



# Stories Old and New

## Migration and identity in the UK heritage sector

**A report for the Migration Museum Working Group**

By Mary Stevens

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## About ippr

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## About the Migration Museum Working Group

The Migration Museum Working Group was formed in late 2006 after a meeting held at the Institute for Public Policy Research (ippr) to discuss what more could be done to represent migration issues within the UK museum and heritage sector. It consists of the following people who share an interest in these issues and a passion for seeing migration more appropriately represented in cultural life in the UK:

- Barbara Roche (Chair), former UK Minister for Immigration
- Zelda Baveystock, Newcastle University
- Dr Gareth Griffiths, Director of British Empire and Commonwealth Museum
- Dr Jill Rutter, ippr
- Dr Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, formerly ippr, now Director of the Royal Commonwealth Society
- Ratan Vaswani, Museums Association
- Ian Wilson, National Trust
- Robert Winder, author of *Bloody Foreigners*

Members of the working group serve as private individuals and do not represent any organisations.

The working group was supported by the Baring Foundation, National Trust and the Stone Ashdown Trust whose backing allowed the commissioning of independent research on what already exists in terms of representing migration within the UK museum and heritage sector, and on what more could be done.

This research was conducted by Dr Mary Stevens, an expert in this field. Her PhD thesis is on the French national museum of immigration (*Re-membering the Nation: the Project for the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*, University of London, 2008) and she is currently a post-doctoral research associate in the School of Library, Archive and Information Studies at University College London. Dr Stevens's report, published as a companion to this discussion paper, looks at the many and various ways that museums and other institutions in

the UK and around the world have covered migration. It is an excellent contribution to the debate on the merits of museums of migration. The working group has drawn on some of her ideas. And it is our hope that we may be able to commission more research of this nature in the future.

ippr has served as the hub for the working group. This report has also been designed and published by ippr, and the working group is particularly grateful to Georgina Kyriacou for overseeing this process.

## About the author

Dr Mary Stevens is currently a post-doctoral research associate in the Department of Information Studies at University College London. Her PhD thesis concerns the French national museum of immigration (*Re-membering the Nation: the Project for the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration*, University of London, 2008).

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## 1. A forgetful nation? Changing the consensus on migration

The history of migration to and from the British Isles is as old as the islands themselves. However, the common understanding of this history as passed down through the education system as well as by museums, archives and other heritage sites, has often glossed over or ignored this crucial aspect of our island story. There are understandable historical reasons for this: at times, the vision of Britain as a tightly-bonded self-sufficient place has been instrumental in securing our common defence. The period of the emergence of national museums in Europe coincided with the age of Romantic nationalism, and later, the Great Power struggles of the age of empire. In capturing specific national 'genius', these new institutions defined the nation in opposition both to rivals on the other side of the English Channel and 'less advanced' peoples across the globe and acted to generate and reinforce a politically useful sense of cultural and racial superiority (Kaplan 1994, Simpson 2001).

Histories of migration, diaspora and cultural exchange did not fit this vision of Britain, and so they were silenced. Yet, for example, there were Africans present in Britain with the Roman army long before any of the peoples we have traditionally been encouraged to think of as 'English' (such as the Saxons) arrived, and many will have settled (Fryer 1984).

The composite, plural, constantly evolving nature of the population of the British Isles is described by Marika Sherwood, founder of the Black and Asian Studies Association (BASA) and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in a recent article on British identity for the 'Who do we think we are?' website.<sup>1</sup> As she points out, someone who says they are 'English' or 'British' could have ancestors who were Celts, a people originally from the Russian steppes or Picts, who originated from the Black Sea region. After the Romans left, Saxons, Angles and Jutes invaded from the area that is today Germany. She writes of the Danish conquests in the eleventh century, followed by the Normans, the Flemish, Plantagenets from Anjou, and so on, continuing this account up to the present day before concluding with the provocative question: 'which of these ancestries do you claim when you say you are "British"?' (Sherwood 2008).

It does not take long to realise that while our island status may have encouraged the idea of the 'fortress built by Nature', populated by a single 'happy breed of men', for the vast majority of our history the sea has acted less as a barrier and more as a highway and a bridge: 'the inhabitants of these maritime crossroads could reach out into the world and the world could come to them' (Miles 2005: 26). In the words of a former Culture Minister, Margaret Hodge, 'we have to understand that the essence of our cultural identity is not fixed or immutable – we have always been an open society, traditional importers and exporters of talent and ideas' (Hodge 2008). And talent and ideas rarely travel alone, they are borne by people. 'Outsiders' have been behind many of the most significant innovations in technology and society in Britain (Wood *et al* 2006).

Yet unlike many other countries migration is not part of our national mythology; rarely do we think of ourselves as a nation of migrants, however misguided and contradictory the concept of the 'true-born Englishman' may be, as Daniel Defoe pointed out in 1700 (Winder 2004: 12). Migration history also remains a marginal topic for historical research: as historians Kathy Burrell and Panikos Panayi have highlighted, 'immigration remains neglected in both national history and public memory' (Burrell and Panayi 2006: 16). The consequence of our collective forgetfulness has been to open up a space for the stigmatisation of more recent migrants as

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1. [www.wdwtwa.org.uk/whatiswdwtwa](http://www.wdwtwa.org.uk/whatiswdwtwa). The project follows the recent Curriculum Review on Diversity and Citizenship, undertaken by Sir Keith Ajegbo. Who Do We Think We Are? is led by the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), Historical Association and Citizenship Consultant Paula Kitching and supported by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

a threat, particularly those whose 'race' or ethnicity made their differences visible: a threat to law and order, to job security and above all to some ill-defined but widely held notion of 'Britishness'. If anything, attitudes towards immigration have hardened in recent years with more people believing, perversely, that immigration 'closes Britain off to new ideas and cultures' (BBC 2004).

As Nick Merriman, formerly a curator at the Museum of London (and now the Director of the Manchester Museum) noted when conducting the research for the seminal 'Peopling of London' exhibition in 1993:

'Perusal of the rhetoric of racist groups made it clear that much of their message was predicated on the notion that – in Britain at least – there had been a homogeneous white population prior to 1945, bound together by a common history and set of values, and that after 1945 this homogeneity had been overlain by the introduction of – in their terms – alien non-white populations with different histories, values and cultural backgrounds who did not belong to Britain and were the source of many of the nation's current woes.' (Merriman 1997: 121)

At that time the heritage sector did little to dispel these myths; nowhere in the Museum of London's displays was there evidence of the medieval Jewish community (and its subsequent expulsion and return), the continuous black presence since the sixteenth century, the establishment of Asian communities since the seventeenth century and the significant populations of Chinese, Italian and German origin in the nineteenth century. The cultural heritage of traveller communities, the quintessential migrants, is also invariably absent from the records.

These gaps matter. They matter because they have the effect of fostering an exclusive, hierarchical understanding of British identity, in which a sense of entitlement is felt by many to derive from notions about the length of time a particular group may have been present in these islands, notions that are often aligned with race. They matter too in a globalised world, where there is a growing need for collective narratives that provide a historical framework for today's interconnectedness and help us to understand our place in the world (Urry 1996). To think about the British history of immigration and emigration is to engage profoundly with just what it means to be British. It is not to tack a new story on to an established set of agreed accounts. Rather, it is to rise to Professor Stuart Hall's challenge to 're-define the nation' and re-imagine 'Britishness' itself 'in a more profoundly inclusive manner' (Hall 1999: 10).

This does not mean finding ways to grudgingly acknowledge that recent arrivals can be British too; it means learning to think of even the most deeply-rooted inhabitants as, once, new arrivals themselves. The idea of a 'profoundly inclusive' heritage has often been taken as synonymous with (in some quarters increasingly maligned) policies of multiculturalism. But this is to misunderstand the opportunity our shared heritage of migration represents; pluralising, but above all complicating, 'our island story' is, as another former Culture Minister David Lammy has pointed out, a way of staking out *more*, not *less*, common ground between the contemporary inhabitants of these islands (Lammy 2005).

In advocating a conceptual shift from the idea of Britain as island fortress to Britain as a global crossroads our aim is not to substitute one myth for another. Nor is it to suggest that all migrations across all historical periods are readily or usefully comparable. There have been periods of greater population stasis, just as there have been periods of more flux. The years since the fall of the Berlin Wall have seen particularly high levels of movement across Europe's borders, both internal and external (Feldman 2008); indeed it is the pressing need to adapt our outmoded concepts of collective belonging better to accommodate these phenomena that lies behind the desire to revisit the dominant historical narrative.

However, the intention remains to open up Britain's history to a wider range of influences and interpretations, not to dictate a new orthodoxy. Our introspective 'island story' was monolithic and oppressive of difference; our outward-looking 'island stories' should be anything but. And they should trouble notions of 'Britishness', including the newer revised versions, just as much as they serve to shape them. Heritage, like migration, is *process* not product, the 'locus and instrument of undoing and redoing history' (Prakash 2004: 208), not its immutable material expression.

## 2. Why should migration be represented in the heritage sector?

Even if we accept the premise that migration deserves to play a greater role in the national imagination, we might nevertheless ask what it is about the heritage sector that equips it to achieve this outcome. While museum and gallery attendance in the UK is relatively high (41.5 per cent of all adults attended a museum or a gallery in 2006–7) many adults never enter one (71.7 per cent of adults in the ‘low socio-economic’ priority group did not visit a museum or gallery in the same year) (Museums, Libraries and Archives Council [MLA] 2008). However, museums, archives and heritage sites have an impact that extends beyond the changes they can make to the lives of individual visitors. They send out strong signals about what we value as a nation. They can help foster a sense of belonging. They are also, increasingly, spaces for debate. And they do all these things not by reinventing themselves as agents of social policy but by returning to their core activities: collecting and interpreting the material traces of our past.

### **Heritage as mirror**

The heritage sector carries great symbolic weight. As such it is a powerful source of cultural meanings. The choices we make in developing collections, or, for an organisation like the National Trust, in acquiring sites, determine who and what we see as belonging to our national community and reflecting our values (Hall 1999). In recent years we have seen how an expanding understanding of cultural heritage has impacted on the priorities of heritage organisations; the idea that the National Trust might acquire properties such as the nineteenth century Back-to-Backs in Birmingham or the childhood home of John Lennon in Liverpool would have been unthinkable not so long ago since popular and working-class culture did not use to be considered ‘culture’ at all. It follows that, like popular culture and working-class lives, our migration stories deserve a more prominent place in our national self-understanding and need to be more visible in our heritage institutions.

Moreover, our collective failure to engage in an informed way with contemporary migration patterns derives from our ignorance about this aspect of our history, the product of a carefully orchestrated amnesia. What is needed to redress this is a form of ‘memory work’, a new archaeology of our past to reveal buried meanings. Because of the richness of their collections, museums, archives and heritage sites are ideally placed to carry out this work. As the museum anthropologist Anthony Shelton has explained, ‘In a society that has consistently failed to come to terms with its historical relationship with less industrialized societies and the nature of its own cultural identity in a newly aligned Europe, museums are in a unique position to encourage public debate about such issues since they are the custodians of the fragmentary evidence that provides the greatest contradictions to prejudiced misconception’ (cited in Coxall 1997: 115). It is these fragments that need to be unearthed and held up in the mirror for all to see.

Undertaking more of this work may represent a shift for some heritage organisations, but in the long run not doing so represents the greater risk. For when a group or individual’s heritage is ignored or overshadowed by the dominant narratives – in other words, when they cannot see themselves reflected anywhere in the mirror – the long-term outcome can be ‘disaffection, disillusionment and disenfranchisement’ (MCAAH 2005: 10). The absence of certain groups from ‘national cultural institutions’ and ‘the official view of history’ is ‘significant’: ‘it is like being rubbed out of history’ (Wood *et al* 2006: 34). Rather than fostering a more cohesive society, if the heritage sector continues to under-represent migration histories it may find it is contributing unwittingly to its fragmentation.

An English Heritage-commissioned MORI poll in 2000 found that 75 per cent of the black community and 63 per cent of the Asian community thought that they were underrepresented in the nation’s heritage; somewhat surprisingly 45 per cent of the white



community agreed with them (MORI 2000).<sup>2</sup> Much has been done even since these surveys were conducted but in short, there is widespread public support for more work in this area and the nervousness at management level that many museum and heritage professionals report about conducting more work of this type would not appear to be justified.

### **Heritage as broker**

Above and beyond its symbolic value, the value of the heritage sector lies in its ability to provide 'the safe, shared spaces in which assumptions can be challenged, where difficult issues can be addressed, where we can test the boundaries, but in the process move towards a better sense of ourselves' (Hodge 2008). This is important: 'In this era of plural identities, we need civil times and civil spaces more than ever, for these are essential to the democratic process by which individuals and groups come together to discuss, debate and negotiate the past and, through this process, define the future' (Gillis 1994: 20). As civil spaces, heritage sites have the potential to host conversations around contentious issues, including migration.

At 19 Prinzelet Street, the independent museum of immigration and diversity in the East End of London, a site specific installation by Suzana Tamamovic uses the fabric of the building to explore the fears, anxieties, longings and desires of refugees. This work often provokes thoughtful, impassioned and sometimes angry responses from visitors which volunteers are encouraged to channel into a constructive exchange of ideas, often bringing other visitors into the discussion. Heritage, in short, has the potential to build on material culture to broker a more nuanced, complex reading of the past and, by extension, of the present.

Once again, stimulating critical debate is not an add-on to core activities: it derives from the very nature of the sites and collections whose greatest asset is their availability for multiple interpretations. For example, a document or an artefact relating to the founding of Barings Bank could be used to tell the story of the role of Protestant immigrants and refugees in establishing many of the great institutions of the City of London. Alternatively, it could also be used to stimulate reflection on the legacy of the slave trade since the bank was founded largely on Francis Baring's profits from this activity. The aim of this example is not to point the finger, merely to provide a simple illustration of the ways in which the documentary and material culture of the past can be used to draw out the complexities of our migration heritage. Britain's migration history, with its continual interweaving of narratives of immigration, emigration and forced migration, sometimes even in the course of a single individual's or family's life, is unusually complex. Heritage sites, as places where these threads can be untangled, examined and rewound, can play a unique role in helping us as a nation to come to terms with this unstable and intricate past.

### **Towards heritage diversity**

In recognition both of the heritage sector's responsibility to serve society as a whole (including previously under-represented audiences, such as communities of African and Asian heritage) and the unique role it can play in fostering intercultural dialogue, it has in recent years engaged at length with cultural diversity and how best to represent it. In this report we take the view that 'cultural diversity' is only one aspect of a much bigger national picture that should include many categories of individuals who do not necessarily feel themselves to be concerned by the 'cultural diversity' agenda. Nevertheless, it is useful briefly to review this literature, since its findings inform the thinking of this report. The debate about the representation and presence in museums and galleries of culturally diverse arts and artists was kicked off in 1976 by Naseem Khan's influential and wide-reaching study *The Arts Britain Ignores* (see Khan 2005). Appendix 1 lists some of the key publications that have

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2. By 2003, overall 72 per cent of people thought that more should be done to recognise the contribution made by different communities to our heritage (English Heritage 2003).

addressed the issues around cultural diversity in the heritage sector in the last decade. For the fullest overview of the theoretical and practical background to this debate see Lola Young's essay for the Museum of London<sup>3</sup>.

### Beyond diversity

While the emphasis on cultural diversity has done much to move the heritage sector forward, as a strategy it also has its limitations. Put simply, there is a risk that the emphasis on cultural diversity encourages museums, galleries and heritage sites to present a very static picture of diversity, a 'mosaic' approach, which, if not handled with great sensitivity, may encourage an idea of society composed of discrete, exclusive communities. Moreover, a predominantly celebratory approach to previously hidden histories can institutionalise new silences and hierarchies (Kushner 2006).

The risk of a reductive tokenism was acknowledged by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in its 2006 major review of the museum sector:

'There is a risk of pigeonholing people in a tokenistic way. In choosing which identities to explore, museums, are making an implicit statement that these are the identities that matter. We risk replacing a single dominant story with a series of stories that fail to connect with one another – the "Muslim" story or the "working class" story. [...] Museums need to recognise the multiple histories of our diverse communities, but also to be places where cross-cutting stories can encounter one another, allowing different historical traditions to meet.'

(DCMS 2006: 13)

One way in which this can be achieved is by placing the emphasis on *migration as process* as much as on *diversity as outcome*. This approach also helps to encourage an understanding of identities as self-representations that are neither immutable nor somehow 'natural', but created over time in response to changing circumstances, new environments and encounters with new peoples. The heritage sector is uniquely placed to restore a sense of historical temporality to representations of diversity, or, in other words, to ground a growing number of interlocking 'horizontal' stories about who we are today in a complex web of 'vertical' stories about where we have come from (DCMS 2006).

Rather than migration being seen as one aspect of a cultural diversity agenda, cultural diversity (in so far as it refers to 'ethnicity and race'<sup>4</sup>) could instead be perceived as a subset of a much more far-reaching national migration story. Situating contemporary diversity in the context of the long history of population and settlement, but also of the movements of people in and out of Britain that defined the Imperial period, would make it harder to maintain existing assumptions about 'majority' and 'minority' communities by emphasising not so much difference as commonality.

### The educational need

There are more than 10 million children of school age in the UK. As a group they comprise a significant proportion of the heritage sector's visitors, either with their families, or through school-organised visits. Policy changes in English schools announced in 2008 will guarantee

3. 'Our lives, our histories, our collections' by Lola Young,

[www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/Collections/OnlineResources/RWWC/Essays/Essay2/](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/Collections/OnlineResources/RWWC/Essays/Essay2/)

4. In the MLA's document *Cultural Diversity Statement, Issues and Action Plan for Resource* (Resource 2003), cultural diversity is defined as 'diversity based around ethnicity and race'. The MLA's current agreed definition of diversity is much broader: 'Diversity is about the range of visible and non-visible differences that exist between people. These differences include those relating to ethnicity and race, class, intellectual and physical ability, urban and rural living, faith and gender, sexuality and age' (Hylton 2004: 2).

every child five hours of cultural activities every week, which at times will include visits to museums. Additionally, pressures on teaching time in the primary school curriculum means that there is less formal teaching of History in these schools than there was 20 years ago. Instead, primary school children usually receive much of their historical knowledge and understanding through one-off museum visits.

English schools also have a duty to promote social cohesion, and the study of migration is a compulsory part of the curriculum in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, through Citizenship education, History and Geography. As a consequence there is a growing demand for the heritage sector to provide suitable resources in this area. Any new approach to representing migration in the UK heritage sector must respond effectively to the needs of child visitors, who will comprise a significant audience.

In the UK there has been a long history of educational interventions that have aimed to build better inter-ethnic relations, to which the heritage sector has contributed. The multicultural education movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s aimed to prepare children from the majority community for life in a multi-ethnic society. At this time schools began to celebrate festivals other than those that were Christian. School textbooks were also reviewed for their portrayal of minority cultures.

But by the mid-1980s, multicultural education had begun to attract criticism for homogenising and exoticising the cultural forms of minority groups, as well as failing to challenge the deep-rooted inequalities within British society. A growing anti-racist movement called for minority groups to unify as British Blacks and fight racism. This more assertive movement again led to a rewriting of school textbooks, school projects that explicitly examined ethnic inequalities in the UK, as well as school policies that aimed to confront racism (Klein 1993). A number of heritage sector diversity initiatives have their roots in this period, for example, Black History Month, the Black Cultural Archives, and the now defunct Ethnic Communities Oral History Project.

But there was criticism in some quarters of the tone of some anti-racist initiatives. Academics challenged dominant constructions of race and anti-racism for failing to acknowledge the range of different types of racism in the UK and the experiences of groups such as Cypriots, Irish, Polish and Gypsy Roma (Anthias and Yuval-Davies 1992, Rattansi 1992). In schools, implementing wider educational reforms made demands on teachers' time and energy and in such a climate educational initiatives that examined diversity or ethnic inequality were given less priority. But this lull was only temporary. Increased refugee migration during the 1990s and the demonisation of this group by some sectors of the media led a number of refugee NGOs to produce teaching resources and organise educational programmes as a means of getting their message across to a youth audience. These same organisations formed Refugee Week in 1998, a week of events that involves schools and the heritage sector, as well as many community organisations.

But since late 2001, terms such as racism and race equality have been replaced in schools as in a number of other areas of government by a new policy agenda: social cohesion. This policy shift was caused by concerns about religious extremism after the 2001 and 2005 atrocities in New York and London, the Bradford and Oldham disturbances of 2001 and reports into the latter events which identified the housing, educational and employment segregation of Muslims within a number of British cities.

In response to these concerns, government imposed a duty on schools to promote social cohesion and as part of this process initiated a review of the English school citizenship curriculum, with the aim of using this subject to bring diverse communities together and create a common British identity. This review led to a redrafting of the secondary citizenship curriculum, with the obligation that schools now teach children about 'migration, to, from and within the UK'. However, this new requirement is not yet matched by sufficient educational resources beyond the school gates, in sites such as museums. The launch of the

'Who do we think we are?' website<sup>5</sup> in 2008 which provides resources to teachers in this area is both a useful new resource in itself and evidence of the urgent need for additional resources.

This policy context raises four questions for the heritage sector educators:

1. What resources are presently available in the heritage sector for teaching about migration?
2. What migratory movements are represented in education initiatives, and what gaps exist?
3. How effective are present heritage sector educational initiatives in building good inter-ethnic relations and greater social cohesion?
4. If we want to promote our migration heritage, what form should the educational and child-centred components take?

Many of the specialist sites, as well as temporary exhibitions discussed in this report have attached educational programmes. Websites such as Moving Here ([www.movinghere.org.uk](http://www.movinghere.org.uk)) have been designed to be accessible for all age groups. But like the exhibits themselves, much of the educational material (as well as school books) places greater emphasis on cultural diversity and downplays both migration as a process and the impact of new arrivals on shaping the host cultures. There are many gaps in coverage, in particular emigration from the UK, European immigration and the smaller and newer communities that have arrived in the UK during the last ten years. Indeed, in many respects the gaps in educational coverage mirror those in the heritage sector as a whole (see below).

Many specialist sites and temporary exhibitions have been located in London and other large metropolitan areas. Children who live outside the big cities have had much less opportunity to visit these exhibitions. In general, there is little 'hands-on' material relating to migration and available on a regular basis to young people across the UK. Heritage sector online resources that might help fill this gap struggle to compete with the sophisticated media platforms many children are used to. There is scope, then, for more educational work in more locations, but also for better work. Many educational interventions that have aimed to challenge prejudice have not been informed by research into social identity and cognitive development theories of prejudice (unlike in post-conflict zones such as Rwanda and the Balkans) and as such have not scored well in evaluations (Lemos 2005).

It is essential that any future heritage sector migration initiative both fills the historical gaps and successfully engages the child audience.

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5. For the website's approach to migration see the article by Keith Ajegbo, 'These days people are on the move', [www.wdwtwa.org.uk/news/55/these-days-people-are-on-the-move.html](http://www.wdwtwa.org.uk/news/55/these-days-people-are-on-the-move.html)

### 3. Existing migration initiatives in the UK

In recent years many museums, heritage sites and community organisations have taken up the challenge of improving the public representation of migration. This section provides an overview of these initiatives, based on information provided by heritage professionals working in this field. It is by no means comprehensive and there may be important projects that have not been included. Moreover, the range and diversity of these initiatives should not disguise the fact that coverage remains patchy. Many visitors to museums and heritage sites may still come away with no inkling of the complexity of population histories in a given area. And often organisations depend on the commitment of individual curators of this agenda. There is still much work to be done to embed migration histories in the heritage mainstream.

#### **From the margins to the mainstream: the 1980s to the present**

In Jon McGregor's 2006 novel *So Many Ways to Begin* the central character, David Carter, a curator at Coventry Museum, decides to curate an exhibition entitled 'Refugees, Migrants, New Arrivals'. The year is 1975 and while Carter's fictional Director is reluctant to support the project, he recognises that this is a 'fashionable' subject. Had a real life David Carter been engaging with Coventry's various communities to put together an exhibition about migration histories as early as 1975 he would have been a very early pioneer.

That said, it was in the mid 1970s that migration as a subject the heritage sector should be tackling was first discussed with any seriousness. In this section we attempt to review what has happened since, but it is important to note first that this working group is not the first body to float the idea of a national museum of migration. Indeed, in 1999, the Asha Foundation was awarded £10 million by the Millennium Commission to establish such a museum. Sadly, it failed to come up with the matched funding and the project had to be abandoned (Dean 2005).

Back in the 1970s, ambitions were much more modest than they are today. Small, local museums quietly started to consider how the migration stories of their local audiences could be better represented: Hackney, Bruce Castle in Haringey and Leicester Museums are notable examples (Fussell 1991). This engagement with migration came out of the extent to which such museums are embedded in their local communities. This often comes with a strong sense of responsibility towards the community as a whole and a more immediate awareness of who is being left out, which then translates into a desire to build 'a responsive museum service' (MacDonald 1995).

Today, following recent redevelopments, migration stories are at the heart of some of these same institutions: Hackney and Brent in London remain outstanding examples. In a similar vein, museums in areas that have long been key points of arrival and departure, such as the Dover Museum, necessarily place narratives of exchange of peoples and cultures in the foreground. However, openness to migration narratives is not always synonymous with a willingness to use the museum to tackle the prejudice and hostility experienced by newcomers. Dover Museum, for example, uses its award-winning Bronze Age Boat display to explore cross-Channel links 3,500 years ago, but it does not seem to have been prepared to tackle head on the thornier contemporary questions of clandestine immigration across the English Channel and the duty of care towards refugees, issues that have cast a dark shadow over local politics in recent years.

While various local initiatives were taking place during the 1970s and 1980s, it was not until 1993 that a truly landmark event in the representation of migration took place, with the Museum of London's 'The Peopling of London' exhibition. Beginning in 15,000 BCE, the exhibition charted a broad range of migration streams into the city of London from the Romans, via the 'Age of Empire' to a final section, 'The World in a City', mapping out the

demographic character of London since 1945. As Raminder Kaur has argued in an essay for the Museum of London, through this exhibition 'the island race is rapidly dispelled as the myth that it always was' (Kaur 2005).

There were, inevitably, grounds for criticism of the Peopling of London exhibition: some people felt consultation was tokenistic and that the exhibition was at times essentialising in its representation of London's minority communities (see Merriman *et al* 1996). Nevertheless, the legacy of the exhibition has been significant. At the Museum of London itself it has informed the thinking behind a series of redevelopments, notably the complete redesign of the contemporary galleries (which look at 1666 to the present), scheduled to open in 2010 at a cost of £20.5 million<sup>6</sup>. Migration is also now a prominent theme in the Medieval and Roman galleries, thanks in part to the impetus provided by The Peopling of London.

The conclusion to the evaluation of the exhibition – that migration stories should be 'mainstreamed' throughout the museum's work – is now a view shared by professionals across the sector, even if change is sometimes frustratingly slow. Nevertheless, new museums, or museums undergoing substantial redevelopment, are increasingly placing migration at the heart of their new narratives. The 'Global City' gallery in the new Museum of Liverpool, opening in 2010/11, will, for example, 'give an overview of the places Liverpool traded with across the world, what was imported and exported, and where people who settled in Liverpool migrated from', in conjunction with the wider objective of giving due consideration to 'Liverpool and Britain's role in the British Empire'<sup>7</sup>.

Similarly, as part of the consultation process for the new Museum of Bristol (opening 2011) stories about migration to the area, under the title 'When and why did you or your family come to Bristol?', are being collected from the public<sup>8</sup>. The new museum will also include a gallery on Bristol and the slave trade (Heritage Lottery Fund 2006).

Outside the Museum of London, one of the first museums to mainstream migration histories was Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in the 1990 refit of 'Gallery 33' ('A Meeting Ground of Cultures'). Eschewing the tendency to take a celebratory, multicultural approach, the gallery aimed to 'deconstruct colonialism, recontextualise twentieth-century migrations and integrate the histories of white Britons and ethnic minorities' (Pierson Jones 1992: 240).

A good example of how migration is increasingly embedded in museum representations of both national and local history in areas where it might previously not have been expected is provided by the British Galleries at London's Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). Throughout, the exhibition acknowledges the contributions of migratory flows to the decorative arts in Britain, for example, in the influence of French Huguenot weavers on textile design and of Imperial trading networks on seventeenth and eighteenth century manufacturing. Through the 'Whose Story?' project, the National Trust has also been integrating migration stories into its interpretative strategies, notably at Charlecote Park and Wightwick Manor (see Grosvenor and Myers 2006 on the latter).

In the archives sector a growing awareness of the importance of developing representative collections has led archives to develop more proactive acquisitions policies with a view to filling in some of gaps in their collections (for example, around migration). The London Metropolitan Archives provides a good example of this change: recent deposits include the important collections of African-Caribbean activists and publishers Eric and Jessica Huntley,

6. 'What's happening at the Museum of London?'

[www.museumoflondon.org.uk/english/supportus/capitalcityproject/whatsappenmol.htm](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/english/supportus/capitalcityproject/whatsappenmol.htm)

7. 'Global City', [www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/galleries/globalcity/index.aspx](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/galleries/globalcity/index.aspx)

8. 'What's Your Bristol?', [www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Leisure-Culture/Museums-Galleries/museum-of-bristol---whats-your-bristol.en](http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Leisure-Culture/Museums-Galleries/museum-of-bristol---whats-your-bristol.en)

of the Muslim Women's Helpline and, of particular interest for the theme of migration, 44 metres of records from the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation dating from the mid-seventeenth century. The 'Legacy' project at Tyne and Wear archives has focused on revisiting the collections in order to draw out hidden migration histories in the existing mainstream collections and making these more accessible to users, through the production of a user guide to records of ethnic communities and (separately) to migration. The migration user guide includes references from workhouse admission lists and trade union archives, highlighting the pervasiveness of the migration experience.

Whether 'migration' or 'cultural diversity' is the best way of framing an inclusive approach to heritage is, however, a subject for debate. St Fagan's, the National History Museum of Wales, is currently engaged in developing a new museum-wide interpretation strategy with a view to contributing to a significant collective re-evaluation of what it means to be Welsh. The main message of the new strategy is as follows:

'There is no such thing as one Welsh identity – there are many. The exhibition will explore how our sense of who we are, and where we belong, is shaped by language, beliefs, family ties and a sense of nationhood. It will show that culture and traditions are constantly evolving, and will question what the future holds for a nation like Wales in a global age.' (St Fagans 2007: 1)

Clearly, migration patterns will be fundamental to an understanding of 'a nation like Wales in a global age'. Elsewhere in the strategy this is made more explicit: Wales's complex religious tapestry is for example to be interpreted as a product of migration. But it should not be assumed that migration stories alone can support the whole fabric of a renewed Welsh identity. This example highlights the fact that migration histories need to complement and deepen rather than displace cultural diversity themes.

### **Temporary exhibitions: cross-cultural immigration stories**

'The Peopling of London' established a temporary exhibition model that has been copied in a number of organisations. The following initiatives are all linked by the fact that they have taken 'the long view' with regard to the history of migration and have sought to emphasise links between communities by taking a chronological or thematic approach. All have, however, focused on immigration rather than broader migration histories.

- 'Moving In – The Peopling of Ealing over 1000 years', Gunnersbury Park Museum, Acton, 2000.
- 'Encounters: The Meeting of Asia and Europe 1500–1800', V&A, 2004. While this exhibition was not focused on the history of migration, its three sections – discoveries, encounters, exchanges – necessarily engaged in an in-depth way with Britain in the world, and the world in Britain, in this crucial historical period.
- 'Our People Our Times', Northern Ireland Museums Council, 2004. This exhibition, which began with 'Ireland's first migrants' in the Mesolithic period, toured to a number of locations. Each host institution prepared a series of activities to accompany the exhibition (Croke 2007).
- 'Closing the Door? Immigrants to Britain 1905–2005', The Jewish Museum, London, 2005. This exhibition took the centenary of the Aliens Act as the starting point for exploring 'how migrant and refugee communities have struggled and survived, despite the restrictions on their right of entry, and how they have enriched and enhanced British society.'
- 'What would you do if...?', Salford Museum, 2006. This exhibition focused on the experience of refugees in North West England but also included a 'migration timeline', documenting the history of migration to Salford since the fourteenth century.

- 'Roots to Cardiff – how the world made a city', Cardiff Museum, 2007.
- 'Destination Tyne & Wear – Stories of Migrant Communities in the North East', Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, 2008.
- 'Connections: hidden British histories', touring, 2005 to present. The 'Connections' exhibition is one outcome of a joint project launched in 1998 between the Jewish Council for Racial Equality (JCORE), the Asian-Black-Jewish Forum and the Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations at Southampton University. In addition to a website that explores the parallels between Black, Jewish and Asian histories in Britain a 24-panel exhibition for young people was prepared. This exhibition has toured to schools, libraries and community centres.

### **Showcasing cultural diversity**

Not all museums and heritage sites have engaged with the history of migration in a cross-cultural context, but most have at some stage used exhibitions to showcase the cultural diversity resulting from migration. Sometimes these have been developed by museum professionals keen to provide a more inclusive service to their communities, and sometimes the impetus has come from within the community. The various options are discussed by Crooke (2007). Here we list only a few key exhibitions:

- 'Reflections of the Black Experience', Brixton Art Gallery, 1986. This group show was the first to showcase the work of Black British photographers. It led to the creation of the agency Autograph, which has just recently established the first archive of culturally diverse visual arts at Rivington Place in Shoreditch, London. The archive will be a major resource for the study of the representation of migration in the visual arts.
- 'The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain', The Hayward Gallery, London, 1989.
- 'Warm, Rich and Fearless: A Brief Survey of the Sikh Culture', Cartwright Hall, Bradford Art Galleries and Museums, 1991. The reflections of the curator, Nima Poovaya-Smith have been very influential in shaping the way museums and galleries work with under-represented communities (Poovaya-Smith 1997).

A long and varied list could be drawn up from institutions of all sizes: 'Black British Style' (V&A 2004), 'Coal, Frankincense & Myrrh: Yemen and British Yemenis' (Weston Park Museum, Sheffield, 2007–8), 'The World in the East End' (Museum of Childhood, 2005–8), 'Identities' (Jewish Museum, 2006), 'Little Italy: The Story of London's Italian Quarter' (Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, 2008), 'From Bec to Broadway' (Wandsworth Museum, 2003) and so on. The 'Moving Here' project (see below) facilitated a lot of projects focused on individual community narratives (including 'From Bec to Broadway', which explored the South Asian community in the Tooting area of South London) as did the Local History Initiative (2000–6).

### **Issue-based initiatives**

#### **Asylum and refugees**

Asylum and refugees have been the focus of a number of projects, designed to challenge negative stereotypes around refugees, to attract new audiences and to use heritage sites to contribute to the integration of refugees in the UK.

With regard to exhibitions, 'Belonging: Voices of London's Refugees' at the Museum of London (2006) is the most high-profile example. 'Belonging' was created as part of the Refugee Communities History Project, a partnership between the Evelyn Oldfield Unit, Museum of London, London Metropolitan University and more than fifteen refugee community organisations and resulted in the collection of more than 160 in-depth life story



interviews, as well as photographs and objects. It also featured work created as part of the Refugee Heritage Programme, an initiative of the London Museums Hub, funded by the Renaissance programme, in which four local museums worked with five refugee organisations. The museums involved were: Croydon, Hackney, The Ragged School Museum (Tower Hamlets) and the Redbridge Museum. The museums worked with African, Kurdish, Somali and Afghan groups respectively. The Refugee Heritage Programme culminated in a conference at the Museum in Docklands in March 2008 which revealed the diversity of initiatives around refugee involvement in the heritage sector.

Glasgow's Gallery of Modern Art addressed this theme in a 2003 exhibition, as did Salford Museum and Art Gallery in the 2006 exhibition 'What would you do if...?'. Both these institutions were also engaging with refugee communities behind the scenes. Salford developed a Refugee Volunteer Programme, and Glasgow's exhibition was part of a bigger 'Sanctuary' project that included fourteen outreach projects in partnership with Amnesty International (Mulhearn 2007). The Salford project was part of a joint initiative by the DCMS and Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Children, Schools and Families) entitled 'Engaging Refugees and Asylum Seekers'. Other partners included National Museums Liverpool, Leicester City Museums Service, and Tyne and Wear Museums (Hybrid 2008).

The focus of this report is on representation rather than community engagement and as such there is not space to go into the full range of heritage sector initiatives aimed at engaging refugees. It is important to highlight the work of Refugee Action in delivering 'refugee awareness training' to staff in museums and libraries in Bristol, Liverpool and Nottingham. The growing trend for heritage sector organisations to engage with refugees through ESOL teaching (English for Speakers of Other Languages) should also be mentioned; the V&A has been a leader in this area.

### **Enslavement and the slave trade**

With the projects developed to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 2007 the forced migration of enslaved Africans and the legacy of the trade in Britain became firmly embedded in the UK heritage landscape. Over £20 million was awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund for projects inspired by the bicentenary (DCLG 2007), often leaving a permanent (or at least long-term) legacy (for example the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool and the acclaimed 'London, Sugar and Slavery' exhibition at Museum in Docklands).

### **Migration in rural areas**

Compared with migration in cities, this aspect of migration heritage has been under-represented. However, there have been a number of recent initiatives inspired by the need to provide a context for understanding the presence and needs of migrant agricultural workers in rural areas. 'Feast of Fenland' (Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, Wisbech and Fenland Museum and touring, 2007–8), was a travelling exhibition centred on food, but which used this theme to 'put migrant workers in a proper historical context and show they are nothing new' (David Worthington, Renaissance East Midlands projects manager, cited in Stephens 2007). Also in Norfolk, the 'Brandon Cultural Heritage Project' was a local history project that focused on migrant workers in Brandon in Suffolk and Thetford in Norfolk.

'I packed this myself' was a travelling exhibition put together by Bridging Arts with migrant artists' association Apart Arts and funding from the Diocese of Truro and administered by Cornwall Community Foundation. A community-based exhibition, it sought to 'throw a spotlight on the hundreds of migrant workers who work across Cornwall throughout the year'.<sup>11</sup>

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11. [www.bridging-arts.com/news/i-packed-this-myself-photogallery](http://www.bridging-arts.com/news/i-packed-this-myself-photogallery)

A number of projects in the Local History Initiative, which was administered by the Countryside Agency, also explored migration in rural areas, for example, the 'Biddulph East Oral History Art Project', which explored the impact of migration from Central and Eastern Europe 'and from all areas of Britain' to this area of Staffordshire apparently known locally as the 'Little United Nations.'<sup>12</sup>

### **Migration and the armed forces**

Until recently the involvement of troops from the British Empire in fighting in the conflicts of the twentieth century in particular had largely been ignored. This was particularly true for Africans and African-Caribbeans. The stationing of Caribbean troops on the home front during the Second World War makes this a particularly important episode in the history of the African-Caribbean presence in the UK. However, there are some signs that contributions like this are starting to gain more recognition.

The Ministry of Defence's 'We Were There' exhibition has been touring the UK, highlighting the often under-recognised contribution made to Britain's Defence over the last 250 years by men and women from Africa, Asia, the West Indies and other Commonwealth countries. 'From War to Windrush' at the Imperial War Museum, London (2008–9) is another attempt to fill this gap. Similarly, artist Said Adrus's 'Pavillion Recaptured' exhibition for The Lightbox, Woking (2008) explored the complex and forgotten history of the Muslim soldiers of the Indian Army who fought for Britain in the First World War.

Refugee Week in June and Black History Month in October are key drivers for temporary exhibitions or events. These weeks are useful in that they raise the profile of particular histories. However, Black History Month, now in its 21st year in the UK, is seen by some as 'ghettoizing' and even as a barrier to mainstreaming Black history in the heritage sector.

### **Specialist sites and institutions**

In addition to projects within existing institutions there are a number of specialist sites with migration-related collections. These organisations are often independent and struggle to gather the necessary funds.

#### **19 Princelet Street**

19 Princelet Street is currently as close as the UK comes to having a permanent migration museum. Many generations of migrants from across the globe have found shelter in this eighteenth century house in the East End of London, from the Huguenot refugees who were its first residents to the Polish Jews who paved over the garden to build a synagogue in the nineteenth century and their successors who held anti-fascist meetings in the basement in the 1930s. What makes the site so precious is the way the traces of these successive habitations are all preserved in the fabric of the building: 'Listen to the walls', one of the installations urges.

The building was purchased in 1981 by a charitable trust, the 'Spitalfields Centre for the Study of Minorities', which was set up in order to secure the house's preservation. 19 Princelet Street was registered as a charity in 1983. The project was pioneered by Tassaduq Ahmed, a leading figure in the local Bengali community, and Rabbi Hugo Gryn. From the outset, fostering intercultural understanding has been at the heart of the charity's work. One example is the 2000 'Suitcases and Sanctuaries' exhibition project, undertaken with the support of the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, where children from predominantly Muslim schools worked on Jewish histories and vice versa. The intercultural emphasis is also reflected in the profile of the volunteers, who are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds (and include refugees).

12. [www.lhi.org.uk/projects\\_directory/projects\\_by\\_region/west\\_midlands/staffordshire/biddulph\\_east\\_oral\\_history\\_art\\_project/index.html](http://www.lhi.org.uk/projects_directory/projects_by_region/west_midlands/staffordshire/biddulph_east_oral_history_art_project/index.html)

19 Princelet Street enjoys a high level of public recognition following profiles in a wide range of media<sup>13</sup> and would be a popular choice for a permanent museum of migration. The main difficulty the charity faces in moving to the next level is raising the matched funding necessary to draw on public sources, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund (at least £3 million is required). Immigration, apparently, remains a subject with which private sponsors are uncomfortable. Ironically, this may be because the absence of a national museum or similarly high-profile initiative means that it is not seen by many as part of the national heritage. In 2002 19 Princelet Street was placed on English Heritage's 'Buildings at Risk' register. English Heritage also contributed £30,000 for urgent structural repairs. The ongoing fragility of the building means it can currently only open for a few days a year.

19 Princelet Street is a founder member of the UNESCO migration museums network and is also part of the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience, which also includes the Lower East Side Tenement Museum in New York City.

### **Butetown History and Arts Centre**

The Butetown Centre in Cardiff is a local history and cultural centre established in 1987 which aims 'to ensure that the social and cultural history of Cardiff Docklands, one of Britain's most famous communities, is carefully collected and preserved'. The centre aims to create a 'Bay Peoples' archive and museum and to that end is building up collections relating to the history of the area, including the important history of migration in the docks. The centre is an independent charity.

### **Specialist sites by community**

The following major institutions specialise in the heritage of particular communities (with important migration histories). Their activities reflect the strengths of their expert staff and collections.

- **Jewish museums.** There are notable Jewish museums in London and Manchester. Both hold collections documenting the social and cultural history of Jews in Britain, in addition to impressive collections of Judaica. The Jewish Museum in London is currently undergoing a £9.2 million redevelopment programme. The renewed museum will aim to 'build on its valuable work in combating racism and prejudice, promoting interfaith respect and understanding, and contributing to cultural diversity in London and the UK.'
- **The Black Cultural Archives.** Thirty years in the making, the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton, South London, has recently been awarded £4 million by the Heritage Lottery Fund to become a permanent museum and archive of the black presence in Britain.
- **The Ulster American Folkpark.** Documenting an emigrant rather than an immigrant community, the Ulster American Folkpark is an open-air museum in Co Tyrone, Northern Ireland that tells the story of emigration from Ulster to America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Folkpark was founded in 1976. Since 1998 it has been part of National Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland. Plans are currently being prepared to develop a National Museum of Emigration.

### **Specialist sites by theme**

Just as temporary exhibitions have explored particular themes in the history of migration, so there are dedicated thematic sites.

- **International Slavery Museum (ISM), Liverpool.** Opened in 2007 within Merseyside Maritime Museum, the ISM is part of National Museums Liverpool.

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13. [www.19princeletstreet.org.uk/press.html](http://www.19princeletstreet.org.uk/press.html)

- **British Empire and Commonwealth Museum (BECM)**, Bristol. Opened in 2002, the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum is the first major institution in the UK to present the 500-year history and legacy of Britain's overseas empire. Its 2007 exhibition 'Breaking the Chains – The Fight to End Slavery' was shortlisted for the coveted Art Fund prize. As an independent charity the BECM has struggled to attract the financial support it requires to meet its current £2 million annual running costs and is planning a move to London with the hope of securing its long-term future and reaching a larger international audience.

### Online initiatives

The physical initiatives described above are complemented by a set of online initiatives.

#### Immigration online

**Moving Here** – [www.movinghere.org.uk](http://www.movinghere.org.uk)

'Moving Here' was a consortium of 30 archives, libraries and museums that contributed to the online catalogue of 200,000 items relating to the history of migration to the UK. The first phase of the project dedicated to the development of this online resource and including essays on the history of the Irish, Jewish, Caribbean and South Asian communities in the UK was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and led by the National Archives. Visitors to the site were also encouraged to upload their own stories and 104 did so. 'Moving Here' also provides guidance for people from these communities looking to explore their family history, and this feature helps to explain the site's success.

A second phase from 2005–7 included four new regional heritage partners (MLA Yorkshire, West Midlands Museums Hub, East Midlands Museums Hub, and London Museums Hub) and a number of other organisations (National Museums Liverpool, the Royal Geographical Society, the Museum of London, West Yorkshire Archives Service, and the Jewish Museum), again led by the National Archives and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. This second phase was intended to facilitate community-based heritage projects around the history of migration across the UK. These projects are profiled on the website.<sup>15</sup>

The 'Moving Here' project has now closed. No new items are being added to the collections, nor are there ongoing plans to disseminate the research, although ongoing access is handled by the National Archives. Any proposals for additional online resources will need to plan for their long-term future.

**Origination** – [www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/R/racedebate/more.html](http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/R/racedebate/more.html)

'Origination: The Rich Mix of British History and Culture' is a Channel 4 mini-site, created in 2006, that 'brings together, the wealth of web resources recording and celebrating the contributions of immigrant cultures to contemporary Britain.'<sup>16</sup> Many of the resources it gathered have now been taken down, highlighting issues around the long-term sustainability of online resources. It continues to host a series of 'Talking Points', where various prominent figures share their views about multiculturalism and an ethnicity map of Britain.

#### The BBC

The BBC website provides detailed information about the history of immigration to the UK in a range of locations. In addition to 'Born Abroad: An Immigration Map of Britain'<sup>17</sup> (prepared in conjunction with ippr) local and regional pages offer detailed information about sometimes little-known migration history in their area, for example about the Polish community that came to settle in the village of Penley on the Wrexham-Shropshire border.<sup>18</sup>

15. [www.movinghere.org.uk/stories/default.asp](http://www.movinghere.org.uk/stories/default.asp)

16. [www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/R/racedebate/more.html](http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/R/racedebate/more.html)

17. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/uk/05/born\\_abroad/html/overview.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/uk/05/born_abroad/html/overview.stm)

18. [www.bbc.co.uk/wales/northeast/sites/wrexham/pages/penley.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/northeast/sites/wrexham/pages/penley.shtml)

### Emigration online

The Scottish Emigration Museum – [www.homecomingscotland.com](http://www.homecomingscotland.com)

This project, coordinated by the Scottish Museums Council, aims ‘to provide the global community with access to a unique, authoritative and inspirational online collection of Scots migration-related resources in partnership with key Diaspora partner countries’ (Scottish Museums Council 2008). It is due to be launched in time for the 2009 ‘Homecoming Scotland’ celebrations.

Scots Abroad – [www.nls.uk/catalogues/online/scotsabroad/index.html](http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/online/scotsabroad/index.html)

Scots Abroad is a portal hosted by the National Library of Scotland, giving access to online Scottish emigration resources both inside and outside the Library.

Glaniad – [www.glaniad.com](http://www.glaniad.com)

Glaniad (Welsh for ‘landing’) is a website that tells the story of the Welsh emigrants who settled in Patagonia, South America, during the late nineteenth century. In 2005–6 items ‘of cultural and historical significance to Wales and Patagonia’ were digitised to produce a searchable online gallery and a trilingual website to interpret these items. The project was a joint undertaking between CyMAL (Museums Archives and Libraries Wales), Culturenet Cymru, the National Library of Wales, the University of Wales Bangor Archives and Library, and various organisations in Patagonia with funding from the Welsh Assembly Government. The online resource was also explicitly designed to meet the requirements of secondary school History Key Stage 3: A Historical Theme: Migration and Emigration.

**Hidden Histories: The Untold London portal** – [www.untoldlondon.org.uk](http://www.untoldlondon.org.uk)

Untold London is a web portal connecting users with information about the history of London’s diverse communities. Based at Museum of London Docklands and managed by London Museums Hub, the project is supported by the technology of the 24 Hour Museum and is funded by the MLA and the DCMS (which back the Hub). The project is in part a response to a recommendation by the Mayor’s Commission on African and Asian Heritage for ‘the establishment of a virtual resource [...] as a formal and informal educational tool as well as a portal for the wealth of heritage resources [...]’ (MCAAH 2005: 18). The site provides history listings in London, collection information and news features. Past listings and features are archived as a resource. Information is organised ‘by cultural group’.

### Community projects

The initiatives described above are mostly major institutional initiatives. There is also a wealth of smaller projects, often, although not exclusively, led by and from the communities in question and funded for the most part by the Heritage Lottery Fund. While these projects take place outside of the mainstream, those in receipt of public funding are required to make their outcomes accessible to people from beyond their community, often by depositing their archives with local or national archives or libraries. Collectively, these projects make a major contribution to the UK’s migration heritage.

### Community heritage and oral history projects

Oral history has a particularly important role to play in the history of migration, since there may be minimal traces in existing collections in museums and archives. Oral history projects may empower migrants to tell their stories for the first time (Thomson 1999). And the community basis of these projects enables them to reach individuals and unearth memories and experiences that would probably be inaccessible to mainstream organisations, even those that are locally embedded.

The table that follows lists a selection of recent community heritage projects that have used oral history (often alongside other activities), funded either by the Heritage Lottery Fund, or by the Big Lottery Fund under the ‘Awards for All’ scheme. The list is not comprehensive, but is intended to give a flavour of the kind of work being undertaken.

**Table 1. Community heritage projects using oral history**

Project	Lead partner	Community/ies
Burton Multi-Cultural History Project	East Staffordshire Racial Equality Council	Caribbean, South Asian
How Soon we Forget	Soft Touch	Caribbean, South Asian, African, Eastern European in Leicester
First Bosnians in the UK	Bosnian Cultural Centre – Midlands	Bosnian
Moving Out	Full spectrum production	Caribbean in Nottingham
Diamond anniversary of the 'Seva' in Handsworth	Sikh Community and Youth Service UK	Sikh, Handsworth (Birmingham)
London Turkish Heritage Project	Turkish Cypriot Community Association	Turkish Cypriot
Asian History Project	Asian History Project	Asian in Bristol
Hidaha iyo Dhaqan	Somaliland Community Centre	Somali in Manchester
	Polkadotsnraindrops	Vietnamese in London
Migration project	Stockport Youth Services	Multiple
Irish Heritage in Haslingden	Irish Heritage in Haslingden Committee	Irish
Sikhs in Scotland	Anderson Mel-Milaap Centre	Sikh
	Camden Cypriot Women's Organisation	Greek Cypriot
Cypriot Diaspora Project	Greek Parents Association	Greek Cypriot
Oral History of Bangladeshi in Greater Manchester	Tigers Community Association	Bangladeshi in Manchester
Bangladeshi Heritage	Newham Bengali Community Trust	Bangladeshi in London
Unpacking The Past	MAPPA	Multiple in Portsmouth
Moroccan Memories	The Migrant and Refugee Communities' Forum	Moroccan
Tales of three generations of Bengalis in the UK: Bengali Oral History Project	Swadhinata Trust	Bengali
The Immigrants Project	Reading Local History Trust	Multiple in Reading
Walsall Asian Heritage Project	Walsall Asian Library User Group	Sikh, Hindu, Muslim, Gujarati, Bangladeshi in Walsall
Vietnamese Oral History Project	Refugee Action	Vietnamese
Welcome Stories Project	National Coalition Building Institute, Lancashire	Multiple in Lancaster
Romany Heritage Project	Gypsy/Traveller Support Group	Traveller

These projects are often supported by larger umbrella groups such as Eastside Community Heritage and Shed 22, both in East London, which provide support, training and sometimes physical space to community projects in their area.

### Trails

The Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trail is a unique national initiative, bringing together a wide range of heritage sites, organisations and objects in the UK and revealing their (often hidden) importance for Sikh Heritage. The project has been supported by English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund and was launched in 2004. In the first phase a website was created which enabled visitors to follow the Trail virtually and plan actual visits. In the second phase of the project (scheduled to run to 2010) the trail will deliver a programme of outreach and education initiatives but will also continue its exploration of existing museum and archive collections. The trail is an exciting way of using a virtual platform to link partners in a physical network.

### Community partnerships

While many communities have drawn on available funding to go it alone, there are also instances of successful partnerships between heritage sector organisations and community groups (and often additional partners such as schools and universities) around the themes of migration and settlement. These may be initiated by the community or by the heritage organisation keen to meet cultural diversity objectives. A number of the exhibitions and projects cited above in the section 'Showcasing cultural diversity' fall into this category. The following further examples are intended to give some indication of the diversity of partnership working, and also to extend the frame beyond the staging of exhibitions.

- 'Ferham Families' (2007). A team including researchers from the University of Sheffield, curators from Clifton Park Museum and a visual artist from the local community worked with a local school, a Sure Start programme and members of the Pakistani/Kashmiri community in Rotherham to create a website and exhibition and to 'to explore ways in which museum practices and the collection of artefacts within a museum were both upheld and disrupted through the presentation of an exhibition of 'identity narratives' (Pahl and Pollard 2006). The project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.
- Northamptonshire Black History Association (formerly Project) and Northamptonshire Record Office have worked together on two separate Heritage Lottery Fund projects from 2002–8 to encourage black and Asian community groups (many of whose records pertain to histories of migration) to deposit their archives at the record office in order to preserve this heritage for the future and, from the point of view of the record office, to create more representative collections.
- 'Footprints of the Dragon' (ongoing since 2007): a partnership between the London Metropolitan Archive (LMA), the Chinese National Healthy Living Centre (CNHLC) and the London Chinese Community Network (LCCN). The project aims to document the experiences of Chinese settlers in London since 1880 to create a 'London Chinese community archive' at LMA.
- *Identity and the City: A History of Ethnic Minorities in Bristol 1000–2001*. This was a book published as part of the 'England's Past for Everyone' project, a scheme led by the Victoria County History and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, bringing together historians and volunteers to work on new publications and other resources. The Bristol group, led by researchers from the University of the West of England, chose to focus on 'the people who have made Bristol their home, from medieval Jews to the modern day asylum seeker.'<sup>19</sup> Another outcome from the project was the creation of the 'Bristol Slavery Trail.'

### Community archives

Within particular communities, the history of migration is increasingly documented by independent community archives. These initiatives vary in size from some large-scale organisations in receipt of considerable project funding from either the Heritage Lottery Fund or the Arts Council (such as the Black Cultural Archives and Rivington Place, the new archive of 'culturally diverse visual arts'), to projects that depend entirely on a small number of volunteers, may never have received any funding and may fall below the radar even of local authority heritage services. A variety of institutional arrangements are possible: material may be held entirely in the community, or housed by mainstream institutions such as universities or local authority archives, with ownership remaining with the source group. For example, the Archive of the Irish in Britain, 'a unique academic and community resource', is

19. [www.englishpastforeveryone.org.uk/Counties/Bristol?Session/@id=D\\_4N9iGiLD8dQ3CFDbb6vo](http://www.englishpastforeveryone.org.uk/Counties/Bristol?Session/@id=D_4N9iGiLD8dQ3CFDbb6vo)

held by the Irish Studies Centre at London Metropolitan University<sup>20</sup> but there are also important collections of material relating to the Irish diaspora held entirely within the community, for example, by the Huddersfield Irish Centre.

The value of the community archives sector was recognised by the report of the Archives Task Force, which suggested that archives held in the community were ‘as important to society as those in public collections’ (Archives Task Force 2004: 43). Community archives have a unique role to play in telling the British migration story, since they often preserve the documentary legacy of those groups that have been marginalised by the mainstream heritage sector. They offer communities the opportunity to tell their own stories on their own terms. The intrinsic transience of migration also means that archive collections are sometimes better placed than museums to tell the story of migration, since traces often remain in the form of passenger lists, diaries, tickets and photos, as scraps in shoeboxes rather than artefacts in museum stores. However, the lack of core funding for independent archives makes it difficult to guarantee their sustainability.

The need to develop a long-term strategy for the independent community archives has been identified by the Community Access to Archives Project and more recently by the Archives Diversification Sub-committee of the Heritage Diversity Task Force (2007, unpublished). Any initiative seeking to raise the profile of migration heritages in the UK would need to include measures to support this valuable sector, which currently relies heavily on project funding.

### Identifying the gaps

While many of the initiatives described above demonstrate the impressive diversity of approaches to migration in the UK heritage sector they also reveal the piecemeal and patchy way in which migration is represented. Gaps mentioned by the experts consulted during the preparation of this report include:

- *The Medieval and Early Modern period.* When people think of migration to the UK, there tends to be a focus on twentieth century migration. Some of the earlier migratory phases, set out in Section 2 above, have been particularly under-represented.
- *Emigration.* While the emigration experience, particularly to North America, is well represented in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, emigration from England is almost completely invisible in the heritage sector, except in the context of the British Empire, which is itself a very marginal topic (currently visible only at the Bristol Empire and Commonwealth Museum and, to a lesser extent, in National Museums Liverpool).
- *Internal migration,* both from rural to urban areas and between the nations of the United Kingdom. By way of example, the recent ‘Destination Tyne & Wear’ exhibition at the Sunderland Museum focused on migration from overseas, without highlighting the fact that between 1880 and 1920 the North East region was a major centre of migration not just from Ireland, but also from Scotland (Renton 2006).
- *Return migration.* There is no evidence of return migration either to or from the UK being represented in museums, archives or other heritage sites anywhere in the UK. This topic is essential to grasping the complexity of migration flows.
- *The history of the British Empire and Commonwealth* and its associated population patterns. The only institution to specialise in this crucial aspect of British history (Bristol Empire and Commonwealth Museum) is being forced to relocate because of lack of funding. The lack of understanding of the history of the British Empire can be considered a major barrier to intercultural dialogue between the majority white population and communities originating from the former colonies.

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20. [www.londonmet.ac.uk/irishstudiescentre/archive/archive\\_home.cfm](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/irishstudiescentre/archive/archive_home.cfm)



- *European migrations*, in particular *Irish and Polish migrations*. The lack of visibility of the Irish diaspora in the heritage sector is particularly surprising given the existence of a strong research community (reflected in migration focused research centres at London Metropolitan University, Huddersfield, Bradford and Queen’s University Belfast [Omagh]). Little of this work appears to have permeated through to museums and archives. The Irish community was profiled in the ‘Moving Here’ project, resulting in the digitisation of a significant amount of relevant material from the National Archives and other repositories. However, most of the community projects associated with ‘Moving Here’ were short-lived, and few of the heritage organisations involved (such as Kirklees Museum) appear to have sustained their involvement with the Irish community.

A number of archives, either based in the community or in academic institutions, have emerged to fill this gap, but the challenges for community archives are multiple (see Flinn 2007) and all struggle to achieve a high level of visibility. Moreover, under-representation of the Irish diaspora has often amounted to misrepresentation; the Museum of London has, for example, reportedly been criticised in the past for representing nineteenth-century Irish Londoners as ‘almost exclusively uneducated labourers’ (Samuels 2007). The Irish community has not been the subject of any major exhibition in England, nor have population movements in both directions between England and Wales and Ireland been explored in any detail in a heritage setting.

Despite a long history of migration between Poland and the UK (in both directions: as many as 15,000–40,000 Scots may have settled in Poland in the seventeenth century)<sup>21</sup> a lack of awareness of this history, and in particular the arrival of large numbers of Poles in the aftermath of the Second World War, contributes to misconceptions about the Polish presence. The story of the Polish presence in Britain could play a significant role in fostering a more sophisticated public understanding of the complex and inextricable links between Britain and Europe. The Polish community remains, however, almost entirely absent from mainstream heritage representations (the language barrier was reportedly one reason why it was not profiled in ‘Moving Here’) and Polish-led heritage organisations (in particular POSK – Polish Library and Archive in Hammersmith, West London) receive little or no support from the mainstream heritage sector.

- *The most recent migrations*, whether from Eastern Europe or from countries such as Iraq. There was also a feeling that the drive to find ways to improve the representation of African and Asian heritages in the sector has led to some figures and periods being disproportionately emphasised, not in relation to the heritage sector as a whole (where these heritages continue to be marginalised) but rather in the context of the overall picture that is presented, for example of the African presence in the UK. The recurrence of now familiar figures and narratives may reflect both a lack of specialist knowledge on the part of curators and the ongoing paucity of research into Black British history. So, for example, the arrival of the Windrush dominates narratives of migration from the Caribbean, to the detriment of a more complex story for this period. There is an ongoing need for support for Black heritage projects across the widest possible range of historical periods and geographic areas to correct this imbalance. Such projects depend on increased support for academic research into Black British history, which continues to be neglected or marginalised in school and university curricula.

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21. [www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/europe/intro\\_europe.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/europe/intro_europe.shtml)

Thematic gaps were identified in the areas of:

- *Changing communication technologies.* The Internet, cheap long-distance telephone calls and satellite television have radically changed individual experiences of migration and the way diasporic space is imagined, constructed and inhabited. Overall, the media used by migrants to maintain links with home, and how these have changed, were felt to be under-represented.
- *Music.* Few recent projects have looked at the importance of music as a vehicle for the telling of migration narratives, nor have there been systematic attempts to look at the migration of musical styles and practices. Music, however, is one of the ways in which people most readily engage on a day-to-day basis with diversity, diaspora and the creative fusion of cultural styles and practices.

What links both these themes is the question of intangible heritage and the problem of how we use collections and displays to document and represent performance and practice. This is a particularly pressing issue for any heritage initiative seeking to explore the theme of migration since there is no easy answer to the question of what constitutes the material culture of migration (as opposed to diversity). Indeed, central to the theme of migration is often the idea of loss, of what has been left behind. But how can museums, built on a logic of accumulation, acquisition and material excess, account for this void and open up a space for the longed-for, missing object (Grognet 2007)? Migration museums present an exciting opportunity to call into question the dominant heritage paradigm but they are also liable to struggle to develop a rationale and long-term strategy if they are seen merely as instruments of social change rather than sites for intercultural experiment and encounter.

## 4. The international context

Although some of the issues around migration are specific to the UK, accelerations in the pace of movements of goods, people and ideas around the world have generated very similar debates in many other countries, predominantly in the English-speaking world and in Continental Europe. Since the late 1990s many countries have turned to museums and heritage sites to help them address fundamental questions of identity and origin. Part of the answer has frequently been to explore the legacy of population movement and settlement through migration museums.

The importance of this trend has been recognised by UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), which in 2006 created an international migration museums network. The final statement of the first UNESCO expert meeting on migration museums sent out a clear message about the value of such institutions, noting their potential 'to achieve a more cohesive and peaceful society both nationally and internationally' and 'to protect migrants' rights' (UNESCO 2006).

As the following discussion will show, many of these initiatives would not be appropriate in the UK context, but no new initiative in this area should occur without careful attention to international experience and existing international networks of expertise, which have much to teach us. (See Appendix 2 for an overview in table form.)

### **The Americas and Australasia**

#### **The United States**

The United States has the most potent site for a migration museum in Ellis Island in New York. The Island was the first port of call for more than 12 million immigrants between 1892 and 1954 and is thus deeply symbolic for migrant heritage. It is both a museum and a heritage site, seeking to interpret both the individual and collective stories of immigrants and the processes of migration they experienced on the Island. Its displays primarily address the flood of European immigration to America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, a permanent contextual introduction and temporary exhibitions seek to broaden the site's narrative to include non-European migration in more recent years. The museum also offers access to passenger records and help with family history research, which has proved very popular. Ellis Island opened its doors to visitors in 1990.

The Lower East Side Tenement Museum, also in New York City and established in 1988, addresses the history of migration in the United States on a much more personal, domestic scale. The Museum's mission is to promote tolerance and a historical perspective by interpreting the variety of migrant experiences on Manhattan's Lower East Side in the light of contemporary social issues (Abram 2000).

The US also has a strong tradition of ethno-specific museums. Many states possess a number of such institutions, typically the result of grassroots movements to record and preserve ethnic heritages. Examples include the Chinese American Museum in Los Angeles, the Ukrainian American Archives at the Museum of Detroit, and the Welsh American Heritage Museum in Oak Hill, Ohio. Many of these institutions emphasise a 'hyphenated' identity, simultaneously both ethno-specific and American. This approach is mirrored at national level with the National Museum of the American Indian and the forthcoming National Museum of African American History and Culture, both of which combine (or will combine) celebrations of achievement with narratives of forced displacement and migration.

#### **Canada**

In 1971 Canada adopted an official policy of multiculturalism, the first country to do so. The initial focus in the policy was on the right to the preservation of one's culture and ethnicity as a part of Canadian national identity. Multiculturalism was then enshrined in the 1982

Constitution Act as part of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and further enhanced by the 1987 Canadian Multiculturalism Act. While this legislation was developed primarily with the cultural rights of Canada's francophone minority in mind, it has also had implications for the representation both of first nations' peoples and more recent arrivals.

The influence of Canadian multicultural legislation can be seen most clearly at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, the equivalent of a national museum of Canadian history. The museum includes the 'Canada Hall', an extended chronological gallery which uses full-scale reconstructions and recreations of buildings to tell the stories of successive waves of migration to and within Canada.

Canada also has its own equivalent of Ellis Island at Pier 21 in Halifax. Again, this is a symbolic site of arrival, which seeks to preserve the immigration shed which processed more than one million new arrivals between 1928 and 1971, as well as the stories of the people themselves. Other museums have focused on migration histories through their temporary exhibitions and events programme (for example, 'The Scots – dyed in the wool Montrealers' at the McCord Museum of Canadian History, 2003, and 'Encontros: the Portuguese Community' at the Centre d'Histoire de Montreal, 2003); these exhibitions are typically celebratory in their approach.

### **Australia and New Zealand**

Much as in Canada, explicit multicultural legislation has impacted on the development of social history and migration museums in Australia. The formal adoption of multiculturalism as policy in 1978 was further enhanced in 1989 with the National Agenda for Multicultural Australia. Australia's two migration museums can be seen in part as a direct embodiment of these policies, providing a space and a forum for different groups to come together and showcase their migration histories and cultures.

The Migration Museum in Adelaide was the first to open in 1986 as a state government initiative, followed by the Immigration Museum in Melbourne in 1998. Both museums have permanent displays on different aspects of the migration experience from the 1800s to the present and successful community access galleries, where community groups can mount their own exhibitions (Szekeres 2000). Migration stories are also central to the National Museum of Australia, which opened in 2001, although the emphasis on cultural diversity and aboriginal struggles has placed the museum at the heart of Australia's 'culture wars' and led it to be accused of sponsoring 'black armband history'. Similarly, in New Zealand, the Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongawera's narratives of migration are explored through the 'Passports' gallery, which looks at the contribution made to New Zealand by 'different ethnic communities'.

The Migration Heritage Centre in Sydney presents another model. This too is a state government initiative but critically without a dedicated building. Operating out of the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, the core of its work lies in virtual exhibitions and digitised collections through its website.<sup>22</sup> It also works in partnership with numerous other museums in the state to present temporary exhibitions in different venues, as well as heritage trails and educational programmes. As with the US, there are also several examples of ethno-specific history museums, such as the German Migration Museum within the Hahndorf Academy in Hahndorf, and the Golden Dragon Museum in Bendigo (run by the Bendigo Chinese Association).

It is worth noting that the extent to which migration museums help foster inclusive notions of national heritage in the 'new world' is dependent on the broader narrative context in which they are embedded. While Ellis Island is careful to incorporate non-European stories

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22. [www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au](http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au)

into its displays, it arguably owes its high symbolic status to the dominance of white mythologies of national origins. A more extreme case is 'El Hotel de los Inmigrantes' (House of Immigrants) in Buenos Aires, which has been accused of celebrating the history of European migration to the detriment of African and indigenous American stories (Blickstein 2006). There is also a danger that in an overtly bi- or multicultural context, exhibitions on migration can reinforce notions of discrete, segregated communities, by posing an essential 'otherness' (however well-intended).

## Europe

European museums of migration have frequently drawn inspiration from initiatives such as Ellis Island. Some countries have sought to capitalise on the interest of North Americans in tracing their European ancestry by establishing emigration museums. But elsewhere the Ellis Island model has been adopted by policymakers keen to displace romanticised notions of white cultural homogeneity – 'our ancestors the Gauls' in the classic French formulation – in favour of more complex national stories, grounded in the movement of peoples and cultural syncretism. These new institutions are seen as having an important role to play in tackling xenophobia and racism. Other countries, in particular the Netherlands, have, however, chosen to develop their own models.

### Immigration museums

The most ambitious European project to date is Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration (CNHI), the French national museum of the history of immigration. Opened in October 2007 in a central Paris location, it is the only immigration museum in Europe to have national museum status and is intended to alter perceptions of immigration and contribute to social cohesion. The idea of an immigration museum first emerged in the late 1980s, around the time of the celebrations for the bicentenary of the French Revolution, when radical historians and civil rights activists began to reflect on the absence of a history of immigration from the French popular historical imagination, despite the fact that, according to research conducted in 1991, one quarter of all French citizens had at least one foreign grandparent (Tribalat 1991).

Support for the idea gained ground in the aftermath of the 2002 elections, when the Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin was eliminated from the Presidential elections by the National Front's Jean-Marie Le Pen. The project for an immigration museum was revived by the new centre-right Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, with the backing of President Chirac, who appointed his former adviser and one-time Minister of Culture Jacques Toubon to lead the project, in the hope that it would present the newly elected centre-right government as tough on racism and supportive of France's 'visible minorities'. Crucially, in order to achieve the creation of a new museum Toubon was allocated the (reduced) resources of an existing state-funded 'race relations' agency (l'ADRI, l'Agence pour le Développement des Relations Interculturelles). Unlike its counterparts in the English-speaking world the French museum is firmly republican; the permanent exhibition, which looks at the history of immigration to France since the Revolution, is organised thematically rather than by community (an earlier temporary exhibition, 'Toute la France', which coincided with the victory of a multi-racial team in the 1998 football World Cup, took a community-based approach).

Even so, the museum could be said to represent a softening of the conventional assimilationist line on French national identity, particularly in its commitment to working in partnership with migrant community organisations and its formal recognition of cultural diversity. This may explain why the new institution has not yet been visited or even officially mentioned by President Sarkozy, whose May 2007 decision to create a Ministry of Immigration and National Identity resulted in the resignation of a number of key experts from the museum's advisory and management boards. The network of over 1,500 organisations (including NGOs, community heritage groups, local authorities and other

heritage organisations) to which members subscribe by signing a 'charter' or a more official partnership contract, is perhaps the centre's greatest achievement and the aspect of the project that is potentially most relevant to the UK (Gascoigne 2008; see also the special issue of *Museum International* 59:1-2 [2007]).

One of the key partners in the CNHI network, the independent archive of the history of migration, *Génériques*, has also been responsible for creating a now four-volume official guide to the history of immigration in France's national and regional archives, with the support of the French national council for archives. The first three volumes appeared in 1999 and the fourth in 2005. A fifth is planned to complete this remarkable survey.

There has also been an immigration museum in Denmark since 1997 and a small museum, part of an archive and resource centre, in Borås, Sweden since 1973. A museum for Catalonia was scheduled to open in 2007. Preliminary discussions about an Italian migration museum were launched in October 2007 at a seminar at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While in Germany there is (as yet) no national institution, in 2007 the Documentation Centre and Museum of Immigration from Turkey (Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration aus der Türkei e.V. or DOMiT, a grassroots organisation created in 1990) fused with the association for a German migration museum (Migrationsmuseum in Deutschland e.V.), founded in 2002 in Cologne from a network of researchers and activists to create the Documentation Centre and Museum of Immigration in Germany (Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland, or DOMiD). Its stated aim is the creation of a national migration museum.<sup>23</sup> The national Museum of German History (Deutsches Historisches Museum) is also collaborating on a major temporary exhibition with the French museum of immigration, opening in Paris in December 2008 before travelling to Berlin in 2009.

### Emigration museums

The current boom in emigration museums in Europe predominantly reflects the growth of 'genealogy tourism', especially from the United States. Yet despite the commercial incentives for the development of such institutions many handle the subject in a sophisticated fashion, encouraging reflection on notions of diaspora and cultural identity. The majority of these institutions are located in Northern Europe.

First among these is the German Emigration Centre in Bremerhaven, which opened in 2005 and which in 2007 was awarded the prestigious 'European Museum of the Year' award (previous recent winners include London's V&A, and the Guggenheim, Bilbao). The centrepiece of the museum is the recreation of the experience of the transatlantic crossing, but temporary exhibitions have also covered subjects such as the experience of those forced into exile by the Nazis. The display concludes with a 'Migration Forum', which invites visitors to engage with the contemporary picture of global migration (Pes 2007).

The idea of an emigration museum is not new; the Swedish 'House of Emigrants', home to a museum, a large archive of material relating to Swedish emigration to North America and family history research library opened its doors as long ago as 1968.<sup>24</sup> The Bremerhaven centre is, moreover, not even the only institution of its kind in Germany: there are also emigration archives or research centres in Hamburg, Oldenburg and Bredstedt, all of which are members of AEMI (see below). There are plans to turn the Hamburg centre into another museum.<sup>25</sup> Back in Scandinavia an emigration museum is planned in Peraseinajoki, Finland, Norway already has one (the Norwegian Emigrant Museum) and Denmark has national emigration archives. All these organisations cater to a very large extent to the North

23. [www.domit.de/seiten/ueberdomid/ueberdomid-en.html](http://www.domit.de/seiten/ueberdomid/ueberdomid-en.html)

24. [www.utvandrnashus.se/eng/](http://www.utvandrnashus.se/eng/)

25. [www.ballinstadt.de/en/ballinstadt.php?id=9](http://www.ballinstadt.de/en/ballinstadt.php?id=9)

American genealogy tourism market. The same can be said of the Dunbrody Emigrant Ship, County Wexford, a full scale replica of an 1845 vessel that carried thousands of emigrants from Ireland to North America over a period of thirty years, and the Cobh Heritage Centre in Cobh, County Cork.

The Museum of Emigration and the Communities is a recent Portuguese initiative, exploring both nineteenth century emigration to Brazil and twentieth century population flows between Portugal and neighbouring countries in Western Europe. It does not, however, address the Portuguese colonial diaspora, despite its importance in opening up Africa and India to European traders and the longevity of the Portuguese Empire. Other Southern European initiatives include an emigration museum in San Marino (established 1997) and the Pietro Conti regional emigration museum in Gualdo Tadino, Italy.

### **Migration museums**

One of the few European institutions to explore the movement of peoples more broadly is the Centre de Documentation sur les Migrations Humaines in Luxembourg which since 1995 has developed and hosted temporary exhibitions as well as leading a 'living museum' walk in the town of Dudelange's 'little Italy' neighbourhood. A project for a Serbian migration museum has recently been launched in Belgrade (Srpski Muzej rasejanja i seoba) with a view to helping the people of Serbia negotiate the thorny issues of identity and displacement and exile in the Balkan region. The museum has three sections: immigration, emigration and return migration (both voluntary and forced). It describes its vision as 'Serbia in the World, World in Serbia'. A campaign for a migration museum is also underway in Switzerland (Verein Migrationsmuseum Schweiz, set up in 1998).

Good practice and strategies for developing migration museums in Europe have been discussed at a number of international conferences in the last few years, a phenomenon that partially explains the rapid spread of the model. Of particular note are 'Museum Representations of Migration' (November 2003, Historical Museum of Rotterdam), 'Museums and the History of Immigration: A Question for All Nations' (December 2004, National Library, Paris) and 'Migration in Museums: Narratives of Diversity in Europe' (October 2008, Berlin), all of which drew or will draw participants from several European countries. The UNESCO Expert Meeting on Migration Museums, which took place in Rome in October 2006, can also be considered a landmark event in terms of bringing together practitioners around this theme.

### **'Houses for cultural dialogue': the case study of the Netherlands**

Of experiences in other countries, that of the Netherlands corresponds most closely to the UK's. Both countries have chosen to develop policies focused on the recognition of diversity. Both have large populations with their origins in former colonies. And, critically, in both cases official policy towards the cultures of these populations has come under scrutiny as a consequence of home-grown Islamic extremism (in the Netherlands the murder in 2004 of film-maker Theo van Gogh was a key moment).

In 2006 immigrants made up 19.3 per cent of the Dutch population, according to the central bureau of statistics (Council of Europe/ERICarts 2009). This significant population was felt by many in the heritage sector to be seriously under-represented, both as visitors and as heritage practitioners. The heritage of the Netherlands' diverse communities first began to be explored in the 1980s in temporary exhibitions at the Amsterdam Historical Museum and the Museum of World Cultures (Wereldmuseum) in Rotterdam. In 1997 the Netherlands Museums Association (NMA) set up an 'Intercultural Museum Programme' with a view to stimulating programmes exploring the theme of cultural diversity. From 2001–4 this was supplemented by a programme, initiated by a grassroots network the 'National Organization of Ethnic Minorities' and again supported by the NMA and the Ministry of Education and Culture entitled 'The Cultural Heritage of Minorities' (Cultureel Erfgoed Minderheden, CEM).

This scheme brought together 45 different organisations (museums, archives, universities, community groups) to collaborate on a total of 47 projects, including an exhibition about the legacy of slavery at the Wereldmuseum, Rotterdam (2003–4).

The project was not continued after 2004 and instead in 2006, partly in response to the changed political climate, the Secretary of State for Culture and the Secretary of State for European Affairs jointly announced the creation of a 'House for Cultural Dialogue', aimed to reinforce social cohesion through encouraging intercultural exchange. This represented a significant shift away from the earlier 'multicultural' model which prioritised the representation of different minority communities. Four 'houses' or cultural centres have now been set up in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague, under the group name 'Kosmopolis'.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, faced with anxieties about the failure of Dutch 'integration' policy, the state is increasingly seeking to use the history of the Netherlands to develop a stronger sense of a collective identity and common values. The desire of the Government to raise awareness about the history of the Netherlands among recent migrants is certainly one of the factors behind the decision in July 2007 to create a national history museum for the Netherlands in Arnhem. At the same time more radical critics of cultural policy are campaigning for the history of migration to be placed at the heart of any reworking of Dutch history: 'What we see as "characteristically Dutch" is sponged with international influences. There is no such thing as "the Dutch identity". A national identity, just like an individual one, is multiple, dynamic and even contrary. All of us have come from somewhere. "Our" heritage, our history crosses borders' (Stam 2005).

### European networks

In addition to the UNESCO network mentioned above there are European networks dedicated to promoting better understanding of Europe's migration heritage.

First is the Association of European Migration Institutions (AEMI), founded in Denmark in 1989, which 'seeks to provide its members with an international forum through which they may advance the knowledge of European migration.' Three UK organisations are currently members: Merseyside Maritime Museum (Liverpool), the Centre for Migration Studies at the Ulster-American Folk Park (Omagh) and National Museums Scotland. The benefits that derive from networking at European level on these issues (such as awareness of funding streams and access to potential partners – important since applications for European cultural funding can only be made jointly by organisations from at least two member states) do not currently appear to trickle down to other organisations with migration-related collections. AEMI members have put together an online exhibition, 'The Art of European Migration', which 'presents a collection of images which help to tell the story of the millions of people who moved from Europe to North America during the past millennium.'<sup>27</sup> The exhibition site is hosted by Queen's University Belfast.

A second grouping is European Routes of Migration Heritage, a network of trans-European cultural itineraries that retraces historic migration routes across Europe. The network is managed by the Luxembourg-based European Institute for Cultural Routes which since 1998 has been charged with developing the 'Cultural Routes' programme of the Council of Europe. There is also a European Jewish heritage route, and routes exploring the Celtic, Viking and Norman heritages in European context.

2008 was the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. In the UK this funding stream was used almost exclusively to lever additional funding into the celebrations for Liverpool, Capital of Culture.<sup>28</sup> Stronger leadership in the UK heritage sector with regard to developing

26. [www.kosmopolis.nl/](http://www.kosmopolis.nl/)

27. <http://aem.qub.ac.uk/index2.html#>

28. [www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/546.0.html?&L=0&L=0](http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/546.0.html?&L=0&L=0)



European partnerships (on themes of common interest such as migration) could help channel more funds into the sector in the future. Intercultural dialogue is in fact the key theme for the European Union's Culture Programme until 2013, presenting obvious opportunities for collaborative work on migration histories.

## 5. The international experience: implications for the UK

While, as the previous chapter showed, there is already a wealth of expertise in the UK about possible approaches to representation of migration in museums and other heritage sites, there is also clearly much that can be learned from these international comparisons.

First and foremost, the extent to which migration museums help foster inclusive notions of national heritage is dependent on the broader political context in which they are embedded. We have seen how the national political climates in Canada, France and elsewhere have influenced the development of both museums and the migration narratives within them; collective choices about how best to accommodate difference within society are reflected in the heritage sector as much if not more than heritage narratives reshape dominant attitudes. The extent to which a museum of migration can encourage better intercultural relations may be limited in situations where both popular media and mainstream political parties promote an anti-migration discourse, even if over time a museum may develop into a forum for a questioning of this dominant narrative. In short, a migration museum needs to be part of a broader political commitment to developing a more positive public consensus about the value of cultural diversity and migration and not seen as an 'answer' in and of itself.

Second, the French example in particular illustrates the need for both strong cross-party leadership over an extended period and the existence of an appropriately resourced project team if the dream of a museum is to become a reality. Despite the attractiveness of strong leadership to overcome bureaucratic and political obstacles, this approach does carry a risk: a new institution may struggle to assert its editorial independence from its most prominent backers and their policies. High-level backing seems essential, but the museum requires as broad a coalition of supporters as possible if it is to remain credible.

With regard to possible models for the UK, Ellis Island, Pier 21 and Bremerhaven's German Emigration Centre are testimony both to the power and the limitations of an iconic site. These emblematic sites are perhaps less obvious in the UK. Tilbury, Southampton and Heathrow, as points of entry and departure, rather lack magic. Leicester, Brixton or Spitalfields may be more obvious choices, but are associated in the popular imagination with particular migrant communities.

Moreover, when thinking about the heritage sector in the UK it is important to understand the distinction between activities that happen in and through museums, archives and historic houses and the wider activity associated with organisations and individuals who are actively engaged in caring for and interpreting historic places. Many of these places are directly linked to the history of migration but are not necessarily seen as such, from places of worship to railways and coast line. The archaeological record, too, from early prehistory onwards is overflowing with evidence of migration. Indeed, it may be that in Britain we need to think more in terms of iconic areas or networks of material culture (from London's East End, to Cardiff's waterfront and the mills and factories of Bradford) than of single iconic sites, like Ellis Island. A network approach is however by no means incompatible with a migration museum; indeed, a central institution might act as a lynchpin and help to increase the visibility of all these sites, as the French experience increasingly demonstrates.

There are many possible solutions to the challenge of siting a museum. The stories that are told inside can balance associations with particular migratory movements associated with the location. Ensuring that much of a museum's work is undertaken away from a fixed site also addresses some of the limitations of the iconic site.

Finally and most importantly, our examination of international heritage sector initiatives highlights the breadth of coverage as well as many different approaches to public engagement and inter-cultural dialogue that have been adopted by museums across the world. There are collections that could be borrowed and exciting partnerships waiting to be

developed. The representation of migration can, after all, never be restricted to national boundaries. Moreover, any future British project would find itself in the enviable position of being able to both learn from the mistakes and draw on the successes of its international counterparts.

## Appendix 1. Key publications to have addressed cultural diversity in the heritage sector in the last decade

Publication title	Author	Date	Commissioning body	Findings/recommendations
Cultural Diversity: Attitudes of Ethnic Minority Populations towards Museums and Galleries	Philly Desai and Andrew Thomas	1998	Museums and Galleries Commission	Highlights barriers to access for 'ethnic minorities'.
'Whose Heritage? The Impact of Cultural Diversity on Britain's Living Heritage' (conference)	Included keynote address by Stuart Hall	1999	Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund, Museums Association, North West Arts Board	Identifies need to develop more inclusive model of heritage.
Holding up the Mirror: Addressing Cultural Diversity in London's Museums	Helen Denniston Associates	2003	Archives, Libraries, Museums London (ALM London)	Suggests strategy for collections development and improving access.
Reflections: Mapping Cultural Diversity in London's Local Authority Museum Collections	Val Bott	2003	ALM London	Maps the use of collections in the context of culturally diverse communities within 28 museum services in London. Barriers to diversifying collections included lack of political support (from local authorities) and limited opportunities for sharing skills and experience with other museums.
Focus on Cultural Diversity: the Arts in England	Ann Bridgwood, Clare Fenn, Karen Dust, Lucy Hutton, Adrienne Skelton, Megan Skinner	2003	Arts Council England and Office for National Statistics	Survey into attendance, participation and attitudes to the arts amongst culturally diverse populations. Identifies high levels of interest and participation in the arts among culturally diverse communities. 87 per cent of Black or British Black and 84 per cent of mixed ethnicity respondents thought that 'Arts from different cultures contribute a lot to this country', as did 71 per cent of white respondents.
Enriching Communities: How Archives, Libraries and Museums can Work with Asylum Seekers and Refugees (conference papers)	Various	2004	ALM London	Series of case studies.
World in One City		2004	London Archives Regional Council	This study 'established a picture of the way in which the archives sector currently engages with London's Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.' (No longer available online)
New Directions in Social Policy: Cultural Diversity for Museums, Libraries and Archives	Tracey Hylton	2004	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)	Overview of policies concerning the term 'cultural diversity' both within and outside the sector; brief analysis of materials and statements which may be significant in relation to public policy development.
Handle with Care: Towards a Diversity Strategy for London's Archives, Libraries and Museums	Michael Bell Associates	2005	ALM London	Emphasises need for diversity policy to be embedded throughout heritage institutions, including in areas such as training and development.

Revisiting Collections: A Toolkit for the Capture of Information to Enhance the Meaning and Significance of Museum Collections for New and Culturally Diverse Audiences		2005	ALM London	Developing a methodology for community involvement in collections management, development and description.
Delivering Shared Heritage, the Mayor's Commission on Asian and African Heritage		2005	GLA	Recommends action on workforce diversity, community-based heritage, equitable partnerships, inclusive education.
Our Lives, Our Histories, Our Collections	Lola Young	2005	Museum of London	Consultancy for the Museum of London's 'Reassessing what we collect' project. Reviews literature on cultural diversity and makes recommendations for collections strategies.
Unearthing our Past: Engaging with Diversity at the Museum of London	Raminder Kaur	2005	Museum of London	Consultancy for the Museum of London's 'Reassessing what we collect' project. Identifies the need to work with more complex, cross-cutting models of difference and makes suggestions as to how this might be done in the context of the Museum of London.
Cultural Diversity Interim Report (unpublished)		2005	National Museum Directors Conference	Recommends that each national museum appoint a member of the senior management team to oversee cultural diversity policy.
Culture Shock... Tolerance Respect, Understanding and Museums	Chris Wood and Hannah Gould	2006	Campaign for Learning in Museums and Galleries (CLMG), Home Office	Recommends supporting community collecting and 'personal museums'; 'an international outreach programme to capture the stories of migration and settlement from British émigrés abroad'; 'culture boxes' for new arrivals to UK; a one-world international programme to take stories of life in Britain to peoples' home country museums; 'culture gateways' curated by heritage organisations at points of entry to the UK (ports, airports); a 'blockbuster' exhibition exploring questions of citizenship and identity and building on material developed across UK.
Understanding the Future: Priorities for England's Museums		2006	DCMS	Museums as the 'building blocks of belonging'.
Diversity	Karen Raney	2006	Engage: The National Association for Gallery Education	Identifies the current strategies for embedding diversity in art institutions. Profiles work of gallery educators, artists, curators, funders engaging with the diversity agenda. Highlights obstacles.

Arts Council England: Diversity – The Journey	Tony Panayioutou	2006	Engage: The National Association for Gallery Education	Gives an account of the gains to date in terms of programmes, events, funding and equality schemes linked to black and minority ethnic groups and artists.
Diversity and its Discontents	Karen Raney	2006	Engage: The National Association for Gallery Education	Summarises a seminar of strong opinions against the pigeonholing exercise artists and curators must undergo in order to secure funding.
Cultural Diversity in Britain: A Toolkit for Cross-Cultural Co-operation	Phil Wood, Charles Landry and Jude Bloomfield	2006	Joseph Rowntree Foundation	Cultural diversity is something which should be explored for its advantage, rather than being assumed to be a problem for society to deal with. Argues that national government has failed to respond to community cohesion in a joined-up way so far. Recommends government adopting a strategy for productive diversity, local authorities developing ‘intercultural spaces and places’ and revisions to the teaching of multiculturalism in schools, to make it ‘applicable to all communities, including the indigenous population’.
Heritage Diversity Task Force working papers (unpublished)	Various	2007–8	GLA	Suggests ways in which the recommendations of ‘Delivering Shared Heritage’ (see above) can be implemented.
Knowledge and Inspiration: A Strategy for Archive, Library and Museum Collections in London	Caroline Reed	2008	ALM London	Gives collections diversity as a key strategic objective: ‘By 2010, archives, libraries and museums will be better equipped and supported to respond to the needs of London’s diverse communities, providing Londoners and visitors to London with opportunities to build knowledge and cohesion, understand shared histories and celebrate London’s unique identity as a world city.’
Arts and Refugees: History, Impact and Future	Hybrid	2008	Arts Council England, Baring Foundation, Paul Hamlyn Foundation	Mapping exercise, exploring the ways in which arts organisations are working with refugee groups.
Interculturalism: Theory and Policy	Malcolm Jones	2008	Baring Foundation	Summarises academic literature on interculturalism and the implications for policy.
Keeping Cultures: Report on the London Museums Hub Refugee Heritage Project		2008	London Museums Hub	Identifies ‘strong signs’ that cultural inclusion has a bearing on social inclusion; museums can help overcome barriers to social inclusion; there is ‘appetite’ among visitors for museums sharing different cultures; and a methodology for long-term evaluation.

## Appendix 2. Summary table of international heritage initiatives

Note: projects that appear in *italics* are either not yet completed or are still under discussion.

Country	Museums	Archives	Other initiatives
United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ellis Island, New York, 1990</li> <li>• Lower East Side Tenement Museum, New York, 1988</li> <li>• Dreams of Freedom (Immigration Museum), Boston</li> <li>• Various community museums e.g. Chinese American Museum, Los Angeles</li> <li>• Migration integral to various national museums, including the Smithsonian National Museum of American History and the National Museum of the American Indian</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various community archives e.g. Ukrainian American Archives</li> </ul>	-
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Canada Hall' in Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau, 1989</li> <li>• Pier 21, Halifax, 1999</li> </ul>	-	-
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migration Museum, Adelaide, 1986</li> <li>• Immigration Museum, Melbourne, 1998</li> <li>• Various community museums e.g. German Migration Museum, Hahndorf</li> <li>• Migration also integral to National Museum of Australia, Canberra, 2001</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migration Heritage Centre, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney</li> </ul>
New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Migration integral to Museum of New Zealand – Te Papa Tongawera</li> </ul>	-	-
Argentina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• El Hotel de los Immigrantes, Buenos Aires, 1990</li> </ul>	-	-
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration (national immigration museum), Paris, 2007</li> <li>• Museum of French Emigration to Canada, Tourouvre, 2006 [1987]</li> <li>• <i>Migration integral to Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations, Marseille</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Génériques, independent archive of immigration history, Paris, 1987</li> </ul>	-
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immigration museum, Farum, Copenhagen, 1997</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Danish Emigration Archives, Aalborg, 1932</li> </ul>	-
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The House of Emigrants, Växjö, 1968</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immigration archive and resource centre, Borås (includes small museum), 1973</li> </ul>	-
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Immigration museum, Catalonia</i></li> </ul>	-	-
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Discussions underway about national immigration museum</i></li> <li>• Pietro Conti regional emigration museum, Gauldo Tadino</li> </ul>	-	-
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland (DOMiD), Köln, since 2007</i></li> <li>• German Emigration Centre, Bremerhaven, 2005</li> <li>• <i>Emigration museum, Hamburg</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamburg</li> <li>• Oldenburg</li> <li>• Bredstedt</li> </ul>	-
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Emigration Museum, Peraseinajoki</i></li> </ul>	-	-

Country	Museums	Archives	Other initiatives
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Norwegian Emigrant Museum, Hamar, 1988</li> </ul>	-	-
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Museum of Emigration and the Communities, virtual museum: <a href="http://www.museu-emigrantes.org/">www.museu-emigrantes.org/</a>, 2001</li> </ul>	-	-
San Marino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emigration museum, 1997</li> </ul>	-	-
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cobh Heritage Centre, County Cork</li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dunbrody Emigrant Ship, County Wexford, 2005</li> </ul>
Luxembourg	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation centre on migrations, Dudelange, 1995</li> </ul>
Serbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Migration museum</i></li> </ul>	-	-
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Place of migration in the forthcoming national history museum currently under discussion</i></li> </ul>	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Houses of cultural dialogue (Kosmopolis), since 2006</li> </ul>



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