual Conference 2020 (2021)
Krakow, Poland



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE COLLECTIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF MUSEUMS OF CITIES



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Krakow, Poland

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The Right to the City

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CAMOC's team has persistently endeavoured to keep the pace of editing and delivering publications, mostly digital but, as regularly as possible, also on paper, all of them of free access. The *CAMOC Museums of Cities Review*, which has been published since 2017, following six years of editions of the former CAMOC Newsletter, will soon see its 13th issue released to the public.

In previous years, our inspiring predecessors in the lead of the ICOM City Museums International Committee managed to edit a number of conference proceedings and great books, such as *Our Greatest Artefact: the city* (2013). Since 2017, our team has published the proceedings of all CAMOC's annual conferences in the form of e-books freely available for download, as a means to expand the accessibility to the most relevant contents of every conference: Mexico City (2017), Frankfurt (2018), Kyoto (2019) and now Krakow (June 2021). The workshops and webinars, put together over the last six years, have also been illustrated in special dossiers, in books of proceedings or issues of the Review. Therefore, the preparations for the editing of the book of proceedings on the Barcelona CAMOC conference, held in December 2021, will soon follow.

CAMOC's publications over the last few years have always been presented under the same graphic design, helping to strengthen a unique identity and making them easier to recognise and assemble. Nevertheless, the key point of the success of our committee's work in this regard lies in the efficiency of our editor and Secretary: Jelena Savic.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual conference that was meant to be held in the lovely city of Krakow in 2020 had to be postponed to June 2021 and, even so, on a strictly, albeit very professional, online live model, made possible thanks to the great team of the Museum of Krakow. This conference was a high-quality one focusing on the theme "The Right to the City", and covered three topics: The Right to the City: Strategic Approaches for City Museums; Who Has the Right to the City? State-Of-The-Art Approaches in City Museums; and The Right to a Sustainable Urban Future. The introduction, penned by Jelena Savic, provides our readers with a thorough description and critical analysis of the paper presentations and the main topics debated by almost forty speakers from 23 countries across Europe, Asia, Oceania and North America.

In addition to the articles published in this book, we invite you to find the whole conference recordings on CAMOC's YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX-2yER0juEP2X16OIL8oUw>.

Across this array of gripping papers, we find relevant knowledge-sharing perspectives on the city museums' panorama all over the globe, innovative thinking, new successful practices, mistakes to avoid and cross-disciplinary approaches. Suay Aksoy, former CAMOC Chair and ICOM President, points out that "museums need to engage with societal issues and to pursue the dual role of creating / raising awareness through learning and helping their communities to voice their wishes / demands for a better life and environment." Joan Roca embraces the same idea under a different phrasing: he states that a city museum is a "heritage institution of urban knowledge to enhance citizenship".

While addressing the issue of a connection between museums, a historical narrative and storytelling, Michal Niezabitowski asks "how to construct a tale of a city today?" He says that "finding a universal story, which appeals to the listeners in a timeless way, bears its name in the world culture – it is a myth. How, then, should museums narrate so that they could turn their cities into a myth which is "immortal"? Can a city, which is neither anthropomorphic nor organic, become a hero?

Andrea Delaplace brings up the importance of plural narratives and participatory processes to build multivocal museum contents.



The analysis of protests to gain a stronger right to the city is the subject of Margaret Anderson's paper on the exhibition *Protest Melbourne*.

The power of data to connect residents and other museum visitors to important aspects of the city is the main topic of the paper by Sarah Henry (Museum of the City of New York), about "Art and Data: Exploring Subjectivity and Objectivity in *Who We Are*". Artists can play a special role in presenting data in a more compelling way, "by interpreting and problematizing data and making it emotionally as well as intellectually accessible".

The final topic of the conference and of this book is directed towards a more sustainable urban future, namely through the paper "Sites of Transition: The Museum in an Emerging Global Network of Interconnected Sustainable Cities" by Morien Rees, the chair of the ICOM Working group on Sustainability.

We hope you will learn from this book and enjoy its diverse approaches showing the vitality of city museums across the world!

See you all soon at the next CAMOC conference as a part of the ICOM General Conference in the lovely city of Prague, in August 2022.



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CAMOC Annual Conference 2020 (2021)
Krakow, Poland

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY: CAMOC'S 15TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE, DELAYED BY THE PANDEMIC

About the conference and this publication

In 2020, for the very first time in CAMOC's history, it was not possible to hold the annual meeting of our members. These past two and a half years have been marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, in every sphere of life, nevertheless, we were able to adapt and overcome the situation. So, even if at a much later date than initially planned, I am pleased to present this Book of Proceedings, with its fifteen original texts, as the tangible outcome of our Krakow gathering.

Despite the disruption of the plans due to the pandemic crisis, our 15th anniversary conference in Krakow was never cancelled – we kept postponing it in the hope that the improvement of the global sanitary and travel situation would allow us to organise the meeting on site at a later date. When we were planning our meeting we took a number of things into consideration, for instance, being physically present in one of the great European cities, getting to know the Museum of Krakow with its many branches and being able to experience the urban context of Krakow as its main subject of interest presented itself as important as the conference theme itself.

The Call for Papers (launched in December 2019) drew in about 70 proposals from five different continents. Then, we were forced to postpone the conference three times and eventually opt for an entirely online event. The conference was held on 9-11 June 2021, a whole year after the initial proposed dates for June 2020. The online format was challenging and inevitably reductive, however, it had positive effects too: there was a significant increase in the number and the diversity of our participants, especially attendees, in comparison with the usual on-site meetings. We welcomed almost forty speakers from 23 countries, and there were over 200 registered participants, twice the number of the most numerous attendance of an on-site CAMOC conference (Kyoto 2019), showcasing fifty-one countries across six continents.

The theme for the 15th CAMOC Annual Conference had been first announced at our previous meeting in September 2019 in Kyoto. Henri Lefebvre's concept of the *Right to the City*, dating back to the end of 1960s, remains highly relevant in the today's world. Lefebvre insisted that the revolution has to be urban, in the broadest sense of the term. The conference theme was inspired by his original concept and the version taken further by another great thinker, David Harvey. In his seminal text, Harvey addresses the question of what kind of city we want by exploring "another type of human right, that of the right to the city".¹

Despite the pandemic context, the theme was kept as initially planned: its relevance remained, and we also felt the responsibility towards our selected speakers, participants and members to pursue the debate on this topic. Some of the accepted speakers felt the need to adapt their contributions due to the new circumstances caused by the pandemic.

A set of four topics related to the right to the city was developed in order to situate our debate in the context of city museum studies: "Participation/locality", "Who has the right to the city?", "Urban revitalization" and "Confronting *post-truth*". The online format of the conference conditioned the programme and the planning of the sessions, otherwise said, organising the conference days and the order of speeches entirely around these four main axes proved unfeasible. Therefore, the structure of this Book of Proceedings diverges from the thematic subdivision of the conference, given that it had to be adapted and simplified since not all of our speakers were able to submit full papers for this volume.

For this Book of Proceedings, CAMOC carries on the trend established in recent years: we opted for a digital publication, in English, in order to reach the highest possible number of researchers, experts and third parties



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¹ Harvey, D. (2008). The Right to the City. *New Left Review*. [online] Retrieved from: <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii53/articles/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city>

interested in urban life, cities and their museums. This volume is available as an e-book, free of charge, and it may be used and shared according to the CC BY-NC-ND license copyright conditions.²

The structure of the book

While the entire digital conference was recorded and made available publicly, this Book of Proceedings contains only a part of the contributions presented at our annual meeting.³ This is why its structure differs from the thematic subdivision of the conference. Most of the contributors are from city museums, however, there are some who come from different professional contexts albeit to cities.

Those who have given their contributions to this book tackle several key threads: they show how the dialectics between local everyday life and the city as the right *space of representation* can be made visible and tangible by means of a city museum strategies, collections and activities. They reflect on the ways city museums contribute to understanding and mediating the complex relations between visitors and residents, (im)migrants and residents, “insiders” and “outsiders” in the urban space.

They examine how city museums contribute to making cities more inclusive through developing new forms of participation in the process of urban revitalisation. Finally, the principles of conveying authenticity through museum collections and programmes, acknowledging the plurality of voices present in the museum space and offering a reliable base for one’s own interpretation of the urban reality have been present throughout the book.

The book has been organised in three parts: the first part is centred on the paradigm shift in museums and a range of strategic approaches to enhance the museums’ social role, applicable to city museums. The second part contains state-of-the-art examples of city museum initiatives and projects from different urban contexts, promoting the right to the city in diverse creative and innovative ways. The two texts concluding the Book link the right to the city to urban sustainability – our keyword for 2022. They provide different insights into the sustainability prospects and concerns, in equal measure, directed at a global scale and at micro-level, that of our everyday life.

Part 1: The right to the city: strategic approaches for city museums

The keynote article by Suay Aksoy, a distinguished cultural heritage and museum expert as well as a former CAMOC Chair, Chair of the ICOM’s Advisory Council and President of ICOM, sets the tone for this chapter and the entire Book of Proceedings. Entitled *Museums: From being for visitors to being for citizens*, it reflects on the increased relevance of museums today, achieved through a paradigm shift towards their stronger social role. Museums are now striving to go beyond their visitors and contribute to bringing positive change whether in their social contexts or globally. Many of the “wicked”, unstructured problems, present at the global scale, linked to achieving social cohesion, equity, justice, social and environmental sustainability, or coping with climate change, are now at the centre of attention of museums. Museums have a unique potential – and also a unique responsibility – to make an intentional positive shift and help work towards a solution in a long-term perspective.

Joan Roca focuses on the strategic thinking and planning specifically applied to city museums. By bringing together specialist knowledge and citizen participation, city museums are able to simultaneously explain the city and be one of its transformative forces, namely in the domains of democracy, social justice and environmental sustainability.

Michał Niezabitowski turns his gaze to the essence of what makes a city museum – understanding and narrating the city, and, intrinsically, the subtle art of listening. This art needs to be rediscovered and conveyed through a “tender museum professional”, so that the right to the city is achieved.

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³ The audio-visual archive of the entire event can be accessed on the CAMOC’s YouTube channel, at: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLNhaRZEo9KyaUD-L1zYnIFbNvIPpNMN6aq>



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Andrea Delaplace highlights the diversity and plurality of perspectives that compose the (hi)story of a city. The (hi)story of a city is also the stories of migrations, as a whole and individually, which have an important place in city museums, beyond the scope of specialised migration museums.

Junichi Kobayashi concludes this chapter by stressing the power of culture – the author emphasises the role of museums in overcoming the consequences of large-scale crises and problems humanity has been facing today, including the COVID-19 pandemic. This role may be fulfilled not only at local level but also through cross-cultural communication.

Part 2: Who has the right to the city: State-of-the-art experiences from city museums

This section gathers eight papers where different facets of the right to the city are explored in specific cultural contexts.

Margaret Anderson discusses the right to protest in a forward-thinking, democratic society and, in light of the lived experience of the pandemic, points out to a new research question: that on the limits to this right and on how the future of protest may be affected.

Sarah Henry presents a case study about a recent exhibition in the Museum of the City of New York, which tackles the objectivity and the power of data. City museums have great capacities in making data meaningful and accessible, in order to empower citizens to interpret and understand their urban context more thoroughly, to support their critical thinking and exercising their right to the city.

Two subsequent articles, by Nicole van Dijk and Lien Vloeberghs, focus on strengthening social inclusiveness and resilience. The Stichting Wijkcollectie, The District Heritage Foundation, works at the level of neighbourhoods, involving the local communities of Rotterdam by embracing all their diversity. The Red Star Line Museum explores the history of migration as a universal, human and natural phenomenon. Lien Vloeberghs's paper is about how exhibiting personal stories and individual approach may help create a bond between a visitor-observer and the migrant-narrator, and establish a connection marked by mutual acknowledgement, recognition and respect.

Kamil Stasiak's paper resonates with Joan Roca's message on strategic thinking and planning for city museums, and showcases an array of current initiatives in the area of museum education in the Museum of Krakow. The museum works as a research and knowledge hub for the city, building awareness of urban heritage values to ensure its sustainable future.

The three final papers in this chapter tackle museums in the making. Marco Minoja, Samuele Briatore and Antonella Andreotti present the Milan city authorities' vision and strategic plan to redesign the museum offer available in the city. As it seems from the work conducted so far, twenty museums and other institutions, organised in four distinct zones, form a (civic) museum district and represent museums *in* the city rather than the museum *of* the city in a narrower sense of the word.⁴ Through a case study about the future city museum for the Italian hilltown of Orte, Yvonne Mazurek tackles the underresearched domain of small towns, whose relevance is currently being reevaluated in the context of the changing lifestyle trends, sustainability concerns and prospects and the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, Jelena Savic's paper concludes this section with a reflection on the unique time when a new city museum is being contemplated in Porto and the importance of conveying a broadened vision of the museums' social role and potential to future city museum professionals.

Part 3: The right to a sustainable urban future

The concluding chapter of this Book of Proceedings consists of two texts which tackle urban sustainability as a key issue at the present moment across the museum sector and beyond. Joana Sousa Monteiro's paper on



⁴ City museum researchers will be able to follow the progress of this project at our upcoming conference in Prague this August.

recent sustainable projects in the Museum of Lisbon simultaneously addresses matters of urban sustainability, wellbeing and cultural diversity. The Museum of Lisbon connects and empowers citizens through a personal-scale approach, contributes to social cohesion and works as a local hub for learning and acting towards a more sustainable future.

Morien Rees, the Chair of ICOM's Working Group on Sustainability, concludes this section and the book by outlining the potential of museums as sites of transition to a sustainable future and the CAMOC's possible role in the roadmap to achieving the UN's sustainability goals.

The power of museums

Our next annual conference will take place in Prague, in August 2022, as a part of ICOM General Triennial Conference, under the umbrella theme *The power of museums*. As the role of cities, from high-density metropolises to small towns, becomes more and more fundamental in any discussion on sustainability, our focus at CAMOC Prague will be on *Museums, Citizens and Urban Sustainability*. Our main research questions will be: how museums and citizens together can build a more sustainable society; how the role of city museums as local sustainable citizenship hubs may be shaped, and how city museums can work as part of larger networks organised around urban sustainability and resilience goals.





PART 1

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY: STRATEGIC APPROACHES FOR CITY MUSEUMS



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Krakow, Poland

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MUSEUMS: FROM BEING FOR VISITORS TO BEING FOR CITIZENS

ABSTRACT

For a long while now, we have been talking about a paradigm shift regarding museums. What we understood from it, in very general terms, was a stronger leaning towards the social role of museums. However, the content of this social role did not stay the same at all times. It evolved in step with contemporary society, it expanded. Previously, it had been more about audience development activities that were deployed for the purpose of inclusion. Today, the discourse about social role is primarily about touching lives. Museums have moved out of their enclaves both as a public space and as a virtual site. Hence, museum experience is less of a topic than is the relevance of museums in society. We aim to serve citizens beyond museum visitors. But how far? Museums have dimensions besides their social role, like learning, their most pivotal function. It is time to look back, reflect and discuss how all these dimensions could converge and enhance the relevance of museums today and tomorrow.

Key words: Social role, relevance, public space, inclusion



The social role of museums and the evolution of the paradigm

This is such a particular moment in time for museums, as it is for everything else, that I have more questions than answers. At a recent webinar, I was asked how I envisaged the future of museums. I answered that I had some concerns because the COVID-19 pandemic was still so present and impacting museums. This being said, my idea of museums is charged with hope for the future. Museums are reimagining and broadening their role in society. In a way, the pandemic has helped incarnate this new museum persona. Museums are following the developments in society, be it the climate crisis or health issues, the use of new technologies or citizen equality, and they are getting involved as well. This will continue because it has a lot to do with the relevance and resilience of the museums in contemporary society. We might as well regard it as an act of updating the reasons for the relevance of museums.

Museums more than ever care for touching lives, even when practicing their primary functions of collecting, research, learning or exhibiting. And it does not stop there: access, inclusion, participation have gained newer and deeper meanings for museum theory and practice.

The museum has not always been the public space that we conceive today. I remember reading Robert Archibald's book *The New Town Square: Museums and Communities in Transition* back in 2005 and getting impressed by his thoughtful insights into the past, our sense of place and *identification* (this was the word he used, not "identity"), the way we think about *our environment* (not "the environment") and wilderness as the ways we deal with the present and the future. What was insinuated was a place - a public place, but still a place.

Come today, we see museums as inclusive and democratising spaces where we carry out conversation about the pasts, the present and the futures. They still hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society and safeguard diverse memories for future generations. Moreover, they also advocate for equal rights (cultural and all others) and equal access to heritage and culture for all people. We now speak about space.

In fact, during the COVID-19 crisis, museums existed almost exclusively as space, as a virtual space! And, as such, they continue to exist and they will, although not exclusively. This being said, the non-virtual public space has long been existing outside the museum as well as within, and not suddenly because of the recent lockdowns.

City museums have pioneered in this realm. Perhaps the nature of the topics and activities they engage with encouraged this approach. When you talk about the preservation of your city's walls or migrants to your city or gentrification of your neighbourhood, you do step out, especially if you want to make your museum integral, relevant and indispensable for your community. This is about resilience, which requires a capacity to review, to re-examine past conceptions, decisions and established practices in order to adapt to the contemporaneous. In other words, it compels us to reimagine and restructure the museum and its ways of existing in contemporary society.

As much as "the right to the city" sounds like a call to an immediate moment in the present or even to a future moment, near or far, it is also a call to remember or learn the stories of our city. Therefore, I tend to think of it in intergenerational terms. So, I start with the question: which stories do we remember? As we are talking in the context of museums, we better ask: which past is told in our museum? How



did we arrive at the narratives that we have? Whose right was it, or is it, to tell it the way we have?

Thus, we are talking about inclusion in the final analysis, and inclusion is quite a political matter. This being so, the content and degree of inclusion has expanded throughout the last couple of decades. It is linked to the paradigm shift for museums and basically with the social role of museums, which has also evolved in this time period. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, it was more concerned with visitors than with a global notion of society.

Engagement of museums with societal issues and the pursuit of relevance

Using culture for addressing social problems was a key issue and audience development for the purpose of social inclusion was the slogan of the museum professionals and art practitioners. This was the time for museums to justify themselves in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.¹ This was the time of the rising discipline of museum management and marketing. We talked about “museum experience” more than anything else and looked for ways of making the museum experience unforgettable. Things happened in the museum mostly.

Today the role of museums is determined more by the pursuit of relevance for the whole society and for this they need to stretch beyond the visitor who steps in. They need to appeal to the citizen, be concerned with the life of people and touch lives. Hence, a topical issue like decolonisation is not solely about artefacts. It is a thread that is woven into the decolonisation of minds, to racial equity and to inclusion.

Thanks to social media and new technologies, the world has become so small that it fits in our smartphones and whatever happens out there touches our life here. So, how can our museums be immune to this? The murder of George Floyd, a year ago, ignited the largest civil rights demonstrations across the US. It did not stop there. The *Black lives matter* movement spread all over the world as did the protests against police brutality. Can museums overlook an issue concerning the life on the streets of their cities?

One might say there are other civic bodies and civil societal organisations that can do or already are doing what museums set out to do today. How are we going to be differentiated? I believe museums are better equipped than any other body to accomplish this role: their collections of material culture give them a unique selling proposition (of gazing at and handling objects), but, just as importantly, they also have the information and knowledge accumulated, being generated, and yet to be generated through research and to be shared with the public. We have this extraordinary capacity to create learning and to connect.

We cannot and shall not let go of this role, of this duty. On the contrary, museums need to engage with societal issues and to pursue the dual role of creating / raising awareness through learning and helping their communities to voice their wishes / demands for a better life and environment.

To pursue the example I gave before, the removal of statues or monuments became the focus of protesters as the demonstrations against systemic racism spread across the US. They also appeared in other countries, like the UK, where they are still tackling the issue of “retain and explain”. Is this not an issue that

¹ McPherson (2006; 44-57)



the museum informs the citizens about so that eventually they could discuss the consequences? For a moment, I am thinking of the exhibitions on slavery and the city, previously developed by the Museum of London and Docklands. They have such a wealth of materials and information. Museums are places of reconciliation. Could the city museum provide the platform for discussion and shared solutions, thus contributing to reconciliation and social cohesion in the community?

Museums are not neutral spaces, however, they can be safe spaces to tackle challenging ideas and developments and encourage their publics to engage with these contemporary demands. Otherwise their absence could be detrimental for the memory of their communities, cities and countries.

Allow me to share a sad story about a place in Istanbul, the city where I live. Some of you might still remember a series of events called the *Gezi Protest*. It concerned a wave of demonstrations that started on 28 May 2013 to contest the sudden intervention by the central government to implement an urban development plan for Istanbul's Taksim Gezi Park, ignoring its ownership by the Municipality and its original title as public space next to Taksim, the Istanbul's busiest square. The protests were sparked by outrage at the violent eviction of a peaceful sit-in action at the park in protest against the plan. Subsequently, supporting protests and strikes took place across Turkey, demonstrating a wide range of concerns at the core of which were issues of freedom of the press, expression and assembly.

At the end of police brutality and governmental indifference, more than 3,000 arrests were made, 8,000 people were injured and 11 individuals lost their lives. After the events, Taksim Square was converted into a "pedestrian zone" made up of big barren stretch of concrete, together with the Gezi Park. The aim was to erase the memory of the place that cradled the largest spontaneous urban uprising in the city's life, which, in the eyes of the increasingly authoritarian government, was the work of the secular, liberal pole – as in polarisation.

As Istanbul did not have a city museum then – and still does not have one now – you might wonder what happened to all the documents, photographs, videos, memorabilia and oral history recordings. They are safe, and that is thanks to the many civil societal organisations, NGOs, a number of universities and the brave individuals who archived them in secrecy and will guard them until we have a museum.

This is perhaps a case to note as to why partners and partnerships are important, especially those that share the same values and missions as we do.

City museums have a special emphasis on the relation between a place and its people. They have an emphasis on belonging: connecting a place, its people and the rest of the world, their past, present and future. In a migrating world, this is the most challenging, but perhaps also a gratifying job: to care about the newcomers' right to the city amidst all the polarisation in communities, populist and discriminating political discourse, inefficient policies of health and education and possible discontent of some residents.

Actually, the stories of the cities are the stories of migration. People move away from their homes in search of a better life elsewhere. Reasons for this mobility have been various throughout history. It is not only the economic hardships or political conflicts that spark such flight. In today's world the climate crisis is becoming an important reason for migration and it is not going to disappear for a foreseeable future. Can city museums fulfil their potential as catalysts for social cohesion and social justice by playing a democratising role in helping migrants and residents get connected, explore identity and belonging and become active participants?



Museums as catalysts for social cohesion and justice

Yes, it is doable. Just recently, I read a lovely short report on the ICOM website about *Our Shared Cultural Heritage*, a youth-led project for young people from diaspora groups and their peers, conducted by the Manchester Museum, Glasgow Life and UK Youth. It enabled young people to take the lead in how they wanted to engage with museums, supporting them to actively participate in shaping how their own heritage and culture is understood, presented and managed in the museum and in their new city. It is justifiably a model that strongly reaffirmed the essential value of museums for the construction of a just and sustainable future, as the authors said. I will add, the new hybrid model enabled the museum to help them claim a right to the city.

Year after year, museums are voted as some of the most trusted bodies in the society. Yet, during the COVID-19 crisis, museums were the first public organisations to be closed and the last to reopen. Apparently, trustworthiness is not automatically transcribed into indispensability.

However, engaging with communities and encouraging public participation could be pivotal in accessing the policy-makers and taking part in the decision-making processes. The prerequisite for this is probably revamping the city museum as a space for listening to the citizen, face to face or online. Possibly, our collections can bring life to these conversations and engage audiences with contemporary challenges. What better platform, virtual or hybrid, to get informed and discuss health matters, climate change or declining tourism, themes that concern the future of the city and our life in it? And let's not forget the social media. City museums are perfectly apt for such a mission, participative and connecting, as the policymakers would be grateful for gathering such valuable public opinion. It's an opportunity "to make and remake our cities", as one of the CAMOC Krakow speakers said on the first conference day, a democratising step!

I wonder if, in the post-pandemic period, museums could lead the rebuilding activities in their communities. It would be desirable if they could contribute to transforming their city's life by placing wellbeing at the heart of the policymakers' agenda.

In my view, the main asset that makes museums indispensable, in the long run, is their capacity to deliver learning, whether by themselves or in partnership with universities, be it in history, arts, sciences, literature, among others, as well as in contemporary subjects. Our obsession with collections and exhibitions has somehow overshadowed this competence of the museums. If we could slightly change our perspective and see collections primarily as a means of learning, we would develop a certain essentiality; museums are quicker, more versatile and less rigid than the institutions of formal learning in scope and delivery. Also, there are so many gaps in the sphere of education that could be filled by museums.

We know that museums are indispensable, we just need to communicate it properly to the rest of the world.

Last but not least, I would like to recite a "tender" story from the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which is by name an art museum but acts like a city museum. Like many others across the globe, they met the challenge of the pandemic and acted appropriately as need dictated. In the context of a platform called *Museum from Home*, among other activities, they also gave gardening lessons. During the pandemic, they tripled the size of their vegetable garden in order to supplement Tulsa food banks. Until this one, the only vegetable garden I knew in a museum was that of the previous Copenhagen



Museum, which I visited almost ten years ago when Jette Sandahl was there.

One particularly popular engagement offering that the Philbrook people organised was the opportunity to exchange letters with the museum's two garden cats, Cleo and Perilla, with responses written by staff volunteers. The cats received thousands of letters from all over the world, including an especially moving one from a man in prison who wrote he was lonely and needed to talk. The Museum Director said: "It does go to our core mission – connecting people to art and gardens", and continued: "Sometimes keeping people connected is really simple".²

So, there are many shades of activism and they are welcome as peaceful endeavours to bring positive change to our lives. There is less scepticism today about the museums' social role and responsibilities, given that they are informed by ethical values and scientific rationale. Otherwise we wouldn't be talking either about climate change or social discrimination at a conference of the museums of cities as we do today. Let me finish with the words of two esteemed colleagues, Robert Janes and Richard Sandell: "Museums not only have the potential to shape a more sustainable, equitable and fair world, but also an obligation to do so".³

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² <https://www.aam-us.org/2020/09/01/rising-to-the-challenge/>

³ Janes and Sandell (2019, xxvii)

BIOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

“How can city museums contribute to developing new forms of participation in the process of urban revitalisation and thus help create a more inclusive and participative city?” The article starts out with this question, which encapsulates the session dedicated to *Urban revitalisation* within the programme of the CAMOC Krakow Conference, under the general theme of *The right to the city*.

How can city museums intervene both in explaining the city and in transforming its landscape and cultural heritage? How can they do this while bringing together specialist knowledge and citizen participation?

The article begins with the definition of the city museum as a “heritage institution of urban knowledge to enhance citizenship”, the situations experienced by the MUHBA (Barcelona History Museum) and a review of considerations of method when explaining and showing the city and when acting on heritage. The “inside” and “outside” of the museum interact with each other, and it is particularly interesting to approach the cases of the museum in the historical heart of the city and in the working-class neighbourhoods of the urban periphery.

Key words: Barcelona, urban strategies, urban renewal, historical method, heritage



Introduction

“Nobody stays on a continent or in a province, everybody stays in a city. A city is like a human being: first a child, then it grows, gets old and might die. Local governments are the key for achieving broader political goals”. These were the words of Amos Masondo, Mayor of Johannesburg, in 2010, at the presentation of the *City Development Strategy* for Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi, hosted by the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), which is the largest worldwide organisation of municipal and regional governments.

A decade later, the 2040 strategic plan for the city of Johannesburg contained the following statement: “Growing our city, beyond the bricks and mortar, is also about building a shared sense of belonging. As it becomes evident from the experiences of other successful cities, Johannesburg’s future success is directly related to the extent to which all believe they belong.”¹ But feeling that you have the right to the city means being able to somehow take ownership of it, and this is not possible if you do not know it.

Knowing the city, having the ability to explain the urban world in which one lives, is not so simple, particularly in big metropolises. School, where history and social science continue to refer to the whole of the nation, is of little help. The social need to know how to “read the city” is not always understood by political and social leaders. With regard to the digital media, the overabundance of information does not necessarily correspond to the ability of processing it.

If science museums marked the 19th century and art museums marked the 20th century, the 21st century, as Chet Orloff says, might be the century of city museums. The creation of CAMOC, in 2005, promoted a simple definition of city museum that should be borne in mind. According to Ian Jones, it is a “museum about the city, not a museum that happens to be in the city”. And what was said about their mission is as valid today, or more so, as then: “Knowing and understanding the city is the first step to changing it for the better – and helping to know and to understand is what museums are good at.”² This, indeed, can be done in a number of ways: the question of method in the creation of knowledge is decisive in city museums.

It is a good idea to go a step further to try to answer the question posed by the organisers of the CAMOC Krakow Conference: “How can city museums contribute to developing new forms of participation in the process of urban revitalisation and thus help create a more inclusive, participative city?” It is worth mentioning that the “inside” and the “outside” are hard to separate in the case of city museums.

The combination of showing the city and intervening in urban heritage is not new. Many museums have or have had competencies in urban archaeology or the cataloguing of buildings and landscapes, but even if this is not the case, the city museum can have an intense urban role to play through strategic agreements with the municipal government, cultural and neighbourhood entities and other urban agents.

It is important for the museum to have these urban strategies ready because the opposite case also occurs: the city museum is used by public authorities, often in connivance with private initiatives, as an instrument for urban change and

¹ City of Johannesburg (2019). *Joburg 2040. Growth and Development Strategy*. 34. [online] Retrieved from: https://www.joburg.org.za/documents_/Documents/Joburg%20GDS%202040/Joburg%202040%20GDS_March%202019.pdf

² Jones, I., MacDonald, R. R., & McIntyre, D. (Eds.). (2008). *City Museums and City Development*. Lanham: Rowman Altamira.



promotion of tourism, without even consulting the museum team. Very often, the situation lies halfway between the initiative of the museum and that of other urban agents. This is something we should think about.

The article starts out with some questions already formulated in my keynote talk at the CAMOC Conference of 2018, held in Frankfurt, and in the presentations of Elena Pérez Rubiales, also from MUHBA (Museu d'Història de Barcelona, Barcelona History Museum), in Frankfurt and in Kyoto. After tackling questions of method in the following sections, I will focus on two specific cases of intervention by the museum in imagining the city, which, in turn, affect the urban narrative that the museum proposes. I will deal with the interventions in the historic centre on the one hand, and in the popular, working-class, neighbourhoods of the outskirts on the other.

Two methodological traditions

The idea of city museums as mere “local museums”, widespread until recently, has not encouraged their analysis as a specific category of a cultural institution with general defining traits, being the method the most important of them. This trait can be better analysed through works of Wilhelm Dilthey and Ernst Troeltsch.

In this aspect, city museums are far removed from arts and technology, belonging more to the territory of the social sciences, including urbanism. If we analyse the proposals of city museums, we find an alternation between a *naturalist position*, which considers the trajectory of urban society and the material results that derive from it as explicable from general concepts, and a *historicist position*, which considers them from the viewpoint of their specificity that is unique and unrepeatable.

Indeed, we can explain the trajectory of city museums by this duality of methodological positions, with the first being the historicist line, due to the fact that city museums arise from the reaction to what is considered a loss of identity caused by the destructive impact of modern urbanism in the heart of the cities. This was how continental Europe concentrated the materials that were expelled by urban changes, adopting the concept of “museum”. The idea took shape in Brussels and in Paris in the 1860s. We might describe this line of culturalist acknowledgement of the representational value of the elements of the past as *patrimony historicism*.

The other line, which aspires to a general and comparative knowledge, follows the model of the natural sciences, hence its consideration as naturalist. It arises from the interest in building knowledge that is applicable. In our case, the goal would be to promote knowledge of the city by encouraging the reflection thereupon and intervention in urban decisions by the citizens; for this reason, we might call it *urban pedagogism*.

This methodological line made a no less unique use of the concept of “museum” and could be already found among the positivist currents of continental Europe, although it was particularly strong in the English-speaking world. In 1892, the biologist, sociologist and urbanist, Patrick Geddes, member of the British Positivist Society, created the Outlook Tower to show Edinburgh and to promote citizens’ knowledge of its urban trajectory with a view to intervening in it.³ Geddes later extended his project to other cities, even as far as India. He soon gained disciples in America.

³ Geddes, P. (1906). A Suggested Plan for a Civic Museum (or Civic Exhibition) and its Associated Studies. *Sociological Papers*, 3, 197–240.



Urban history appears as a viable point of confluence between the two traditions that I have just discussed: the second closest to the Enlightenment and positivism, focusing on explaining urban form and uses, and the first more closely linked to Romanticism and historicism, focusing on heritage and social representation. Returning to what I discussed above, we are not far from the duet between the external view or *erklären* (explaining the processes) and the internal view or *verstehen* (understanding the intentions), as discussed by Dilthey and Troeltsch.

The fact remains, however, that urban history is a *rara avis* in city museums. I am not referring to the history of urbanism, but to the trajectory of the city substantiated by the society that inhabits it, as a historical subject with its own profile. Neither there is a wealth of personnel trained in urban history in city museums, and universities do not tend to offer systematic studies on a particular city, not even in the big capitals.⁴ Hence the interest in viewing city museums as nuclei of research and centres of knowledge and as multidisciplinary meeting points for researchers of the urban world and citizens interested in learning about the trajectory of the city and taking ownership of it.

The limits of action by city museums

Not only is it impossible to live without memory but also without history. Community memories are multiple and without a benchmark history they cannot be calibrated. The objective of the work of the museum must be of narrating the process of the urban society and space over the long and short terms; showing the historical trajectory, signposted as well as possible with the objects and other documents that it displays, and by the live reading of the urban space. If the museum focuses on explaining the key moments and decisions over time, its role as a privileged place for thinking the city can be extremely valuable.⁵

To reach this goal, city museums should adopt a *prudent epistemology* of their public praxis. To be a useful instrument for thinking the present and imagining the future, the museum must avoid entering into it; otherwise, from the first controversy that arises, it will see its legitimacy as an institution that is the guarantor of a plural and shareable historical urban knowledge reduced.

City museums are not immune to cultural populism. There is no independence of criteria without solid knowledge. Without accurate historical knowledge, and if it is impossible to derive a rigorous and proven explanation, city museums may lose the trust of the public and become part of the institutional propaganda apparatus. It is important to separate enunciative language, which is characteristic of an explanation of the collective trajectory, from prescriptive language, which is characteristic of the plans and projects for the city of the future. If the historical analysis is contaminated with presentism, it loses efficacy for the very purpose of approaching the present.

The limits of action of city museums do not reduce their potential; rather, they are the guarantor of their potential. Their conceptualisation as heritage entities of urban knowledge and citizen construction makes it possible to root them in history and in the space of the city, following the motto of the Enlightenment, dare to know - *sapere aude!* - and to have them contribute to democratising urban identities. This is the commitment to a duly placed Enlightenment that can take critical advantage of the two museistic traditions laid out earlier.

⁴ Many cities have an archaeology service, but far fewer have urban history studies. In Barcelona, the Historical Archive of the City of Barcelona (AHCB) and the Museum of the History of the City (now Barcelona History Museum, MUHBA), have worked on it.

⁵ This was one of the reasons for founding CAMOC and had a strong presence in its early conferences, especially in Vienna in 2007. See *City Museums and City Development... op. cit.*



Topos and logos: places matter

When we say that museums “are not neutral”, as proclaimed by a campaign launched some years ago, there are a few considerations to take into account. The first: no cultural institution is neutral and many, starting with schools, are even less so than museums; this is no big discovery, nevertheless, we just need to be very aware of it. The second: the effective critical response for dealing with an undesirable ideology is not another ideologization of the opposite sign but rigorous knowledge; hence the need for research, as discussed in the previous section. Now, I will address the third: how location and urban context affect the narrative that the city museum embodies and, vice versa, how the museum can contribute to physically modifying the urban setting.

In the case of city museums, we cannot talk about the “inside” of the museum without considering the fact that its role also depends on the “outside” of the museum, on the planning and cultural decisions of the urban powers that model urban space, in which the museum, in some circumstances, can also have an important effect.⁶ In this regard, because of their work in researching and explaining the urban world and as creators of heritage, city museums can be powerful instruments for defining more inclusive urban strategies.⁷

However, most of the strategic plans of the world’s major cities, not to mention urban regulatory plans, rarely mention city museums, unless it is in relation to tourism or the representation of the urban powers. I have mentioned this in the case of the strategic plan of Johannesburg in South Africa; nevertheless, if we go to the antipodes on the globe, to Calgary, Canada, we find a similar situation.⁸

If strategic planning does not come to museums, museums can adopt strategic planning instruments in their urban action in the historic centre, as well as the outskirts in case of polycentric city museums, rooting cultural nodes that allow expanding cultural dialogue and the right to the city.⁹ A city museum is not really a city museum if it does not have a city strategy in its rooms and in the city as a whole.

Potentials and servitudes of the historical core

A large proportion of city museums has emerged and been reformed in the framework of planning interventions in historic town centres. The recent or ongoing metamorphosis of the museums of Liverpool, Helsinki, Frankfurt, Copenhagen, Krakow, Vienna, London or Amsterdam, among others, is closely linked to the plans and projects for urban renovation, in different ways. In Lisbon, the peripheral position of the main headquarters, at Palácio Pimenta,

⁶ Roca i Albert, J. (2019). At the Crossroads of Cultural and Urban Policies. Rethinking the City and the City Museum. In: *The Future of Museums of Cities, CAMOC Conference Frankfurt 2018*. CAMOC. [online] Retrieved from: https://camoc.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/04/FRANKFURT_CONFERENCE_-_BOOK_OF_PROCEEDINGS_Final_LR_2_.pdf

⁷ See: United Cities and Local Governments (2010). *Policy Paper on Urban Strategic Planning: Local Leaders Preparing for the Future of Our Cities*, especially page 10: “Strategic planning provides a methodology which helps cities identify their strengths and weaknesses, while defining the main strategies for local development. [...] Strategic planning differs from urban planning, and it complements other planning tools and usually results in a planning product such as a City Development Strategy. [...] Strategies are flexible tools for long-term orientation and enable revision and adaptation to changing circumstances.” [online] Retrieved from: <https://issuu.com/uclgclglu/docs/urbanstrategic/13>

⁸ United Cities and Local Governments (2010). *Policy paper... op. cit.*, 130. See also: *One Calgary 2019-2022 Service Plans and Budget*. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.calgary.ca/content/dam/www/cfod/finance/documents/plans-budgets-and-financial-reports/plans-and-budget-2019-2022/service-plans-and-budgets-2019-2022.pdf>

⁹ Pérez Rubiales, E. (2020). Right to the City, Right of the Citizens: For a New Generation of City Museums. In *City Museums as Knowledge Hubs. Past, Present and Future, Camoc Conference Kyoto 2019*. CAMOC. [online] Retrieved from: <https://camoc.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/09/KYOTO-CONFERENCE-BOOK-OF-PROCEEDINGS-fs0915-web.pdf>



was resolved by incorporating the centrally-located Torreão Poente, in Praça do Comércio.¹⁰ In Barcelona, the museum is now undertaking the renovation of its main headquarters in Ciutat Vella (Old City) and works at some other venues.

The creation of the Barcelona History Museum is an afterthought of the plans and strategies linked to the Via Laietana. The opening of this thoroughfare through the historic city centre began in 1908 to make it a business axis connecting the Eixample (the New City) to the port. It involved demolition of more than two thousand homes and displacement of more than ten thousand people. At the same time, the materials of the demolished ancient palaces were collected, some notable houses were moved, a number of neo-medieval constructions was added while excavations were carried out; that *sventramento* was at the origin of the “Gothic Quarter”.¹¹ The name “Gothic Quarter” was suggested by Ramon Rucabado in 1911, for the symbolic reinforcement of the surroundings of the institutions of religious and civil power in the middle of a city where periods of social crisis were frequent.¹²

The “Gothic Quarter” operation absorbed multiple layers of urban history in its area of heritage zoning. The Roman wall had appeared quite well preserved when a row of houses was demolished, and among the buildings that were moved to the area, stone by stone, the most well known was the Casa Padellàs. Beneath it, the Plaça del Rei (King’s Square) and the surrounding buildings were found, excavations of the Roman and the early medieval city were carried out, and next to them, the restoration of the Palau Reial Major (Great Royal Palace) began. The historian and archivist Agustí Duran i Sanpere proposed transferring the historical exhibit on Barcelona that had been part of the 1929 *International Exhibition* in Montjuïc to this monumental site beside the Via Laietana.

¹⁰ See Roca i Albert, J. (2019). *At the Crossroads...* op. cit.

¹¹ Florensa, A. (1959). *Nombre, extensión y política del “Barri Gòtic”*. Barcelona: Ayuntamiento de Barcelona. [online] Retrieved from: <https://bcnroc.ajuntament.barcelona.cat/jspui/handle/11703/101591>; Grau i Fernández, R., & López Guallar, M. (1982). El concepto de monumento histórico en Barcelona, 1835-1982. In: Bonet Correa, A. (Ed.), *Urbanismo e historia urbana en el mundo hispánico* (vol. II, pp. 1055-1064). Madrid: Universidad Complutense; Ganau Casas, J. (2003). La recreació del passat: el Barri Gòtic de Barcelona, 1880-1950. *Barcelona quaderns d'història*, 8, 257-272. [online] Retrieved from: <https://raco.cat/index.php/BCNQuadernsHistoria/article/view/105505>

¹² Roca i Albert, J. (2010). Intervención arqueológica, discurso histórico y monumentalización en Barcelona. In: *Arqueología, discurso histórico y trayectorias locales*, Cartagena: Ayuntamiento de Cartagena. 25-40.



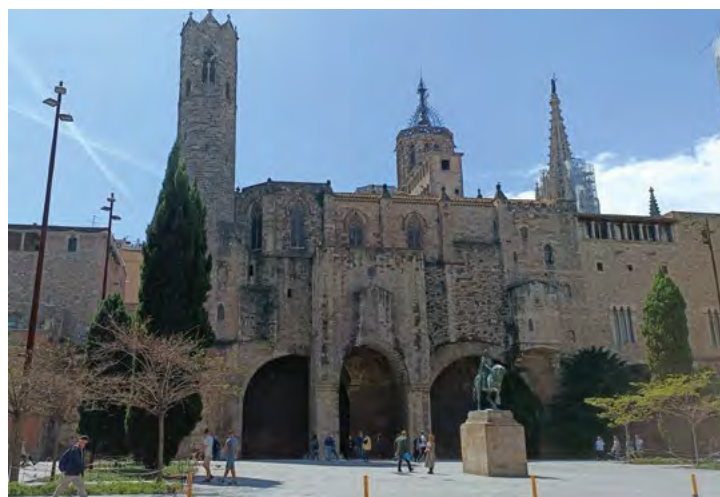
Strategic thinking to complete the “Gothic Quarter”, Adolf Florensa, 1959.

The scheme affected the general planning of the area.
© Ajuntament de Barcelona



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Monumental metamorphosis of Plaça Ramon Berenguer el Gran, with the buildings occupied by MUHBA in the background. On the left, Carrer de la Tapineria in 1910-1920. On the right, the same space transformed, as it stands today. Photographs: Left, Josep Branguli © Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona. Right, Stanislav Biel © MUHBA



This is how the Museum of the History of the City (Barcelona History Museum today) was created in 1943. These were difficult times of social, political and national repression in Barcelona, capital city of Catalonia, during the long dictatorship of General Franco, and the new museum became an undercover citizen victory in an oppressive climate: the interpretation of the monumentalisation of the “Gothic Quarter”, in the historic epicentre of the city and of Catalonia, took on a new meaning because it also formed part of the effort to rebuild the city after the bombing by the Fascist air force during the Spanish Civil War.

Despite the fact the meaning of such operations varies from city to city, the case of Barcelona is not exceptional. A significant recent example is the direct relationship between the renovation of the Historisches Museum Frankfurt and the large investment made to recover the medieval town centre. The *Neue Frankfurt Altstadt* was created between 2012 and 2018 according to the *Dom-Römer Projekt*.

The old centre of Frankfurt has been renovated sixty years after its destruction during World War II. The post-war reconstruction with modern buildings has been eschewed in favour of a postmodern medievalism that has paid great attention to detail. The metamorphosis of the Historisches Museum Frankfurt, completed in 2018, cannot be separated from this planning operation. In Frankfurt, the recomposition of the historical centre has taken place almost half a century later than in Barcelona. Notwithstanding, it has been no less controversial, because, in this case, the operation also involved the problem of the symbolic reconstruction of German cities after the fracture caused by the Nazi movement.

The historicist restitution of the medieval centre of Frankfurt has overlaid the ideation by Till Behrens, of a green river axis of facilities, the *Grüngürtel Mainufer Konzeption*, which grouped the museums under the label *Museumsufer* (“riverbank of museums”). This strategic idea did not involve intensive territorial zoning like in the case of a *Museumsinsel* (“museum island”), but it was more porous. Relatively similar cases include the *Culture Mile* in London, of which the new Museum of London in West Smithfield will be a part of, and the *Museum Mile* of the Upper East Side of New York, where the Museum of the City of New York is located.

Although of a different nature, the link is no less strong in the case of Liverpool, where the city museum is linked to the metamorphosis of the urban front of the Mersey estuary. The Museum of Liverpool has been the pioneer of a great planning operation, taking on the role played by art museums in other cities: what is known as the “Bilbao model”. The renovation of the former port area was not, however, free from controversy either, when the intensity of the intervention led to the loss of classification as a world heritage site that had been granted to it by UNESCO.

The new Museum of Liverpool, designed to heal the wounds of socially difficult decades in the city, has become a symbol of the urban politics of the state, on which it has depended since 1986. It was inaugurated in 2011. A decade later, National Museums Liverpool, the entity of which it is a part, has launched the *Waterfront Transformation Project*, linking “storytelling, heritage, community, connectivity and commercial income to create a cohesive visitor experience and catalyst for social and environmental improvements in the area”.¹³

All in all, the symbolic intensity of the most central and often main headquarters of city museums has not lost currency in the early 21st century. Given that the “right to the centre” is a fundamental component of the right to the city, this is unquestionably good news and congratulations are in order. However, the danger

¹³ National Museums Liverpool (2021). *Waterfront Transformation Project*. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/waterfront-transformation-project>



of historical idealisation is considerable. Can the city museum drive alternative interventions in the urban centre, designed less for self-celebration or for tourism? Can it contribute to modulating, in the centre too, a new, more inclusive monumental physiognomy? This will depend, in part, on its powers; there are museums such as those of Copenhagen and Helsinki that have competencies in building heritage, but even if they do not have these competencies, museums can have an effect.

In the case of Barcelona, the competencies are minimal, and it has been necessary to find mechanisms to progress strategic thinking. Limited but positive results have been achieved in the proposals for new modern layers of heritage and in the new contextualisation of some heritage interventions of the past.

Of note is the effort to “put on the map” of the historic centre witnesses of its manufacturing past - the calico factories, dating back to the 18th century and well into the 20th century, which still remain. The Barcelona within the walls was not a fossilised preindustrial city, as the policies of heritage zoning might lead us to think. And now, with the comprehensive reformation of Via Laietana, there is the possibility (though difficult) of rethinking some of the aspects of the Gothic Quarter, and attempting to make it a more lively and diverse environment, with other heritage elements, other urban uses and more inhabitants.

Let us now enter the museum: how to create, in a setting with many connotations as the monumental urban centre has, a museology that approaches, with care and rigor, the whole urban ensemble in a stable exhibit? This is not easy to achieve, with the institutional pressure that exists in many cases to offer a celebratory urban vision in the main headquarters of the museum of the city, and less so with the added pressure of having to live from tourism. At present, with the pioneering example of *Amsterdam DNA*, this tone is often foremost in the new synthesis exhibits that many city museums are organising in their headquarters.

These are the reflections that we are undertaking in Barcelona, with a view to the complete renovation of the Casa Padellàs, which we would like to convert

With the Indians (Calico factories) Project, the museum updated its narrative on the contemporary city and heritage research that contributed to the rescue of the factory buildings of the old walled city.
Source: Artigues, J., & Mas, F. (2013). *Indians 1736-1847/ BCN. Guia d'història urbana*, 14.





Barcelona flashback, in its experimental version as a "minimum kit for a city museum", invites visitors to ask questions based on 100 objects. Enric Gràcia © MUHBA

into the Casa de la Història de Barcelona (House of the History of Barcelona), conceived as the backbone of the MUHBA as a network museum, present in the whole city.¹⁴

For two years, the synthesis exhibition that must be part of the Casa de la Història, *Barcelona flashback*, has been rehearsed in a small format with a hundred objects, remaining open until the CAMOC conference in Barcelona in December 2021, in order to receive the critiques of the attendees. *Barcelona flashback* is intended to be the starting point for alternative ways of visiting the city, both for its citizens and tourists.

Barcelona flashback has been designed as a historical method of reading the city, as a training in the art of exploring the city and of constructing a narrative thereof. The exhibition goes through a five-part sequence, somewhat similar to those of any scientific or judicial investigation: interrogating witnesses, identifying the facts, building the case, situating it in space and comparing it to other cases, i.e. other cities.

The exhibition is fully organised around questions and indicates lines of answers that leave visitors in the role of building the narrative for themselves with the elements they find. As a finale, the visitor leaves by the Roman wall, a privileged viewpoint for observing the link between Via Laietana and the historicist monumentalisation of the Gothic Quarter: it is a good place to undertake a first exercise in "complex urban reading".

At the end, it is suggested that the visitor takes the bus or the metro to explore Barcelona with the MUHBA, weaving views between the "rooms of the museum" scattered around the city: from the heritage sites in the historic centre to Vil·la Joana and the Park Güell, the sites related to the Civil War or the new museum sites located in the humble neighbourhoods of the periphery, and vice versa.

Strategies in the periphery

The elements considered to be historical heritage became more diverse after the Second World War, especially in Europe, in parallel to the development of the welfare state.¹⁵ In the case of Barcelona, the dictatorship of General Franco delayed the process, which gained momentum in the 1980s with the debates on public space and democracy. The architect and urban planner Oriol Bohigas spread the slogan of "sanitising the centre and monumentalising the periphery".¹⁶ Nevertheless, witnesses of the industrial age were not always considered suitable for cultural representation, if they did not stand out for the originality of their architecture. This began to change at the turn of the century.

I will now try to present in detail the case of the periphery in the northeast of the municipality of Barcelona, toward the Besòs River. Historically, this was an industrial and working-class area, which, on the occasion of the 1992 Olympic Games, entered into a process of urban transformation that is still ongoing.¹⁷

¹⁴ See: MUHBA (2020). *Here is MUHBA* (Video). Barcelona: MUHBA. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MMw11zIgoM>.

¹⁵ Choay, F. (1992). *L'allégorie du patrimoine*. Paris: Seuil. English version (2001): *The Invention of the Historic Monument*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

¹⁶ Bohigas, O. (1985). *Reconstrucció de Barcelona*. Barcelona: Edicions 62.

¹⁷ Marshall, T. (2004). *Transforming Barcelona. The Renewal of an European Metropolis*. London: Routledge.



In this area, the public debate on issues of cultural heritage – with a specific reference to the industrial legacy – took off in the 1990s in the Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs (Besòs Riverbank Forum). It was conceived as an open meeting place with no organisational structure, a small “market of ideas” on public space, social welfare and cultural empowerment driven monthly by a high school, the Institut Barri Besòs.¹⁸ The Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs was bringing a wide range of people together for more than a decade: leaders of the neighbourhood movements, education and health workers in the area, rectors of a number of parishes, urban planners, artists and professionals from academic and cultural institutions such as the Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, MACBA (Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona), among others.

The methodological originality of the Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs consisted in propitiating approaches on a double scale in all matters: neighbourhood and city at the same time (and beyond if necessary). People talked about the area of the Besòs, but within the metropolis of Barcelona as a whole. It was in this context that, in the early 21st century, the importance of the elements representing the industrial area for the identity of those neighbourhoods was discussed as part of a wider debate on the process of urban transformation in the locale.¹⁹ Rethinking the projects around the Besòs river was rethinking Barcelona, and vice versa.²⁰ The proposal that arose on cultural patrimony linked history, heritage and innovation, and was one of the few voices that warned of the risks of metropolitan deindustrialisation if no new industrialism was implemented.

In those years of accelerated urban metamorphosis, just when the section of the new diagonal avenue was being opened to the sea through the old Poble Nou, the defence of industrial heritage spread rapidly among the neighbourhood's entities, which turned the legacy of the factories into a fundamental topic in the demand for municipal action. A symbol of this was the long and strenuous fight to preserve the Can Ricart factory site.²¹

This fight, both civic and academic, for the heritage of the industrial era, seen at the same time as a fundamental trait of Barcelona and of the contemporary Catalan nation, took form in the designs and maps of an urban strategy that, after having been negotiated with the municipal government, led to urban planning and the creation of a new headquarters for the city museum in the area. The city council drew up the *Pla especial de patrimoni industrial del Poble Nou* (Special plan for the industrial heritage of Poble Nou), which was approved in 2006, and chose to locate a new branch for the city museum, dedicated to industrial culture, in the upper floors of the Can Saladrigas factory building, near the market and *rambla* of Poble Nou.

Shortly thereafter, in 2008, the museum project changed location to be able to expand its concept toward a comprehensive narrative of the contemporary metropolis by including an urban laboratory. The new site chosen was Oliva Artés, with a building at street level, beside the crossing of Pere IV and Diagonal and in the 22@ technological innovation district. From this position,

¹⁸ Roca i Albert, J. (2019). At the Crossroads... *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Roca, J., Clarós, S., Estrada, L., Hyldtoft, O., & Tatjer, M. (2004). La Barcelona industrial, un patrimoni vergonyant? [Industrial Barcelona, an embarrassing heritage?]. *L'Avenç*, 288.

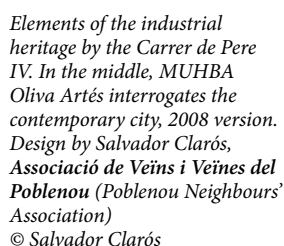
²⁰ This was the starting point for the photography project begun in 1999 by Patrick Faigenbaum and Joan Roca. See: Faigenbaum, P., & Roca, J. (2017). *Barcelona vista del Besòs*, Barcelona: MUHBA.

²¹ Grup de Patrimoni Industrial del Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs (2010). Proposta de pla integral de patrimoni industrial de Barcelona. *Biblio 3W. Revista bibliogràfica de geografia y ciencias sociales*, 10; Clarós, S. (2016). *Can Ricart i el patrimoni industrial de Barcelona*, Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona.



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At a later moment, heritage and museum initiatives were also consolidated further to the north, in the Sant Andreu district, through various actions. The Bon Pastor Neighbours' Association demanded the preservation of a block of the Cases Barates ("cheap houses"), then being demolished to give way to new social housing, as an echo of the history of the neighbourhood and of the whole of Barcelona from the perspective of housing. The former workers of two big metalworks, Maquinista and Macosa, had come together in a foundation to create a small "historical and social museum" that would exhibit their contribution to the conquest of workers' rights and political rights and to the modernisation of mobility. Finally, there was also the action taken by former employees of Fabra i Coats, a spinning factory. Since it closed down in 2005, they have been collecting files and objects from this factory, a company organised in view of incorporating welfare services, inspired by Scottish manufacturing paternalism and followed by the Coats and the Fabra families when they merged in 1903.

Proceeding towards the mountain, the Centre d'Estudis Ignasi Iglésias was paying attention to the archaeological remains of two major historical waterways: the Roman aqueduct and the medieval Rec Comtal aqueduct. At the same time, in 2009, the districts of Sant Andreu and Nou Barris were working in tandem to rehabilitate the Casa de l'Aigua site, as a heritage element and social space, with the support of the Association for the Defense of the Heritage of Trinitat Vella and of the Arxiu Històric de Roquetes (Roquetes Historical Archive), both entities rooted in their respective neighbourhoods. In this case, however, experience has shown that getting two municipalities to agree can be harder than two states; that is to say, the project proposed by the museum is moving forward, though very slowly due to bureaucratic obstacles.

With all these elements creating synergies, it has been possible to prefigure essential elements for a city museum that is representative of and explains the whole of Barcelona, from a multicentre approach, deeply rooted in the urban space and in accordance with its inhabitants.²³ It is no coincidence that this confluence between citizens, local government and the museum has taken form in the eastern half of the municipality of Barcelona, in the direction of the Besòs River. On the one hand, it is the area where the processes of urban transformation have been the most intense in recent decades, and on the other, it is still one of the metropolitan areas with most neighbourhoods in a precarious social situation, which are the object of the *Pla de barris* (Barcelona Neighbourhood Plan).²⁴

Based on the consistency between these perspectives on the trajectory of the city, MUHBA published, in 2018, a strategic outline for articulating them in a heritage and museistic axis or trail, as a powerful echo of the contemporary city. This was

²² Tatjer, M., Clarós, S., & Manenti, A. (2012). Poblenuu/BCN. *Guia d'història urbana*, 11. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/ca/formats/guies-dhistoria-urbana/poblenuucn>; Manenti, A., & Sales Favà, L. (2018). *Pere IV, passatge major del Poblenuu*. Barcelona: MUHBA and Bit Habitat. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/ca/formats/llibrets-de-sala/pere-iv-passatge-major-del-poblenuu>

²³ From here, the MUHBA has been able to structure its spaces in a single historical and heritage narrative of 55 rooms organised by historical, heritage and urban criteria. Presentation at the CAMOC conference in Barcelona, 2021.

²⁴ The Pla de Barris (Barcelona Neighborhood Plan) is fully funding some MUHBA projects, especially in Casa de l'Aigua and in Cases Barates del Bon Pastor. See: <http://www.pladebarris.barcelona.ca/noticia/lilla-de-les-cases-barates-del-bon-pastor-es-convertira-en-un-museu-sobre-l'evolucio-de-l'habitatge-public-a-barcelona> 579552



MUHBA strategic map for the Besòs Heritage and Museum Trail, 2018 version.
Graphic by Andrea Manenti
© MUHBA

the origin of the *Eix Patrimonial i Museístic del Besòs* (Besòs Heritage and Museum Trail), under the slogan “Besòs, riverbank of museums”.²⁵

The foundational principle was similar to that of the *Museumsufer* at the heart of Frankfurt, but applied to reconnecting neighbourhoods of the periphery to each other and to the more central spaces. It has been possible to establish a strong conceptual link between the components, as an expression of the verbs of living in the city from the viewpoint of urban majorities: *urbanise* (Oliva Artés, laboratory museum of the contemporary city), *inhabit* (Bon Pastor Houses), *work* (Fabra i Coats Factory) and *supply* (Casa de l'Aigua: water and urban sustainability).

Other institutions can also be included, such as: the Fundació Maquinista i Macosa (Maquinista and Macosa Foundation), where the focus is on the social history of these two transport equipment companies and on urban and territorial mobility, especially by rail; the Torre de les Aigües del Besòs, linked to the Arxiu Històric del Poblenou (Poblenou Historical Archive), a local study center on the trajectory of workers' Barcelona; the Museum of History of Immigration in Catalonia (MhiC), in the neighbouring municipality of Sant Adrià de Besòs; later, I will return to the metropolitan issue.

The style and techniques of strategic planning have also been useful in the internal functioning of the museum: among others, curators, union and neighbourhood leaders, historians, architects, museographers, documentarists, coordinators have been working together and side by side. This is happening on all the museum projects, but especially in the cases of Fabra i Coats, Bon Pastor and Oliva Artés.²⁶ New formulas are now being sought in Fabra i Coats and Bon Pastor for public-

²⁵ Roca i Albert, J. (2018). El Besòs, riba de museus. *MUHBA Butlletí*, 34, 24. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.barcelona.cat/museuhistoria/ca/formats/butlletins/butlleti-MUHBA-nume>

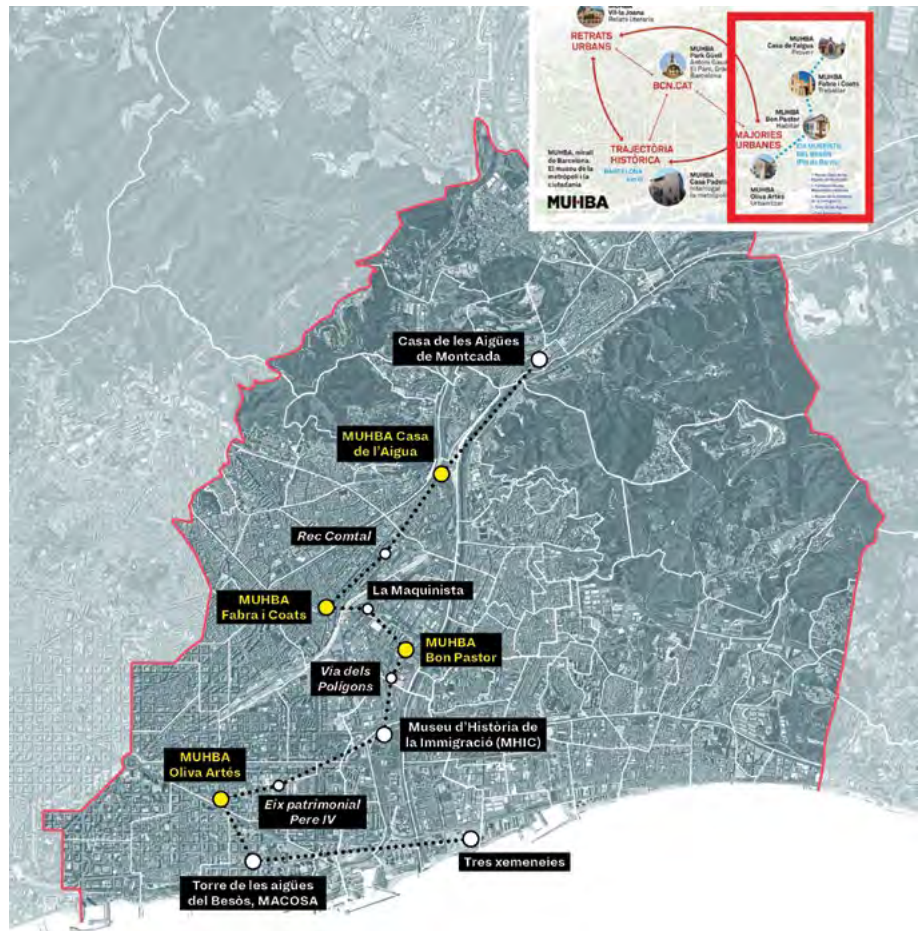
²⁶ Pérez Rubiales, E. (2019). At home. Worker Housing as a Participative New Branch of Barcelona City Museum. In: *The Future of Museums of Cities, CAMOC Conference Frankfurt 2018*. CAMOC. [online] Retrieved from: https://camoc.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2020/04/FRANKFURT_CONFERENCE_-_BOOK_OF_PROCEEDINGS_Final_LR_2_.pdf; Sustersic, P., Roca, J., Alcubierre, D., Cazalla, C., Hervás, N., Manenti, A., Mercader, A. & Ramos, J. (2021). Habitar Barcelona. La restitución y museización de las Casas Barates del Bon Pastor [Living in Barcelona. The Restitution and Musealization of the Cases del Bon Pastor]. *Res Mobilis*, 10-13-2, 328-361. [online] Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.17811/rm.10.13-2.2021.328-361>



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The Besòs Heritage and Museum Trail, 2021 version, on the Agenda Besòs map. The itinerary includes museum spaces and urban visits. Drawing by Andrea Manenti © MUHBA



community administration, to allow both comprehensive “proximity” and “city” management, with the participation of the neighbours.²⁷

So far, the strategic conception of a map of a Besòs Heritage and Museum Trail, with broad social support and increasing institutional support, has come a long way. Beyond the municipality of Barcelona, the proposal is for it to become a metropolitan axis, connected with heritage and museum spaces of the metropolitan municipalities of Montcada (Montcada Casa de les Aigües, with the sources of the Barcelona historical water-supply systems) and Sant Adrià de Besòs, with the Museum of History of Immigration in Catalonia (MhIC) and the site of Les Tres Xemeneies (The Three Chimneys, in a former power station). The connection with the river conceived as a heritage axis helps, thanks to the efforts already made, to restore its environmental quality: Besòs was one of the most polluted and foul rivers in Europe, and nowadays is a metropolitan walk.

The general outline of the project *Besòs, Riverbank of Museums*, which also includes the urban walks between the heritage spaces, can provide a new cultural layer to the *Agenda Besòs*, which is the document that develops the Barcelona strategic metropolitan plan for the whole area.²⁸ It includes 4 municipalities, 98 neighbourhoods (16 of which are in a precarious state), and more than one million inhabitants, of whom 24.6% are recent foreign immigrants.²⁹ The simple fact of drawing this helps to make it a reality. Right now, works are moving forward and at a good pace in all the aforementioned heritage spaces, with remarkable support from the citizens. And this support, in turn, strengthens municipal commitment to the project.

²⁷ Roca i Albert, J., & Turégano López, C. (2020). La gestió participativa i el museu de la ciutat. Patrimoni, ciutadania i nodes culturals als barris de Barcelona [Participatory management and the City Museum. Heritage, citizenship and cultural nodes in the neighbourhoods of Barcelona]. *Diferents. Revista de museus*, 5, 18-35. [online] Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.6035/Diferents.2020.5.2>

²⁸ Consorci del Besòs (2017). *Agenda Besòs. Resum executiu*. [online] Retrieved from: https://consorcibesos.cat/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Resum-Executiu_Agenda-Besos_.pdf. The agenda is part of the Pla estratègic metropolità de Barcelona (Barcelona Strategic Metropolitan Plan).

²⁹ *Pla estratègic metropolità de Barcelona*. [online] Retrieved from: https://pemb.cat/en/static/what_is_the_pemb/2/





Opening of the exhibit *Fabra i Coats makes a museum*, organized with the *Amics de la Fabra i Coats* (Friends of Fabra i Coats) in 2014, as part of the museum project *The city of work*. The collection continues to grow with new contributions from citizens. Photograph by Jordi Mota © MUHBA

EPILOGUE

Explaining and showing the world through cities and taking care of their heritage and of their landscapes is becoming increasingly important in the fight for democracy, social justice and environmental sustainability. Here, city museums have a clear role to play. In this regard, the techniques of strategic thinking and planning help both in drafting proposals and in achieving alliances with other organisations. This is also the case at the scale of relations between cities. I am therefore very proud of the fact that, after the conference in Krakow dedicated to the right to the city, the next conference, in Barcelona, has the general theme of *Connecting Cities, Connecting Citizens. Towards a shared sustainability*.

BIOGRAPHY

Joan Roca i Albert has been trained as an urban geographer and he has worked in the fields of urban history, city planning and education. He is the director of the MUHBA (Barcelona History Museum) since 2007.



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A CITY MUSEUM PROFESSIONAL – THE TENDER NARRATOR

ABSTRACT

In September 2019, at the General Conference of ICOM in Kyoto, I had an opportunity – thanks to courtesy of the CAMOC Board – to deliver a paper titled “The City Museum... A Brief History of Tomorrow”. In that text I made an attempt at understanding and guessing which course the history of contemporary cities is taking and what threats these cities are faced with. In a broader aspect, I was trying to comprehend and predict the future of the *Homo Sapiens* species, which, in my opinion, is undergoing a process of essential change. In view of the threats and chances arising from those changes, I was attempting to find an answer to the question how the city museum should respond to the new situation. The basic point of my paper was the postulate that the city museums should choose, instead of the civilisation of development, the road to the civilisation of inheriting. I believe that Museums, as a community of the new species – *Homo Sensus Communis*, can change the world by constructing a new narration of the city. I concluded my lecture with the sentence: “The cities which are not told die”, because it is my conviction that the task of a museum professional today is to narrate.

Only a month after my return from Kyoto, the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to Polish author Olga Tokarczuk. In her Nobel lecture given before the Swedish Academy and Royal Family, her words were ringing in the audience's ears: today's world needs “the tender narrator”. I interpret these words as a confirmation of my intuition towards us, city museums professionals. That is why at the CAMOC conference in Kraków I would like to continue my thoughts from Kyoto.

If a museum professional must narrate in order to make the world happy, what kind of narrative should it be? What is it to be composed of? How to construct a tale of a city today? A universal story, which appeals to the listeners in a timeless way, bears its name in the world culture – it is a myth. However, it is not every story that becomes a myth. How, then, should museums narrate so that they could turn their cities into a myth which is ‘immortal’? Can a city, which is neither anthropomorphic nor organic, become a hero? It can, provided it is tenderly narrated. In this text, I want to share my beliefs concerning the issue of what the art of narration consists of, a question that needs looking into.

Key words: City museum professionals, narration, future, *Homo Sensus Communis*



Introduction

As a historian who carries the status of a scientific worker, I ought to acknowledge reality as perceived through intellection, the only way for science to exist. However, I am also a museum professional, who recognises the reality both through science and through art. That is why I frequently explain the world to myself by employing my senses. The conflict between the sensitivity of an artist and the insight of a scientist has accompanied me since I was a child. Fortunately, it is not a conflict that might have destroyed me. On the contrary, I believe that, thanks to it, I am able to see the world from two perspectives.

Two years ago, at the general conference of CAMOC in Kyoto, when I was searching for the answer to the question about the role of museums in a contemporary city, I found inspiration in the scientific writings of the eminent Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari. In my lecture, I made the argument that, in view of the twilight of the species of *Homo Sapiens*, which is prophesied by Harari, museums should try to play the game for paving the way for the New Man – *Homo Novus*. Only the New Man can build a new civilisation in place of that of permanent development, which will lead our species to collapse – a civilisation which reasonably uses the inherited resources, a civilisation of heritage, a civilisation of museums.

But what does paving the way for the New Man mean? In what way could museums achieve it? In my opinion, the shortest way to achieve this goal is to build a narrative about the new world, the world of sustainable development and respect for otherness. This is how I see the “history of tomorrow” of the city museums.

Due to the terrible typhoon, my journey back from Kyoto took a very, very long time. I was even forced to walk a distance of 13 km on foot, carrying two suitcases through the rice fields destroyed by the hurricane. After my happy return, I had no idea – none of us did – that the typhoon, by which Japan was bidding goodbye to us, would be nothing compared to the disaster which struck the whole world in 2020. I’m afraid that the epidemic of COVID-19 confirmed – at full length – what I had postulated about in Kyoto. *Homo Sapiens*, building the civilisation of growth and progress, has led us to such a state that we now stand at a crossroads. Is it by accident that the developed countries were struck by the COVID-19 pandemic more severely than those still developing? It is not my intention to prophesise something terrifying now. It could hardly be denied, however, that the past year was really terrifying and instilled fear in billions of people worldwide. It is this fear that I want to address.

A call for tenderness

If, for my lecture in Kyoto, I had been looking up to a scientist to find inspiration, now, for the lecture at the Krakow conference, I have turned to an artist, Olga Tokarczuk, a Polish writer and the 2018 Nobel Prize for Literature laureate, who titled her first book published after receiving the award *The Tender Narrator*. Do contemporary townspeople not need tenderness today? Looking at contemporary museums and present-day cities, I wish to devote this article to a call for tenderness.

The world of museology, so suddenly and violently stricken by the pandemic in March 2020, plunged into a situation which had hitherto been unprecedented in its long history. Overnight, it was cut off from the established ways of contacting the public. That sudden disruption of the relationship came as a real shock for our community. As a response to it, museums made a huge technological leap and mastered a range of new skills in the sphere of cyberspace. In this field, we made a great effort to build new bridges with the public to replace the one that had been destroyed. An unquestionable added value of that effort lies in the fact that we have shown agency. But, at the same time, can we prove that the mere presence in



cyberspace demonstrates that we have maintained the same, warm-hearted and living ties with the public? And, perhaps, should everything that happened prompt us to make those ties even closer? Or, simply putting it, tender? It was not for nothing that Orhan Pamuk wrote: "Inside us and between us the whisper of a tale is constantly heard". The word "whisper" is not insignificant here. There are not many who would listen to someone who is whispering. The whisperer has little chance of being heard, while – in his loneliness and fear – he may need it.

We, as museum professionals, must not entirely give ourselves over to the activity which sometimes resembles the mere production of exhibitions and other events and which sometimes borders on workaholic behaviour, while neglecting the observation of the world. People have always differed from one another, but can we come to terms with the fact that the political elections in which we have been participating for a decade or so have been marked by unusual polarisation? This is the case in Poland, which is divided almost in half, where the vision of a conservative society and the stable national state has collided with the vision of a society which is liberal and plural in its multiculturalism. It is not the differences, however, that are of concern, but the level of emotions they evoke. As a result, we deal with tribal conflicts, in which the only approach seems to be getting rid of your rivals. This phenomenon is not limited to my country alone; these divisions can be found in Hungary, United Kingdom, Turkey, Israel, among many other societies. I think that this kind of trend will expand rather than disappear, and my conviction has been confirmed by the dramatic scenes which took place outside the American Capitol. Consolidation of the totalitarian system in several countries, most recently in Belarus, demonstrates, in my opinion, the other end of the same stick. We represent city museums, therefore, we must not fail to notice that the axis of the conflict runs through cities. In Budapest, Istanbul and in Warsaw, the local authorities do not come from the same political camp as the national authorities. In this context, the slogan of our conference, *You have the right to the city!*, holds two meanings. It means that both the minority and the majority have the right to it, regardless of on which side of the divide they stand. The modern world and contemporary cities are the areas of growing conflict. The subjects of these disputes are politics, ecology, climate change, equality of race, gender, religion, social security and even the attitude towards the past. In my opinion, as stated, this is a conflict between the species of *Homo Sapiens*, which is irretrievably falling behind, lagging in the past, and a new species, the *Homo Novus*, which is now emerging. In my judgement, it is impossible to stop the changes which mark the modern world. Moreover, a historian knows that halting change has never been possible. On the other hand, a historian also knows that such crises are usually accompanied by violent events; unfortunately, that often translates into wars.

The need for a tender museum professional

What might that possibly mean from the perspective of a man, who – as an individual – is completely helpless and powerless when faced with the forces clashing before his eyes? Sometimes, this clash takes place in his city, his neighbourhood or at his own home. I am convinced that such a man is afraid when confronted with the described conflicts. Fear and trembling overwhelm him. That is why now I would like to connect the beginning of my article with the argument that will bring us up to the conclusion. The world needs a new narration, a new tale about itself. The world has to be told from the beginning that Humanity has to invest itself and narrate itself anew. However, the world will not be able to do it without museums. We are the ones who have to tell the world about its past. Without that narrative the world is bound to become lost. How are we supposed to do it? I have already



referred to the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk because I extremely liked the image of the whisper he used. At the beginning, I referred to the Polish Nobel Prize winner, Olga Tokarczuk. In fact, one could even ask, is it a coincidence that the prizes of the Swedish Academy of Sciences have been awarded to artists who come from the countries where these tensions are so strong? From the countries where democracies are young and where political transformations are taking place so fast? Shortly after receiving the 2018 Nobel Prize in Literature, Olga Tokarczuk put forward the argument that the world requires a tender narrator. Does it not also need a “tender museum professional”? And how is this tenderness to manifest? Perhaps through mindfulness, kindness and empathy?

Freeman Tilden, author of the immortal book *Interpreting Our Heritage*, sets down his six principles of heritage interpretation. In principle five, he points out that “interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and it must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase”, to the life of man as a whole. Thus, a museum professional is not supposed to refer to what he wants to pass down to others, what he wants to say. Our task is, first and foremost, to listen to man, receive him as a whole, with his feelings, emotions and needs.

This is exactly the year when our strategic plan came to an end. In February, we started constructing a new strategy, by revising the mission of our museum, among other tasks. After long discussions, we finally accepted the following words: *We listen to the City. We narrate and document Krakow, #jestem Krakow* (I am Krakow = Krakow is me). It is not by accident that the process of “listening to the city” was included in the first words of our mission. We had been maturing to such a formulation for a few long years. And I must honestly say that the ability to listen is not an easy one. The inhabitants of our city deserve listening to their whispers. Since, however, they are lost, like the inhabitants of all the cities of the world, they tend to be nervous, demanding, impatient and pretentious. It is by and large far easier not to be a *tender narrator*, but to recount from the heights of our own knowledge, resorting to the authority of a curator, making our own narrative. Inside us, there still lies the *Homo Sapiens*, holding tight the child of the Neolithic revolution, there also lies the feeling of an utter dislike for losing the control and power that make up his advantage. That Man likes to reign over the surrounding world and over Nature. Likewise, this child of the Neolithic revolution still works at the museums. This child is us. Who or what do we want to control? The answer is the public. We are still a 21st-century tribe when we want to impose the narration over the city. But, if so, is the slogan *You have the right to the city* true? Rather not. In its place, one should rather read *We shall tell you what kind of city you have the right to and we shall fix the boundaries of these rights*.

When, in March 2020, lockdown was introduced in Poland, our museum was closed. Looking for a way of performing our job in the new conditions, we announced the action *Stay at home and tell Krakow*. The idea was simple: if you have to stay in your own flat, then – from your own perspective, from the perspective of the window of the locked-up flat, disease, loneliness and fear caused by the pandemic danger – share your tale with us. The project *Stay at home and tell Krakow* emerged out of the conviction that a city dweller detached from the normality of his ordinary life will feel the need of sharing his experience, of “whispering” it. Soon, our call to “narrate Krakow” met fertile ground, which was demonstrated by the number of “tales / narrations” passed to us. The word must be put in inverted commas, because – as it turned out – a tale has many names. So, we received stories not only written in prose, poetry and diaries, but also works of visual arts, such as photographs, graphics, comic strips /cartoons, and even songs written under the influence of the pandemic.



CONCLUSION

Last but not least, the reference to ordinary / extraordinary artefacts: what is unusual and effective in this collection? It is the fact that this extraordinary harvest is an effect of a simple invitation to share narratives, and, most importantly, the assurance that we shall listen to them carefully and “tenderly”. Could it be, perhaps, that most important of all is yet something else? Namely, what if our claims about our “tender mindfulness” were to be believed in?

BIOGRAPHY

Michał Niezabitowski is the director of Museum of Krakow (former name: The Historical Museum of the City of Krakow). He studied history and museology (Jagiellonian University). He is an expert in the history of medieval Krakow and the history of Krakow's trade. In 1985, he started working at the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow, where he became the curator of museum collections in 1995. In 2004 he became the director of this museum. He is also the head of the Polish Museum Museologists Association.



PLURAL NARRATIVES AND MEMORIES: THE CENTRE D'HISTOIRE DE MONTRÉAL

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Abstract

How are city museums integrating migration history as part of the “cities’ tale”? That’s the question I had in mind while writing this paper. It is a central question in our contemporary societies as more and more people are living outside their country of origin.¹ Migration history does not need to be exclusive of migration museums – a lot of other museums, including city museums, are already incorporating migration history and memory into their narratives (whether in permanent or temporary exhibitions). By doing so, these exhibitions become more inclusive and multivocal, thus adding a more interdisciplinary approach to the history of the cities. Historians, anthropologists, architects and artists all can contribute to creating this multicultural approach in telling the city’s history.

Key words: Migration, Montreal

¹ The reasons are, of course, different for each person and they are not exclusively connected to fleeing poverty or political persecution. As Peggy Levitt highlights so well in the introduction of her book, more and more professionals are also living abroad and the flux of transnational movement is increasing each decade. Source: <https://journals.openedition.org/culturemusees/916>



Centre d'histoire de
Montréal,
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The Centre des Mémoires Montréalaises: an example of multivocality and participatory processes

The *Centre d'Histoire de Montréal* is now called *Centre des Mémoires Montréalaises*.² This is a good example of the importance of memories over one single narrative created by the museum. The *Centre des Mémoires Montréalaises* (MEM) mobilises the population of Montreal to help highlight Montreal's identities.³ It brings together the testimonies of various communities to tell the story of the city, thus valuing the local memories as a key factor for the museum narrative. Multivocality is at the centre of the curatorial practice.

The *Centre d'Histoire de Montréal* has presented a permanent exhibition on the history of the city of Montreal, by integrating the city's "migrant history" throughout the centuries.⁴ A new permanent exhibition will open in 2022; nevertheless, until then, the population of Montreal has been invited to participate in a series of activities promoted by the museum. Of these, two temporary exhibitions are especially worth mentioning: one on the history of one of the neighbourhoods of Montreal (2016), entitled *Quartiers disparus*,⁵ and another - an itinerant temporary exhibition dedicated to migration, called *Fenêtres sur l'immigration* (2019-2020).⁶

In this exhibition, a total of 38 people gave their testimony. They all have arrived in Montreal at different times. Each decade since the 1950s is represented. Think of José-Louis Jacome, who arrived from Portugal in 1958, Emilia de Minico, who came from Italy in 1960, Raimundo Ravello, who arrived from Chile in 1977, Paulo Ramos, who came from Brazil in 1986, Nurun Nahar, who came from Bangladesh in 1994, Amjad Ghafar, who arrived from Pakistan in 2001, or Geneviève Mbombu, coming from Congo in 2013.

The questions that guide different sections of the exhibition are:

- *Far in the distance, a city. What to expect from Montreal before discovering it?*
- *Immigration between constraints and hopes. Why did you immigrate to Montreal?*
- *First impressions and endless comparisons. Is Montreal exotic to you?*
- *Establish, take root. What landmarks, what help is there in Montreal?*
- *Challenges and prospects for the future. How to rebuild your life in Montreal?*
- *Belongings and identities. What bridges are being created between there and Montreal?*

These questions show us that, when arriving in a new city, people definitely create new affective memories of places and new "memorial landmarks". It might be one's first house or the coffee shop that one often goes to, or even a library or museum. The possibilities are endless. The point is that people create reminders and affective memories about their new city and thus foster connections linked to building their identity.

² For more information check their website at: <https://memmtl.ca>

³ According to the website: "The MEM – Centre des mémoires montréalaises mobilizes Montreal's inhabitants, who in turn help highlight the value of the city's plural identities. We collect and present first-hand accounts from a range of communities to tell the history of Montreal. To carry out its mission, the MEM prioritizes citizens' voices, past and present. We capture the essence of "Montreality" - the many different facets of the city in all their diversity. Whether you hail from Montreal or have adopted the city as your own, you're a part of its history. The MEM wants to hear your voice and share your memories. We celebrate the pride of being a Montrealer with you and thanks to you".

⁴ For more information, please check the museum website: http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_page-id=8757,97305573&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

⁵ <https://ville.montreal.qc.ca/memoiresdesmonrealais/quartiers-disparus>

⁶ http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_page-id=8757,142419949&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL



We all have multiple identities, as Michel Serres highlights in his essay “Appartenance et identité”. According to Michel Serres:

“We always make a serious confusion about the notion of identity. I don’t like people talking about “sexual identity”, “national identity”, “cultural identity” etc... Why? Because they confuse identity with belonging. Thus, when they speak, for example, of Brazilian identity, French identity, they confuse what identity is – identity is “A” identical to “A”, that is, “Michel Serres” is identical to “Michel Serres”: this is identity. The fact that he’s French... That’s not my identity, that’s my belonging. The fact that I’m a Jew, a Catholic, a Protestant... Belonging. The fact that my name is Serres is, by the way, a belonging to a family. The fact that my name is Michel belongs to the group of people who are called Michel. These are all belongings. And, consequently, confusing belonging with identity is the very definition of racism. Because it is said: he is black, he is Jewish, he is Catholic, he is... No! He is Michel Serres. Identity should not be confused with belonging. One thing is: $A = A$ (“A” identical to “A”); another thing is: A belongs to the set A.”⁷

So, as we can clearly see, identity is not just a unique concept but a multiple concept. That’s why creating exhibitions that enhance an inclusive identity and show those multiple backgrounds and cultures, which contribute to the richness of every city and every country, is such an important part of the museums dedicated to the history of a city. The exhibition *Fenêtres sur l’immigration* has as a central objective to show exactly this idea of multiple identities that create the local history and identity of a city, and how new inhabitants apprehend and internalise the connections to their new hometown. It shows deep commitment of the *Centre des Mémoires Montréalaises* to creating the setting for a civic dialogue within the community.

Therefore, these initiatives are giving the *right to the city* to all of those who made and make Montreal their hometown. As we can read on the Museum’s website:

“Montreal is a living and dynamic entity, born from the encounter between territory and populations. Like any city, it is constantly changing, never completed, always in the making. It carries with it the traces of those who have gone before us. Physical traces, inscribed in the architecture and landscapes of its neighbourhoods. Intangible traces flowed into lifestyle, languages and mentalities. ... To achieve its mission, the MEM gives pride of place to the voices of yesterday and today of its citizens. The different facets of Montreal in all their richness reveals “showmanship”. Whether you are from Montreal or have adopted the city, you are part of its history. The MEM wants to hear from you and share your memories. The museum celebrates with you and thanks to you the pride of being Montrealer!”⁸

This is a good example of how city museums can make space for responsive, adaptable forms of dialogue in physical and digital settings (especially now with the pandemic scenario), thus creating potential for expanding civic dialogue and opportunities within the community. As Stephen E. Weil points out in *Making Museums Matter*, museums need to be prepared to make a difference in their communities and to be able to demonstrate their openness to create a dialogue within their physical space.

⁷ The essay is the preface by M. Serres to the 1999 edition of Authier M., Lévy P. *Les arbres de connaissances*. Paris: Éditions la Découverte. 7-15

⁸ According to the Museum’s website: http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/portal/page?_pageid=8757,142419949&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL



Museums (in particular, city museums) are more and more often perceived as places of dialogue and of inclusiveness, forums that welcome citizens (the inhabitants) to discuss subjects that are important to their “everyday life” and also to the society at large. Inclusiveness is important as it makes it possible for everyone to feel involved and part of the community.

Migration history is part of every city’s history and it enhances inclusiveness in everyday life by showing that inhabitants of cities are from different backgrounds and cultures and that they represent the richness of local history and memories. By presenting the example of MEM, I wanted to open the discussion on the importance of local histories and memories when creating a museum narrative dedicated to the history of a city. The right to the city is also the right to local memory and heritage.

Migration memories and the participatory process in exhibition making: creating empathy

The example of the *Centre de Mémoires Montréalaises* is a good one regarding participatory processes in the city.

Where have you heard the personal histories of migrants in your city?

By integrating the stories and memories of migrants living in Montreal, the Museum is integrating them into the local history and memory. The narratives of migrants are not exclusively of migration museums but also part of every city and country. That’s why many local museums are including migration history in their narratives and enhancing participative processes, creating a “contact zone” with different communities in different neighbourhoods.⁹ Urban development and geography of any city are deeply affected by such important movements as migration. Migration flux is essential to understanding the flux of movement inside a city.¹⁰ That’s why many geographers specialise in the movements connected to migration and their relation to the geography of a city.

Museums are part of urban landscape and urban social network. They also have the ability to create new networks and to foster the dialogue between the different actors of society. As they collect tangible and intangible testimonials linked to the environment, the collections forming part of their heritage cannot be explained without the landscape.

The responsibility of museums towards urban landscape and communities is at the heart of ICOM’s preoccupations and policies:

“Museums extracted their mission from a legal and operational point of view and have managed buildings and sites of cultural landscape as “extended museums”, offering enhanced protection and accessibility to such heritage in an intricate relation with communities. Museums contribute not only to the knowledge of the values of cultural landscape, but also to the development of the symbolic frameworks that determine them, so that the notion of cultural landscape becomes an instrument for the assessment of what needs to be protected, enhanced and handed on to future generations, and what will instead go questioned, criticised and modified.”¹¹

⁹ The concept was developed by Pratt and used by Clifford.

¹⁰ Darling, J. (2016). Forced migration and the city: Irregularity, informality, and the politics of presence. *Progress in Human Geography*, Vol. 41, 2, 178-198. [online] Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/phg/41/2>

¹¹ Resolution adopted by ICOM’s 31st General Assembly 2016, Milan. Source: https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOMs-Resolutions_2016_Eng.pdf



Another factor that is enhanced by inviting the inhabitants of a city to share their memories is the creation of an “emotional bond” and empathy in the visitors.

“Emotion has always been present in museums, but for a long time it was considered the “madwoman of the house”, which had to be channelled if not suppressed. Concern and desire for subjectivity was the opposite of an objective and impartial approach defended by the “social sciences” (including museology).

The same is not true today, when emotion is part of a legitimate economy of the visiting experience. Such an emotion is based on the mobilisation of the visitor’s senses by the exhibition curator, sacrifices, if necessary, to different rituals, and can nourish a pedagogy, social or political, beyond the aesthetic field to which she was first identified.

How can history and especially city museums help develop a form of historical awareness that encourages both critical engagement and the feeling that traces of the past have significance for the present? Is it possible for history or city museums to go beyond the role assigned to them, that of “places where one learns the tales of the progress, triumph and exceptionalism of a nation or a city?”¹²

Montreal has other museums related to the city history worth mentioning here: the Jewish Museum, which also presents the history of Montreal, the *Écomusée du Fier Monde*, a museum of history and citizenship, the *Pointe-à-Callière*, which addresses archaeology and the early history of Montreal, and the McCord Museum, which presents other facets of city history.

A growing number of exhibitions seeks to use the dynamics of recognition and identification to undermine time-honoured narratives of the past and / or produce new forms of subjectivity. More and more authors indicate this is a process that has been growing for more than twenty years and more sharply in the last decade.¹³

How can city museums help in this process? What is the role of a city museum and how can it be deeply connected to its community? We need to think about the larger picture and actions that museums can implement to achieve inclusiveness and awareness to the point of actual change in the society. We need to recognise that all museums play a role in our contemporary societies and have the power to transform the world. Social, economic and environmental sustainability are all at the heart of the discussions in the working group of ICOM regarding the new museum definition.

To sum up, I would like to highlight two points:

- More and more museums are inviting citizens to participate and share inside the museum’s space – they use spaces and resources to unite the community and show that not only are we stronger together, but the future depends on our unity. So, the respect of differences (origin, social background, gender, etc.) is essential for a more inclusive society, especially at times like these, when extreme divergences seem to take place in the public forums and seem to widen the gap rather than uniting.
- Offering a “safe space” for “minorities” to express themselves is also important: from hosting multicultural entertainment (theatre, stand-up comedy performances, music festivals, etc.) to leading a Facebook, Twitter

¹² Source: Witcomb, A. (2020). Comprendre le rôle de l’affect dans la création d’une pédagogie critique pour les musées d’histoire. *Culture & Musées* 36 [online] Retrieved from: <http://journals.openedition.org/culturemusees/5672>

¹³ Such as Witcomb (2003, 2018) and MacDonald (2008).



or Instagram live chat on inclusivity, museums are finding creative ways to connect with their communities at large and in service of important causes such as climate change and migration.

The museum as a social actor of memory and its role in the construction of identity

Museums can, therefore, become social actors of memory, itself conceived as the presence of the past in the present and considered as constitutive of identity. However, can a museum profoundly change perceptions on the subject? This is a real question, which arises, moreover, more generally for the so-called heritage culture, at a time when cultural industries are sharply expanding and where stereotypes about “otherness” are mainly constructed by major audio-visual media (in particular, social networks).

Of course, exhibiting immigration is not limited to immigration museums; city history museums, or even community museums, can also present exhibitions on the legacy and memories of immigration. However, in the traditional history museums, the “great story” is presented without really relying on the individual or collective memory of a particular group to validate or corroborate it. On the other hand, in immigration museums, it is common to call on “ordinary witnesses”, that is, “individual or collective” memories, in the hope of making history more tangible. Indeed, it is the individual or collective narrative accounts (memories and personal experiences) that construct and validate the discourse on the history of immigration. Oral history is, therefore, at the heart of the museum practices of these institutions.

In the case of the National Museum of the History of Immigration in Paris (former CNHI), ordinary witnesses (personal narratives) come to the fore and converge to create a collective narrative / collective discourse. The “little stories” converge to create the “big story” that appears in the chronological reference tables. In other words, individual or family memories illustrate the historical statements presented by the reference tables, which clearly mark the strong points of the history of immigration in France.

However, does having individual memories integrated into the permanent exhibition narrative actually make the story more tangible? Can the public better understand or even relate to the migration experience presented?

The attention given to the memory of individuals in the construction of an institutional discourse is further justified in the comments accompanying the *Repères* exhibition at the *Palais de la Porte Dorée* in Paris, France, and confirming the Museum’s membership in the category of museums of society. A participatory practice is at the heart of the CNHI / MNHI project: the memory objects donated by immigrants and presented in the Gallery of Donations and in the first part of the permanent exhibition, entitled *The Departure*, emphasise this desire of the Museum to make the history of immigration “tangible”. Do we resort to objects-witnesses to stimulate memories?

For the museum to be a participatory actor in the construction of the social memory of immigration presents a certain risk of deflecting the controversies around the current debate on migration. Concurrently with the enhancement of the role of the museum in the construction of identity, a certain scepticism combined with prudence is also observed with regard to the political instrumentalisation of which the museographic tool may be the object.



According to Dominique Poulot:

“A clearly identifiable model is developing, and for which Benedict Anderson has provided a convincing formulation, evoking the triptych of statistics, cartography and the museum in the formation of imagined communities. In other words, the museum has been able to contribute to the process of progressive identification of citizens with the collective body of their nation, as has also been done by the country’s geographical or accounting representations.”¹⁴

The heritage and memorisation processes, thus, reveal the negotiations between the sensitive histories and the political dynamics that structure the heritage environment. In equal measure, the need for recognition of the memories of immigrants in the public space and the need to belong to a specific territory and society lead to the creation of a link between representations of identity and cultural practices to those of political forms. Given the crucial role that museums play in telling the story of national identities and cultural origins, the contribution of exhibitions dedicated to migration issues becomes very important, thereby enhancing the value of minority discourse.

Heritage is a political resource (tool) and it is used to define and legitimise individual and collective identities. Migration heritage gives a sense of self-recognition to narratives often ignored in the past: what we call dissonant or contested histories. These museums have at their core the objective to bring to light contested histories and recognition for these communities (politics of recognition). So, by analysing exhibitions and displays, I wanted to deconstruct the national narratives on migration conveyed by these institutions and their negotiations of the past, as well as how these museums can become platforms for discussing important contemporary issues of identity and sense of place / belonging. The narratives conveyed by these museums can help bring the matters of social injustice and inequalities to the forefront and also foster a more inclusive approach to identity and community in our contemporary societies.

The heritage of a “place of memory” can reveal the dynamics and mechanisms behind museum discourse as well as the tensions between micro- and macro-history. The negotiations and rewriting of history linked to these heritage development processes highlight the sometimes fictional or romanticised character of memories and stories linked to cultural sites. Nevertheless, does this mean that places of memory would become places of fiction?

As a result, the museum as a social actor in memory will lead to a possible questioning of the official discourse, in light of contemporary migratory issues, as well as of its impact on our understanding of identity construction. In addition, immigration museums offer the illustration or promise of a new outlook on the world, the past and its heritage, and on the notion of “the other”, as it has been conceived since the 1970s in many fields, such as philosophy, anthropology, literature, feminist studies or sociology. How do these museums think about the relationship with the “others”? This is one of the central questions in studies of the reception of discourse on the history of immigration.

According to Maryse Fauvel:

“The identity of an individual or a country is not innate, it is not stable or to be preserved at all costs. Theories on the construction of identity

¹⁴ Poulot, D. (2016). Introduction. *Culture & Musées* 28. 13-29 [online] Retrieved from: <http://journals.openedition.org/culturemusees/783>



now conceive of identity, not as a state, but a process, a construction of oneself, flexible, changeable, plural and which should not be hierarchical. ... Kristeva in particular explained how much otherness is necessary for the constitution of an identity: we each have a part of “other” in oneself. The knowledge of oneself passes through that of the “other”, one forms one’s own identity in relation to others.”¹⁵

The political context in which we find ourselves today is important as it calls into question the migration policies put in place by the various European governments in the last ten years.

How, then, to present “other” cultures without re-circulating domination? As suggested earlier, by setting aside binary structures and the dominant historical discourse of patriarchal government, and, above all, by including the voices of multiple subjects and by analysing facts, works and objects with a critical eye, from different points of view, sometimes contradictory, in order to carry out these displacements mentioned in the part on the “post-colonial”. Finally, and most importantly⁵⁷

, the old and deep exchanges between cultures must be illustrated in order to avoid essentialisms.

The museum sector is going through a deep change and what we call the decolonisation process of museums and collections is being increasingly discussed all over the world. How are museums dealing with contemporary themes such as migration, decolonization initiatives and the COVID-19 pandemic? What is the role of museums in relation to these issues and what approaches are they taking? Our societies are experiencing a period of profound change that would allow us to think deeply about the transformations we would like to see introduced in the museum field.

The recent years have shown us that migration issues are central in the international geopolitical scenario and hence are important in the representations of our contemporary societies. The same goes with the decolonisation topic as an important feature of rethinking the museum’s role in representing other cultures in the 21st century.

The recent ICOFOM Symposium (March 2021) focused on decolonising museology, the importance of rethinking the “myths of museology” and deconstructing the discipline in order to foster a new way of redistributing power and knowledge in our contemporary societies.¹⁶ A series of questions has been raised during the Krakow conference that reflect the need for museums to acknowledge their non-neutrality: how museums are tackling “white supremacy” is, for example, one of these questions. How can museums diversify their staff to be more inclusive and multicultural

Back to the ICOFOM Symposium, another interesting topic discussed was the terminology of decolonial and postcolonial museums. In his presentation, Fabien Van Geert pointed out that there is a difference between the periods of appearance of these terms and their geographical use.¹⁷ The term “postcolonial”

¹⁵ Fauvel, M. (2014). *Exposer l'autre. Essai sur la Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration et le Musée du Quai Branly*. Paris: Éditions L'Harmattan. 23.

¹⁶ The 44th annual ICOFOM symposium took place online from 15 to 18 March 2021. For the full program and information on the event, check the website of the conference at: <http://www.icofom2021.ca/fr>

¹⁷ Fabien Van Geert is a professor of museology at Université Sorbonne Nouvelle. His presentation at the 44th ICOFOM Symposium was called “Muséologies postcoloniale et décoloniale. Ou les frontières poreuses des concepts muséologiques”.



would refer to authors with an English-speaking background such as Edward Said¹⁸ and Arjun Appadurai¹⁹ and it started to be used in the 1990s. The term “decolonial” is more recent; it started to be used from 2010 onwards, especially by authors coming from the Portuguese or Spanish speaking realms, and it would refer to authors such as Walter D. Mignolo, for example.²⁰ So, two perspectives with the same core objective were created, stemming from different backgrounds, to change the approach and representations that are conveyed by museums and museology. Decolonising not only is a conceptual tool but it also involves deep commitment and ethical project.

This observation raises important questions: what are the epistemological concepts (and their origins) behind the ongoing decolonisation of museums and museology? Who are the actors behind the decisions made in the decolonisation process in the museum field?

These are just some of the questions that can be raised when thinking of the decolonisation process. But we should not forget that this process is complex and relies on a complete reformulation of museum practices and concepts. Critical thinking allied to action and practice are at the centre of addressing decolonisation and social inclusion and justice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, immigration museums aim to build an inclusive narrative on immigration, highlighting the contribution of immigration to national identity and culture. Thus, the right to the city is also the right to memory and heritage. “

The objective of this article was to show that immigration representation in museums is responsible for the establishment of a participatory museology; at the same time, like museums of society, migration museums ask questions of society itself and the way of “apprehending the different ethnic communities in order to create a representation of the other” (in the style of ethnographic museums). While the basis of this article is my doctoral research, I have tried to broaden the framework of analysis of exhibitions, by highlighting the extent of the approaches and remarks defended by the various institutions dedicated to the history of the immigration.

An interdisciplinary approach is often favoured by these museums, bringing new perspectives that can call into question our own paradigms about the society or the group represented. It would, in fact, be interesting to put into perspective and to make the reflections (resulting from my thesis) on the dialogue between museums of immigration and museums of society. Through the analysis of a conceptual element such as the shared memory of immigration, museums develop a participatory approach in the creation of collections (donation and collection of memory objects). Immigration museums are museums of society where participatory methodology is at the heart of the creation of exhibitions and collections, thus creating a museum journey that presents a polyphonic discourse. This multivocal perspective is present in the exhibitions dedicated to this subject and in the formulation of a discourse on immigration that integrates different narratives to develop a more inclusive local or national identity.

The development of a demand from society and a demand for minorities to enter into history and the national discourse brought forward a new type of museums,

¹⁸ Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.

¹⁹ Appadurai, A. (1991). Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology. In: Fox, R. (Ed.) *Recapturing Anthropology*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press. 191-210.

²⁰ Mignolo, W. (2013). Géopolitique de la sensibilité et du savoir. (Dé)colonialité, pensée frontalière et désobéissance épistémologique. *Mouvements*, 2013/1 (n° 73). 181-190. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-mouvements-2013-1-page-181.htm>





dedicated to the history of immigration.

In the case presented in this article, of the *Centre des Mémoires Montréalaises*, the visitor is invited to discover personal stories of immigrants who have created their new living environment and “affective” and personal memories in Montreal. This exhibition testifies to a real attempt to create community practices for a museum discourse. By inviting immigrants to donate an item and tell their personal stories, it creates a true polyphonic narrative about immigration. Different narratives and voices present not only challenges and struggles but also the successes that immigrants have experienced upon arriving at their final destination. The interesting point of this museum is that it integrates the history of migration to its narrative without being a museum exclusively dedicated to the history of migration. It is a museum that tells the history of a city and its neighbourhoods, and immigrants are part of every city’s tale so they are also part of the mechanisms of creation of heritage and local memories. Integrating their narratives to the museum’s narrative is an inclusive initiative and representative of an institution that truly values participative processes. As part of the analysis of migration museums we find museums which do not define themselves as exclusively dedicated to the history of migration as well, but integrate the history of migration to the history of the city.

The contribution of contemporary art further enriches the words presented by these museums, resulting in a more subjective perception among the visitors. Through the musealisation of personal stories and memories of immigrants, as well as the interpretations and transformations of these memories by contemporary artists, immigration museums want to encourage a certain empathy on the part of the visitor, who will, thus, be able to apprehend the migratory phenomenon through a biased, more subjective view and not exclusively by means of a chronological or academic presentation of facts related to the history of immigration.

Finally, museums dedicated to the history of immigration stand as recent initiatives in the international museum landscape. As the theme is gaining importance in the international political scenario, due to the current migration crisis since 2015, they are also gaining space in contemporary discussions on heritage and social inclusion. Some museum professionals argue that the ideal scenario would be to include the history of immigration in national history museums instead of having museums dedicated to immigration itself. However, at the moment, it is essential to have a forum to discuss and reflect on immigration as well as on the migratory phenomenon in our contemporary societies. With the growing role of museums as social actors, immigration museums could turn into a platform for discussion on the socio-economic inclusion of immigrants and refugees.

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BIOGRAPHY

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THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE ROLE OF CITY MUSEUMS

ABSTRACT

In 2020, the management of museums around the world faced many challenges, never experienced before, due to the escalation of the COVID-19 infection into a pandemic. The Edo-Tokyo Museum, to which I belong, was temporarily closed from 29 February 2020 to 1 June 2020, in conjunction with the declaration of a state of emergency. Then, on 25 April 2021, when the third state of emergency was declared, the museum was temporarily closed once more.

In addition, in step with the postponement of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games to 2021, many Museum-organised exhibitions and other events related to the Olympic and Paralympic Games were also put off until 2021, which, in turn, entailed a change of our line-up that presented itself as a challenge to us. The number of projects impacted by the situation, large and small, amounted to more than 200, which was disastrous.

The international exchange programme of the Edo-Tokyo Museum, as well as of other museums in the city, was greatly affected by the infection situation. This disaster was literal “pandemic”, a global epidemic, which also became a major barrier to cultural exchange. In today’s era of globalisation, “people, goods and information” freely flow across time zones and space all over the globe. The virus also crossed national borders and spread out from person to person quickly around the world. As a result, ugly incidents, such as hate crimes, frequently began to occur, causing considerable anxiety and hatred among people.

What can museums as cultural facilities of the city do in such an era? To begin with, I want to make a more extensive use of the materials and works that my museum holds, by taking into account the collection that has been formed by the history and culture of the area. We make full use of it to evoke memories and symbols of the past and present them to the citizens. The museums organise exhibitions based on themes of social significance, and we will create a prospect for the future.

Cross-cultural exchange is promoted by cross-border cooperation and exchanges of exhibitions between city museums around the world. I would like to have a contributory role in social inclusion and to solve urban problems after COVID-19, related to disease, life, family, education, disasters, environment, among others. I think that the city museum can contribute to the friendship and mutual understanding of humankind in the world with “the power of culture”.

Key words: Globalisation, COVID-19 pandemic, cross-cultural understanding, power of culture



Introduction

In today's globalised world, people, things and information can easily transcend time and space and move back and forth across the world in a flash. The COVID-19 virus has spread across borders and passed from person to person with alarming speed, unleashing an assault on the world that has left deep scars. The mark left by COVID-19 has been especially pronounced in densely populated cities. Many city museums around the world have been forced to close their doors temporarily or permanently and had to cancel or postpone their planned projects due to declarations of a state of emergency or lockdowns in the wake of what could be seen as a human crisis.

Cities are already facing a variety of as-yet unsolved persistent issues including environmental, population, ethnic, daily living, and other concerns. However, this pandemic has brought hardship and difficulty to museums and art galleries in cities all over the world, which they had never experienced before. So, what should we be doing as the custodians and managers of these cultural institutions?

Promotion of cross-cultural communication

I would like to propose the promotion of cross-cultural communication or the coming together of museums as a first step. Before delving into that idea in more detail, I would like to review the presentation I made at the CAMOC session during the ICOM Kyoto Conference in September 2019. The basic premise of my presentation was that flourishing intercultural exchange leads to mutual inspiration, fusion, revitalisation and, ultimately, development. Historically speaking, cultures will, more often than not, influence each other and blossom in different locations when spread and shared. In other words, societies have flourished greatly by proactively transplanting and absorbing different cultures.

On the other hand, as that trend intensifies, a unique local culture nurtured since ancient times and treasured by local people could be swallowed up by globalisation and destroyed. For example, the local culture that has been lovingly nurtured in a certain place forms a "small universe" over time, as symbolised by festivals, performing arts and other seasonal events. As part of the local and traditional culture, it serves as the bedrock of communal existence. It may be too simplistic and short-sighted to view culture as a conflict between global and local concepts in the first place. Instead, we could consider the meeting of cultures as causing a form of mutual "chemical change" in which the different cultures become deeply intertwined over time and influence each other.

The important thing here is to enounce the process of transformation in which two cultures influence each other. One could say that the most essential thing is to investigate and appropriately present a transformation process that considers what changed and how, and what did not. A process declaring that, through the undulating waves of time, "these changes happened and they led up to the culture we have today". People involved in museum work can help citizens consider their own culture through exhibitions and other museum activities that explore this type of transformational process.

The COVID-19 pandemic: culture as a source of resilience

Having said that, COVID-19 was not a factor that existed at the time of the ICOM Kyoto 2019 conference. At that time, no one imagined the imminent arrival of a disaster that would wreak havoc on humanity as a whole. No one was thinking we



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would experience this kind of pandemic. Today, less than two years after, the world is in a terrible state. To prevent the spread of infection, many cities introduced lockdowns. A state of emergency was declared three times in Tokyo, with the third one still ongoing as of June 1. In this context, the Edo-Tokyo Museum was forced to close its doors for over six months in total. In truth, we have had to cancel or postpone a total of over 200 large and small projects.

The COVID-19 pandemic is imposing fundamental changes in everyone's lives across the world. People have felt considerably anxious and impatient and those feelings have even resulted in hate crimes and other criminal activities in some locations. Under what conditions are people living their daily lives now in every corner of the world? While the degree may differ between countries and cities, it would appear that people are experiencing difficulties beyond description. In Tokyo, any outings that are not absolutely necessary or urgent are restricted. Body temperature checks, the wearing of masks and the disinfecting of hands are all mandatory. Cafés and bars have seen their opening hours restricted or been forced to close temporarily. Such measures are essential as long as infections keep on rapidly spreading.

To be forced to keep your distance from other people is something we have never experienced before. Some people are experiencing a type of sensory deprivation caused by the prolonged requirement for self-restraint in their daily life. In some cases, this can disrupt cognitive function, and excessive stress can lead to physical and mental anxiety disorders. Never before have I been more convinced than now of how invaluable art and culture are to human beings. When you experience pent up feelings, when times are tough and you cannot see a way out, art and culture can prove to be a valuable source of latent resilience, with the power to resist, recover and restore.

Here I would like to mention one Edo-Tokyo Museum initiative by way of example. In the wake of COVID-19, we held the exhibition *Edo-Tokyo Seen through "Blue"* to express gratitude and respect for doctors, nurses and other professionals who continue to work despite the risk of infection. The collection brought various works based on a blue theme under one roof, including the superb work by Katsushika Hokusai called *The Great Wave off the Coast of Kanagawa*. It depicts people on a boat being helplessly tossed around by the crashing waves of the great ocean. The contrast with a brave Mount Fuji in the background is a wonderful condensation of movement and stillness. I am sure I am not the only one who is in awe of the roughness and beauty of nature that exceeds the realms of human comprehension. Hokusai has had a profound influence on artists, including Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh and French composer Claude Debussy.

So, let me say once more, never have art and culture been more sorely needed than they are now. The pandemic will eventually be brought under control. While people will need to explore new ways of living their lives, they will undoubtedly adapt to the post-COVID world. Already, we can draw strength from the solidarity witnessed between people, however big or small, to overcome their shared distress. In any case, lives will change even more dramatically in the future, and I want us to explore and anticipate necessary social issues as we enter the coming era.

After the pandemic

We also want to see museums collaborate and share the unique culture of each of our cities through irreplaceable individual museum collections that are viewed as the heritage of the human race. Let's consider these collections as an opportunity to learn in detail about the history of a city's establishment or the lives that city



residents have woven over time. We would like to advance our understanding while mutually respecting each city's unique culture. We want to see the disaster wrought by COVID-19 firmly incorporated as one of each city's memories.

To do that, all museums should cooperate more vigorously than ever under a "Power of Culture" banner. If we, as museum managers, work hand in hand, then, surely, we can help promoting human solidarity, even if only by a small amount. People have experienced smallpox, cholera, the Spanish flu and other infectious diseases in the past. In the Middle Ages, plague is thought to have wiped out one third of the population of Europe; however, do remember that those dark times were followed by the brilliant period of the Renaissance. Could we, CAMOC museum members, not plan an exhibition together around a common theme, such as *Infectious Diseases and the Human Race*, for example? It would be the greatest pleasure to see such an endeavour turned into a touring exhibition. Let's explore the idea together.

(Postscript) After CAMOC Krakow 2020 (2021) digital conference last June

About four months have passed since the three-day CAMOC Krakow held from 9 to 11 June 2021. Although it was a digital conference, it was a very successful event with lively discussions. I would like to express my deepest gratitude once again to the organisers for their tremendous efforts to make this conference a success.

In Japan, the state of emergency was lifted on 30 September 2021 and society is gradually getting back to normal. Since I wrote this article in May for the presentation at CAMOC Krakow, I would like to report that the Edo-Tokyo Museum is planning to hold two exhibitions overseas next year as postscript events

One exhibition will be held in Seoul, South Korea. At the Seoul Museum of History, which has fostered mutual friendship and trust between museums and their staffs for more than twenty years, the exhibition *Scenes Around Sumida River in Edo-Tokyo* will take place resorting to the Edo-Tokyo Museum collection. The exhibition will be opened from September 2022 and it is characterised as the exchange exhibition to the featured exhibition *1784, Ordinary days in Seoul*, which was organised by the Seoul Museum of History in 2019 at the Edo-Tokyo Museum. The other exhibition, under the working title *Life with Animals*, will be held in the Japan Culture Centre in Paris, and it is also using the Edo-Tokyo Museum collection. This exhibition is scheduled to start in November 2022. As we continue to build on these efforts, we hope to work with CAMOC members to promote the "cross-cultural understanding" outlined in this paper.

When these exhibitions successfully open and if you have a chance to visit South Korea or France during exhibition period, I hope you will take a look at them.

BIOGRAPHY

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PART 2

WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO THE CITY?

STATE-OF-THE-ART APPROACHES IN

CITY MUSEUMS



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PROTEST MELBOURNE: EXHIBITING PROTEST IN A CITY MUSEUM

ABSTRACT

Melbourne has a long history of protest. From the earliest days of the emerging city, Melbourne's citizens took to the streets on a regular basis to express their views on political issues. Early street marches were important in propelling Victoria along the path to democracy. Many of those protests took place in the vicinity of the Old Treasury Building, where Victoria's leaders had their offices. Now that the Old Treasury Building is a museum, it is appropriate to include aspects of Victoria's political history, including its protest history, in exhibition programmes, along with other displays about life in the city.

Protest Melbourne is a new exhibition about the many issues that inspired Melbourne's citizens to take to the streets. Topics presented include First Nations protests, women's rights, workers' rights, gay rights and campaigns for peace and the environment. Many issues have a surprisingly long history. The exhibition was due to be installed in mid-2020 but it was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the light of experiences during the pandemic, we decided to review the content of the exhibition, adding a section examining the right to protest, both in "normal" times and during periods of national emergency. This section points to the complex status of the "right" to protest, and the legal limits to that right. It also invites debate on where those limits should be. As the museum reopens in 2021-22, associated education programmes will explore those questions with visiting students, hoping to provoke engaged discussion around questions of the role of protest, the legitimacy of limits to the right to protest in a democracy and how those rights should be exercised in times of national emergency, like the recent pandemic.

Key words: Protest, democracy, human rights, pandemic, debate



Introduction

In May 2021, the Old Treasury Building opened a new exhibition on the history of political protest in Melbourne. The display was originally scheduled for installation in 2020, but, like many programs the world over, fell victim to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Protest Melbourne* charts the history of street protests in the city, from the very first demonstrations held in the 1840s to the present day. It is a turbulent history, as Melburnians have not hesitated to air their views in public whenever the government of the day displeased them.

Many of those protests were staged in the vicinity of the Old Treasury Building, often on its forecourt. Initially, this reflected the fact that the heads of government, the governor and the premier of Victoria, both had offices in the building, as did other senior ministers of state. The executive tier of government¹ has also met in the building since 1862, which meant that all legislation passed by the Parliament of Victoria was signed into law in the Executive Council Chamber on site. That is still the case today. This dual use of a building as both executive of government and a history museum is unique, as far as I know, and it means that the Old Treasury Building has a particular interest in presenting programmes that focus on government and the democratic process, along with displays on the history of the city that surrounds it.



Schools Strike 4 Climate rally, Old Treasury Building, 20 September 2019. © Old Treasury Building

Protesting for political rights

Over the years, the issues that brought Melbourne's citizens onto the streets in protest were many and varied, and obviously we could not hope to cover them all in one small exhibition. We chose instead to group the protests thematically, with an emphasis on issues that still resonate today. They included First Nations protests, women's rights, gay rights, workers' rights, peace activism and the environment movement. It was striking to discover just how many of today's concerns could trace a long history of protest. Women's rights are one example. The first organisation to demand political rights for women in Australia was formed in Melbourne in 1884. It was a genteel association of ladies, literate and well-connected, and their weapons of choice were the petition and the deputation to senior men in government, most of whom had offices in the Old Treasury Building. The noisy street marches that would come later were not yet for them,² but these women were energetic and determined. One of their petitions, the so-called "monster petition" of 1891, gathered 30,000 signatures and stretched to a length of 260 metres – much to the consternation of the members of parliament who received it. These women needed all their determination. Although women in the sister colony of South Australia gained the vote in 1894, the conservative Victorian parliament refused 19 successive suffrage bills, before finally granting women the right to vote in 1908.³ By contrast, the Parliament of the newly-formed Commonwealth of Australia granted women the vote in 1902.

The main focus of these early feminists was the suffrage, nevertheless, they also campaigned for better working conditions for women and against domestic violence. These were issues that continued to inspire women's protests through both world wars and into the 1960s, until the Women's Liberation Movement burst

¹ Composed of the Governor of Victoria with the Cabinet, either in full or in part.

² Quartly, M., Smart, J. (2015). *Respectable radicals: a history of the National Council of Women 1896-2006*. Clayton: Monash University Publishing, Chapter 2.

³ Lake, M. (1999). *Getting equal: the history of Australian feminism*. St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, Chapter 1.



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Protest Melbourne, women's rights. Photograph: Old Treasury Building. Background image: International Women's Day, 8 March 1975.
© National Library of Australia

onto the scene in the late 1960s, demanding an end to all forms of discrimination against women.⁴ Those were heady days that saw the Women's Liberation Movement achieve a great deal, however, issues like domestic violence and sexual harassment in the workplace never went away. Indeed, there is strong evidence to suggest that violence against women increased substantially during the stressful conditions of the pandemic lockdown in Melbourne⁵ and other global cities, while sexual harassment in the workplace and violence against women are prevalent everywhere, as global movements like the #MeToo campaign showed only too clearly. Disgust at the inadequate response to one particularly serious incident in the Australian Parliament prompted a series of large protests around the country, including one in Melbourne in March 2021. Assembling under the banner *Enough is enough: March 4 Justice*, women converged on parliament buildings throughout Australia demanding action.⁶

First Nations people also have a long history of protest in Victoria. Although the armed resistance was quickly overcome, Kulin leaders soon proved adept at using the mechanisms of representative government to argue for justice. The first protest march by people of the Kulin Nation took place in 1876. They were calling for freedom of movement and land rights, a campaign that would go on well into the twentieth century and is still an issue today.⁷ Other live issues include

honest recognition of First Nations history and the shameful incidence of black deaths in custody. Protests against black deaths in custody aligned with the global *Black Lives Matter* campaign of 2020-21.

Achieving change through protest

There can be little doubt that some of the large protest movements achieved change. During the First World War, huge crowds assembled to oppose a Federal Government proposal to conscript young men to fight overseas. Such was the depth of feeling that the government eventually abandoned its plans and Australia sent only enlisted soldiers to fight.⁸ A second attempt at conscription in the late 1960s saw an equally passionate response. Huge demonstrations protested against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam conflict and demanded an end to the conscription of young men into the armed forces.⁹ The Vietnam moratoriums were one factor in the 1972 election of a progressive federal government, after many years of conservative dominance and in Australia's withdrawal from Vietnam. Similarly, the women's rights and gay rights marches of the 1970s and the 1980s helped lead to the abolition of discriminatory laws and, ultimately, changes to the marriage laws, legalising same-sex marriage (in 2017). Rallies to improve workers' rights were instrumental in gaining an eight-hour working day for selected Victorian workers in the mid-1850s, a movement that spread throughout

⁴ Lake, M. (1999), Chapter 10.

⁵ *** (2021, March 18). Crime statistics highlight impact of coronavirus lockdowns in Victoria. *ABC News*. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-18/victorian-crime-statistics-coronavirus-pandemic-family-violence/100016152>

⁶ Eddie, R. & Webb, C. (2021, March 15). Thousands gather in Melbourne for Women's March 4 Justice. *The Age*. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/thousands-gather-in-melbourne-for-women-s-march-4-justice-20210315-p57arl.html>

⁷ Broome, R. (2005). *Aboriginal Victorians: a history since 1800*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, Chapter 9.

⁸ Goot, M. (2016). The results of the 1916 and 1917 conscription referendums re-examined. In: Archer, R., Damousi, J., Goot, M., & Scalmer, S. (Eds.), *The conscription conflict and the Great War*. Melbourne: Monash University Publishing, 101-126.

⁹ Langley, G. (1992). *A decade of dissent: Vietnam and the conflict on the Australian homefront*. North Sydney: Allen & Unwin.



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the workforce over following decades.¹⁰ Large rallies in the early years of this century opposed attempts to introduce conservative workforce legislation that sought to remove hard-won industrial rights, with some success.

Nevertheless, other protests had little impact on policy. Some of the largest anti-war marches were organised in 2003 to oppose Australia's involvement in the Iraq War, with little apparent effect. More recently, the issue of global climate change has once again brought young people onto the streets in large numbers. A series of *Schools Strike 4 Climate* rallies were held in 2018 and 2019, having attracted large crowds across the generations. Several assembled on the forecourt of the Old Treasury Building. We collected some of the banners carried in those protests immediately after the events and we show a selection of them in the gallery. However, while there are some signs that Australian governments are listening to the concerns of their citizens on climate issues, the results have been patchy at best.

A right to protest?

As *Protest Melbourne* makes clear, the citizens of our city have been enthusiastic protestors during its entire life. The first protest rallies took place in the 1840s, when Melbourne was less than ten years old and large street protests in the following decade played an important part in persuading Victoria's reluctant rulers to make democratic concessions.¹¹ Such protest activity was an intrinsic part of Victoria's transition into a democratic government, and it has remained an important aspect of citizen participation ever since. So much so, in fact, that it is probably fair to say that most Victorians take their right to protest for granted. Even though they might not agree with every issue, most Victorians would defend the right to demonstrate for those beliefs in public. However, the legal position is not quite as clear, and restrictions associated with the pandemic brought those complexities into sharper focus.

Australia is one of few democratic nations that does not guarantee its citizens a constitutional right to protest. We have no federal bill of rights or a similar document.¹² Generally, that has not affected the outcome very much. Most Australians simply assumed they had the right to protest and did so enthusiastically. The police seldom intervened, except to keep order. And mostly, the courts upheld that position, arguing that the right to protest was assumed within a healthy democracy, citing a concept called "the implied freedom of political communication".¹³ However, like the United States, Australia is a nation of federated states, with both state and federal governments and associated legislative regimes. The constitutional reach of the states is broad and two states have chosen to legislate to address human rights specifically. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006) provides the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and freedom of association – all essential components in the right to protest. Yet, those rights were never absolute. Even in ordinary times, they precluded actions that involved trespass, vandalism, obscenity, racial or other types of vilification. But, as we all found in 2020, in extraordinary times, when the government declared a state of emergency, the right to protest could be further legally limited.



Homemade banners carried in the *Schools Strike 4 Climate* rally, 2019. © Old Treasury Building



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¹⁰ Kingston, B. (1988) *The Oxford history of Australia* (Vol. 3). Melbourne: Oxford University Press, Chapter 1.

¹¹ Hirst, J.B. (2002). *Australia's democracy: a short history*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, Chapter 2.

¹² Piccini, J. (2019). *Human rights in twentieth century Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Chapter 1.

¹³ O'Sullivan, M. (2020, April 21). Is protesting during the pandemic an 'essential' right that should be protected? *The Conversation*. [online] Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/is-protesting-during-the-pandemic-an-essential-right-that-should-be-protected-136512>

Protest in a pandemic

During the months of pandemic lockdown in Melbourne in 2020 and again in 2021, all Victorians were subject to the directives of the Chief Health Officer, an official whose role was suddenly central to our lives. At times, those restrictions included a ban on travelling more than five kilometres from home or on leaving home for more than one hour, and then for only one of four (or later five) “essential” reasons. Maintaining an appropriate social distance from others and wearing a mask in public were also mandatory. Gathering in public (or private, for that matter) was strictly limited. People could be fined for ignoring those directives and many were. Most simply complied with the regulations and supported efforts to control the spread of the virus. But it is fair to say that protesting legally under those conditions was almost impossible, and those who tried met with strenuous police enforcement. Early legal commentators expressed concern at this stifling of public protest, while supporting government pandemic efforts overall. They suggested that authorities might consider making engaging in otherwise lawful protest one of the “essential” reasons for leaving home, although with no apparent response.¹⁴

Public attitudes

However, something else also changed. Even Victorians who normally might have supported protest activity found that they did not. There was a sense that gathering to protest, even for otherwise exemplary causes (like *Black Lives Matter*, for instance), was irresponsible – endangering public health – and many disapproved. The Premier of Victoria said very clearly that he disapproved. In September 2020, he said: “It’s not the time to protest... regardless of what you’re protesting about”.¹⁵ Even as Victorians began to emerge from the first long lockdown in December 2020, that unease at large public gatherings lingered. The march against sexual harassment and continuing violence against women that took place in March 2021, under the banner *Enough is enough: March 4 Justice*, was one of the first to attract a really large crowd since the pandemic began, and even then, many who might have gone stayed away.

Attitudes hardened further during 2021, when Melbourne was put into three successive lockdowns in an attempt to contain the COVID Delta variant. The third 2021 lockdown (the sixth since the pandemic began) was declared on 6 August and was not predicted to end until 5 November, depending on rates of vaccination in the eligible population and the infection rate at the time. At the same time, government conducted an energetic advertising campaign trying to maximize vaccination rates, while simultaneously debating whether to mandate vaccination in some (or all) occupations and for access to dining and entertainment venues. These were all strategies implemented in other countries. While most of the population experienced some type of “lockdown weariness”, a small minority grew increasingly angry, and several violent demonstrations were the outcome. They seem to have involved groups with widely varying views, from those opposed to lockdowns *per se*, to groups opposed to vaccination (“anti-vaxers”), and some associated with extreme views, notably those on the far right of the political spectrum. Faced with rising infection rates and the weary sameness of a long lockdown, many Melburnians viewed these protests with disapproval verging on disgust. A long tradition of supporting political protest crumbled in the face of

¹⁴ O’Sullivan, M. (2020, July 27). Protest in a pandemic – the special status of public spaces. *Australian Public Law*. [online] Retrieved from: <https://auspublaw.org/2020/07/protest-in-a-pandemic-the-special-status-of-public-spaces/>

¹⁵ O’Sullivan, M. (2020, September 3). Protests have been criminalised under COVID. What is incitement? How is it being used in the pandemic? *The Conversation*. [online] Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/protests-have-been-criminalised-under-covid-what-is-incitement-how-is-it-being-used-in-the-pandemic-145538>



what looked like gratuitous violence, abuse directed at healthcare workers and the sheer futility of it all.¹⁶

Criminalising protest

Obscured within the maelstrom of fear and uncertainty as these protests took place were some official responses that concerned legal scholars. One of those was the government's decision to charge the organisers of some protest events with "incitement" – a charge generally applied to actions encouraging the commission of a serious crime like murder or assault. Incitement is an offence under the Victorian Crimes Act and can result in a criminal conviction – a far more serious outcome than receiving a fine for breaching public health regulations. As one example, those with a criminal conviction are barred from working in a range of occupations. In a contribution to *The Conversation* (3 September 2020),¹⁷ legal scholar Maria O'Sullivan argued that the decision to charge protest organisers with incitement was both complex and controversial, since taking part in a protest was not, in itself, a criminal act, unless protestors damaged property, committed trespass or threatened public order. Moreover, the event or act in question need not even take place for the charge to be levied: merely inciting the act was enough. Further incitement charges were levied during the violent protests that took place in September 2021. At the time of writing, these charges were yet to be heard in court (COVID-19 led to a long backlog of court hearings) and convictions might not follow, but the precedent of using charges of incitement against the organisers of protests, albeit within the context of the pandemic emergency, has concerned legal commentators. They fear the potential to stifle legitimate public protest activity in the longer term.

An exhibition revised

These events changed our thinking about the exhibition. Although much of the content was researched and designed before the pandemic, the delay in installation meant that we could add a section examining the right to protest in more detail. We could even bring it up to date, by adding references to the anti-lockdown and anti-vaccination protests, and to the government's response. But more than that, the pandemic and the increasingly violent demonstrations held by the anti-lockdown protesters, made us reflect far more deeply on the contested nature of protest at a time of national emergency and on where the limits to the right to protest should be set in such times.

Debating the right to protest

By resorting to online material and education programmes in the museum, we invite debate on these issues. We ask students to consider what they value about the right to protest, what issues they believe warrant protest in a democracy and what limits should be placed on that right. Educators suggest that they consider these questions within the context of "normal" times, and then, within the context of the pandemic, to tease out how their responses might differ in changing circumstances. We also suggest that they read different media accounts of these events to identify how commentary on the protests varied from one publication to another. Thus, the hope is to increase not only students' awareness of the context of such events but also the capacity to interrogate the news they receive every day from a multiplicity of sources. Unfortunately, extended lockdowns have meant



The right to protest in a democracy, Protest Melbourne. © Old Treasury Building



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¹⁶ *** (2021, September 26). At Melbourne's anti-lockdown protests, everyone has a different version of the truth. *ABC News*. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-09-26/anti-lockdown-covid-protests-melbourne-main-stream-media-distrust/100490148>

¹⁷ O'Sullivan, M. (2020, September 3)

that very few classes have managed to visit the exhibition to date, and accordingly that I cannot report on pupil responses. However, there has been a strong interest from teachers in booking visits once we reopen, which bodes well for the future.

It will also be very interesting to gauge the response of general visitors to this content. Even before the more violent protests of 2021, one survey of public attitudes to various aspects of life under COVID asked specifically what people thought about the right to protest during the pandemic. It was conducted in December 2020, as restrictions were easing and the number of infections was thought to be controlled. Respondents were asked whether they thought large protest gatherings should be allowed, either immediately or in some months' time. Over 70 per cent of those surveyed said that they thought such gatherings should only be allowed from one to three months in the future: 50 per cent selected the later timeframe – in three months' time.¹⁸ I am not aware of more recent surveys that might indicate whether attitudes have changed during 2021, but informal monitoring of general media and social media commentary suggests that anti-protest views have strengthened.

The future of protest

It is too soon to tell whether the experience of the pandemic will result in long-term changes to Melbourne's culture of protest. People may well resume political activism, slowly and cautiously as we do in many other aspects of our lives now, but others may abjure it altogether. Almost certainly the pandemic will mark those who have lived through it in some enduring way, but whether that results in long-term changes to the fundamentals of the way we work and live our lives is not yet clear. Whatever the outcome, we will attempt to document the evolving culture of protest in Melbourne and to reflect that process in our future programmes, both on site and online.

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BIOGRAPHY

Margaret Anderson is a senior public historian and museum administrator who currently manages the Old Treasury Building in Melbourne. In a long career, she held senior museum positions in Western Australia and South Australia, and, in the 1980s, she was the foundation director of the Migration Museum in Adelaide. She pioneered discussions in Australia encouraging museums to present diverse histories and to partner with community groups.

Margaret is a feminist historian with research interests in women's history and material history. She is especially interested in debates about conflicted views of history and the capacity of museums to present "difficult histories". She is a long-term ICOM member, having served on the Australian National Committee and she is a member of CAMOC and ICMAH. From 2016 to 2020 she was a member of the international committee working towards the new definition of museum.



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CAMOC Annual Conference 2020 (2021)
Krakow, Poland

SARAH M. HENRY

Museum of the City of New York
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**ART AND DATA: EXPLORING SUBJECTIVITY
AND OBJECTIVITY IN
WHO WE ARE: VISUALIZING NYC BY THE NUMBERS**

ABSTRACT

What is the role of data in urban life – and by extension in a city museum? Through the case study of *Who We Are: Visualizing NYC by the Numbers*, an exhibition presented at the Museum of the City of New York in 2019-2020, this paper investigates the power of data in a city museum context. It argues that clearly and compellingly presented data can connect residents and other museum visitors to important but often unseen and /or abstract aspects of the city. Artists can play a special role in this, by interpreting and problematizing data and making it emotionally as well as intellectually accessible. The paper emphasises that self-aware problematization of numbers is key and that museums need to be explicit about their methods, and to call attention to the hazards as well as the power of using data to characterise cities and urban issues.

Key words: Data, right to the city, city museum, visualisations



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Introduction

The theme of the CAMOC Krakow conference, *The right to the city*, focuses our attention on a critical question. How can museums empower urbanites to play a meaningful role in shaping their cities? This paper asks us to train our attention on a powerful tool in this effort by focusing specifically on numbers and statistics. It asks city museums to take numbers seriously: not just as modes of knowing but as forms of engagement. In particular, this paper asks us to consider the evolving role of data in urban space, both in the city at large and within the walls of a city museum.

It further asks how and when numbers can be tools of empowerment or disempowerment. Numbers are undeniably a potent weapon in struggles to shape the city, but their power, in turn, raises epistemological questions about the strength and hazards of quantification in the urban context – in effect, *who* has the right to numbers and to define what they mean. Who has the right to data in a city and in a city museum?

The quantified city

One of the foundations of life in the 21st-century city is the growing power of the so-called “big data”. In a now-legendary editorial in *Wired* magazine in 2008, editor-in-chief, Chris Anderson, contemplated the impact of the “data deluge” in the so-called “Petabyte Age”. He argued that there has been a quantum shift in the amount of data that is available and that at its heart “more is different”, lamenting the substitution of number crunching for other disciplines that can help us understand the world.¹ The history of the confrontation with numbers at a massive scale of course goes much further back, as Trevor Barnes reminds us.² But the very power of 21st-century computing has made it possible to expand the use of numbers as potent (and sometimes hazardous) tools with which to interpret the world. Moreover, these are not just tools for the construction of knowledge: they can be vehicles of communication, persuasion and education, instruments of social change for policymakers and activists, or tools of surveillance and repression.

In the urban context, the agglomerative effect of data is particularly powerful. The very “bigness” of data makes it especially relevant to urban studies and city museums as they strive to make sense of city scale and weave stories about urban life and its masses of people. Numbers offer an opportunity to dig into larger patterns, interrogate shared experiences and to understand the city as a whole as well as the gradations, inequalities, and contrasts that define urban places. This is true in practical terms, as data is being used across the globe to envision a new way of imagining the future of cities, notably in the “smart cities” movement, which endeavours to put data to use in the interest of urban problem solving.

At the heart of the smart cities idea is that democratising access to numbers is a powerful tool in crafting a more equitable, just and smart future. This is manifest in the proliferation of online “data dashboards” for cities, which, given the urban dwellers access to salient numbers about their cities and in the “open data” movement, gives the public direct access to the underlying data sets being gathered in the increasingly quantified city. For example, *NYC Open Data* allows visitors to download more than 3,000 datasets that are collected and maintained by the government of the City of New York, embodying the philosophy that data belongs to all, without restriction.³ It also sponsors the annual *Open Data Week*, offering a roster of programming dedicated to demystifying data and making it accessible to everyone.

¹ Anderson, 2008

² Barnes, 2013

³ <https://opendata.cityofnewyork.us>





Awareness of the powerful need for and uses of data has only grown during the COVID-19 pandemic, as people across the world have become ever more accustomed to and aware of the power of numbers to tell the stories of this collective and global event. Charts and graphs of positivity and vaccination rates, hospitalisations and death tolls and demographic analysis, they all have become part of daily life, and they have laid bare vital facts not just about the pandemic itself and its differential impact on different populations, but on existing systemic inequalities in our communities.

The promise of all of this data is that it will provide the tools to make cities smarter, by enabling design of solutions that respond to real, objective conditions. And yet there is a well-considered critique of the uses of data in the 21st-century city. Part of the critique is that reliance on data can turn city-making into mere city management, cementing the city government as a tool of technocracy rather than democracy and reproducing rather than disrupting inequality and socio-spatial fragmentation.⁴ Critics also point out that the apparent neutrality and authority of numbers and data is belied by the fact that the question of who interprets the data to what ends is key: big data is simultaneously powerful and problematic. This critique has fuelled the “data justice” movement, built on the idea that enfranchising people in understanding and interpreting is critical to empowering them in speaking for themselves and their communities.⁵

The work of these activists suggests that the right to the city increasingly rests on what we might call a “right to the data” – the right and power not just to access but also to interpret the numbers that capture the city. Not only is this a powerful tool for active social engagement, but grasping the city at a collective scale also enables urbanites to speak to shared and contested experiences and truths. Indeed, if we are going to take the struggle for social justice and dignified access to urban life to face growing urban inequalities seriously, we need to take numbers seriously – as a source of knowledge and a tool for empowerment, while always being mindful of the inherent hazards of data interpretation and analysis. And it makes data literacy an important requirement of civic engagement.

The promise and challenge of data in the city museum

These issues around the power and hazards of numbers are particularly salient in the context of a city museum. Like any museum, the city museum uses specificity – specific objects, specific artworks, specific stories – to weave particular narratives. But as tellers of urban-scale stories, city museums also have a powerful reason to speak to the larger context and to speak shared experiences as well as individual ones.

In fact, at the Museum of the City of New York, we use data all the time to tell the big stories of the city. From the public-facing point of view, numbers – especially when well visualised – provide an interpretative framework and an important teaching tool. They help visitors’ understanding to move from the specific and anecdotal to the general and systemic, from the personal scale to the city scale, from the micro to the macro. A well-designed graph or chart can provide more context and be far more memorable than a wall text with many paragraphs.

Importantly, the use of data also provides an important check on the curatorial decisions around the selection of objects and images for display. Statistics prompt us to ask: how do the specific stories and specific choices we are making relate to the broader story of the city? Are we choosing the right case examples or case studies to focus on?

⁴ Shelton and Clark, 2016

⁵ Taylor, 2017

Nevertheless, there are challenges. Although numbers have an air of authority around them – apparently promising to move us from the subjective to the objective – they are also acts of interpretation. In the words of the artist Herwig Scherabon: “Data is like words. It needs to be put in the right context to make sense. In a very deterministic way, there is a nimbus of “truth” all around it. However, at closer inspection it becomes clear that there is always a storytelling aspect involved in it. Working with data is like journalism and involves a lot of interpretation and speculation”⁶.

In addition to these interpretative challenges, there is another significant obstacle to using data for public engagement and education: numbers can be experienced as confusing, intimidating, or just plain boring. But this is where the museum can excel and play an important role. Bringing to bear their expertise in visitor engagement, design and visual learning, museums can turn otherwise off-putting and inaccessible data sets into aesthetic and even emotional interpretive experiences. Design can make critical information about the city not just available and accessible, but appealing. And clear and compelling visual presentations can foster data confidence and literacy among those who engage with them.

Case study: *Who We Are*

The Museum of the City of New York directly tackled these questions and more in a recent project that probed the promises and limitations of data: *Who We Are: Visualizing NYC by the Numbers*, on view at the Museum from 22 November 2019 through 18 October 2020. Unlike the many exhibitions that the Museum mounts that use numbers to supplement and expand their content, this project turned the tables by making numbers themselves the subject of the exhibition.

The context was the 2020 US Census. Politically, a tremendous amount rides on the census, because the decennial enumeration determines many things: political representation, districting and apportionment, distribution of public funds and policy analysis as well as decision-making. Thus, as the 2020 Census approached, deep concerns emerged. One cause was the historical undercounting of urban areas and of communities of colour. Additionally, political fear and confusion exacerbated the underlying situation. The proposal by the Donald Trump administration to introduce a citizenship question was widely seen as an attempt to intimidate people living in the United States without documentation, while political fights over securing funding for the Census Bureau were seen as attacks on getting a full and fair count. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic had a chilling effect on the canvassing process, as extensions were created and then rescinded. All of these factors added to the sense of urgency to encourage people to participate in the count.

Seeking to play a constructive role in spreading the word about the importance of participating in the census, the Museum of the City of New York planned a special exhibition and a series of public programmes around the count. Rather than curate an exhibition directly on the census itself – its history, inner workings and importance – the curatorial team, including guest curator Kubi Ackerman, the Museum’s Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Curatorial Fellow Monxo López and myself, decided to take a different tack. Recognising that the census and the data that it collects could feel distant, dry, and / or technical to visitors, we decided instead to focus on bringing joy, wonder, curiosity, and even beauty to bear on the topic. The result was *Who We Are*, whose mission, in effect, was to start with the uses and insights to which the numbers could be put in the interest of urban self-discovery, and work backwards from there to encourage people to care about the data collection itself.

⁶ MCNY, 2019



The central move of the exhibition was to highlight artwork and design that was driven by data. Collaborating with a variety of artists and designers who use data as a fundamental part of their practice, Ackerman selected a stunning group of artistic projects to form the heart of the exhibition. Each in its own way probes a set of questions about New York City, its residents and their collective identity.

The exhibition began with historical examples, underlining the fact that urbanists have long understood that numbers do not “speak for themselves”. In fact, the massive quantity of data collected in the census needs to be analysed and interpreted in order to answer questions about who we are. As long as data has been collected, researchers, urban planners, and others have found patterns and correlations, tested policy proposals, and promoted specific causes. Visitors to the exhibition learned that that very process of analysing such masses of information has led to innovations in the realms of data science and computing, as well as in the burgeoning fields of digital mapping and data visualisation.

The historical examples also illustrated the fact that the decision about how to visualise information is a complex, creative and inherently a subjective one. Long before the advent of powerful digital tools for analysing data, people found innovative ways of communicating numbers. The historical data visualisations on view demonstrated how data has been used to construct knowledge, pursue political agendas and incite curiosity, often in ways that are beautiful as well as informative. Examples included stunning and unusual graphs and charts from the turn of the 20th century by civil rights leader W.E.B. DuBois, depicting elements of Black life in the South; visualisations depicting the changing population and composition of cities and states over time; and examples of the historic use of mapping to track demographic change and immigration and to surveil immigrant groups deemed a threat.

The main gallery of the exhibition highlighted the intersection among contemporary art, design and data visualisation. The works in the gallery showcased the works of data analysts, demographers and contemporary artists and designers who use these tools to enliven and humanise statistics and to shed new light on how we understand our urban environment and ourselves. Many of them drew on recent advances in digital mapping and data analysis software that have made the tools for understanding and visualising massive information even more widely accessible. Many of these works aimed to uncover unusual or unexpected insights and to do so with explicitly political or activist intent. For example, some of the contributors focused on how race is defined and inscribed in the economic and political

Detail of Making Data Visible from Who We Are: Visualizing NYC by the Numbers at the Museum of the City of New York. © Isometric Studios (Design) and Brad Farwell (Photograph)





Left: Installation of *Simulated Dendochronology of Immigration to New York City, 1840-1917*. © 2019 by Pedro Cruz, John Wihbey, and Felipe Shibuya. Right: *Grid Series* by Neil Freeman, in *Who We Are: Visualizing NYC by the Numbers* at the Museum of the City of New York. © Brad Farwell.

landscape, or the degree to which immigration has shaped the city, two issues deeply connected to the political discourse of our time. Others drew attention to the extreme inequalities of income and wealth in New York, one of the wealthiest cities on Earth. Other pieces interrogated the very process of collecting demographic information. Together, they encouraged visitors to consider the questions we ask of ourselves, how we represent ourselves to the world, the ways in which we are categorised, and what goes missing or unstated in the process.

Some visualisations made powerful use of visual metaphors. For example, Pedro Cruz, John Wihbey, and Felipe Shibuya's *Simulated Dendochronology of Immigration to New York City, 1840-2017* depicts the changing population of New York City as the growth of tree rings.⁷ This interdisciplinary team from the Northeastern University has visualised the shifting origins of immigrants by using each ring to represent one decade of immigrant arrivals to New York City from 1840 to 2017, with each cell representing 40 people. They colour-coded the cells by geography and positioned them in the direction of the immigrants' home countries. Rings that are more skewed toward the east, for example, show more immigration from Europe, while rings skewed south show more arrivals from Latin America. Unlike visualisations that show historical change moving along a timeline from left to right, leaving the older history behind as time moves by, in this piece, the earlier historical data remains present and visible even as immigration grows and changes over time, representing the core of the metaphoric tree.

This work uses census microdata from the Integrated Public Use Micro Series (IPUMS). Rather than summary tables, it draws on millions of individual, anonymised questionnaires. Because the census records for 1890 were destroyed in a fire, estimates for that decade were derived from the mid-curve between 1880 and 1900. It makes the invisible emotional and inherently beautiful, suggesting as well how the growth of the city has been shaped by a host of external factors.

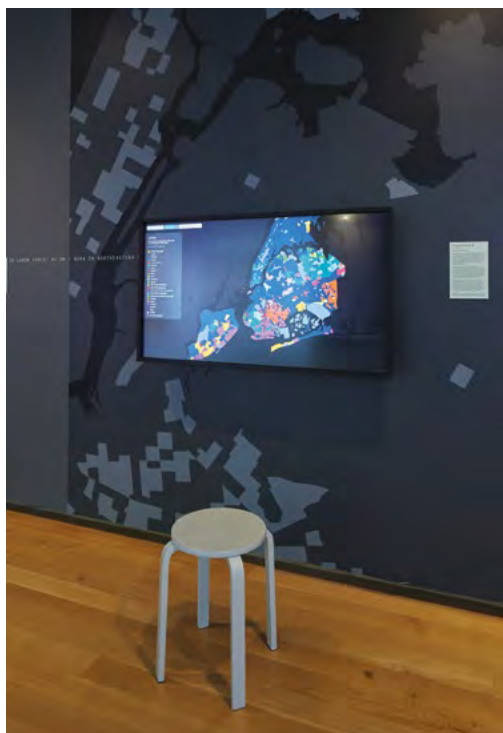
Other forces that are seldom understood are the method and structure of census data collection. Neil Freeman's *Grid Series* highlights the geographic units underlying the statistical analysis of the census – census blocks and tracts.⁸ These units have a logic of their own, effectively creating a parallel universe, a model of the city that lives only in databases and bureaucratic forms. This model is tremendously useful and, in many ways, it corresponds to the real city, but Freeman, an artist and urban planner, urges that we should not forget that it is an intermediary construct. In his words:

“New York has been allocated into geographic units for statistical purposes, and ... these units have a logic of their own. This logic attempts to create a parallel universe, a model that lives in databases and forms. ... When looking at census data, we must understand that it's a record of

⁷ Image: p.69, left

⁸ Image: p.69, right





Installation of Jill Hubley's *Languages of New York City in Who We Are: Visualizing NYC by the Numbers* at the Museum of the City of New York. © Brad Farwell

this model city, not our own. This model is tremendously useful, but we should never forget its existence as an intermediary”.⁹

By disassembling the census map and reordering its units in a grid according to their relative values with regard to specific metrics, Freeman reveals patterns of inequity and injustice that play out across New York City. The animation and static graphics have an abstract beauty to them that creates a sense of surprise and wonder, drawing attention to what would otherwise be invisible.

The questions that we ask of data shape what they reveal. Artist, designer and developer Jill Hubley's *Languages of NYC* highlights the linguistic diversity of New York City, one of the world's most polyglot cities.¹⁰ While in many neighbourhoods English is the shared language on the street, census data reveals that only half of New Yorkers speak English at home. A quarter speaks Spanish, and the rest speak one or more of hundreds of different languages. Hubley's visualisation showcases the power of census data to reveal more than what is visible in public and to uncover geographic settlement patterns throughout the city. Critically, the ability to turn layers on and off enables lesser-heard languages to become more evident. Excluding “English” shows the prevalence of Spanish, as one might expect. But hiding both “English” and “Spanish” enables a dazzling rainbow of other languages to emerge.

Hubley's work also shows the limits and biases of the data – “African languages”, for example, are not differentiated from one another in the census. This is an issue that is highlighted in a piece by artist Ekene Ijeoma, called *A Counting*.¹¹ Ijeoma, founder / director of Poetic Justice at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab, aims to bring our attention to issues of immigration, assimilation, cultural preservation and representation by focusing on New York City's linguistic diversity.

In a place where over 800 languages are spoken, the dominant languages tend to stand out, but Ijeoma's artwork inverts the usual hierarchy. The artist invited speakers of living languages, as well as rare and endangered ones, to record their voices as they count to 100. An algorithm that generates a unique “counting” using a different voice and language sample for each number. The algorithm selects which language samples are played based on the proportion of the New York City population that speaks each language, but inverted the proportions, so that the rarer and more endangered language samples are selected more. Ijeoma explains that “counting in multiple languages and dialects counters the census, which has historically miscounted and misrepresented non-white Americans / marginalised people”.

Census data can powerfully reveal the differential circumstances of people in the city, a point driven home by artist Herwig Scherabon's *Landscapes of Inequality: New York City No. 2*.¹² New York City is a place of economic extremes, home to some of the wealthiest and poorest neighbourhoods in the nation. In this piece, Scherabon puts in imagery these differences as abstracted forms that uncannily mirror our usual reading of the urban landscape mapped onto the street grid. In Scherabon's rendering, the geography of New York remains, but the city itself takes on new forms as income segregation boundaries appear as wall-like structures, a metaphor for how residents in the same city can live in very different worlds. The height of the extruded cubes corresponds to median household income, with higher sections of the matrix representing higher incomes and lower areas representing lower incomes.

⁹ MCNY, 2019

¹⁰ Image: p.70

¹¹ <https://a-counting.us/>

¹² Image: p.72, top



Some of the works also problematize the very nature of the data itself – how it is collected, what questions it raises, and what is not said or captured. For example, designer Giorgia Lupi created a piece for the exhibition that invites visitors to think critically about what questions are not asked by the census. In *What Counts?*, Lupi invites visitors to the gallery to answer a series of questions about their identities, internal lives and values.¹³ As each visitor answers, a unique “data portrait” builds up in form of a design that reflects their answers, using hand-drawn shapes that suggest the imprecision of categorising humans with hard numbers alone. Each portrait then joins the growing archive of other portraits that are analysed and displayed in an ever-changing projection on the gallery walls, and visitors can save their own portraits and even have them printed in the form of a pin-backed button that they can purchase in the museum shop.

As Lupi explains:

“The idea for the project was born when we started to think about the current Census, and how effective it is (or isn’t) at truly capturing who we are as humans. We wanted to raise big questions around the fundamental ideas of counting and categorisation which undergird both the exhibition and the intent of a national Census. How do we, as humans, define ourselves? What elements of our identity matter most – to ourselves and to others? Are we unique, or are we part of a greater whole?”

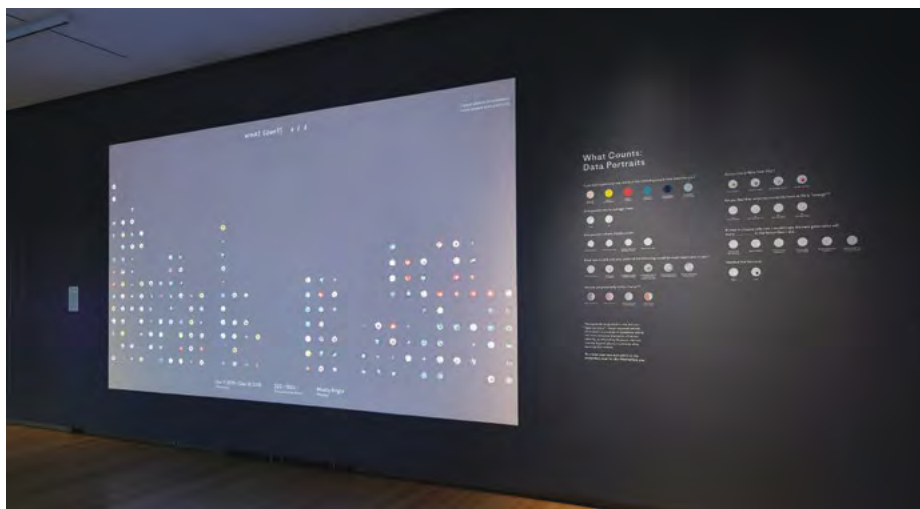
The piece is a meditation on the human condition, “eschewing clinical bar charts or aggregated data tables, the insignias organise themselves as flowing, blossoming patterns that reveal insights about what unites us, and what makes us wholly unique”.¹⁴

Conclusion

Together, the works in *Who We Are* promote both an appreciation of the value of numbers as tools and a healthy scepticism about them. What are the strengths and the flaws in the datasets? How are marginalised people reflected or omitted? What questions are asked and what are not asked? What choices did the analyst and the designer or artist make in making meaning out of them? What are the hazards and promises of the increasingly quantified city and quantified self? Both respect for numbers and the critical thinking about them are important antidotes to the idea of “post-truth”.

¹³ Image: p.72, bottom

¹⁴ MCNY, 2019



Installation of Herwig Scherabon's *Landscapes of Inequality: New York City No. 2*, in *Who We Are: Visualizing NYC by the Numbers* at the Museum of the City of New York.
© Brad Farwell



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Installation of *What Counts?* by Giorgia Lupi with Melisa Altinsoy, Ting Fang Cheng, Phillip Cox, Luca Falasco, Serena Girardi, Sarah Kay Miller, Tommaso Renzini, and Gabriele Rossi in *Who We Are: Visualizing NYC by the Numbers*.
© Brad Farwell.

As artist Neil Freeman cautions:

“Looking carefully at data as an artefact can help us understand the values, foibles and biases of the data collectors. Census data (or voids in the data) can help us understand patterns of inequity and injustice in the built and social environment if we are attuned to look for them. If we are not, Census data can be used to disenfranchise and persecute.”¹⁵

With care and self-aware attention to detail, city museums can use data as tools in the pursuit of truths that are important in the dialogues about the future of the city.

But numbers alone do not create meaning. One of the powers of the artist – and the museum itself – is to make information accessible, meaningful and appealing. The impact of design and creative insight cannot be overstated in this process. Done well, they engage people in content, make the stories that numbers capture emotional and relatable, and foster feelings of competence and empowerment. Without these tools, people cannot effectively claim or exercise their “right to the city”.

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¹⁵ MCNY, 2019

BIOGRAPHY

Sarah M. Henry is the Robert A. and Elizabeth Rohn Jeffe Chief Curator and Deputy Director of the Museum of the City of New York, where she has served since 2001. She has led the curatorial team for many critically acclaimed exhibitions, including the Museum's award-winning three-gallery signature exhibition, *New York at Its Core* (2016). Dr Henry received a PhD in American History with honours from Columbia University and a BA *summa cum laude* from Yale in History and Mathematics / Philosophy. She is the recipient of the Manhattan Borough President's History Visionary Award, was elected a member of the New York Academy of History, and serves on the board of the International Council of Museums' Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities (CAMOC).



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STICHTING WIJKCOLLECTIE, THE DISTRICT HERITAGE FOUNDATION

ABSTRACT

Despite being in its early stage, the *Neighbourhood Collection* has had to deal with a number of unusual circumstances, not least the COVID-19 pandemic. However, its ambition to move from a traditional museum outreach approach to an embedded and longitudinal one is already proving itself attractive to local communities and the wider civic and business society.

The development, evolution, research and data gathering of the programme will be carried out in partnership and co-production with the local communities, among other partners. Funding commitments from foundations, trusts and municipalities are giving us room to innovate and have the programme expanded. Activities and events will increase and grow during 2022/23.

We are also very open to dialogue and partnerships with others farther afield.

Key words: Intangible heritage, stories, inclusive neighbourhoods, social resilience, research



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Stichting Wijkcollectie, The District Heritage Foundation

The District Heritage Foundation has emerged from a joint initiative of the *Authentic Rotterdam Heritage* team (from Museum Rotterdam) and the Veldacademie (an urban research agency). The foundation aims to initiate and implement research, culture and heritage projects on its own initiative and in partnership with third parties. By working together with the local communities in neighbourhoods, the work intends to strengthen social inclusiveness and resilience.

Our work is centred around social development projects and has a keen interest in neighbourhood-generated research to support and develop practice and policy. The foundation seeks to share its projects and results with educational, research and cultural institutions, as well as other relevant parties. The foundation receives financial support for this programme from the Mondrian Fund, the VriendenLoterij Fund, the Stichting ter Bevordering van Volkskracht and the VSB Fund.

Over the course of 2021, the foundation has been working on four pioneer district collections in Rotterdam, namely the neighbourhoods of Bospolder-Tussendijken, Merwe-Vierhavens, Hillesluis and Tarwewijk. An individual logo and identity were created for each district. An important element of the work consisted in creating a *Junior Neighbourhood Collection*, to record and document the important stories and experiences of children and young people. So far, we have co-collected fifteen stories in this segment and over seventy stories with people of all ages across the neighbourhoods, a number that will keep on growing.

In terms of defining what is appropriate for *De Wijkcollectie*, we have a fairly broad remit. We want the stories to take place in the neighbourhood, to have a contemporary focus and that they contribute to social cohesion, living together and a sense of community. Each contributor receives recognition with a special District Collection Award and their photograph is included in the collection documentation, which is then made available to the public at <https://wijkcollectie.nl>

We source and generate stories in a variety of ways and in different formats. They can vary from collecting stories suggested by residents after an interview, through a photograph, a story, a poem, a short film or an audio recording. Every person involved has their portrait included.

During collective events such as the *VerhalenCafés* (*Story Cafés*) or the *Story Walks*, the groups and participants are also interviewed and photographed, often alongside the neighbourhood collection logo. Once the stories have been collected, they are structurally inventoried and documented. The films, audio recordings, interviews and poems are then used to stimulate discussion during the *Story Cafés* or *Story Walks* and distributed via social media as well.

Collecting

In terms of safeguarding and preserving the collection, all material is documented according to archival standards. The stories from the different neighbourhood collections are made available on the project website. As the project took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, this has presented many challenges, especially in engaging the community. We have looked for varied ways to introduce different residents to each other with new stories. For example, we have organised a number of online *Story Cafés* and in-person *Story Tables*. The *Story Tables* are small(er), focused gatherings where three people share stories at the distance of one and a



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half meters. In addition, we organised socially distanced *Story Walks*, which have been a great success. The registration procedure witnessed a large overbooking leading to a long waiting list for people wanting to take part in this outdoors project.

Community at the centre

Strength, energy and inspiration are found in abundance at Stichting Wijkcollectie among the residents of Rotterdam's neighbourhoods. This is our starting point to work in partnership with Rotterdammers to make a more resilient living environment for everyone. By sharing stories with each other, we seek out to build social networks and, at the same time, learn more about the city. Equipped with

An "active" stop during a *Story Walk*. © Wijkcollectie Foundation



this knowledge, we believe neighbourhoods can be developed in a smarter way. This begins by mapping the strengths of a neighbourhood and by sharing and discussing the life experiences of residents at our *Story Cafés* and *Story Walks*.

The questions raised and the community needs that emerge from these experiences help shape a different perspective of the area, which can then aid, for example, certain departments in the Municipality, Government and NGOs. Part of our role is to clearly describe these issues and their effects, not just today but in the longer run as well. We have also been comparing our case with programmes in other cities and countries to contrast and learn from.

Much work has already been done during the first active year of the Wijkcollectie Foundation. Stories have been collected, collaborations in neighbourhoods have been set up and walks organised in which the stories of the neighbourhoods are shared and celebrated. This year also marked the start of a collaboration initiative with four Rotterdam artists who are reflecting on the Wijkcollectie in their own way, which will help us see surprising new angles.

Making our work accessible to everyone in our neighbourhoods is important. For example, we want to share the work in different forms of neighbourhood museums that can be found in the most unexpected places.

Story Walks

Our *Story Walks* run through the neighbourhoods with a wide range of participants, from storytellers and residents to workers and entrepreneurs. They



pass various *Story Locations* and hear first-hand about life in the neighbourhood from different perspectives while walking through the locations. These inspiring personal testimonies bring recognition to the life experiences of those living in the area. They then form the basis for other activities, including musical, spoken-word and art performances. The participants also share food and drinks catered by individuals and businesses in the area. In each walk, participants visit between four and eight *Story Locations*, each distanced at some ten-minute walk from the following. The longest walk usually lasts ninety minutes and covers no more than 2.5 km.

The role of research

Through our *Story Cafés* series, we have also been able to encourage and stimulate inspiring and innovative insights into neighbourhoods that we carefully record. These occasionally longer stories not only help us better understand the neighbourhood but also bring texture to its demographics and provide some basic statistical data on the location. By placing these aspects in a more complete context, we are able to get a better picture of the daily life in a neighbourhood. This, in turn, can contribute to finding (better) solutions for issues in the addressed neighbourhoods. Often, the stories we profile emphasise the urgency of need, they bring nuance to bland figures and bring a wider focus to what are often regarded as narrowly focused issues.

These layers of experience and data allow us to identify more clearly both the similarities and differences between neighbourhoods. This can, for example, help understand why one approach or solution might work in one neighbourhood and not in the other. The interactive nature of the project also allows for the development of understandings and relationships between participants and guests. We engage with both groups to help map the stories being told and the networks they illustrate. Measuring the interaction between people and the impact, personal and towards policy, helps us improve our methodology for the future. This is followed up by surveys and online data gathering where we try to find out if the events have led, for example, to an increase in visibility and a connection between the people and the places featured.

Our research approach is using the Theory of Change method (ToC). This method maps out objectives and goals and then analyses how our activities can contribute to achieving those goals. The objectives are a combination of our overall aims for the project and the aspirations of local communities. For example, we are particularly interested to know if our *Story Walks* and *Story Cafés* are contributing to improve community resilience. This is, of course, a difficult task, as resilience, being a qualitative subject, is difficult to research because it often revolves around the way people deal with changes, shocks and tensions in their lives. Resilience can also be about the extent to which people react, recover, adapt or even transform during change.

One of the ways communities can be resilient is to act (collectively), and that depends on their awareness of what is happening in the neighbourhood, with whom they can work together or who they can go to if they need help or support. Bearing this in mind, we have formulated both long-term goals (access to connection in the neighbourhood for everyone) and short-term ones (more social cohesion in neighbourhoods, a self-organising network and increased self-esteem(s)). In order to assess how we might achieve these goals, action evaluation involving discussion, feedback and data gathering is a constant part of the project process. This is also part of the wider “community” forming nature of the project,



Getting to know each other at the beginning of the walk.
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AAbdel Kwam with pupils as part of the District Heritage Collection in the Hillesluis district.
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where contributors from all walks of life build a sense of shared responsibility and trust. We hope that this transition from “strangers” to “community” will develop and, if deemed necessary, provide the basis to come together in celebration or for social intervention. This will stand out in contrast to what we know about neighbourhoods, where people mainly remain anonymous and where there is less inclination for them to come together and intervene if something goes wrong.¹

Research insights are at an early stage and the COVID-19 pandemic has been a major disruptive factor. However, some of the early trends emerging are:

Attendance

On average, 25% of the participants of the *Neighbourhood Collection* activities are locals (we expect this to augment in tandem with a profile increase and information).

The first *Story Cafés* were mostly attended by professionals or people from the networks of speakers.

The third walk, which had its focus on music, attracted many residents; said otherwise, 46% of those who attended the musical walk live in the neighbourhood.

Motivation

Story Cafés: the majority of the attendants mainly came to the first *Story Cafés* held in the BoTu neighbourhood for the stories themselves. A significant proportion also participated in the *Neighbourhoods*, because they like to stay informed on what is going on in the neighbourhood. Therefore, motivation is not always directly linked to meeting or networking, but more to becoming acquainted, in a general sense, with the neighbourhood and the stories presented there.

Story Walks: as time went on, fewer and fewer visitors attended the *Story Walks* specifically for the stories or the speakers; conversely, getting to know the neighbourhood was the main motivation. During the walks through M4H (Port Area), we saw for the first time that visitors had also been recommended to take the *Story Walk* through first-hand contacts and came for that reason.

General

The *Story Walks* provide more interaction between visitors than the *Story Cafés*. The *Story Cafés* provide more connections between speakers.

In terms of public familiarity, the signs are positive with several visitors indicating that they look at their neighbourhood with different eyes after a *Story Walk*.

Participants' general comments and feedback:

“I noticed how beautiful and diverse my neighbourhood is.”

“I have seen many things and things that I knew nothing about.”

“Everyone connects with each other and makes the neighbourhood better.”

“So much fun, energy and involved people.”

“A lot is already happening here for and by residents, and I am hopeful for the future.”

“I see that there are a lot more activities taking place than I thought.”

¹ According to: Blokland, T. (2017). *Community as urban practice*. Cambridge: Polity.



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“There is so much happening that is not on the surface.”

“For years, I saw the decline of the district, now I experienced the positive commitment and strength.”

“Yes! I walk into those locations now!”



In each district, a separate logo is being used. © Wijkcollectie Foundation, 2021

BIOGRAPHY

Nicole van Dijk is the initiator and director of Stichting Wijkcollectie (the District Heritage Foundation): a foundation which is building district collections where culture and heritage are instrumental for social change. She is also working as a lecturer and curator. Until 2021 she led the research and development programs of Museum Rotterdam. This included the *Authentic Rotterdam Heritage* - a new way of active collecting for museums. Nicole studied at an art school and holds a masters degree in cultural anthropology.



LIEN VLOEBERGHES

Red Star Line Museum
Antwerp, Belgium

THE RED STAR LINE MUSEUM: BUILDING A COLLECTION IN COMPLEX MIGRATION REALITIES. *DESTINATION SWEETHEART* AS A CASE STUDY

ABSTRACT

The Red Star Line Museum tells the stories of passengers of the Red Star Line, a shipping company that, from 1873 to 1934, transported two million European citizens between the harbour of Antwerp and North America. The Museum is installed in the company's old warehouses, where medical inspection of the passengers used to take place. The permanent exhibition focuses on the Red Star Line migration stories, albeit contextualised within a broader history of migration as a universal, human and natural phenomenon. The Museum is a *lieu de mémoire*, designed to create space for reflection on migration between then and now.

Key words: Migration, exhibition, storytelling



Destination Sweetheart: A temporary exhibition on love and migration

Since its opening in 2013, the Red Star Line Museum has programmed temporary exhibitions that were mostly small, limited to the museum café located at the same hall. However, *Destination Sweetheart* (25 September 2020 – 26 September 2021) was the first in a line of larger temporary exhibitions in which one “reason” for migration is highlighted in depth. *Destination Sweetheart* portrayed the stories of people who came to or left Belgium to be with their love partner, from the Red Star Line period until today. The coming exhibitions will narrate stories of refugees and labour migrants.

We have opted for long-term perspectives, so that stories, whether set across time, space or social classes, can dialogue with one another, and that history can instil a different perception on migration than the one often formed by the news. *Destination Sweetheart* portrayed stories such as those of Andreas and Anna, deportees who met each other during the Second World War; wives of guest workers who came from Italy, Turkey, Greece and Morocco in the period between the 1950s and the 1970s; or of a Belgian colonist who brought his Congolese partner Hélène to Belgium when Congo became independent in 1960. Other stories were newer: Emilie and João met each other during an Erasmus exchange, Laura from Colombia met a Belgian tourist in her country, Chela from the Philippines got in touch with a Belgian man on a dating website.

The museum team researched archives, statistics and literature to recount the story of the Belgian government’s migration policy towards love migrants; nevertheless, the core of the exhibition was formed by the personal stories. The exhibition of personal stories creates the possibility for visitors with a migration background to feel recognised or acknowledged, while visitors without a migration background might connect to lives that are usually portrayed as removed from their own.

The collection of the Red Star Line Museum

Our collection is atypical. Unlike most museum collections, our strength lies in the immaterial heritage: life stories and migration experiences narrated by those who migrated or their descendants. Pictures, documents and objects are mediators to visualise the stories and make the immaterial more concrete.

What and how we collect has evolved. In the beginning, the collection was focused on the Red Star Line, and existed under two components:

- A maritime collection linked to the history of the shipping company and the experiences of crew members, first-class and cruise passengers on board: posters, brochures, menus, souvenirs of the crew members, documents of shipping agents, etc. The museum takes care of more than 6.000 objects of this kind;
- A collection of stories of Red Star Line passengers: letters, postcards, passports, pictures, tickets, sometimes trunks or objects brought from “the old country”, always with “ego-documents” or stories told by descendants.

These Red Star Line stories are still a starting point for new exhibitions and collection building projects. In the long run, the museum will own a collection of personal migration stories from the 19th century until today, on immigration, emigration and transit migration to, from, and through Belgium. These stories





cannot be found in archives or in existing museum collections, but they are shared with us by migrants, families – our audience. Participation is crucial for our collection.

For each story, our aim is to form an *ensemble* that documents the story as thoroughly as possible, preferably consisting of:

- “Ego-documents” or an oral history interview (by the person who experienced it or his or her descendants);
- Pictures and documents in analogue or digital formats;
- Objects with symbolic and narrative meanings to the story.

At this point, the museum team is undertaking a collection assessment, along with a group of citizens with a migration background and our professional network (teachers, guides, Belgian and international museums, among others).

Exhibition projects such as *Destination Sweetheart* give us an opportunity to experiment and evaluate, because collecting “newer” migration poses us new questions. Which stories do we choose? Are all stories suitable for collection? How do we find the balance between the privacy of people’s lives and making stories public?

The *Destination Sweetheart* exhibition as a collection building project

Forty oral history interviews were the starting point for *Destination Sweetheart*. We contacted love migrants through our networks: people who had participated in earlier museum activities, museum guides in training, spontaneous meetings in or outside the museum, personal networks, academic researchers; a freelancer who speaks Turkish focused on Turkish women, among others.

We have chosen an individual approach. Love and relationships are intimate topics that require a safe space, and because every participant had a different amount of



time and energy to spare, every trajectory had a different pace. In the interviews, we talked about what happened (how did you meet your partner, when did you leave your country, how did the procedure to get documents go, etc.), but mostly about the impact, experiences and emotions of love and migration. We asked participants to show pictures and, based on the story, we added meaningful objects and documents together with them.

There was always an interaction between the everyday life of the interviewed and the museum logic, which necessarily limits the extent of a person's story, to make it manageable for a collection. It is a balancing act that becomes tangible in both exhibition making and collection building. How can we bridge the gaps between complex, unique realities and the need to outline collection requirements and manage narratives for visitors, who do not always have an affinity with migration?

It became clear that most participants felt more comfortable in sharing their story in the exhibition rather than donating their stories to the collection. With the former, they had full control of the end result, while with the latter they entered in a long-term engagement in which they would lose control over their stories. As a museum, it is our responsibility to capture these objects and narratives in a collection and safeguard them for future generations, however, in a way that does not exploit the participants or makes them vulnerable to misuse. We would like to share some notes on this balancing act.

Recent stories

Stories on migration that happened not too long ago have the advantage that more details are known. The more time elapses, the more might and will be forgotten. However, a closer proximity in time might also mean more trauma, given that the story is still close to the bone of the storyteller. These narratives are less fixed and other people involved are alive and can react to the story.

Also, for more recent migration stories, it seems more difficult to find interesting objects. We live in a time where we communicate more digitally (less letters and postcards), and objects are seen as less valuable, thus more easily thrown away, while older objects have an atmosphere of nostalgia and preciousness and the participants feel more of an "urge" to show them.

As collection builders, we try to look into the future and see which objects of today will become more "precious" in decades and centuries to come.

Narratives change throughout time, and are layered by others

An oral history interview is only a moment's reflection of how a participant looks at what happened at that exact moment. One participant talked about how difficult his years as a love migrant in Belgium had been. He used the metaphor of a water tap that kept on dripping; although the water drops are light, in the end they leave a "scar" over a stone sink. One year later, he revisited the museum and told us that he was sorry for presenting such a negative view on his story because once he had found work his perspective had completely changed.

On a different day, a daughter of an interviewee told us that if we would have done the interview with her mother earlier, she would have given a brighter and happier reflection on her life in Belgium. Now, the lady explicitly told us that she never felt at home in the country. Her daughter said it was an exaggeration caused by her advancing age.



Destination Sweetheart
exhibition. © Ans Brys



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Participants who shared their story, visit during the opening of *Destination Sweetheart* exhibition. © Samuel Pinillos Garcia

Although we have felt the need, we have not yet found a framework to include these time-sensitive and context-sensitive changes and impacts.

Balancing between an in-depth interview technique versus protecting privacy

To create the context for a personal and touching interview, it is necessary to make people feel comfortable. It is a process of trust to convince them that their story matters: interviewer and interviewee get to know each other better. Interview strategies make people “forget the microphone” but, at the same time, they need to be conscious that the interview will become public. We give participants control on when the interview will become public and the possibility to restrict the public use. If needed, participants can withdraw passages from the interview or the entire interview from the collection at any point in the future.

It is key to have a clear view of what the museum might want to do with the interviews once they are part of the collection. Therefore, participants can decide more clearly what they want to share. It has to be an honest exchange between museum and participant.

Digital assets as an alternative to physical objects

Inherited, treasured objects play a very important role in most families. They relate directly to a different time, they were once touched by loved ones who are now deceased, therefore it is very difficult to part with them. Likewise, objects that are still used in households or daily lives are not easily given away.

At the same time, in the museum context, these objects act as necessary mediators or bridges to the visitor, they make stories come alive and tangible. Temporary loans for exhibitions are often not a problem. But how do we manage this in the future? Do we need to contact the family again, every time a demand of a researcher or museum is posed? Can pictures of objects also act as museum pieces?

Individual versus collective methodologies

Most of the time, we chose to collect on an individual basis. Migration experiences are always unique. Labelling people as part of a certain community is a very realistic pitfall to end up in a “checklist system” whereby you want to “grasp” communities, which is never fully possible. Nobody can be a representative of a community.

But some groups are less easily convinced that their experiences have a place in a museum. One of our colleagues who speaks Moroccan Arabic gathered ten Moroccan women who had come to Belgium, following their husbands who were guest workers. We visited exhibitions and organised heritage activities with them as a group. The women supported each other in sharing their stories and the museum became a comfortable space for them. Afterwards, individual interviews were conducted with those of the women who wanted to tell their stories for the exhibition and collection.

A set of stories builds a relationship with other stories. Also, when people share, not only with an interviewer but with others who went through a similar experience, they may become more aware of their role as heritage formers, and, furthermore, they can reinforce that role for each other. This participation may only enrich the collection output. We would like to further look into methodologies that acknowledge the collective aspects of heritage creation and valuation, in regard to everyone’s individual, unique and multi-layered identity. The trajectory with the Moroccan women was fruitful, but we need to keep in mind the specific features



of this group: as pensioners they had time available, they spoke the same language and had a shared past. Can we bring together individuals with no shared past in the strict sense and still make them reinforce each other? Or could there be other ways to invest in the individual trajectories to raise awareness?

The future

To further build on these experiences, the Red Star Line Museum will keep on experimenting on collecting personal migration heritage. We are determined to do so with an open view and we remain available to be contacted and to share in this process.

BIOGRAPHY

Lien Vloeberghs (1988) has worked in the Red Star Line Museum between 2012 and 2021, as a historian, interviewer, networker and curator. She holds master degrees in History (University of Antwerp), and Conflict and Development Studies (University of Ghent).



MUSEUM EDUCATION AS AN ELEMENT OF URBAN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT: THE EXAMPLE OF THE MUSEUM OF KRAKOW

ABSTRACT

When we speak of urban and spatial heritage management, we foremostly speak of activities undertaken to protect and preserve this specific type of heritage in the best possible condition. However, the values it carries should have not only historical but contemporary relevance as well. This paper is based on the thesis that conservation measures alone are not sufficient means of protection, and that education and the resulting increase in awareness are key to the increase of public responsibility in the protection of a cultural landscape. Such must also involve the development of a fruitful debate on the harmonious combination between preserving the historical fabric while ascribing valuable features and contemporary functions thereto. City museums are entities that can play an important role in building awareness of values related to an urban setting. In this paper, by analysing the offer of the Museum of Krakow, I will try to answer the questions: to what extent does it meet the demand for education in the context of urban heritage, and how should it be developed in the future to fulfil this task even better?

Key words: Urbanism, heritage, Krakow, museum, museum education, spatial



Heritage protection

The primary goal of material cultural heritage management lies in its protection. The Act on Monument Protection and Care imposes on state authorities the obligations primarily based on the creation of legal regulations and financing activities aimed at permanent preservation of the buildings, including theft prevention. When it comes to the owner of the monument, on his list of duties, last in order, there is the responsibility to create the suitable conditions for “popularising and disseminating the awareness of the monument and its importance in terms of history and culture.”¹ Meanwhile, in the strategic thinking envisaging the protection of material heritage, the development of awareness through education should be an issue of equal importance in the legislative and conservation fields, and it should be carried out in cooperation between the owners of the buildings and the state institutions of scientific and cultural character, including museums.

From the perspective of museum education on urban heritage, the paradigm of building knowledge should serve the paradigm of building awareness of the need to protect historical settings and to draw inspiration from them for the debate on the shape of contemporary cities. Jacek Purchla believes that the socialisation of the historic preservation process is a remedy for the ineffectiveness of the state system, when he writes: “Local government and civil society are a necessary condition for the creation of a modern system of cultural heritage protection in Poland. To achieve these goals, it is necessary for the State to undertake a strategy of development of social capital for cultural heritage.”² Educational programmes implemented in museums may prove to be an important element in building this capital. Through the rise of social awareness of local heritage resources and their value one contributes to the increase of the grassroots care for local monuments. This is particularly important in the case of spatial setting, because, while a single monument may be properly maintained and used by its responsible owner, the maintenance of a larger space requires the involvement of the local government and the local community. The effect of generating this widespread care is the slowdown of the degradation of historical areas during their daily use, and thereby reducing the expenditures required for maintenance and repair. Finally, a community with a developed sensitivity to the value of cultural landscape is able to react faster than the state conservation services to cases of destruction, improper adaptation or exploitation of the monument or the entire space.

However, improving awareness of the value of local heritage, including urban heritage, is not only about the wellbeing of the sites themselves. According to Gregory Ashworth: “Heritage can be seen as a process by which objects, events, places, activities and figures from the past are transformed into experiences lived here and now. It also represents the result of activities, a state consciously created in response to current political, social or economic needs.”³ Participation in cultural heritage has a multi-track impact on enhancing the quality of life. We will only focus on those directly related to urban heritage. Awareness of the historical values of the environment in which we live has a significant impact on the sense of

¹ Dz.U. 2018 poz. 2067, Obwieszczenie Marszałka Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 3 października 2018 r. w sprawie ogłoszenia jednolitego tekstu ustawy o ochronie zabytków i opiece nad zabytkami (Polish act on the protection of monuments and the care of monuments), 3.

² Purchla, J. (2014). Dziedzictwo kulturowe, a kapitał społeczny. In: *Dlaczego i jak w nowoczesny sposób chronić dziedzictwo kulturowe*. Warszawa. 26.

³ Ashworth, G. (2015), *Planowanie dziedzictwa*. Kraków. 22.



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connection with a place.⁴ This translates into building identity, pride in one's place of residence, and, ultimately, individual and collective positive self-esteem.⁵ Caring for material heritage also has positive effects on the environment. Often, from the economic point of view, it would be cheaper to demolish a historic building and erect a new one. However, this solution would squander many non-renewable resources and consume a significant amount of energy.⁶ Finally, the knowledge of historical urban planning, its advantages and disadvantages, allows us to evaluate the concepts proposed today. Intuitively, we do not always choose the solutions that are most beneficial to our quality of life. Increased sensitivity in the field of urban planning may contribute to a greater emphasis on the quality of spaces chosen for everyday life and thus put pressure on city developers and city authorities in order to plan and design more carefully.

While the sense of the need to protect historic buildings, especially the most popular ones, is quite strong, the awareness of the need to preserve spatial arrangements as cultural landscapes is less so. Likewise, historical preservation at its dawn focused on individual buildings, and this was a period of unprecedented devastation of the urban landscape associated with industrialisation.⁷ The same path taken by professional conservation must now be followed by public awareness, and museum education may prove particularly helpful here. As Wiesław Gruszkowski wrote: "Urban planning is the art of organising the space of cities to meet human needs. It is politics in the sense of purposeful action towards desired transformations. It is also a science of the method of making those transformations in the most rational way".⁸ In order to understand the influence of the urban environment in our lives and in the lives of previous generations, education about architecture should be supported by a better understanding of urban planning. Krakow has particular arguments to be a precursor here. After all, in 1978, no specific building was added to the UNESCO list, but the entire and dense area of the historical centre. When we address the management of this space, the attention is focused on investments of a conservational character, and, at the same time, an approach noting the role of knowledge of the value of the urban layout is also visible. An example of this can be found in the creation of the tourist route *Tracing the European identity of Krakow* in the main square's undergrounds, or in the implementation of numerous events promoting heritage in urban interiors.⁹

The mission of the Museum of Krakow is as stated: "We describe, document and tell Krakow. We listen to the city..."¹⁰ It would be a breakneck task to attempt to fulfil it without presenting the specific scene on which the events take place, which has been shaped by urban processes. With all the richness of the Museum of Krakow's educational programme, the most stable, therefore the most effective element is the permanent offer of classes, especially those addressed to schools and preschools. Due to the fact that space (in this case urban space) and time are the basic criteria within which we locate events, issues related to urban planning permeate almost all classes conducted by the Museum. There are, however, some in which these issues play a key role. The multi-branch structure of the Museum encourages looking at the city from various perspectives. However, it also carries

⁴ Senetra – Szeliga, J., Jagodzińska, K. (2017). Społeczno - ekonomiczny wpływ dziedzictwa kulturowego. Aspekty teoretyczne. In: *Potencjał dziedzictwa. Społeczno - gospodarcze przykłady z Europy Środkowej*. Kraków. 63.

⁵ Murzyn-Kupisz, M., *Dziedzictwo kulturowe, a rozwój lokalny*. Kraków. 127.

⁶ Senetra – Szeliga, J., Jagodzińska, K. (2017). 64

⁷ Tomaszewski, A. (2012). *Ku nowej filozofii dziedzictwa*. Kraków. 84.

⁸ Gruszkowski, W. (1989). *Historia urbanistyki w zarysie*. Gdańsk. 6.

⁹ Bujakowski, K., Rojkowska – Tasak, H. (2011). Zarządzanie w obszarze światowego dziedzictwa w Krakowie. In: *Zarządzanie miejscami wpisanymi na Listę Światowego Dziedzictwa UNESCO w Polsce i w Norwegii*. Kraków. 245-248.

¹⁰ *Strategia rozwoju Muzeum Historycznego Miasta Krakowa 2017-2027* (Development strategy of the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow 2017-2027). 6.

the risk of losing the cohesion of the message and thus the difficulty in reaching the public with information about the offer. Nevertheless, this is eliminated thanks to the coordination of activities by the Education Department.

Krzysztofor Palace

Until 2020, the widest offer referring to urban heritage was held by the Museum's Krzysztofor Palace branch, with the exhibition *Cybertecture. Krakow - time and space*. Using mock-ups, digital visualisations, films and a modest number of exhibits, on a relatively small area, the spatial development of Krakow from the pre-localisation period to the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was presented. Due to the value of the material on display, part of it has been moved to the Town Hall Tower. At the new, larger permanent exhibition *Kraków od początku, bez końca* (*Krakow from the beginning, without an end*), urban themes are also strongly present. However, unlike the previous exhibition, they are not shown as independent phenomena but rather in the context of the inhabitants' everyday lives.

Particular attention has been given to the street as a space of communication, a place where the inhabitants meet, where commerce, celebrations and symbolic values take place. Some elements of the educational offer prepared for the earlier exhibition will be retained. The workshops *Ordinary, extraordinary views of Krakow - how Old Krakow looked like* are addressed not only to elementary school classes, but to the oldest preschool groups as well. They focus on the first image of Krakow placed in Hartmann Schedel's *Liber Chronicarum*. During the classes, the children reference the project with activities familiar to them, by arranging the above-mentioned image from large format puzzles, and then, together with their teacher, note down and draw the characteristic urban landmarks on their own copies, reflecting, also with their teacher, on their history. During these activities, they also find buildings that no longer exist or have been rebuilt, thus becoming aware of the changes that are taking place in the architectural fabric of the city.

Similar goals are pursued by the workshop *We build the city - architectural workshops*, addressed to children and youngsters from the 4th grade of elementary school. Likewise, the main topic here is medieval Krakow. However, in addition to a more detailed discussion of the characteristic urban elements in the form of the market square and the street grid, the systemic conditions of the city's development related to its incorporation under Magdeburg Law are presented. The participants' attention is drawn to the durability of the urban layout of the Old Town with simultaneous changes - particularly functional changes - of individual elements. More possibilities of spatial imagination and manual skills of the participants are used in the recapitulation at the end of the classes, when children in groups draw or make a model of the city, taking into account the most important elements discussed. In this example, we can mention the interdisciplinary approach. For several months now, the workshops have made extensive use of recycled waste rather than specially purchased art materials, thus bringing into focus the issue of the sustainable city. However, especially in the case of high schools, at the workshops, participants identify their favourite places in the city and those that they consider in need of intervention. They recognise the features that determined such a distinction and together they propose solutions, learning about the process leading to their implementation, such as the civic budget, petitions, contacting councillors or demonstrations.



Nowa Huta

The Museum of Nowa Huta is another branch with a strong urban planning theme in its permanent educational offer. Nowa Huta is an industrial district of Krakow, created in the surroundings of a metalwork's conglomerate, constructed after World War II by the communist government. Just as in Krzysztofor, the issues of interest are presented even to older groups of preschools and elementary school pupils as part of the *Build Nowa Huta with us* classes. During the workshops, participants make a model of the city and, through the process, they also develop the ability to work in groups and how to appropriately share tasks. Young people from the fourth grade of elementary school not only learn the basic elements of Nowa Huta's urban plan, but they also reflect on the social groups which co-created the district, during the classes entitled *How an ideal city was built, or Nowa Huta's architecture and urban planning*. The possibility of experiencing real buildings, streets and other elements of the urban layout is one of the most effective methods of consolidating the awareness of the urban values of the surroundings. Among the walks offered by the Museum of Nowa Huta, the *History of Nowa Huta immortalised in architecture* is particularly important for the theme. The walks follow three different routes, the content of which refers, among other things, to architectural styles, unrealised elements of the urban plan or factors concerning the location and shape of the district accompanying the steelworks.

Museum of Podgórze

Similar in nature to the *We Build the City...* workshop at the Krzysztofor Palace and the *Build Nowa Huta with Us* workshop is the *Operation CITY* class, held at the Museum of Podgórze, during which participants also complete an urban design project. In this case, older preschool children and elementary school students go back to the late-18th and early-19th centuries, to learn about the factors that determined the location and the shape of the city on the right bank of the Vistula River (an independent municipality until 1915). The classes *Heritage - an idea for the future* were prepared for young people from the fourth grade of elementary school. The emphasis here was not strictly on urban planning, but rather on the attachment to "small fatherland" as part of raising awareness, which, in turn, can contribute to a greater involvement in shaping one's environment.

Apart from telling the story of the fate and attitudes of the people of Krakow during the German occupation, the Schindler Factory branch runs a set of classes entitled *The Architecture of Krakow in the Time of Occupation and Symbols of Totalitarianism*. Besides raising awareness of the fact that urban planning may be a part of a totalitarian state policy, the value of the classes lies in the comparison between Krakow's architecture from the interwar period, the years of occupation and contemporary architecture.

Looking at the means employed for the realisation of activities and the permanent offer made available by the particular branches, one can notice an effort to make them more varied, attractive and adjusted to different age groups. Museum education is one of the most dynamically developing areas of museum work.¹¹ It can also be seen just by looking at the permanent offer of the Museum of Krakow related to urban and spatial heritage. And this is achieved by spreading knowledge about it in accordance to the concept laid in its strategy, which states that the institution "is moving away from the role of the Museum as a passive storyteller to that of an active participant in the ongoing history".¹²

¹¹ Kacprzak, D., Milewska, K. (2015). Edukacja w muzeum wielodziałowym i wielodyscyplinarnym. In: *ABC edukacji w muzeum. Muzea sztuki współczesnej, rezydencjonalne, wieloodziałowe i interdyscyplinarne*. Warszawa. 64.

¹² *Strategia rozwoju Muzeum Historycznego Miasta Krakowa 2017-2027*. 3.



Cracovia 3D

One of the most important activities of the Museum of Krakow aimed at disseminating knowledge on historical urban changes was the *Cracovia 3D* scientific project carried out in 2004.¹³ It resulted in the digital reconstructions of the buildings of Krakow, Kazimierz and Kleparz in the mid-17th century, the transformation of the space of the main market square from the 11th to the 18th century and the inclusion of selected objects. The results of the work were presented in the form of a temporary exhibition and publications are still being used in activities conducted by the Museum. One of the most important effects of the project has been the presentation of *Cracovia 3D* at numerous temporary exhibitions abroad, which has contributed to an increased awareness of the medieval and modern urban legacy of Krakow.”

The dissemination activities presented above should be considered as a method for optimal use of human, physical and information resources. Particularly valuable material resources of the institution, especially in the context of urban issues, are the historical buildings in which the various Museum's branches are located. In particular, the Rynek Underground, the Town Hall Tower and the Krzysztofory Palace located at the main square, at the heart of the medieval town, as well as the Światowid cinema in the urban setting of Nowa Huta.

If we want museum education to become an important element of urban heritage management, we have to assume that building knowledge in the audience is only the first stage of activities. It should result in an increase in sensitivity, consolidation of identity based on taking pride in one's place of residence, and, consequently, an increase in social participation regarding the preservation of the cultural landscape. In order to make this possible, the Museum of Krakow should reconstruct and expand its current, already extensive and valuable offer. Firmly grounded in its past, the bridges between it and the present should be emphasised even more strongly, as this will help raise awareness of the enduring values of urban planning and, consequently, of the need to protect them. The knowledge of positive, proven patterns from the past and elements that improve the quality of life will give the audience the opportunity to evaluate and debate the currently proposed spatial changes.

In the case of young people at school, the implementation of the above-mentioned goals would be possible thanks to a stronger reliance on the themes which, in the main programme of studies, are placed within the subjects of nature and geography. The presence of elements concerning urban planning in the main programme of studies is dimmer than it could be wished for. Therefore, there is a need to supplement it with, for example, museum education. However, for teachers to decide to use it, they should see the connection with the programme they are implementing. It is up to the cultural institution as a service provider to make the teacher aware of the above-mentioned connections and make the offer of the museum attractive from his/her perspective. Then it is necessary to make the classes attractive in order to raise a positive motivation in the students and a belief in the value of the presented topic.

The Museum of Krakow carries out participatory activities, an example of which is a series of debates entitled *Krakow Colloquium*, where issues concerning the urban space are discussed. The *DNA of Krakow* networking meetings programme is currently being launched, and, in its framework, city activists and representatives



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¹³ Marek, M. (2011). *Cracovia 3D. Rekonstrukcje cyfrowe historycznej zabudowy Krakowa*. Kraków. 9.

of non-governmental organisations operating in Krakow are invited to participate. The aim of these meetings is to confront ideas and to motivate them into taking joint action in the future, which, thanks to the synergy effect, may become even more effective. One of the six thematic blocks is devoted to urban planning, but the subject is also present in others, especially in the one dedicated to green spaces. According to the strategic documents of both the city and the institution itself, the decentralisation and the spreading out of activities should be pursued. This is of particular importance in the case of the discussed issue. The general awareness of the value of spaces such as the Old Town or Kazimierz is high, and the situation is not bad in those parts of the city whose residents have a strong local identity, such as Podgórze and Nowa Huta. The areas that require the most work are the districts which residents identify themselves the least with, and these are usually places bearing the greatest spatial chaos. One of the three pillars of the *Programme for the development of culture in Krakow* is the stimulation of cooperation between cultural entities, namely, the networking of their activities.¹⁴ In the case of urban heritage education carried out by the Museum of Krakow, it would be natural to further develop cooperation with existing organisations operating in particular districts and professional associations such as the Association of Polish Architects.

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¹⁴ *Program rozwoju kultury w Krakowie do roku 2030* (Programme of the Development of Culture of Krakow until 2030; Annex to the Resolution Nr LXXIX/1933/17 of the Krakow Municipal Council from 5 June 2017, 118).



BIOGRAPHY

Kamil Stasiak works at the Krzysztofory Palace branch of Museum of Krakow. He is a graduate of History at the Pedagogical University in Krakow, and postgraduate of Culture Management at the Jagiellonian University.



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MARCO EDOARDO
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BRIATORE AND
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MILAN: 1 CITY, 20 MUSEUMS, 4 DISTRICTS, A PLURAL VISION FOR CIVIC MUSEUMS

ABSTRACT

Civic museums belong to the city: collections emerge from citizens' donations or the collection of local artefacts. Milan's civic museums first appeared over 150 years ago and they express the city's past and present. In their activity, we can see what cultural future perspectives look like. The citizens themselves are the purpose of the narration. Milan is a big city and the museum district project is the tool for reaching out to the various segments of Milan's public. The Milan City Council is aware that it has to take upon itself the responsibility of reaching out to the public, which is not a monolithic entity. To understand the history, the spirit and the evolution of Milan over time, we can resort to museums, and they can also be a tool for the social inclusion of all types of public and for creating new relationships with the territory. Therefore, museums belong to all citizens and their diverse needs, be it as a group or as individuals. In this framework, the project *District X* was developed.

Key words: Milan, civic museums, *District X*, social inclusion, cultural hub



Introduction

The city of Milan holds a very complex and articulated museum system. The municipality directly manages a network of nearly twenty civic museums with collections under different themes.

The city is changing rapidly and the museum system wants to keep up with Milan's international objectives; in 2019, the Culture Department started a research of the concept of "museum district" at an international level for a possible improvement of the public offer of the museums, which has led to the drafting of a strategic plan in October of 2020.

A museum district is an organisational model in which different subjects participate and, which is capable of improving the exhibition offer in a particular territorial area.

The civic institutions are managed by four different departments and are divided by thematic areas. This type of organisation does not take into account the distribution of museums in the city at a territorial level and the possible interactions between the various cultural chains.

Thinking from a territorial organisation point of view, we identify four districts:

The first of these is located in the surroundings of the Sempione Park, which shares the immediate vicinity with civic-owned entities, such as the Castello Sforzesco, the Civic Archaeological Museum, the Civic Aquarium; other institutions, namely the Triennale Foundation and Palazzo Litta; historical monuments: the Arco della Pace and the Civic Arena, as well as other places of entertainment and culture – the Strehler and the Dal Verme theatres and Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper*.

The second district, the area of the Giardini Pubblici, is a real "museum garden"; here we find the Pavilion of Contemporary Art and the Gallery of Modern Art on one side, to which Natural History Museum and the Planetarium are added on the other side. All these institutions belong to the civic museums; Palazzo Dugnani follows along the third side, while on the fourth there is the Hotel Diurno, which will undergo restoration, and where MEET, the first centre for digital culture, was recently founded. A new private museum dedicated to the Etruscan civilisation will open at Corso Venezia. Not far from the gardens, there is also another civic museum, the Boschi di Stefano House Museum. The cultural offer is enriched by the presence of other institutions, such as the nearby Conservatory or the State Archives, just to mention the main ones.

The third district lies around Piazza del Duomo: the civic institutions are the Palazzo Reale, a historical space for temporary exhibitions, and the Museo del Novecento; in the immediate vicinity there are also the Museum of the Risorgimento and the Museum of Costume Fashion and Design. Close by, there are several cultural institutions: the Brera Art Gallery, the Poldi Pezzoli Museum, the Bagatti Valsecchi Museum, the Gallerie d'Italia, the Ambrosiana Art Gallery.

The fourth district is the old industrial area of Ansaldo: here, in 2014, the MUDEC, the Museum of Cultures, was inaugurated.

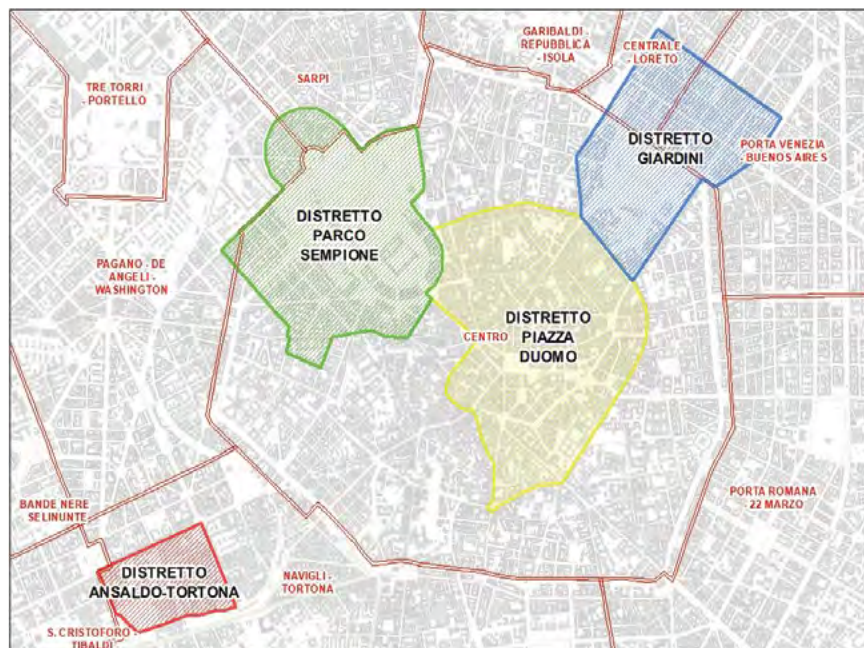
A strategic plan for the redesign of the city's museum offer

In order to improve the public cultural offer, Milan looked at the most interesting international experiences and drafted a strategic plan. This is how the project 1



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Map of museum districts.
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city, 20 museums, 4 districts came into being. The project designs four museum districts by taking into account their geographical and spatial identity. These locations became the cement of a network connecting the four city poles and the other actors of the cultural offer, multiplying the impact of the twenty civic museums.

The final draft of the Strategic Plan, stating the strategic and operational guidelines for the redesign of the city's museum offer, followed the preliminary analysis.

The Strategic Plan consists of three sections:

- the first section - ANALYSIS: concerns the analysis of the evidence emerging from: the activities of the civic museums involved, from the recognition of territorial context, from external stakeholders' inputs and the international benchmarking.
- the second section - PLANNING: the document sets out the results of the design phase, identifying the strategic axes, objectives and actions for the implementation of the plan;
- the third section - MONITORING: the methodology for monitoring and evaluating the reorganisation process is presented in the last section of the Strategic Plan.

Project objectives

The project aims to make the civic museum system more efficient towards the exterior thanks to a cultural offer of the city that also integrates the non-civic cultural institutions present in the districts.

The integrated management of cultural policies will allow to more effectively connect them to the urban, economic and social development strategies of the respective territories, becoming the drive of a harmonious growth for each territorial area.

District X

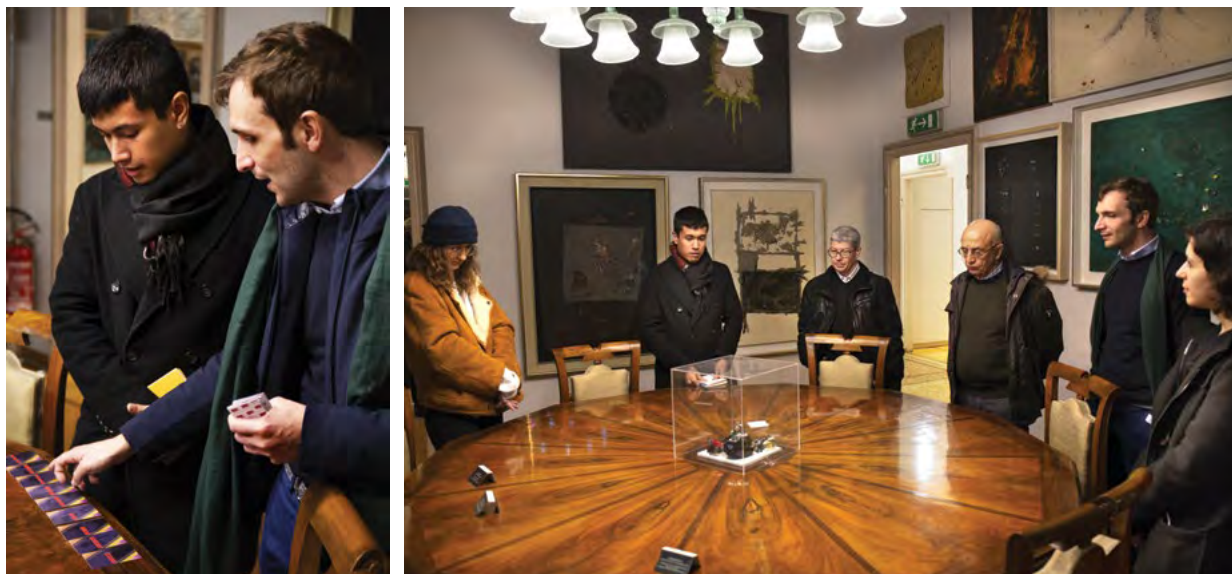
The connections between the other cultural infrastructures (libraries, event venues, cultural associations) aim at making the districts the core of the city services. In this framework, *District X* was developed. *District X* envisages the adoption of diverse contemporary approaches, which, in turn, bestow on museums the responsibility of reaching out to different communities.

The *District X* is a participatory project and also part of the reorganisation of the Milanese museum system, responding to the needs of contemporary society through rethinking the role of museums. Museums have a duty to engage communities and individuals in order to understand their needs.

The first edition was held in 2020 through the action *Distretto X: Sguardi Plurali sui Musei*. The goal of this project was to involve the LGBTQI+ community in the identity creation of the Giardini Pubblici cultural district. Several meetings and workshops were held at the neighbourhood museums. They have allowed the strengthening of co-design through narrative activities and have enhanced the values of the Milanese civic museums as a creative drive. More than twenty local



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LGBTQI+ associations joined the project and all contributions were collected in a catalogue. The action was an occasion for reflecting on gender identity by means of an artistic narration mediated through emotional cards.

A District X workshop.
© Samuele Briatore

The second edition took place by means of the action *Distretto X: Domani Ti Scrivo*, which sought to raise territorial awareness with the involvement of two different generations, brought together in a path of personal sharing and narration. Having the shared reflection on a work of art from the park's different civic museums as the starting point, it was possible to involve other inhabitants of the area and make the district the beating heart of interpersonal and intergenerational relationships. This project looks into the creative and narrative aspects of letters. Through the exchange of letters, we wanted to establish a relationship between two people of different generations by reflecting on a work of art from the collection of the neighbourhood museums. Museums and collections do serve as an inspiring drive for intergenerational knowledge.

Meeting contemporary demands

The *District X* actions aim at meeting contemporary demands which museums are accountable for, whether in regard of society or individuals: to bring various communities and citizenship targets together.

Therefore, the project aims to involve and listen to active citizens in the creation of the cultural districts, to understand their creative and expressive potential and deepen the knowledge of their needs.

Thanks to opportunities for meeting / listening, we could improve involvement, planning activities and visits, the co-conception and co-planning of educational and development activities, as creative forces of civic museums.

The potential of storytelling and narration was used in projects such as *District X*, thanks to the generosity of the participants and the co-planning of activities and, especially, to their ability of adapting to the difficulties that arose along the way. Thus, *District X* was able to highlight how gender identity is important for self-representation and the representation of reality that surrounds us, especially in terms of artistic expression, and how sexuality is an identity element around which a community is built.



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The power of narration has not put into place an exclusionary or “ghettoising” action. Conversely, it has multiplied readings, resulting in an inclusive path focused on communicating to the other rather than to oneself about one’s own experience within the cultural institutions of the district. They remain conducive to the emergence of a further creative potential that can offer new keys to understanding museums, where a new narrative may provide a novel look to all participants.

BIOGRAPHIES

Marco Edoardo Minoja is a cultural manager with over 10 years of management experience in public administration. Since 2018, he directs the Culture Sector of the Milan City Council, which all city’s culture departments refer to, including the 20 museums.

He previously ran the regional offices of the Ministry of Culture in Lombardy and in Sardinia, coordinating territorial offices, museum networks, autonomous museums, national archives and libraries.

He graduated and specialised in archaeology at the University of Milan. Between 2009 and 2015 he directed various archaeological territorial offices of the Ministry of Culture.

Before joining the Ministry of Culture, he worked for various local administrations as a museum curator and as an independent professional. His bibliography counts around 100 entries, including monographic studies, curatorship, catalogues of exhibitions, articles in collective works and specialised reviews.

Samuele Briatore holds a PhD in music and performative arts. He is a researcher at the Scuola del Patrimonio (School of Cultural Heritage), currently involved in the action *District X* of the Culture Department of Milan City Council.

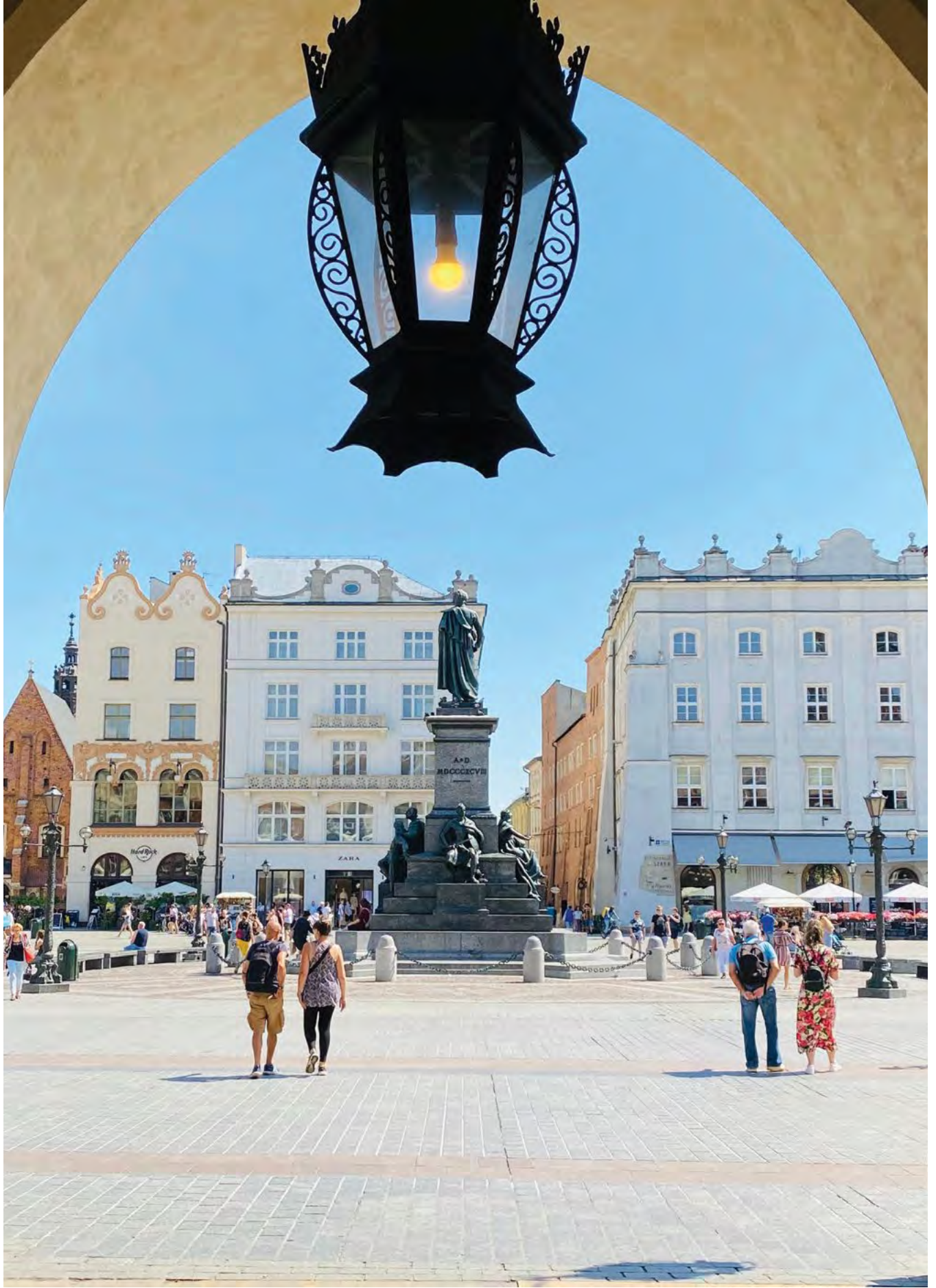
He collaborated with Malta University, the European University of Rome, the Research LAB of Sapienza, Mimar Sinan University of Istanbul, and he was awarded a research grant at the Yildiz Technical University.

Antonella Andreotti works in managing public cultural services. For the last three years, she has collaborated with Marco Edoardo Minoja, Director of Culture at Milan City Council, in projects relating to culture heritage promotion and management.

She participated in the project of Milan’s museums districts and in the first and second edition of *District X*. She is currently working on the planning of the third edition.



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TRACING SMALL TOWN MEMORY IN PASOLINI'S HERITAGE DOCUMENTARIES. TOWARDS A BURGEONING "CITY MUSEUM" AT ORTE (ITALY)

ABSTRACT

Cultural landscapes like those of Italy's hill towns beckon us to reconsider the importance of these urban enclaves and their natural settings. This paper reflects on the right to a small town, namely of Orte, a historically disempowered town located 70 kilometres upstream from Rome. While many towns in Italy struggle to maintain their historical centres and aging museums, city museums may provide important models and solutions to that effect.

An interdisciplinary team has turned to one of Italy's most influential contemporary artists for inspiration, Pier Paolo Pasolini, who featured Orte in two heritage documentaries: *The Walls of Sana* (1971) and *Pasolini and the form of the city* (1974). Through his lens, this cityscape and the anthropic landscape recount the stories of nameless people, a history left untold by local monuments. His films remind us why it is vital to preserve ancient urban fabrics, to organise life around a community and to plan sustainable cities.

In partnership with the Tuscia University and the local diocese, Orte's municipality is exploring strategies to unite its archaeological and diocesan collections in a new city museum. Embracing Pasolini's appeal, Orte's burgeoning cultural hub aspires to narrate local by means of a participative model, which aims to promote the conservation of natural and cultural heritage through a contemporary lens.

Key words: City museums, Pier Paolo Pasolini, sustainable lifestyles, Italian hill towns, merging collections



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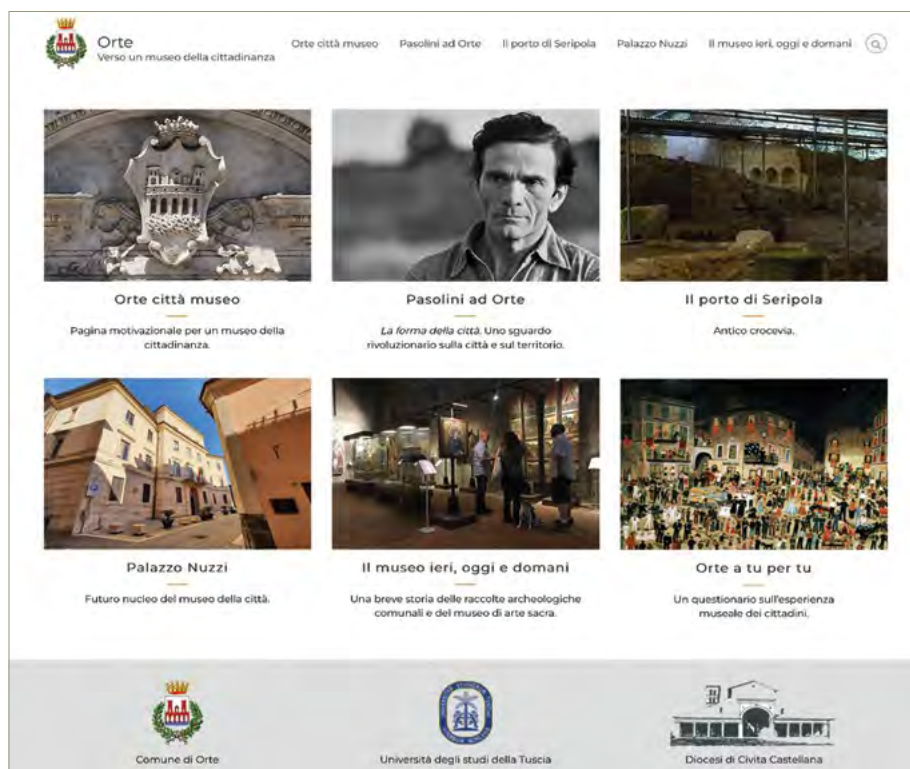
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* In June 2018, the team was managed by Joan Roca and Carmen Cazalla and also formed by Anna Butí, Marta Delclòs, Natàlia Hervàs, Aina Mercader, Sònia Pons and Paula Ustarroz.

The right to the small town

This paper seeks to ignite a reflection on a radically local scale. It does not discuss the right to the city, but rather the right to a small town, namely of Orte, a hill town on the River Tiber, located 70 kilometres upstream from Rome, in a very green part of Italy. At first glance, this *cittadina* may look like much of the capital's hinterlands. For most commuters and travellers, Orte is synonymous with its train station or highway exit. For the artsy types, on the other hand, this town has become a *topos* for its idyllic but threatened equilibrium between town and countryside, thanks to two documentaries by Pier Paolo Pasolini: *The Walls of Sana* (1971)¹ and *Pasolini... and the Form of the City* (1974).² In a collaboration with the Italian television, the filmmaker brought the attention to a small town, spurring us to reevaluate traditional architecture, farming landscapes and local heritage. In 2021, the town's Municipality, Tuscia University and the local diocese agreed to begin laying the foundations for a city museum at Orte; the project draws direct inspiration from Pasolini's appeal to recognise "the revolutionary and scandalous force of the past", preserve the microdiversity of cultural landscapes, and view small towns with a renewed awareness of their current relevance.

Historically, Italian small towns have been systematically disempowered by larger, neighbouring centres.³ The Papal State subjected Orte to a hegemonic power play. With the Unification of Italy, the dynamic between this centre and its periphery



Opening page of Orte
Città Museo
(www.ortecittamuseo.it).
© Orte Città Museo



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was further amplified, and globalised economic models exacerbated such trends. We now stand at a watershed moment. Previously disregarded places now offer viable alternatives to big city life as we rethink urban living and root ourselves in "new", more sustainable lifestyles.

¹ *Le mura di Sana* (Italy, 1971, 00:12:48) is a short film produced and filmed by Pasolini. Its first showing was on 16 February 1971 as part of the TV program *Boomerang. Ricerca in due sere* on Italian national television (RAI) (<http://www.teche.rai.it/2015/01/le-mura-di-sana/>).

² *Pasolini e "la forma della città"* (Italy, 1974, 00:15:30) is a short film produced by Anna Zanoli and filmed by Paolo Brunatto. It first aired on Italian national television as part of the TV program *io e...* on 7 February 1974. (<http://www.teche.rai.it/2015/01/pasolini-e-la-forma-della-citta-1974/>)

³ Castelnovo, E., & Ginzburg, C. (2019). *Centro e periferia nella storia dell'arte italiana*. Officina libraria.



Selected film stills from
*Pasolini e la forma della
città*. © RAI, 1974

Cultural landscapes like Orte's beckon us to reconsider the values embodied by these urban enclaves and their natural settings. In May 2021, for example, a *New York Times* headline blazoned "House Hunters are Leaving Cities and Builders Can't Keep up", suggesting that people are craving for alternatives to costly cities.⁴ Younger generations in this province (Viterbo) are choosing to return to their place of origin and non-natives are taking greater interest in Italian hill towns. Many have preserved their distinct identities and urban plans cater to a sense of community. While only a minority of people in Orte earn their living from agriculture, the landscape is still dominated by fields, the river valley, forests and hills. Located on the highway serving cities like Naples, Rome, Florence and Milan, Orte acts as a transportation hub, a function reflected in the local archaeological records and recalled in the bridge features in the city's coat of arms. Moreover, local unemployment may find solace in remote work, an increasingly viable form of livelihood.

Small towns have a right to emerge from the shadows of major cities and narrate their own stories. It is time to recognise the dignity of hill towns and, thus, reevaluate local museums and their historical narratives, accounts that tend to oscillate between heroic and defeatist tales. Italy's *borghi* (or small towns) have experienced centuries of "brain drain", but today they reveal their overlooked potential as spaces designed by and for communities. Heeding to his radical call to tradition, Pasolini's film work has spurred researchers and authorities at Orte to reflect on museum management with the aspiration of recounting this hill town through a plurality of strategies and voices.

Pasolini at Orte

Pier Paolo Pasolini (born in Bologna in 1922, murdered in Rome in 1975) was one of Italy's most famous and controversial multimedia artists: poet, filmmaker, novelist, journalist, visual artist, editor and activist. From 1950 through the mid-1960s, Pasolini found asylum and inspiration in Rome, especially in its disenfranchised neighbourhoods and communities. In the last ten years of his life, however, his attitude towards the capital conveyed a feeling of alienation and disenchantment. Land speculation had distorted and gentrified its picturesque neighbourhoods and their inhabitants. At the apex of his career, Pasolini began to retreat to the countryside near Orte, where he worked from a refurbished medieval castle, which became his refuge and lay hermitage.

Pasolini's *Form of the City* encourages us to look at Orte through a radically new lens.⁵ In this "film-essay", the artist commented on the city and its landscape as an indissoluble whole.⁶

The concept of a city's form is an urban profile which emerges against its cultural landscape. To know a city, locals and passers-by must engage with its form, or the sum of its heritage, be it anonymous / authored, monumental / mundane, cultural / natural. This whole reflects a city's story, crafted by "an infinite number of nameless men who laboured across eras, which bore the most extreme, most absolute fruits in the form of authored artworks... no one realises that that which needs to be defended is this very anonymity, this anonymous past, this nameless past, the people's past".⁷

⁴ Dougherty, C., & Casselman, B. (2021, May 21). House Hunters are Leaving Cities and Builders Can't Keep up. *The New York Times*. [online] Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/29/business/economy/new-home-building-suburbs.html>

⁵ Zanolli, A. (2011). "io e... Pasolini e "La forma della città": memoria e ricerca intorno a una trasmissione televisiva, *Paragone* 731, LXII. 8–44 (fig. 5–13).

⁶ Chiesi, R. (2003). Lo Sguardo di Pasolini. *La forma della città*, un film di Pier Paolo Pasolini e Paolo Brunatto. *Parol on Line*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.parol.it/articles/pasolini.htm>

⁷ "...una infinità di uomini senza nome, che però hanno lavorato all'interno di un'epoca che poi ha prodotto i frutti più estremi, più assoluti, nelle opere d'arte d'autore...nessuno si rende conto che quello che va difeso è proprio questo anonimo, questo passato anonimo, questo passato senza nome, questo passato popolare. In: Pasolini and... "the form of the city", 00:10:17 – 00:11:27



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Through Pasolini's eyes, small towns and their territories not only become united expressions of material and intangible culture conveyed in an unevenly paved road but works of art as well. He placed landscape, material culture and evidence of folk religion next to the products of "high culture". If art collections embody the community's "most extreme" cultural expressions, their meaning arises in dialogue with archaeological repertoires, city plans and the anthropic countryside.

Fifty years after their filming at Orte, Pasolini's heritage documentaries provide punctual reflections on the urban fabric, traditional lifestyles and land development. Local identity emerges through ecosystemic cultural diversity. Hence, city museums can uniquely mediate between history and evolving identities.

Local collections' efforts and their need for new ideas and functions

According to Pasolini, the city's form is its very essence. Like the distinct form of an individual's face, this city, its form and its heritage have personal stories to tell: Orte's form emerges from a plateau of tuff rock etched against the sky and buffered by the Tiber valley and adjacent fields. Over millennia, its inhabitants extracted building materials from the town's underbelly to construct their homes, walls, churches, palaces, hospitals and convents. Conversely, the resulting voids form wells, aqueducts, cellars, washhouses, cold rooms and a nymphaeum.

These people's stories have yet to emerge, as local museums reflect an older paradigm of collecting, preserving and displaying artworks. These collections reflect broader trends in heritage preservation from the turn of the century up to Italy's economic boom of the 1960s. This is when the Museum of Sacred Art was inaugurated to display an 8th-century mosaic, alongside painting, sculpture and metallurgy dating from the 12th to the 16th centuries. Despite the diocese's admirable efforts over the past 50 years, its display strategies are growing obsolete. The local museum director actively advocates for the works' conservation, but long-term preventative measures and maintenance remain underfunded and unaddressed. Similar difficulties have led the ex-Civic Museum and its archaeological collection to be declassified from museum to depository. Like many smaller urban centres in Italy, Orte is struggling to maintain its aging museums and visitor systems, to say nothing of its historic city centre.

A series of academic initiatives have worked on the city's heritage and, in the face of common difficulties, are beginning to dialogue with one another more actively. In recent years, Tuscia University's restoration and conservation laboratories have strongly invested in studying and preserving artistic heritage in the territory surrounding Viterbo. Its directors agreed with local officials to use local properties as laboratories for training future restorers. One of the most successful examples of this collaboration is the restoration of the 18th-century decorative cycle in Orte's Palazzo Nuzzi. These efforts build on interdisciplinary research from over a quarter of a century.

As time elapses, the town's museums struggle to stay open. They require new ideas and new functions; it is necessary to update and integrate the collections to recount Orte's uniquely stratified history, between archaeology and art history, similarly to many other Italian centres. Professors, students and local experts are working together with Orte Municipality and local associations to define shared enhancement strategies through a burgeoning city museum. There is also a willingness to integrate more recent material, such as Pasolini's documentaries and other works that reflect the city's development since the mid-20th century, and to speak of an evolving local population.



Amidst this interinstitutional work, the social role of museums has yet to take root. There are efforts to establish common ground between stakeholders from various sectors, like an extensive online questionnaire about local museum habits and visitor experiences.⁸

The recent agreement between civic, religious, and academic institutions



Orte's coat of arms, a bridge over the Tiber, will act as a common thread at the future city museum.
© Y. Mazurek

In partnership with Tuscia University and the diocese, the Municipality of Orte is exploring strategies to unite its archaeological and diocesan collections in a new city museum, which will draw its contents from local archives while including topics from contemporary history and current affairs. The agreement established between these entities was formalised in September 2021, and foresees the involvement of administrators, archaeologists, art historians, restorers and locals in developing new narrative strategies. The institutions recently launched the webpage www.ortecittamuseo.it as a platform for planning this city museum, using local collections to promote a greater sense of citizenship and community.

To overturn the usual distance between institutions and the wider public, the group has chosen the city's 600-year-old symbol as a point of departure: a bridge over the Tiber. This coat of arms already communicates Orte's long-standing function as a transportation node.

The river, roads and fiberoptic cables that pass through the city limits contain the stories of locals and travellers. One example crowns the entrance of the town's cathedral, commissioned by the king of Italy in the early 20th century, synthesising local history in the town's central square.⁹

The project *Orte Città Museo* is a pilot project that aims to move beyond clerical commissions and administrative divisions in order to re-examine local identities. The municipality, university and the diocese plan to work together alongside the local population in the co-creation of a museum mission and to move beyond canonical historical narratives. Orte's future city museum can – as Pasolini suggests – recount the story of the thousands of nameless people who formed and continue to forge this town. As local museums seek to dialogue with the terroir, the aim is to share more nuanced and more inclusive narrative through Orte's future City Museum.

⁸ The Podgórze Museum provides an important model for this phase, as this branch of the Museum of Krakow emerged from nearly 20-years of neighbourhood events, collections and online activity.

⁹ Image p.104, left.

BIOGRAPHY

Yvonne A. Mazurek was trained in art history in New York and Chicago before moving to central Italy. There she taught art history survey courses for fifteen years while continuing her education in conservation and heritage enhancement. She continues translating academic writing on a range of cultural heritage topics and is currently pursuing a PhD exploring museum strategies for small urban centres, in collaboration with Tuscia University in Viterbo, Italy.





HERITAGE AND DESIGN: CONSTRUCTING AN IMAGINARY MUSEUM OF THE CITY

ABSTRACT

Until the beginning of 2020, Porto did not have a museum specifically dedicated to the city as the main subject - an institution that could be seen as the museum of the city. However, recently, a process of rethinking the network of existing museums has been under way, that is to say, a new approach is being developed in order to complement them with new structures spread across the city, linking them through several programmatic axes. To that effect, a new semantics is being constructed so this redefined network as a whole can be read and understood as the Museum of the City.

This unique time when a new city museum is being contemplated in Porto became an inspiration and a realistic setting for the learning process in *Heritage and Design*, a short course I taught at the Polytechnic Institute of Porto between 2018 and 2021, as a part of undergraduate studies in Heritage Management. The course was also rooted in the previous research on sense of place I conducted at the University of Porto (2014-2018) and the lessons taken through collaboration in CAMOC in recent years.

The students' tasks were related to exploring diverse aspects and potentials of the museum of the city they live in, creating their own visions and designing museum experiences for and with different audiences, all embedded in the urban reality of Porto, but without having to face organisational, financial and many other real-life constraints.

The course provided opportunities to broaden a vision of museums and their role, as well as to challenge the often stereotyped and uninformed views about museums of cities and their potentials. It was also possible to adapt and share many ongoing concerns and discussions city museum experts have been tackling worldwide, including the ones about the right to the city.

Learning through a combination of analytical and creative processes, involving research, engagement in field work and references to previous knowledge obtained throughout the study curriculum, in order to develop and support original ideas, turned out to be a successful formula for the course. Hopefully, it has also sparked special interest in some of our future young colleagues about the city museum themes.

Key words: Porto, city museum, education, heritage, creative process



Introduction

Porto is the second-largest city in Portugal and an urban hub of relevance for the entire northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. It is a city of long and important history, celebrated by the inscription in the UNESCO World Heritage List (1996), but also a living, contemporary city. According to the results of the latest census, about 1.7 million people live in the metropolitan area of Porto.

Despite its historical and contemporary relevance, until just recently, Porto did not have a museum specifically dedicated to the city as the main subject, an institution that could be seen as the museum of the city.¹ In February 2020, the city authorities announced the “(re)birth” of the Museum of the City; the aspiration to create such an institution in Porto already carried a history of about three decades, but only in 2020 the conditions were finally met to materialise the idea under the coordination of the artistic director Nuno Faria.² The concept is based on the process of rethinking the network of the existing municipal museums: a new approach is being developed in order to complement them with new structures spread across the city, and firmly link them through several programmatic axes. To that effect, a new semantics is being constructed so this redefined network as a whole can be read as the Museum of the City.

This unique period when a new city museum is being materialised offered a realistic setting for the learning process in *Heritage and Design*, a short course I taught at the Polytechnic Institute of Porto between 2018 and 2021, as a part of the undergraduate studies in Heritage Management. The course concept was also rooted and inspired in my previous research on sense of place at the University of Porto and the lessons taken through collaboration in CAMOC in recent years.

The course was based on learning through a combination of analytical and creative processes, involving research, engagement in field work and references to previous knowledge obtained throughout the studies. Then, the students developed original ideas, all embedded in the urban reality of Porto, where they created their own visions and designed museum experiences for and with different audiences.

The activities involved cultural mapping and creation of multisensory urban experiences, by putting their focus on the engagement and inclusion of citizens in all their diversity. There, students explored the values intrinsic to mundane, ordinary urban landscapes, as well as the potential of urban walks for learning and integration into the landscape, always with the ruling idea that the museum of Porto is meant to be not only about the city but also for the city.

This formula provided opportunities not only to broaden the students’ vision about museums and their role but also to challenge the often stereotyped and uninformed views about museums of cities and their potentials. At the same time, this also granted the opportunity to adapt and share many ongoing concerns and discussions city museum experts have been tackling worldwide, including the ones

¹ The Museum of Ethnography and History, which was the closest Porto had to a city museum, was closed to the public back the 1992, as its building was damaged to such extent that it became unsafe for visitors (more details, Portuguese only: <http://www.patrimoniocultural.gov.pt/pt/patrimonio/patrimonio-imovel/pesquisa-do-patrimonio/classificado-ou-em-vias-de-classificacao/geral/view/74816>).

This significant gap has been recognized by private, profit-oriented enterprises, too, and materialized in WoW (“World of Wines”) - a large-scale project to reconvert old, privately owned port wine warehouses in Vila Nova de Gaia into a tourist complex of around 30,000 m². The complex, just across the Douro from the historical center of Porto, contains multiple functions, such as interactive “museum” areas dedicated to wine, cork, city history, design and other cultural experiences, but also a wine school, restaurants, shops and exhibition spaces. The initiator is Fladgate Partnership, owner of several port wine brands and of the Yeatman hotel. The idea emerged around 2014 and the project was completed in 2020. WoW has been advertised as the “new cultural district” of Porto. Among several museums, there is one about “Porto region across the ages”, promoted as “the first and only museum of history of the city of Porto” (more details: <https://wow.pt/>).

² <https://www.porto.pt/pt/noticia/museu-da-cidade-renasce-com-nova-identidade-a-escala-do-porto> (Portuguese only)



about the right to the city. The course has sparked a special interest in some of our future colleagues about the city museum themes.

Theoretical and methodological background

The course concept was rooted in my previous research on sense of place, developed at the University of Porto, where the city of Porto was used as the case study.³ Simultaneously, the course drew inspiration from the state-of-the art debates at CAMOC events. The setting for the creative task was realistic – the museum of the city of Porto, the network of existing and planned museums currently being transformed into a “city-wide museum”.⁴

The concept was refined over four academic years, but the following ideas lay at its core since the beginning:

- **Sense of place (spirit of place) vs. heritage**

Both the notion of heritage and the notion of sense of place are broad, complex, elusive and dynamic; it is difficult to define them and to succinctly pinpoint them. Even though sense of place seems even broader than heritage, it was the preferred main concept to work with, because, importantly, it includes both tangible and intangible assets of a place. Furthermore, this shift enables contemplating recent changes in urban spaces, which may be of less interest for heritage experts because of the lack of historical distance.

- **People-centred approach**

A people-centred approach is about the shift of focus in heritage-related disciplines from buildings, collections and assets to the people for whom these are important; in equal footing, it is also about the need of mobilising people in various aspects of conservation of places that they find meaningful. Moreover, it is about enhancing people's individuality and acknowledging the world of every single human being.

- **Mundane landscapes**

The course promoted expanding the field of inquiry from special and outstanding cultural landscapes to the domain of those mundane, ordinary landscapes where everyday lives unfold.

- **Urban walks**

Urban walks represent a spatial practice that enables one to “become part of the landscape” and assign one's own meanings and sense to the city through a direct experience. Therefore, students were invited to use urban walks both a research technique to back up their course projects and as the main theme of their experience design tasks, namely to create urban itineraries with the aim of getting acquainted with the natural and cultural features of Porto's landscape, and the everyday life of its people.

- **Cultural mapping**

Different forms of cultural mapping were presented and suggested as tools to capture place-based information and to get an insight into people's values, opinions, memories attributed to a place.

- **Museum for the city, not just about the city**

Based on the state-of-the-art debates within CAMOC, the topic of how museums of cities function as agents of change and improvements for their communities

³ *Sense(s) of Porto: Rethinking heritage within the contemporary cultural landscape*. Available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/10216/111206>

⁴ <https://museudacidadeporto.pt/en/about-the-city-museum/>



was brought to the students' attention. They were then invited to research further and to employ this knowledge to develop their own proposals in the creative part of the course.

- **Porto and its Museum of the City as the setting**

The creative work had a realistic context – the city of Porto as the subject and the Museum of the City under construction as a concrete environment to design creative – and practicable – experiences.

- **Participation and co-creation**

The students were asked to create proposals that embraced interactivity and, wherever possible, co-creation, never reducing participants to passive observers.

The course outcomes

The learning process during the course was based on a series of creative exercises. Each student built upon a research on the sense of place and the Museum of Porto in order to design a unique urban walk, an experience within the museum walls and another outside the museum, involving citizens; ideally, all of them would have a common thematic thread.⁵

According to the students' feedback, much hesitation was felt at the beginning, as the requirement to contribute creatively had not been “usual” throughout their studies in Heritage Management until then.⁶ By the end of the course, many reported that the learning methodology “made them think differently about the city”.



An example of the project tackling the city's multisensory properties (other than visual)
Source: Eduardo Tim (course student)

Many students proposed urban experiences of Porto, for visitors and residents alike, based on focusing on senses other than visual. They created a series of realistic whole-day itineraries grounded in the city's multisensory properties, thus connecting the sense of place and the five human senses, and, in turn, revealing the potential of presenting Porto in a novel and memorable way.

Likewise, a number of itineraries went beyond the historic centre and the city's main landmarks. Some of the students even found values and were able to offer interesting insights into mundane urban landscapes.

⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic marked the coursework over the last two academic years, particularly affecting the possibilities for field research; so, in the academic year 2020/2021, the students were asked to propose an online museum experience as a part of their creative work.

⁶ Some even stated they felt difficulties with the task as they weren't “creative” persons by nature; however, this changed by the end of the course, as the assignment raised their curiosity and got them deeply involved.



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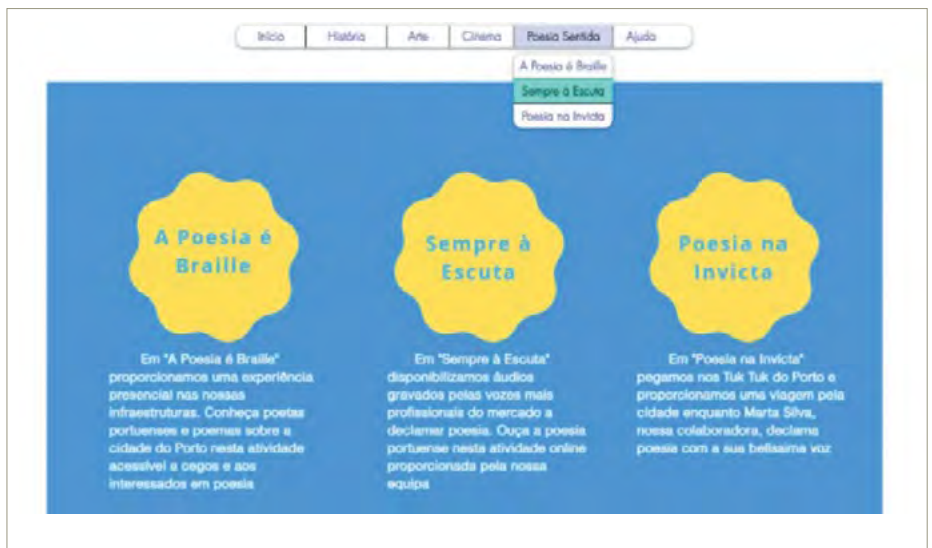
An example of a project tackling the mundane landscape of Porto. The project about exploring and registering urban patterns, as a simple means to create a memorable experience of an otherwise "ordinary" street. The textures that caught the student's eye were examined more closely and transferred to the paper by putting it directly on the surface and pressing a drawing charcoal. The result was an entire book of urban patterns, which translates haptic experiences into a collection of visually interesting material.

Source: Alicia Medeiros (course student)



An example of a project exploring sense of place and inclusivity through the theme of poetry. The proposal to be implemented by the Museum of the City includes different ways to enable access to information to people with visual impairments, an itinerary which connects the narrative on Porto's poets and their lives with the urban landscape, and a strategy for online presence and dissemination at the time of the pandemic.

Source: Bruno Artileiro (course student)



Some creative proposals were centred on the involvement and the engagement of marginalised groups or citizens who "don't usually go to museums".

Finally, an array of under-researched themes about the city's past and present, which may be of interest for the Museum of the City to actually explore in the coming years, was uncovered.

Conclusion

To sum up, the *Heritage and Design* course at the Polytechnic Institute of Porto explored how design can work to the service of cultural heritage studies, embracing a people-centred approach rather than focusing on heritage assets *per se*.

The timing of the course coincided with the creation of the Museum of the City of Porto, and the insight into the international discourse on cities and their museums reassured me that the museum of the city is an appropriate setting to explore



intersections between the disciplines of heritage studies and design.

Having chosen the city as a research subject provided a myriad of creative possibilities, and the museum of the city provided an ideal context: besides understanding and interpreting the city as its main focus, it is a type of organisation perceived as of high credibility as a research institution and as a safe and democratic space to express opinions and exchange knowledge.

The course assignments, based on designing museum experiences for and with different audiences, were meant to support their more engaging and meaningful participation, and a vision of an urban environment where one's right to the city can be achieved.

The students were inspired by many of the projects and topics discussed at CAMOC conferences. Their proposals touched a diversity of topics: the elusive and sensitive nature of intangible heritage, issues like mass tourism, inclusivity, post-memory, sustainability, possible urban future(s). Some of the final course projects far exceeded the expectations one would have from a student paper.

The Museum of the City of Porto, founded at a not very fortunate moment right before the global pandemic started, in February 2020, is still a work in progress. In a few years' time, when the Museum becomes fully operational, these young people, now students, will become professionals and some of them are expected to work or collaborate there. Hopefully, these new professionals will be impressed upon by a broadened vision of the museums' social role and potential as well as duly acquainted with current city museum themes.

BIOGRAPHY

Jelena Savic is an independent researcher on cities and cultural heritage, based in Porto, Portugal. Her background is in the areas of history and theory of architecture and built heritage, as well as in design research. Her current research interests are museums of cities, sense of place and cultural heritage within contemporary cultural landscapes. She has taught at the Polytechnic Institute of Porto (2018-2021), worked as expert associate for built heritage and visiting assistant for history of architecture and cities (until 2014).

Jelena joined CAMOC in 2013. She currently edits the *CAMOC Museums of Cities Review* and pursues the role of CAMOC Secretary.



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PART 3
THE RIGHT TO A SUSTAINABLE
URBAN FUTURE



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GROWING SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS IN THE MUSEUM OF LISBON

ABSTRACT

Just like cities, museums can and should contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals set by UN 2030 Agenda. The resolution “On Sustainability and the Implementation of the *Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda*” was presented by the ICOM Sustainability Working Group to the General Assembly in September 2019, having received a vast support.

There are two major non-traditional themes that city museums ought to be working on if they are intent on doing better: the promotion of a sustainable development and a wider knowledge of the residents’ cultural framework. These topics have increasingly become subjects of research projects, exhibitions, publications and learning activities in city museums. This paper is about a long-term research and exhibition project that the Museum of Lisbon is holding to tackle urban sustainability and communities at the same time: *Cultivating. The Vegetable Gardens of Lisbon*. The exhibition conveys new perspectives, both historical and contemporary, about how vegetable gardens have been shaping the cityscape and the urban food system. Moreover, the timing couldn’t be more appropriate: Lisbon was the European Green Capital in 2020, an award given for the first time to a capital in southern Europe. The key areas of the year-long programme refer to intelligent urban involvement, green growth and eco-innovation, alternative mobility, sustainable land use, adaptation to climate change and treatment of municipal waste.

The main exhibition goals are: a) to focus on the sustainable development of a big city in terms of food, pollution, natural resources and climate change; b) to embrace cultural diversity of the people living and working in the city; c) to promote wellbeing through the connection to nature, cultural roots and the collective memory of living beings in a global ecosystem. The research team comprises experts in anthropology, biology, history, agronomic engineering, architecture and sustainable growing methods, from the city council, universities and community groups.

Key words: Sustainable urban development, community diversity, social inclusion



Introduction: sustainability in the museum

The recent reconceptualization of the Museum of Lisbon has integrated a new programme of temporary exhibitions, mediation activities and publications, tackling a diverse range of subjects and chronologies about the city of Lisbon, from the distant past to reflections on possible futures. Based on research conducted by the Museum and on its collections, we aim to broaden the views and readings about Lisbon's identity values, by means of setting up multidisciplinary approaches, by including the contemporary and informal city and by embracing a plurality of voices, which add up to reinterpretations of historical narratives.

The Museum of Lisbon has pursued the perennial aim to intensify the dimensions of cultural mediation and interconnection with communities over the medium term. It is our wish and goal to improve the knowledge of the cities that Lisbon encompasses and to better communicate its infinite richness.

Sustainability has been under the attention of the Museum's programmes for some time, for instance, in the exhibition *Futures of Lisbon*, focused on circular economy, to which one might add the regular activities related to biodiversity, conducted in the Museum's gardens. However, a project exclusively focused on sustainability was an urgent necessity. Being sustainability a too wide and complex topic, we chose to concentrate on food safety and sovereignty, as well as on green urban landscape.

Just like cities, museums can and should contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals according to the UN 2030 *Agenda*. The resolution "On Sustainability and the Implementation of *Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda*" was presented by the ICOM Sustainability Working Group to the General Assembly in September 2019, having received a vast support.

There are two major non-traditional themes that city museums ought to be working on if they are intent on doing better: the promotion of a sustainable development and a wider knowledge of the residents' cultural framework. These topics have increasingly become subjects of research projects, exhibitions, publications and learning activities in city museums.

Lisbon Vegetable Gardens. From the Middle Ages to the 21st century.

Goals, team and partners

The exhibition *Lisbon Vegetable Gardens. From the Middle Ages to the 21st century* began with an ethnographic research project conducted over the course of three years by the anthropologist Daniela Araújo, curator of the exhibition, together with the historian Mário Nascimento. They established consistent dialogues with Lisbon's vegetable gardeners, people of very diverse geographical and cultural origins. The research created the basis for a reflection on food sustainability, sovereignty and safety in the city.

The exhibition conveyed new perspectives, both historical and contemporary, about how vegetable gardens have been shaping the city landscape and the urban food system. We took a multidisciplinary approach, calling for new historical and contemporary perspectives of the city gardens that have marked Lisbon's landscape since ancient times. Embracing first-person perspectives was crucial to this project: gardeners from the past as well as present-day gardeners are the main protagonists of a narrative showing us how the city territory evolved in the areas



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Exhibition poster
© Museum of Lisbon

of cultivation of horticultural plants for nutritional, medicinal and recreational purposes.

The exhibition timing couldn't be more appropriate: Lisbon was the European Green Capital in 2020, an award given for the first time to a southern European capital. The key areas of the year-long programme were intelligent urban involvement, green growth and eco-innovation, alternative mobility, sustainable land use, adaptation to climate change and treatment of municipal waste. The Green Capital key areas resonated with some of the Museum's exhibition goals: to encourage local sustainable development in a global ecosystem, to embrace cultural diversity and to promote wellbeing in connection to nature.

The partnership with the City Council enhanced the exhibition's scale. We worked together with the Department for the Environment, Green Structures, Climate and Energy, under the inspirational aura of the pioneer landscape architect Gonçalo Ribeiro Telles, as well as with Working Group for Development and Promotion of Urban Agriculture in Lisbon, responsible for the management of the city's 21 municipal horticultural parks, and the association *Colher para Semear – Rede Portuguesa de Variedades Tradicionais* ("Reap to Sow – Portuguese Traditional Varieties Network"), let alone the gardeners themselves. Our exhibition turned out to be the Green Capital's main event, even if held in between two periods of lockdown in 2020 and in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The exhibition opened in October 2020, it was closed between January and April 2021 and reopened from April to mid-December 2021. The public attendance was very positive, given the pandemic context, and most of the parallel activities, both inside and outside the museum, received great attention.



Edible Lisbon model.
© Museum of Lisbon

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Besides the main exhibition curators mentioned (Daniela Araújo and Mário Nascimento, along with Joana Monteiro) and other historians and conservators from the Museum of Lisbon, the project was created in concert with a pool of experts on biology, ecology, hydraulic engineering, urban planning historians, architects, artists, and more than 35 vegetable gardeners with plots in parks and in the backyards of their houses. I would like to make a reference to the team from the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon, including the coordinators of the *HortaFCUL* project, a local and international reference in permaculture, the CE3C – Centre for Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Change, the company

2Adapt, the IHT – Innovative Home Technology/ CGarden), and scholars from three other national universities.¹

Vegetable gardens inside and outside the museum walls

Before going inside, we had to plan for the outside, that is, growing a vegetable garden at the Museum. A sustainability and food sovereignty project in a museum with a garden demanded a wider approach than the usual exhibition / catalogue / mediation activities. Thanks to two of the exhibition partnerships, two very different types of sustainable vegetable garden prototypes were installed on the lawn in front of the exhibition pavilion. One of them was the CGarden, a Portuguese company that has recently developed a new model of self-sustainable modular scheme of vegetable gardens, which, over almost one year and a half, demonstrated to be extremely effective.² The scheme is based on nature's cycles, integrates water collection and storage, an automatic irrigation system using solar energy and a composting compartment. The other one, the Upfarming prototype developed by the Portuguese young architectural studio Parto, was first installed at the Museum and spread out to two neighbourhoods in Lisbon right after the exhibition.³ The model came from Singapore, and it is made up by 24 rotating vegetable-growing shelves set in a structure that can reach the height of eight meters and that slowly revolves throughout the day, being able to grow up to 800 vegetables.

At the back of the garden, there is a composting system that was installed shortly before the exhibition opened, and thus the audiences were easier led towards sustainability issues even before entering the exhibition space.

The exhibition entrance set the ground for the multidisciplinary narrative approach, combining cultural heritage (19th-century busts representing the seasons) and vegetable specimens (fresh pumpkins of different sorts, among others).

The story begins with the natural landscape of Lisbon, the water streams that are nowadays avenues, and portrays how important the fertile land and vegetable gardens were to monasteries and palaces over the centuries – not only for food and the economic development, but also for health treatments. Later, vegetable gardens were equally relevant for the food supply and economic growth of military stations and public and private dwellings, such as cottages and houses.

We were interested to learn how growing vegetables and plants got to be regarded as scientific disciplines since the late 19th century, when the first publications, reviews, seed catalogues appeared and when schools for growing plants and flowers were set in Lisbon. It was the time of emergence of seed shops and “rehearsal” or “experimental” gardens.

The scientific and experimental approach to growing vegetables and a wise sense of sustainability, even if other words were used instead, led to an increase in the awareness of how important green areas were to urban planning, while the rural and the urban worlds were growing farther and farther apart from each other.

¹ The whole list of project partners can be found in the bilingual exhibition catalogue: Araújo, D., Nascimento, M. *et al.* (2021). *Lisbon Vegetable Gardens, From Middle Ages to the 21st century*. Lisboa: Museu de Lisboa

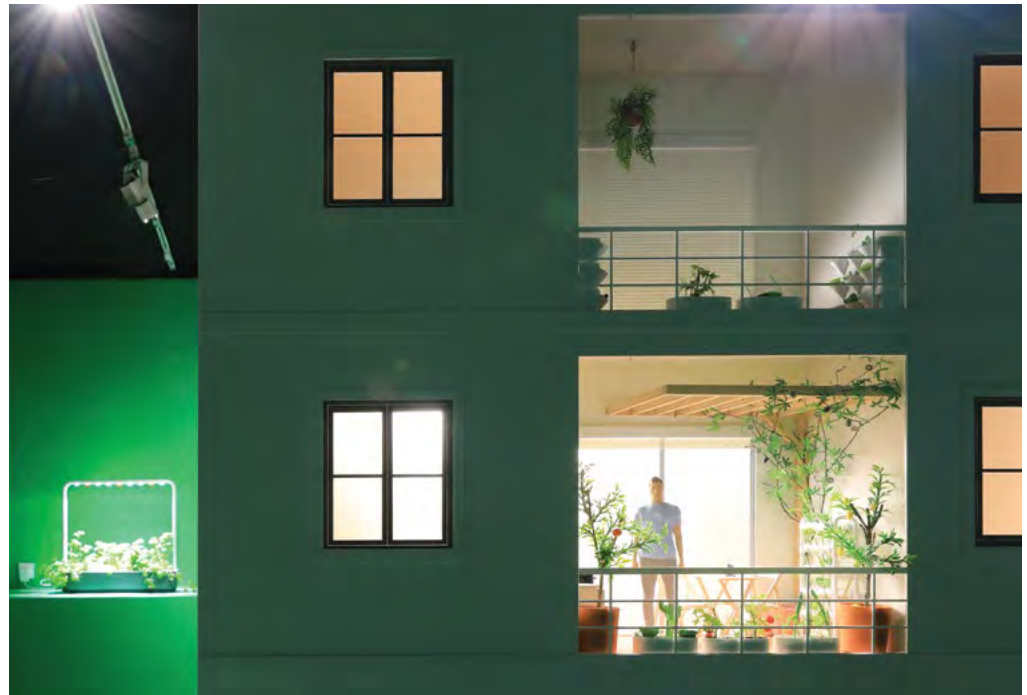
² <https://www.cgarden.pt>

³ <https://upfarming.org>



In the early 20th century, Lisbon was still a riverside city, with 40% of its territory made up of rural landscape lined by vineyards, olives, fruit orchards and vegetable gardens. However, 40 years later the landscape changed completely. Almost the entire city area was redeveloped into houses and buildings, while vegetable gardens remained around cottages, in backyards of buildings and patios. The exhibition explores the planning of the city over the 20th century and the appropriation of urban spaces by green areas, mostly with vegetable gardens. The appropriation builds under formal models following laws and rules in regulating green areas, and under informal versions of the creation of green spaces, sometimes illegally, in empty lots located at backyards or along highways.

Balcony vegetable garden model.
© Museum of Lisbon



Activism has been another way of appropriation of urban land to increase garden spaces and to establish more organic food sources, while contributing to increasing urban sustainability and to regulating the water resources. The exhibition shows a couple of projects led by Portuguese, French and Brazilian people devoted to the development of agroforestry in the available spaces of the city centre. One of examples is about using the vegetables they grow to serve food at the Community Kitchen of Mouraria, located in the old downtown.

The architecture studio Parto built a model for the exhibition, showing how to implement a series of vertical vegetable gardens in some areas not yet filled up with buildings, like hospitals and prison backyards, schools and residential neighbourhoods. The above-mentioned Upfarming project, called *Food Temple*, in which the Museum is a partner, is currently being developed in two neighbourhoods close to the Museum.

Simple tools for creating sustainable vegetable gardens in the city are explained to non-experts with the help of our partners from the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Lisbon, David Avelar and Florian Ulm. They teach permaculture, the planning of human habitats which copies the patterns and relationships found in nature: increasing biomass, diversity and connectivity between the elements, which adds resilience, health and productivity to the system.



A large-scale double model helps show how a permaculture vegetable garden can be built, either in a building's backyard or, at a smaller scale, on a flat's balcony, including an insects' hotel, a composting unit and resorting to a plant association strategy.

It was said at the beginning that the project started with fieldwork research and in dialogue with many gardeners from diverse local and cultural contexts. Daniela Araújo and her team recorded 20 interviews in different vegetable gardens across the city, of which eight were shown in the final section of the exhibition.

The gardeners tell us stories about their motivations, favourite seeds and plants, what and how they eat. Some explain how planting of those vegetables resonates with their family memories and the places they come from, thus helping them reconnect with their cultural and emotional backgrounds. They refer to the food they get out of the gardening, and moreover to the peace and joy they feel when they are there, as opposed to urban daily commuting.

Teresa and Celeste were the first enthusiastic gardeners who showed and taught us how and why they do it and how they feel about planting of what they have chosen. One is recreating a vegetable garden like her father had done in Cape Verde; the other is driven by a more sustainable way of life, linking humans to nature. Each of them lent to the Museum objects they cherish related to their vegetable plots, like drawings, notebooks or a ladybug shelter.

A seed vault has been built for the exhibition, and set up in a collaboration with the "Reap to Sow – Portuguese Traditional Varieties Network" association, which documents and safeguards seeds from all over the country. The vault displays a set of 25 photos of selected gardeners and "seed guardians" who work in 7 of the 21 municipal horticultural parks, beside their favourite seeds. The majority of them are migrants coming from northern and central Portugal, Africa (Cape Verde and Angola), Asia (India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Iran) as well as Brazil. They were invited to choose their favourite seeds and adult plants, often coming from their homelands.

Vegetable gardens are, in fact, the main source of urban agriculture. They add up to food supplies, they can be agents of health and wellbeing, while developing short food chains by delivering locally grown vegetables to the communities and reducing the environmental footprint left by what we eat.

Across the exhibition exit, a seed bomb installation was set up. The seed bombs followed an ancient technique rediscovered by the Japanese natural farming pioneer Masanobu Fukuoka. The technique has been thoroughly used by artists and activist movements like the Green Guerrillas groups across different cities in the world, looking at community gardening as a radical act. The visitors that came in on the last day of the exhibition were given the seed bombs and were invited to throw them at any spot of land of their choosing, thus increasing the cultivated areas all over our city.

An intense and diverse cultural programme was designed for the exhibition, with activities in the different spaces of the museum, either in the exhibition rooms or the gardens; among these there were guided tours, family workshops, *BioBlitz* sessions in the museum gardens, conferences and talks with academics, practitioners, council experts, artists and curators, to name a few. Other outreach programmes were held outside the museum, like tours to designated vegetable



Gardeners Pranlal and Bina.
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Left: Seed bombs.
Right: Digital programme.
© Museum of Lisbon

gardens, a communitarian sustainable kitchen and organic agriculture markets in a partnership with the Agroecological Caravan association.⁴

It goes without saying that the Museum's plans had to be adapted more than once, being the exhibition held in times of pandemic. To overcome the times when activities were not possible to take place on site, the museum set up a digital ongoing programme, including the exhibition blog,⁵ online mediation activities, a virtual tour⁶ and recordings of talks and conferences, including in-depth approaches through the voices of a number of gardeners themselves and many of the experts that took part in building the exhibition concept.⁷



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Family activities at the
exhibition.
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⁴ You may check the whole programme here: <https://www.museudelisboa.pt/en/events/hortas-de-lisboa>

⁵ See: <https://exposicaohortasdelisboa.blogspot.com> (in Portuguese only)

⁶ See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKFGchtJ_KQ&list=PLR9bTi4zMjsPIXn4y6vU1AaRIqODIGHLY&index=2 (in Portuguese only)

⁷ See the Museum of Lisbon's Youtube page, exhibitions and talks, at: <https://www.youtube.com/c/MuseudeLisboaEGE-AC/featured>

The exhibition *Lisbon Vegetable Gardens. From the Middle Ages to the 21st century* produced not one but two books of comments from the visitors, full of inspired words and drawings left by children and adults, as well as enthusiastic remarks about how this exhibition made them gain hope in such difficult times, how they felt moved and keen on growing plants in their homes or parks and how they become more aware of the urgent call for a more sustainable life, in the city and in the planet. Even if those sensations last for a short moment only, we felt it was worth it.

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BIOGRAPHY

Joana Sousa Monteiro is the director of the Museum of Lisbon since 2015. She was a museum adviser to the Lisbon Councillor for Culture (2010-2014). She was Assistant Coordinator of the Portuguese Museums Network at the National Institute of Museums (2000-2010). She holds a degree in Art History, an MA in Museology and an MA in Arts Management. She has been member of the Portuguese National Committee board of ICOM (up to 2016) and is the Chair of ICOM – CAMOC, the International Committee for the Collections and Activities of the Museums of Cities (since 2016).



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SITES OF TRANSITION: THE MUSEUM IN AN EMERGING GLOBAL NETWORK OF INTERCONNECTED SUSTAINABLE CITIES

ABSTRACT

By 2030, the number of planet's megacities will have increased from 33 to 43 – mainly in the southern hemisphere. The number of people living within cities is projected to rise to 5 billion. By 2050, 70% of the world's population will inhabit cities. Over the last 15 years, we have seen diverse groups of cities interacting in a way that could have far-reaching influence on how the planet's life support system evolves. A global network of interconnected sustainable cities is emerging. Any pathway to 1.5 degrees of temperature or a sustainable future must traverse these cities of the future.

In Kyoto, ICOM's General Assembly adopted the resolution "On Sustainability and the Implementation of the *Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda*". In her closing address, President Suay Aksoy endorsed an urgent call by the Working Group on Sustainability (WGS) to align ICOM's core activities with the UN's Agenda 2030, integrating its 17 sustainability development goals across the entire museum sector.

Touching upon the international society's response to these unfolding challenges the planet and its inhabitants are facing, this text will document the response of ICOM and the museum sector to the call by giving a brief account of the Working Group on Sustainability's activities. Turning to the future, it will consider how museums can become sites of transition to a sustainable future and suggest that SDG 17 partnerships for the goals could be a possible pathway.

In a world moving from a market economy to a market society, we are witness to an unprecedented series of environmental and societal crises as consequence of the commodification of everyday life. Considering the museum institution as one of the few remaining examples of truly global commons, the presentation will offer some preliminary observations on CAMOC's possible role in *Transforming our World* in an emerging global network of interconnected sustainable cities.

Key words: Agenda 2030, the commons, stewardship, partnership, sustainable cities





Blue Marble. © No copyright

This is the iconic photograph of the planet Earth, the *Blue Marble*, taken under the Apollo missions. In 1970, while viewing the same blue marble, Jack Swigert, one of the astronauts of the Apollo 13 mission, made his now celebrated remark: “Okay, Houston, we’ve had a problem here...”¹

Today, the *Blue Marble* itself has a problem: Us.

We live under a system committed to unlimited growth.² Unlimited growth within a finite system like the *Blue Marble* results in system collapse. We have created an unsustainable world, exemplified, at least in the global North, by concerns for the environment: massive biodiversity loss, disappearing topsoil and the effects of climate breakdown: melting ice, rising acidic seas, raging fires, drought, storms and subsequent flooding. Despite these concerns, if global consumption around the world was the same as in Norway, where I live and work, we would need three *Blue Marbles*. In the global South, the concerns around sustainability are often predicated on economic and social issues, the environment and climate change are of less immediate concern. Often, sustainability is defined in relation to these three terms: the environmental, the economic and the social. However, there is much to argue for adding a fourth, culture.³ And as such, museums worldwide have a significant role to play in addressing sustainability.

¹ <https://www.nasa.gov/feature/50-years-ago-houston-we-ve-had-a-problem>

² <https://www.overshootday.org/about-earth-overshoot-day/>

³ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/culture-and-development/the-future-we-want-the-role-of-culture/the-key-ideas/>



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What is the international society's response to these unfolding dramatic challenges the planet and its inhabitants are facing?

The younger generations are unequivocal in their response, their solution is *Listen to the Science*.⁴ The global society's response, however, is not reassuring.

In November 2021, the world's attention was drawn to Glasgow, the host city for the COP26, where the non-binding Paris agreement from 2016 on limiting global warming was being revised.⁵ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has indicated that emission reduction to meet the 1.5°C temperature goal should be about 45%. However revised, commitments to the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) at the heart of the Paris Agreement in Glasgow are unlikely to meet the required reductions.⁶ The authors of a recent WMO report predict that the average annual temperature on Earth will temporarily hit 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming at some point in the next five years – a likelihood that has doubled since last year.⁷ The closing agreement at COP26 did little to allay the fears of the global youth,⁸ or indeed impartial observers from the scientific community.⁹

Despite the disappointments of Glasgow, there is one binding political framework signed by every country in the world, also in 2016: *Transforming our World* – the UN's Agenda 2030, with 17 sustainable development goals, including SDG 13 - *to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*.¹⁰ Agenda 2030 is the foundation on which ICOM has committed itself to building a sustainable future for the whole organisation and the communities it serves.

What is the response of the museum sector?

Both within and outside of ICOM, there is much to celebrate in the individual response of institutions and practitioners, although, measured on a global scale, there is little coordinated action. ICOM has recognised the problem and addressed it by establishing the Working Group on Sustainability (WGS) in 2018 and advocating a focus on sustainability at the Kyoto triennial in 2019. There, the General Assembly endorsed Resolution 1, *On sustainability and implementing Agenda 2030*.¹¹ Moreover, for its second mandate period (2020 -2022),¹² ICOM's Executive Board established the WGS as the ICOM hub for sustainability and climate breakdown, tasking it to draft a sustainability action plan, aligned with *Agenda 2030*, for the period up until 2030.¹³ The draft of this action plan will be presented at the 26th ICOM General Conference in Prague in 2022.

ICOM has chosen to frame its approach in ethical terms. Museums have increasingly recognised the duty of care they owe to their visitors, communities

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/sep/18/greta-thunberg-testimony-congress-climate-change-action>

⁵ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

⁶ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs>

⁷ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/05/1092842>

⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/10/youth-activists-petition-un-to-declare-systemwide-climate-emergency>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIZlZRJ8KI8>

¹⁰ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

¹¹ https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Resolutions_2019_EN.pdf

¹² <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WGS-Mandate-2020-2022.pdf>

¹³ <https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/WGS-Mandate-2020-2022.pdf>



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and society in general. A central feature of this duty is acting as stewards of the global memory. ICOM itself, through the Code of Ethics, first adopted in 1986 and revised in 2004, has led the way. A review and revision of the Code is underway. The WGS has coined the term “ethical imperative” in describing the urgency of museums in acknowledging and reducing our environmental impact, including carbon footprint, and helping secure a sustainable future for all inhabitants of the planet, human and non-human.

The practical response of WGS has been to identify two approaches: first, how museums themselves can become sustainable, and second, how museums, through dissemination, can assist their public in achieving a sustainable future.

Some of the recent initiatives that the WGS has been involved in include contributing to the *H.E.L.P* project with the national committees of Italy, Portugal and the Czech Republic, acting as advisors for an international conference on museums and sustainability in Shanghai, and by organising 6 webinars in the run up to Prague in 2022. The WGS has participated in discussions with the leadership of Define and ETHCOM and the international and national committee spokespersons; the group is developing a channel for indigenous voices on the question of sustainable futures and contributing to Prague triennial’s programme. Members of the WGS have participated in numerous webinars and conferences, organised both within and outside ICOM. Among its initiatives outside the organisation, the WGS has represented ICOM in the EU programme *Voices of Culture*, it was instrumental in ICOM becoming an official supporter of the Global Coalition #Unitedforbiodiversity and joining the Climate Heritage Network; it represents ICOM in the UN’s *Race to Resilience* initiative in collaboration with the C40 Cities Group; finally, it has coordinated ICOM’s participation at COP26 in Glasgow and the pre-COP in Milan.

These initiatives indicate that there is a growing demand, from both within ICOM and from outside, for a change of emphasis in ICOM’s approach to addressing sustainability: from the present provision of a body – the Working Group on Sustainability – with an advisory character reporting directly to the Executive Board, to a much more active and participatory role responding to the demands of the whole of the ICOM membership and the communities they serve. While this creates some challenges within the organisation, as the ICOM Statutes limit the role of a working group to solely *reporting* to the Executive Board, the WGS has taken a pragmatic view of these statutory limitations and is embracing a more active role. An example of this approach is a planned series of roundtables for the membership in connection with the development of the Action Plan 2030 in the period leading up to the Prague triennial in August 2022.

The WGS has also a subsidiary goal: to make itself redundant. This will be achieved by ensuring that ICOM members, institutional and private, together with the Secretariat, are all fully conversant with the scale and urgency of the challenges in front of us and understand the nature of Agenda 2030 and its goals in addressing these challenges; furthermore, that ICOM members, institutional and private, together with the Secretariat, are fully committed to actively engaging in implementing Agenda 2030 and its goals of achieving a sustainable future.

As we enter 2022, the means for achieving this are being debated within the organisation: Define, a revision of the Ethical Code and the strategic plan for the period until 2028. It is important that each of these processes be founded on the reality facing the organisation and aligned with the goals of Agenda 2030.



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Turning to the future, how can museums become sites of transition to a sustainable future?

The possibilities are endless, limited only by the creativity of the practitioners working in the museum sector. Here, I will allow myself the luxury of focusing on one possible pathway: dissemination to our public in collaboration with other actors. Specifically, in the context of one of the Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 17.¹⁴

In Agenda 2030, one can read that SDG 17 deals with “partnerships for the goals”, strengthening the means of implementation and revitalising global partnerships. It maintains that a successful development agenda requires inclusive partnerships – at the local, national, regional and global levels – built upon principles and values, and upon a shared vision and shared goals, placing people and the planet at the centre. It refers to the need for cross-sector and cross-country collaboration in pursuit of all the goals by the year 2030, and it calls for the alignment of policies, of strengthening cooperation, using the SDGs as a shared framework and vision for defining the collaborative way forward. Here, we return to the sphere of stewardship: of museums assisting communities by offering them sites of transition, facilitating and disseminating multilevel approaches in the transition to a sustainable future.

The idea of multilevel approaches is also found in the research of the first woman Nobel prize winner in economics, Elinor Ostrom. Her research on climate change was founded on the theory of polycentricity and centred on communities and the commons – museums arguably are one of the few remaining examples of a truly global commons. After the disappointment of COP 15 in Copenhagen in 2008, and equally relevant now in the aftermath of COP26 in Glasgow, Ostrom showed that new and more dynamic forms of response were appearing around the international climate change regime centred on the UN Framework Convention, “emerging spontaneously from the bottom-up”, producing a more dispersed and multilevel pattern in response. She wrote:

“Do not despair if politics moves slowly at the international and national levels because a diversity of actors and institutions is already self-organising in ways that will help to compensate for the collective inaction problems at the higher levels.”¹⁵

Drawing inspiration from the work of Elinor Ostrom and the SDG 17, perhaps the global museum institutions' most significant role in fostering sustainability could be by taking the initiative to align the diversity of interested actors and institutions and their activities in global dissemination projects, offering physical and digital sites of transition.

And what might CAMOC's role in such initiatives be?

Consider the importance of the city in transforming our world, the goal of the UN's Agenda 2030. By 2030, the number of planet's megacities will have increased from 33 to 43 – mainly in the southern hemisphere. Five billion people will be living within cities. By 2050, 70% of the world's population will inhabit cities. In her book *Extreme Cities*, Ashley Dawson suggests that cities represent a paradigm example of unlimited growth within a finite system, one that must be addressed if



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¹⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17>

¹⁵ https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1494833

the planet has any hope of achieving a sustainable future.¹⁶

There is already a number of global networks of interconnected cities emerging to facilitate addressing this challenge: diverse groups of cities interacting in ways that could have far-reaching influence on how the planet's life support system evolves: networks that could be natural partners for CAMOC in embracing SDG 17. Among these, there are two offering diametrically opposing approaches. *Fearless Cities* is an informal global movement of activists, organisations, councillors and mayors that are working to radicalise democracy, feminise politics and drive the transition to an economy that cares for people and our environment.¹⁷ The C40 network of the world's megacities is committed to addressing climate change by supporting cities through collaboration, sharing knowledge and driving meaningful, measurable and sustainable action on climate change.¹⁸

Further emphasising the importance of cities, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its 1.5 degree report from 2018 and in their upcoming 6th Assessment Report to be published in 2022, has addressed the impacts of climate change on cities and the unique mitigation and adaptation challenges and opportunities offered by cities.¹⁹ A special cities' focus will be present in all AR6, including the main assessment report, the summary for policy makers, the synthesis report and the three AR6 Special Reports. AR6 processes will also strive for enhanced engagement with urban practitioners – surely CAMOC, representing ICOM through city museums, should be among these. The IPCC has also decided that a Special Report on Climate Change and Cities will be included in the AR7 (2023-2028). CAMOC could represent ICOM in contributing to this important document – perhaps in collaboration with the WGS and as goal for the ICOM strategic plan, at present under development.

Furthermore, CAMOC, as a network of knowledge institutions and practitioners ethically bound to serving their communities might investigate the possibility of becoming a dissemination hub for these emerging city networks and the special reports on cities commissioned by the IPCC. Their institutional members might be acknowledged as sites of transition. Indeed, there is much to commend the strategy that CAMOC should actively use SDG 17, *Partnerships for the Goals* and SDG 13, *Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*, as a means to extend its membership in the planet's growing number of megacities.²⁰

More specifically, a body of knowledge in the CAMOC archives compiled since its inception, might be drawn on to initiate programmes for its members that augment the implementation of the resolution on sustainability from Kyoto. One such example is migration. Migration is central to the growth of the megacity in the 21st century – it is also fundamental in addressing sustainable futures. Although here perhaps the focus should not be migration *to* cities but rather *from* cities. One neglected aspect of migration is in the context of rising sea levels. In *Extreme Cities*, Ashley Dawson writes:

“Almost all of the world's great cities are sited on or near bodies of water. Thirteen of the world's twentieth largest cities are port cities. This has generated a deadly contradiction – one of the most overlooked facts of the 21st century: the majority of the world's megacities are in coastal zones

¹⁶ Dawson, A. (2017). *Extreme Cities*. New York: Verso

¹⁷ <https://fearlesscities.com/>

¹⁸ <https://www.c40.org/>

¹⁹ <https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2018/12/SPM-for-cities.pdf>

²⁰ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13>



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threatened by sea level rise. By 2025 more than 75 percent of the world's population will live within 200 kilometres of the sea".²¹

A recent report from the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration stated that:

"The atmospheric burden of CO₂ measured in April 2021 at 419 ppm is now comparable to where it was during the Mid-Pliocene Warm Period around 3.6 million years ago. During that time sea level was about 78 feet [24 m] higher than today."²²

If this seems in the realms of fantasy, the latest reports from Antarctica, where scientists are monitoring the Thwaites Glacier, show that great cracks and fissures have opened up both on top of and underneath the glacier, one of the biggest in the world, and it is feared that parts of it may fracture and collapse, possibly within five years or less.²³ Moreover, ice sheets from Norway to Antarctica and the Swiss Alps to the Himalayas are shrinking, adding to rising sea levels.²⁴

I conclude, then, by drawing attention to the challenges of rising seas to global coastal cities, some of which are members of CAMOC. As the global society eventually begins to address the growth of CO₂ emissions and their effect on sea levels, CAMOC might consider investigating the possibility of a dissemination project on the challenges of migration *from* cities, placing it within the context of achieving a sustainable future, predicated on Agenda 2030 and ICOM's commitment to align itself with its goals over the course of the decade to 2030.



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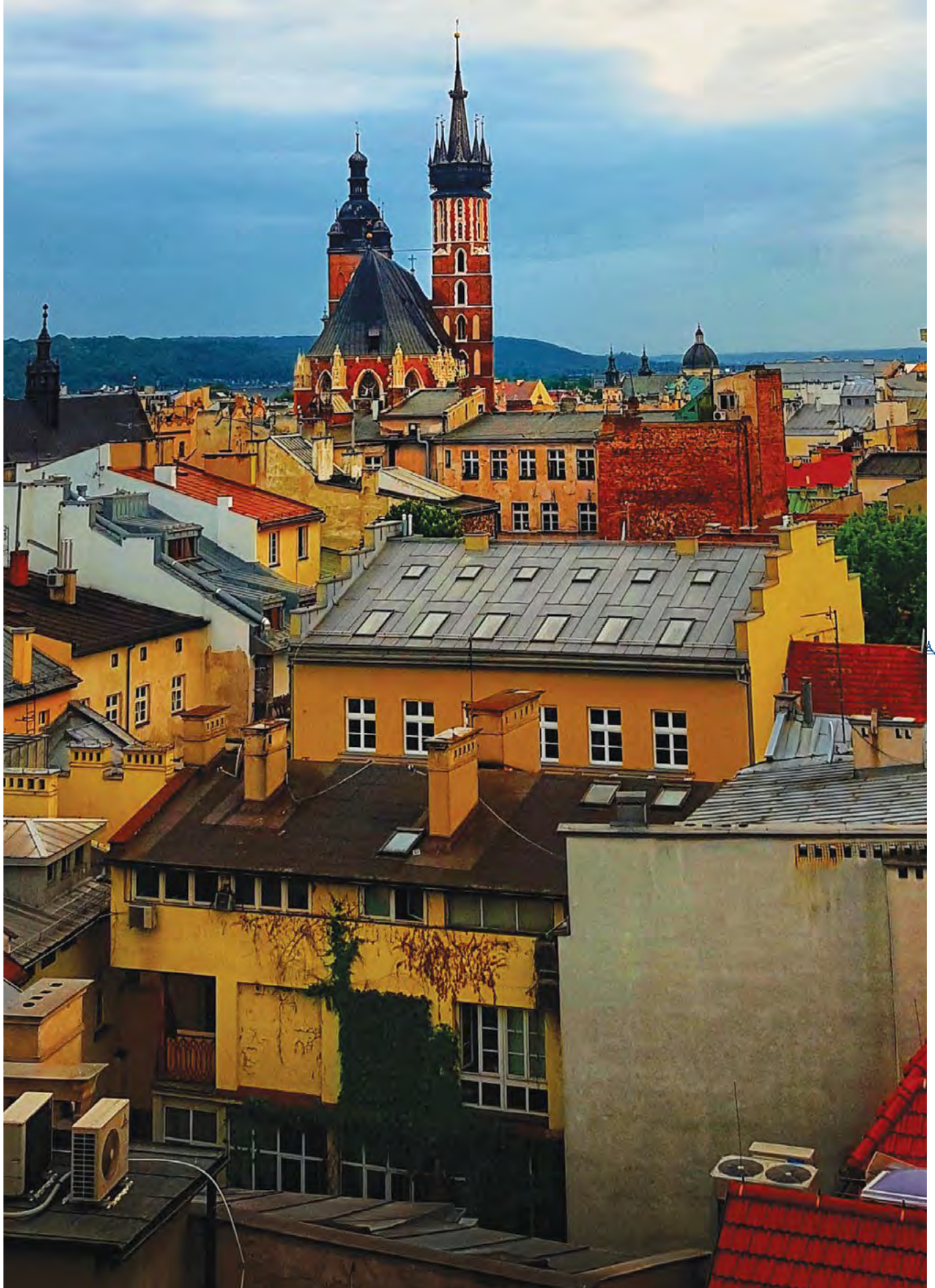
Morien Rees was educated as an architect and art historian and has practiced in Wales and Norway. Since 1993, he has worked in the museum sector. From 2004, his workplace has been at the Varanger Museum on the northeast Arctic coast of Norway. At present, he is occupied with a preliminary study for the transformation of a gymnastic hall from 1933 into the new home for the Vardø Museum, and an international symposium on femicide, to be held at the Steilneset Memorial for the victims of witchcraft trials on the island of Vardø during the 17th century. He is the Chair of the ICOM Working Group on Sustainability.

²¹ <https://picturing.climatecentral.org/>

²² <https://research.noaa.gov/article/ArtMID/587/ArticleID/2742/Despite-pandemic-shutdowns-carbon-dioxide-and-methane-surged-in-2020>

²³ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/dec/18/scientists-watch-giant-doomsday-glacier-in-antarctica-with-concern>

²⁴ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/11/glacier-melting-global-warming-climate/>



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