

# ICOA1234: REPRESENTATIONS OF MIGRATION, ARTICULATIONS OF HERITAGE AND BELONGING

## Subtheme 01: Integrating Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development by engaging diverse Communities for Heritage Management

**Session 1:** Sustainable Development and Community Engagement

**Location:** Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre

**Time:** December 13, 2017, 16:15 – 16:30

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**Abstract:** As migration continues to expand internationally, modern studies of cultural heritage must increasingly include analysis of migrant experiences and identities. Keeping in mind the fact that the ‘right to a sense of belonging’ for all citizens is a crucial component in sustainable urban development, we explore the challenges migrants face to maintain their unique identities while also integrating with conventional representations of national and community narratives. Our paper discusses the importance of including migration as a critical component of heritage understanding, and how museums as institutions open to the public play a pivotal role in interpreting the intersect of migration and heritage. Engaging the work of Stuart Hall as our theoretical framework, we elaborate by analysing three sites demonstrating strategies for museums to increase migrant participation in heritage discourses: the Holocaust Museum in Milan, Contemporary Art Museum in Vienna, and ongoing Multaqa project at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. We conclude by proposing how heritage locations including museums and UNESCO World Heritage sites can improve representations of migrant identities.

**Key words:** *community, equity, participation*

Migrations prompt new questions about heritage, including critical examinations of national identities and global understandings of a shared world heritage. Migrants constantly renegotiate how their complex identities integrate with larger representations of national and international heritage. Focusing on migration and belonging is a unique approach to the study of heritage, requiring a critical examination of the authority implicit in representations of heritage. By studying heritage from the perspectives of those at the margins of such representations, researchers can explore the challenges and opportunities of building more inclusive representations of heritage through World Heritage sites and cultural institutions like migration museums.

Modern governments face challenging questions of how to respect the identities of migrant communities while also contextualizing these communities within the larger representations of identity and nation. This challenge is compounded by the many-faceted nature of migrant identities, which include their areas of origin, current host nations, and statuses as members of dynamic diasporic communities undergoing constant renegotiations and transformations (Appadurai 2000). As social theorist Stuart Hall notes, the modern world now encompasses large communities which are globally connected and internationally dispersed. He identifies heritage as an ongoing «discursive practice» that involves the self, community and state (Hall 2002:74). Observing that heritage must fit into the accepted state narratives of «national story» and «tradition» (Hall 2002:73), Hall provides a valuable framework for analysing how heritage is used to normalize a national identity that frequently excludes migrants. As the state uses power and authority to define heritage and thus decide on «appropriate attitudes and forms of conduct from its citizens» (Hall 2002:73), heritage can create a false sense that what is normal now has always been such, obscuring the dynamic role of migrants and migrant communities in building and changing nations. As Hall concludes, although nations may wish to define heritage as static, heritage is actually an ongoing process and the nation is thus «under constant reconstruction» (Hall 2002:74). To challenge national definitions of heritage requires internal adjustments and active processing (Hall 2002:80), and one strategy to develop that processing is through a critical examination of migration and migrant identities in relation to heritage. Properties identified as UNESCO World Heritage Sites provide especially fertile ground to examine, challenge, and perhaps ultimately restructure current discourses on heritage and belonging.

Despite the continuing rise in global migration (Appadurai 2000), there are currently only a limited number of World Heritage Sites that directly address migrant communities and the impacts of migration. Only eight World Heritage Sites specifically value «their importance in the history of migration» (Halsdorfer 2012:61). Although other sites may mention migration, they lack comprehensive analysis of migration as central to the sites' interpretations. However, now is a vital time for critical examination of migration as represented in the larger framework of global heritage. Useful examples of migrant representations are found at migration museums, which play especially important roles in the interaction between heritage and migrants.

In migration museums worldwide, the stories of migrants encourage the creation of new ideas and narratives in existing spaces. Modern migration museums have enlarged societal discussions of migration in the last decades, challenging traditional understandings of migration and migrant experiences. By examining the interaction between migrants and their host societies, these museums are changing analysis concerning the representation of migration. To understand the concept and processes of modern migration museums, this paper uses the three phases of the development of migration museums according to Laurence Gourievidis's 2014 book, «Museums and Migration: History, Memory and Politics».

As Visser (2016) explains, the first phase Gourievidis identifies is the traditional approach, wherein migration is expressed through objects and collections. The second phase concerns migration as a subject, focusing on the act of migrating or distinct groups of migrants. In the third phase, migration is no longer only the object or a topic of the museum, but migrants themselves become actors in the museum. In this phase, the relationship between museums and communities changes, as communities are no longer just comprised of passive visitors; community members become active participants in their cultural infrastructure. This third phase is primarily defined by the relationship between the museums and audience, including the museums' intended impacts on its communities. This approach integrates the concept of heritage of Hall, who argues that heritage is «the active production of culture and the arts as a living activity» (Hall 2002:73).

The Holocaust Museum in Milan is a unique example that not only commemorates the lives of those who underwent atrocities during the Holocaust but also serves its community in one of the most remarkable ways possible. The museum is located at the same cavernous space under the city's Central Train Station where thousands of Jews used to be secretly loaded in trains and sent to death camps. Today, the museum also serves as a shelter to accommodate the influx of refugees from Africa who have escaped persecution, hunger and war (Tercatin 2015). Volunteers from different religious backgrounds provide amenities such as food and toiletries to the refugees. As reported by one of the Jews volunteers, the refugees may not understand the significance of their shelter, but for Jews, the connection to the location is inherent as they can relate to the desperate people aching for a better life (Stern 2015).

Another example can be seen at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary (TBA21) in Augarten, Vienna. In 2016, the TBA21 launched a three-month long project, led by the artist Olafur Eliasson, uniting refugees, asylum seekers, local students, and the general public of Vienna. The main activity was the making of ecologically sustainable green light lamps. This activity was accompanied by talks and educational seminars creating a dynamic space and consolidating people of different backgrounds. This project invited the participants «to take part in the construction of something of value through a playful, creative process. Working together in an artistic context, in dialogue with the regular visitors of the Augarten, participants build both a modular light and a communal environment, in which difference is not only accepted but embraced» (Forrest 2016). The workshop programme created a reciprocal activity, discussing the links between «production and reception, performer and audience, art and social action (Eliasson 2016).

However, there are several criticisms to this approach. Some migration museums can uncritically «portray host nations as multicultural and tolerant, tending to idealize and simplify the migration experience. In doing so, museums can obscure the historical reasons why particular migrations occurred» (Jenkins 2016). The message that «we are all migrants» suggests a retreat from a story about the nation determined by its existing elites to one where the nation is made up of migrants. Thus, «the story told by migration museums can be unconvincing and incomplete» (Jenkins 2016). To address these criticisms, museums must evolve to ask questions instead of showing and telling only pre-packed stories (Expert Meeting on Migration Museums Final Report 2006). As the Network of European Museum Organisations notes, the main objectives of migration museums are to acknowledge, integrate, build awareness and educate (UNESCO 2006). Therefore, the challenge is not so much to bring in intellectuals, academics, researchers, and historians, but rather to attract the general public, especially those with preconceived — often negative — biases about immigration and migrants. The challenge is also to bring together groups between which tensions exist, such as migrants and host communities. Hence, the concept of migration museum nowadays is both social and political, providing a setting to re-examine and develop new understandings of heritage. By addressing flaws in their portrayals of migration and migrant experiences, modern migration museums can «become places where diverse communities meet and work together towards a stronger society, and better future» (Visser 2016).

There is a need currently to build better bridges between migrants, host societies, and migration museums. An influx of migrations to a community can result in changes to traditional and local cultures, sometimes triggering conflict between the migrations and hosts (Halsdorfer 2012:60). In such a scenario, it can be challenging to both safeguard cultural diversity and improve social cohesion. Migration museums can address modern migrations and work to harmonize differences between migrants and host communities, playing important political roles by encouraging societal self-reflection. At such sites, listening to individual stories may help to deconstruct stereotypes, while memory, history, and narration may also allow visitors to take a step back and consider a more complete picture. Museums serve as compelling settings to create social awareness «through their power to prompt empathetic responses and historical understandings on the part of those who feel that their lifestyle or beliefs are threatened by influxes of people» (Jones 2015), and it is essential that migrations are recognized through museums as key elements in the history of nations. New strategies can foster better understanding; for example, Halsdorfer calls for improved use of emotion at sites, noting that World Heritage sites can include an «emotional dimension» that recognizes the importance of sites as locations that invoke personal reactions: «Such an emotional dimension could reflect on the influences of migration on the processes of identity formation and deepen the links to human rights» (Halsdorfer 2012:65). One way sites improve their emotional depth is by employing migrants as tour guides. These interactions between guide and visitor can allow for improved understandings of the migrant experience, humanizing migrants and ultimately reducing the perceived conflict between migrant culture and the culture of the host nations (Halsdorfer 2012:65).

An example of this strategy can be seen at the Pergamon Museum in Berlin, which addresses migration through the experiences of refugees, including migrants as both guides and audiences. With the Multaqa project, Syrian and Iraqi refugees are trained to provide guided museum tours in Arabic, allowing other refugees to learn about the museum's collections in their native language. The project actively engages migrants in the interpretation of Syrian and Iraqi artefacts: «the guides incorporate the visitors into the process of observing and interpreting the objects (...) [and] the visitors become active participants» (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin). The project also aims to improve the integration of refugees into the larger, non-refugee German population. The project is «a connecting link between the refugees' countries of origin and their new host country» (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin), as guides provide information about German history and culture, and Germany's connections with Syria and Iraq.

There are several potential benefits of addressing this shortcoming of World Heritage Sites and the integration of migration. Susemihl notes that while material aspects must often be left behind during movement, migrant communities can bring along stories and the processes of storytelling (Susemihl 2012:53). For migrant communities, this storytelling links their identities to the physical land of the new nation and constructs access between the migrants that their environments (Susemihl 2012:53). Susemihl concludes that the practice of heritage can both connect migrants in the present and build better integrations of identity in the future (Susemihl 2012:57). By improving representations of migration at World Heritage sites, states can therefore strengthen the overall connections of heritage for all citizens and improve cultural diversity on national and international levels. As Hall concludes, by redefining heritage to include traditionally marginalized voices, we better equip ourselves to exist in an increasingly globalized and migratory world.

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# ICOA1234: REPRÉSENTATIONS DE LA MIGRATION, ARTICULATIONS ENTRE PATRIMOINE ET APPARTENANCE

## **Sous-thème 01: Intégrer le patrimoine et le développement urbain durable en engageant Diverses communautés pour la gestion du patrimoine**

**Session 1:** Développement durable et engagement communautaire

**Lieu:** Hall Gulmohur, India Habitat Centre

**Date et heure:** 13 Décembre, 2017, 16:15 – 16:30

**Auteur:** Ritika Khanna, A. Elliot Olson et Mare Heimrate

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**Résumé:** Alors que les migrations continuent de s'étendre à l'échelle internationale, les études modernes sur le patrimoine culturel doivent de plus en plus inclure une analyse des expériences et des identités des migrants. Gardant à l'esprit que le « droit à un sentiment d'appartenance » pour tous les citoyens est un élément crucial du développement urbain durable, nous explorons les défis auxquels les migrants sont confrontés pour préserver leurs identités uniques, tout en s'intégrant aux représentations conventionnelles des récits nationaux et collectifs. Cette présentation discute de l'importance d'inclure la migration en tant qu'élément essentiel de la compréhension du patrimoine, et comment les musées en tant qu'institutions ouvertes au public jouent un rôle central dans l'interprétation du croisement de la migration et du patrimoine. À partir du travail de Stuart Hall comme cadre théorique, nous analysons trois sites présentant des stratégies muséographiques visant à augmenter la participation des migrants au discours sur le patrimoine: le Musée de l'Holocauste à Milan, le Musée d'Art Contemporain à Vienne et le projet Multaqa en cours au Musée de Pergame à Berlin.

Nous concluons en proposant une manière dont les sites patrimoniaux, y compris les musées et les sites du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, peuvent améliorer les représentations des identités des migrants.

**Mots-clés:** communauté, équité, participation