

HORIZONS OF MIGRATION MUSEUMS¹

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This article explores the evolving role of migration museums as dynamic cultural institutions that engage with contemporary debates on mobility, identity, and belonging. Drawing from case studies across Europe, it examines how museological practices have shifted in response to global socio-political changes, including postcolonial critique, digitization, and participatory approaches. The paper highlights the tension between state-driven narratives and bottom-up initiatives, showing how migration museums negotiate national identity while incorporating diverse migrant voices. It also addresses the spatial and symbolic functions of these museums—whether housed in historic migration infrastructures or created as new forums of dialogue. Ultimately, the study underscores the potential of migration museums to serve as transformative public spaces for plural memory and social cohesion in the face of rising nationalism and cultural polarization.

Keywords: Migration Museums; Cultural Memory; Museology; National Identity; Postcolonialism;

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Tento článok skúma meniacu sa úlohu múzeí migrácie ako dynamických kultúrnych inštitúcií, ktoré vstupujú do súčasných diskusií o mobilite, identite a príslušnosti. Na základe prípadových štúdií z rôznych európskych krajín analyzuje, ako sa muzeologické prístupy menia v reakcii na globálne spoločensko-politické premeny, vrátane postkoloniálnej kritiky, digitalizácie a participatívnych prístupov. Štúdia zdôrazňuje napätie medzi štátom riadenými naratívami a iniciatívami vznikajúcimi „zdola“ a ukazuje, ako múzeá migrácie vyjednávajú poňatie národnej identity pri súčasnom zapájaní rozmanitých hlasov migrantov. Text sa zároveň zameriava na priestorové a symbolické funkcie týchto inštitúcií – či už sídlia v historických objektoch spojených s migráciou, alebo vznikajú ako nové fóra pre spoločenský dialóg. Štúdia napokon poukazuje na potenciál múzeí migrácie stať sa transformujúcimi verejnými priestormi pre rozvíjanie pluralitnej pamäti a sociálnej súdržnosti v čase rastúceho nacionalizmu a kultúrnej polarizácie.

Kľúčové slová: múzeá migrácie; kultúrna pamäť; muzeológia; národná identita; postkolonializmus;

Introduction

Museums of migration have emerged as a significant cultural response to the complexities of global mobility, identity, and belonging. Far from being neutral repositories of objects, these institutions are increasingly understood as contested spaces where national, transnational, and postcolonial narratives converge. Rooted in the interaction between memory, heritage, and sociopolitical discourse, museums of migration grapple with the tension between affirming cultural uniqueness and promoting inclusive, pluralistic understandings of shared human experience.

The paper strives to demonstrate the ways in which the new trends and approaches in museology and museum presentation influence museums and exhibitions of migration. It is not only the paradigmatic shifts in understanding museums, such as “new museology,” post-1980s influence of market forces and recent decade’s turn towards digitization and virtual presentation, that ultimately changed the ways museums of all topics and target audience define their role in society and consider their audience approach. All these shifts were a response to social and economic changes, such as the dissolution of colonial powers, financial cuts in the public sector or a pandemic. Even though the phenomenon of migration is as old as human history, it is in recent decades when it has gained unprecedented scale and permeated all aspects of society. For the museums, it meant that several of paradigms had to be reconsidered – the nation-state as a constituent point of historical

narratives, the fluidity and complexity of migrant experiences that transcend state borders and cultural boundaries, the private life of migrants as a source of knowledge and their personal objects and testimonies as a vehicle of said experience.² As Baur claims, the establishment of migration museums as a distinct category is “a direct response to a need the perceived crisis of collectively shared narratives and the increasing heterogeneity of cultural identities.”³ As the paper aims to show, it is not only the new trends in museology, but predominantly the socio-economic developments that influence the development and approach to collecting and presentation of migration in this type of museums.

This study will also attend to regional specifics and differences in musealizing migration, recognizing migration as a heterogeneous phenomenon whose forms, drivers, and impacts differ markedly across temporal and spatial contexts. The museum depiction of migration is inevitably influenced by the respective country’s migration and asylum policy, as well as the attitude of the general public that stems from historical experience and official and unofficial strategies through which the national identity is being constructed and consolidated.

It should be noted that the museums selected for the purpose of this study do not aim to constitute a representative or statistically balanced sample. Rather, it follows a qualitative, typologically oriented research design. The chosen institutions are approached as illustrative case studies that serve as examples of diverse modes of musealizing migration within European context. The main criterion for their inclusion is their capacity to represent key trends and paradigms identified in contemporary museum presentation and interpretation of migration. In particular, the selection reflects several factors and analytical dimensions, such as the institutional origin of an institution (top-down versus bottom-up initiatives), their spatial embeddedness in relation to historical or contemporary migration infrastructure, dominant narrative frameworks and modes and methods of representing migration experience.

When talking about the museums of migration, it is necessary to emphasize that museums are not neutral institutions of memory, but active agents that help construct collective understandings of the nation, its history, and its values. Benedict Anderson, in his concept of imagined communities, demonstrated that the nation is a social construct formed through shared symbols, narratives, and practices that create the illusion of unity among individuals who will never meet in person.⁴ Museums play a central role in this process by providing tangible evidence and visual representations that support and communicate the “national story,” all while constructing a shared sense of identity, a collective “us” that inevitably constitutes itself in an opposition of the illusory “other.”⁵ As Clifford points out, the “others” are often characterized as „uncultured,” “inauthentic,” and the museums play a crucial role in this perception based on the inclusion and representation of these marginalized or “othered” groups of people.⁶

² POEHLS, Kerstin. Europe, Blurred: Migration, Margins and the Museum. In *Culture Unbound*, 2011, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 339–340.

³ BAUR, Joachim. Staging Migration – Staging the Nation. *Imagining Community at Immigration Museums*. BERNBECK, Reinhard – HOFMANN, Kerstin P. – SOMMER, Ulrike, (eds.). *Between Memory Sites and Memory Networks: New Archaeological and Historical Perspectives*. Berlin 2017, pp. 343.

⁴ ANDERSON, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. London 2006, pp. 6–7.

⁵ CLIFFORD, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge 1997, p. 218.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Globalization brought a significant societal shift that has been challenging the traditional understanding of a nation that used to be mirrored in the museum exhibitions and their historical narratives. The migrant communities have been gaining their voice, slowly but steadily transforming from an oriental, mysterious and secluded “other” into an integral part of society that shapes political agendas and occupies public space previously dedicated to the majority. As Poehls points out, the very concept of migration fundamentally challenges the traditional practices of museums in three interrelated ways. First, it destabilizes the nation-state as a traditional point of reference, highlighting the fluidity of identities and affiliations across transnational contexts. Second, it raises questions of representation—what migration stories to tell and how to exhibit practices of mobility through objects. Finally, she suggests that not only the nation, but also the very spatial frames of the museum—city, region, nation, or Europe—are put into question.⁷

In the recent decades, more museums have adopted the approach acknowledged at the 1972 UNESCO meeting held in Chile that emphasizes the role of museums as powerful tools for fostering social integration and promoting cohesion. One of the most significant aspects of the movement of new museology is social inclusion, defined by Richard Sandell as a proactive and strategic effort by museums to challenge social exclusion and promote equity, access, and participation.⁸ Museums as inherently and inevitably political institutions with a significant influence over society have a potential to be at the forefront of re-imagining narratives of what it means to belong to a nation or a society. Baur proposes that this admission, albeit often reluctant, of strangers into a collectivity that defines itself as a nation that is present in the narratives of migration museums can lead to a multicultural “Re-Vision” of the nation itself.⁹ However, this concept has been widely criticised in recent years. While migration exhibitions aim to communicate inclusive, multicultural messages, multiple authors remind that they inevitably exist within the boundaries and limits of the museum institutions that perpetuate colonial, ethnocentric practices. Boast labels this relationship between museums and communities as a “neocolonial collaboration” – while the museums are framed as inclusive in their approach to migration and other topics related to marginalized and oppressed groups, these practices largely reproduce existing inequalities, leaving museums in control and perpetuating their position as institutions of authority.¹⁰

Modern migration museums embody the challenge of negotiating the dialectic between a pluralist narrative of cultural and ethnic uniqueness and an inclusive narrative of shared consciousness within a transnational society. However, this does not mean that migration museums are limited solely to narratives relating to national identity. The phenomenon of migration brings with it additional significant narrative threads that address the challenges of the contemporary world. It is particularly important to remember that migration is also an environmental phenomenon. Increasingly, migration museums are

⁷ POEHLS, Kerstin. *Europe, Blurred: Migration, Margins and the Museum*, s. 340–341.

⁸ SANDELL, Richard. *Museums as Agents of Social Inclusion*. In *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 1998, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 401–418.

⁹ BAUR, Joachim. *Die Musealisierung der Migration: Einwanderungsmuseen und die Inszenierung der multikulturellen Nation*. Bielefeld 2009, pp. 17–25.

¹⁰ BOAST, Robin. *Neocolonial Collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone Revisited*. In *Museum Anthropology*, 2011, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 56–70.

thematizing, for example, the framework of climate migration, so migration as a part of the climate change debates.¹¹

Migration in museums: State of research

Migration museums are an increasingly discussed phenomenon. In Europe alone, their role is perceived as indispensable for a nuanced understanding of migration as a broad socio-cultural and anthropological phenomenon, as well as for the effective adaptation to the social and cultural transformations that have accompanied Europe in recent decades as a consequence of migration. While the first reflections on museums and migration in the academic literature appeared in the late 1990s¹² (including the famous, albeit nowadays contested James Clifford's *Museums as Contact Zones* chapter¹³ in 1997), it mostly consisted of descriptive text with very few attempts to approach the topic analytically. It was not until the 2000s when the migration museum studies emerged. Important exceptions include case studies and critical examinations of institutions like the Ellis Island Immigration Museum, the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration in Paris, Pier 21 in Halifax, and the Immigration Museum in Melbourne. Scholars such as Barbara Blumberg, Michael Wallace, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Gisela Welz, Nancy Green, and others have explored themes ranging from political motivations and national myth-making to questions of multiculturalism, cultural brokerage, representation, and contested heritage. The classic figure of German museum theory, Joachim Baur, declared in his 2009 book *Musealisierung der Migration* that migration had become a subject of museums and, indeed, of museological discourse as such.¹⁴ The emphasis on effective approaches to not only presenting and exhibiting migration, but also on approaching the migrant audience itself gained prominence particularly during the European migrant crisis of 2015. The same year, the Network of European Museum Organizations NEMO presented its recommendations under the title *Museums, Migration and Cultural Diversity*, based on the work of the German expert group of the Museumsbund. In recent years, the topic has become part of numerous international projects and initiatives, such as ICOM's special project *Migration: Cities*, UNESCO's *Migration and Inclusive Societies*, or *Moving Europe – Negotiating Legacies of Migration at the Museum*. Within academic debates, countless articles, monographs, and edited volumes have been published on this topic. Among German-language works, in addition to Baur's pioneering book, it can be mentioned only several examples, such as *Museum und Migration* and *Migrationsmuseum*. In the Routledge series, important contributions represent *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe: Peoples, Places and Identities*, *Museums and Migration: History, Memory and Politics*, or *Museums, Refugees and Communities*.

¹¹ NETWORK OF EUROPEAN MUSEUM ORGANISATIONS (NEMO). *Museums in the Climate Crisis: Survey Results and Recommendations for the Sustainable Transition of Europe* [online]. Berlin 2022 [cit. 2025-08-07]. Available at: https://www.ne-mo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/Publications/NEMO_Report_Museums_in_the_climate_crisis_11.2022.pdf, p. 36.

¹² BAUR, Joachim. *Die Musealisierung der Migration: Einwanderungsmuseum, Migrationserfahrung und nationale Identität in den USA und Deutschland*. Bielefeld 2009, pp. 23–24.

¹³ CLIFFORD, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, p. 188–219.

¹⁴ BAUR, Joachim. *Die Musealisierung der Migration: Einwanderungsmuseum, Migrationserfahrung und nationale Identität in den USA und Deutschland*, p. 22.

Migration museums before the Age of Globalization

While it might seem that the museum institutions dedicated exclusively or primarily to presenting migration are ultimately a product of globalization of the later decades of the 20th century, their history is much longer. However, it should be noted that their social purpose and displayed narrative have evolved rather significantly. A typical example might be the Muzeum Narodowe Polskie (Polish National Museum) in Rapperswil, founded in 1870 by Polish émigrés in Switzerland after the defeat of the January Uprising. Its aim was to preserve artifacts brought from the homeland, create a Polish center of culture and history, and to actively engage the public in supporting the Polish cause abroad. The museum became one of the key sites in constructing a Polish national tradition rooted in the martyrological fate of Poland, whose subjugation after the dissolution of the state in the partitions was envisioned as a martyrdom for freedom of other European nations.¹⁵ Similar museums were established in the diaspora communities outside Europe, especially in the USA and Canada, which were the target destinations for the mass immigration during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. The Vesterheim Norwegian American Museum in Decorah, Iowa, for instance, was founded in 1877 at the initiative of the Norwegian Lutheran Church.¹⁶ It was not merely an ethnographic museum collecting artifacts from settlers arriving from Norway, but also focused on keeping ties with the cultural institutions in the homeland waiting for its independence from Sweden.¹⁷ Another destination of European diaspora was New Zealand where Toitū Otago Settlers Museum was founded as early as 1898 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Otago settlers by the Otago early settlers' association, which sought to memorialise the old pioneers and their voyage as a noble first generation. In 1899, a similar museum was formed in Auckland as the Auckland Old Colonists Museum.¹⁸ During the period when European nations—and later colonized peoples—were striving for self-determination and political independence, the experiences of exile and diaspora became integral to national self-identification. The purpose of their representation in museums was not only to maintain connections with the homeland, but also to shape a sense of national identity rooted in the tension between the lost homeland and commitment to the new one. Even then, these museums were not merely repositories of collections; they functioned as active discursive spaces, performing and reinforcing the imagined claim to national self-determination.

Following the turn of the century, World War I and the consequent victory of multiple European nations in their fight for independence, the museums dedicated to migration (whether focused on the reemigrants or the diasporas) started to be established in the Old Continent as well. Already in the early 20th century the migration museums began to be established for the purpose of strengthening ties with expatriate communities, reinforcing their connection to the former homeland, and ultimately for better grasping the phenomenon of emigration — not only from the perspective of those who had left, but also from

¹⁵ WIECH, Stanisław. Polskie Muzeum w Rapperswilu w ostatnim roku XIX wieku w świetle dziennika piotrkowskiego gubernatora Konstantina Millera [online]. In *Studia Podlaskie*, 2024, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 6–7 [cit. 2025-08-07]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.15290/sp.2024.32.1>.

¹⁶ VESTERHEIM NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN MUSEUM. Vesterheim History [online]. [cit. 2025-10-06]. Available at: <https://vesterheim.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Vesterheim-History-2021-1.pdf>

¹⁷ RUE, Anna. 'It Breathes Norwegian Life': Heritage Making at Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum. In *Scandinavian Studies*, 2018, vol. 90, no. 3, pp. 350–375.

¹⁸ HENARE, Amiria J. M. *Museums, Anthropology and Imperial Exchange*. New York 2005, p. 245.

that of the country of origin. For example in Norway, efforts to musealize emigration can be traced as far back as 1914, when, as part of the Jubilee Exhibition in Kristiania, an emigration pavilion was presented that narrated the story of a significant group of inhabitants who had left Norway over the preceding hundred years to find a new home in foreign lands overseas.¹⁹

Already within these early pioneering institutions we can trace an important dividing line that can be perceived in the contemporary migration museums — the extent to which they emphasize either exclusion or inclusion. This aspect is connected to one of the most often roles of the museum of migration: to narrate a story of contribution to a given community.²⁰ While in the case of Poland and early diaspora initiatives, the dominant discourse centred on the exceptionalism and cultural bonds of the community with its old homeland, over time — as the community became established in the new destination — the imagination shifted emphasizing the community contribution to the development of the local society and state.

The rise of migration museums reflects a late phase in nation-building, reinforcing established national narratives. This trend is evident in long-standing migration destinations from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Emigration serves as a core element of national identity not only in the United States but also across North and South America and Australia. Museums materialize these narratives, framing both their origins and intended trajectories. Beyond curated collections, historical sites linked to migration are institutionalized as lieux de mémoire, anchoring these stories symbolically.²¹ It should be noted that this approach is not exclusive to the first half of the 20th century. In 1974, the Museo de la Inmigración in Buenos Aires was established in the former Immigrants' Hotel, originally a quarantine centre for newcomers during cholera epidemics. Similar museums later emerged in São Paulo, Halifax, and Melbourne, reflecting the central role of migration in shaping national identity. A key model remains the American Museum of Immigration, opened in 1972 on Liberty Island, which popularized the “journey to freedom” narrative rooted in the early 20th-century “melting pot”²² ideal. When relocated to Ellis Island in 1990, its approach evolved toward a more plural and multi-voiced interpretation of migration history.²³

¹⁹ UTVANDRERMUSEET. About the Norwegian Emigrant Museum [online]. [accessed 7 August 2025]. Available from: <https://utvandremuseet.no/en/home/about>.

²⁰ RORTY, Richard. Solidarity or Objectivity. In KRAUSZ, Michael (ed.). *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*. Notre Dame 1989, p. 167.

²¹ NORA, Pierre. Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire [online]. *Representations*. 1989, no. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, pp. 7–24. University of California Press [accessed 7 July 2025]. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2928520>

²² The „melting pot“ metaphor first appeared in Jean de Crèvecoeur's Letters from an American Farmer (1782), but gained cultural prominence in the early 20th century—precisely when the ideal of national unity began to clash with the complex realities of immigration. Israel Zangwill, author of *The Melting Pot*, was a committed Zionist and advocate for a Jewish homeland. Influenced by the 1903 Kishinev pogrom, his play is better understood not as a celebration of assimilation, but as a vision of America as a refuge—a place where the traumas and divisions of the Old World might be transcended. GLAZER, Nathan – MOYNIHAN, Daniel P. *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City*. Cambridge 1970, pp. 288–290.

²³ DESFORGES, Luke – MADDERN, Joanne. Front doors to freedom, portal to the past: history at the Ellis Island immigration museum, New York. In *Social & Cultural Geography*, 2004, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 437–457.

Contemporary Approaches to Exhibiting Migration

At the turn of the 20th century, museum representations of emigration were significantly influenced by the model established at Ellis Island in the United States, where the dominant narrative centers on an immersive, cinematic portrayal of the migrant journey from European poverty to the attainment of the American dream. A significant part in this way of exhibiting migration plays the site itself, whether in its authentic state or as a complete or partial reconstruction, carrying the meaning of lieux de mémoire embedded in the collective memory of migrants and their descendants.²⁴ This is particularly evident in the “migration museums in the historical migration infrastructure”²⁵ or “port migration museums,” established inside or around the migrant transit sites, such as MEI National Museum of Italian Emigration in Genoa, Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax, Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo (Immigration Museum of the State of São Paulo, Brazil), as well as museums in Antwerp, Gdynia or Göteborg. German ports in particular used to be an important element of 19th-century migration routes in Europe, which is why nowadays multiple museums of this type can be found especially in the western parts of the country, such as Bremerhaven, Hamburg or the temporary community-produced migration exhibitions in Cuxhaven.²⁶

The Ellis Island permanent exhibition has brought out multiple aspects that were later adapted in other migration museums of similar type and became considered the traditional, most approachable and universally comprehensible way to convey the topic of migration (especially in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century) to the wide audience. The presentation approach relies heavily on the immersive scenography combining the presumed authenticity of the site itself with often large-scale dioramas and multimedia installations, often walkable and staged using theatrical techniques in order to provoke a strong emotional resonance. The visitor is often guided through a linear, chronological step-by-step storytelling. As Lanz points out, these presentation techniques have a purpose of turning the visitor from a viewer into a user who is actively part of the narrative, sharing the harrowing and emotional experience of a migrant’s journey.²⁷ Another aspect of the Ellis Island display that became characteristic of more traditional approaches to presenting the topic of migration is the use of iconic objects - typically personal objects used not only for their visual impact, but predominantly for their familiarity and very straightforward interpretation for the visitor. Objects such as suitcases, travel documents and passports, migrants’ letters to and from their families, clothes or baby toys elicit immediate emotional response with the memories they evoke and the meaning they embody even without being accompanied by any labels or additional contextualization.²⁸ It should be noted that these iconic objects do not necessarily have to be authentic - their primary value is symbolic, as

²⁴ BAUR, Joachim. Ellis Island, Inc.: The Making of an American Site of Memory. In GRABBE, Hans-Jürgen – SCHINDLER, Sabine (eds.). *The Merits of Memory: Concepts, Contexts, Debates*. Heidelberg 2008, p. 185.

²⁵ PETELSKA, Michalina. *Migration Museums: A Proposed Typology*. In *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 2022, vol. 10, p. 29.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ LANZ, Francesca. *Staging Migration (in) Museums: A Reflection on Exhibition Design Practices for the Representation of Migration in European Contemporary Museums*. In *Museum & Society*, 2017, vol. 14, no. 1, p. 182.

²⁸ LANZ, Francesca. *Staging Migration (in) Museums: A Reflection on Exhibition Design Practices for the Representation of Migration in European Contemporary Museums*, p. 181.

holders and stabilizers of identity, metaphors for their imaginary former owners. Parkin describes specifically objects of personal nature tied to migration processes as transitional objects that preserve relationships and social links at the times of disruption and change.²⁹

A similar exhibition approach has been employed in multiple exhibitions commemorating migration that had emerged in the early 2000s in the Western Europe, especially in the harbours and adjacent locations. It was, however, decades earlier when the discourse on the musealization of migration originally started to take place.

For example, Germany's emigration history dates back to the 17th century; between 1816 and 1914 alone, over 5.5 million Germans emigrated to the United States, making them—alongside the Irish—one of the largest migrant groups.³⁰ No less omittable, however, was the immigration to Germany, especially to the FRG - on one hand, the refugees from the GDR and the Eastern block from the late 1940s onwards, on the other hand the wave of the “guest workers” from Turkey, Greece and Southern European countries, whose status since their arrival in the 1960s and 1970s transformed from temporary to permanent.³¹ In Germany, discourse on migration has been more developed within museum studies than in historiography,³² which traditionally approached migration through statistical or economic-political lenses. A notable early initiative was Michael Fehr's 1980 proposal for a Museum für die Geschichte und Kultur der Arbeitsmigranten (Museum of the History and Culture of Labour Migrants).³³ Fehr later revised his position,³⁴ critiquing the museum as a colonial and exclusionary structure and advocated instead for treating migration as a transversal theme across all museum narratives.

This approach reflects a broader institutional shift. Since 2010, the Migration Working Group (Arbeitskreis Migration) of the German Museums Association has supported efforts to integrate migration into permanent exhibitions.³⁵ Their 2015 publication, *Museen, Migration und Kulturelle Vielfalt. Handreichung für die Museumsarbeit*, offers practical guidelines for addressing migration and cultural diversity within museum practice.³⁶

The German Emigration Center in Bremerhaven (Deutsches Auswandererhaus) was founded in 2005 and at that time, it was the largest migration museum in Europe.³⁷ The original permanent exhibition focuses on 300 years of migration history. It offers an immersive presentation of the experiences of migrants who left Europe from the port of

²⁹ PARKIN, David. Mementoes as Transitional Objects in Human Displacement. In *Journal of Material Culture*, 1999, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 303–320. Cited in: CARNegie, Elizabeth – KOCIATKIEWICZ, Jerzy. Holders of Battered Memories: Exploring Suitcases as Museum Metaphors for Travel, Exile, and Incarceration. In *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 2024, vol. 67, p. 824.

³⁰ HANEWINKEL, Vera – OLTMER, Jochen. Historical and Current Development of Migration to and from Germany [online]. bpb.de. 11 January 2018 [accessed 25 August 2025]. Available from: <https://www.bpb.de>

³¹ GOGOS, Manuel. Das Gedächtnis der Migrationsgesellschaft: DOMiD – Ein Verein schreibt Geschichte(n). Bielefeld 2021, pp. 12–13.

³² RUPNOW, Dirk. Migration und Museum: Verheißung oder Aporie? In RADONIC, Ljiljana – UHL, Heidemarie (eds.). *Das umkämpfte Museum*. Bielefeld 2020, p. 76.

³³ RUPNOW, Migration und Museum: Verheißung oder Aporie?, p. 79.

³⁴ RUPNOW, Migration und Museum: Verheißung oder Aporie?, p. 79.

³⁵ BLASCHKA-EICK, Sabine. Wie entsteht Verbundenheit? Migrationsgeschichte als nationales und familiäres Narrativ im Deutschen Auswandererhaus. In BERLINGHOFF, Marcel – RASS, Christoph – ULZ, Markus (eds.). *Die Szenographie der Migration: Geschichte. Praxis. Zukunft*. Osnabrück 2017, p. 278.

³⁶ BLASCHKA-EICK, Wie entsteht Verbundenheit?, p. 287.

³⁷ BAUR, Joachim. Ein Migrationsmuseum der anderen Art. Das Deutsche Auswandererhaus in Bremerhaven. In *Werkstatt Geschichte*. 2006, no. 42, p. 97.

Bremerhaven, through an impressive scenography that includes an ocean liner pier, ship cabins, and immigration stations on Ellis Island. In April 2012 the permanent exhibition was expanded by a newly added section focusing on immigration to Germany and it became the first exhibition in Germany to address both emigration and immigration.³⁸ Both exhibitions place emphasis on the personal stories of migrants, which is reflected in the scenography, the exhibits, and the interactive sections where visitors receive a card resembling a boarding pass with the name, personal details, year of emigration, and place of origin of a migrant. Visitors then follow his or her journey throughout the entire exhibition.

Simone Blaschka-Eick (current director of the German Emigration Center) points out, that most of the oral history interviews presented in the museum were told in a very authentic way, but they are not historically verified and a lot of other thought and decision-making processes and the emotionality of migration process itself shows, it cannot be understood purely in scientific and historical terms.³⁹ It is precisely these socially and emotionally charged categories that are more difficult to grasp scientifically—such as moments of decision-making, uprootedness, or otherness—that the museum seeks to convey. It does so through the so-called Forum Migration project, within which methods are being developed to explore how to work with and convey topics such as empathy towards migration and everyday phenomena related to migration in a museum context.⁴⁰ According to Simone Blaschka-Eick the primary target group of the project Forum Migration are children and teenagers and the project aims to help them engage with everyday situations related to migration and oral history archive (gathers personal life stories of labor migrants who came after 1949) and an evaluation center are also included within the museum's spaces.⁴¹

The starting point of the project was the result of extensive visitor surveys conducted by the museum since its opening, which revealed numerous concrete and diffuse fears regarding migration and refugees among the general public.⁴² The second phase of the project began in 2017 with the opening of the "Studio Migration" exhibition space, where continuously updated survey results—reflecting current migration events—are presented to visitors through interactive media stations.⁴³ The project values visitors' opinions by involving them in shaping the exhibition content while enabling them to see and reflect on the views and reasoning of others, encouraging dialogue and potential shifts in perspective.⁴⁴ In this sense the development of the German Emigration Center can be to certain extent understood as an emerging place of plural and heterogeneous "collected memories".⁴⁵

Another German example of migration museum located in the historical migration infrastructure⁴⁶ is the Emigration Museum BallinStadt in Hamburg. The idea of the museum

³⁸ BLASCHKA-EICK, *Wie entsteht Verbundenheit?*, pp.278-279.

³⁹ BLASCHKA-EICK, *Wie entsteht Verbundenheit?*, pp.278-279.

⁴⁰ BLASCHKA-EICK, *Wie entsteht Verbundenheit?*, p. 278.

⁴¹ BLASCHKA-EICK, *Wie entsteht Verbundenheit?*, p. 287.

⁴² PÜLM, Felix. *Refugees Welcome!?* The Controversial Topic of Migration in German Museums. In *International Public History*. 2020, vol. 3, no. 1, article 20202001 [online]. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1515/iph-2020-2001>, p. 6.

⁴³ PÜLM, *Refugees Welcome!?*, p. 6.

⁴⁴ PÜLM, *Refugees Welcome!?*, p. 6.

⁴⁵ RUPNOW, *Migration und Museum: Verheißung oder Aporie?*, p. 87.

⁴⁶ PETELSKA, Michalina. *Migration Museums: A Proposed Typology*, p. 29.

comes from the 1999, when the Hamburg State Archive started the digitization of the lists of passengers,⁴⁷ which represent a unique historical source on the history of migration. After a few temporary exhibitions,⁴⁸ the museum was opened in 2007 as a private museum named after Albert Ballin, a German merchant and shipping magnate. Unlike the German Emigration Center, which uses a completely modern building in the port city of Bremerhaven, the Emigration Museum BallinStadt highlights the authenticity of its space – the former emigrants' halls (Auswandererhallen). Both museums use the authenticity of the cities or buildings in some way, which is the reason why Michalina Petelska counts both of them in her proposed category of migration museum in historical infrastructure.⁴⁹ It is important to emphasize that the current buildings of the museum are not the original emigrants' halls.⁵⁰ The reconstruction however can be understood as an example of the present strategy of creating museums in former migration infrastructure.⁵¹ The buildings in this case are meant to be a part of the display⁵² similarly to for example Red Star Line Museum Antwerp. Both of the museums however aim to be seen as attractive present-day museums.⁵³ It should be noted, however, that the strong emphasis on the originality of the building, especially in the case of the BallinStadt Museum, could lead to simplification and a misinterpretation by the visitors.⁵⁴

It should be noted that taking inspiration from the theatrical installation approach of Ellis Island is not limited only to the early pioneers of modern migration museums. EPIC The Irish Emigration Museum in Dublin, opened in 2016 as a private initiative, is located in the area of docklands, in an early 19th century vault building formerly used as a tobacco store.⁵⁵ Its permanent exhibition focuses on interactive, immersive experience. In Ireland, it is particularly striking that emigration remained peripheral to the Irish culture of remembrance for a long time. The trauma of the Great Famine and the ensuing mass emigration of the nineteenth century long persisted as a displaced and silenced memory, overshadowed by the dominant heroic narrative of Ireland's struggle for independence from Great Britain. In Irish discourse, serious engagement with the Irish diaspora only began toward the end of the 20th century. The EPIC explicitly distances itself from commemorative modes centred on loss and mourning. Instead, it foregrounds immersive experience, utilizing digital technologies to reframe Irish emigration as a constitutive element in a global context.

Probably the most prominent example of a museum dedicated primarily to the topic of migration in the historical perspective in Eastern Europe is the Emigration Museum

⁴⁷ WÖST, Ursula. "Port of Dreams": BallinStadt Emigrant World in Hamburg. In GROPE, Hans-Hermann – WÖST, Ursula. *Via Hamburg to the World: From the Emigrants' Halls to BallinStadt*. Hamburg 2007, p. 74.

⁴⁸ WÖST, "Port of Dreams": BallinStadt Emigrant World in Hamburg, p. 75.

⁴⁹ PETELSKA, *Migration Museums: A Proposed Typology*, p. 29.

⁵⁰ WÖST, "Port of Dreams": BallinStadt Emigrant World in Hamburg, pp. 78-79.

⁵¹ PETELSKA, *Migration Museums: A Proposed Typology*, p. 31.

⁵² PELSMAEKERS, Katja – VAN HOUT, Tom. *People on the Move: How Museums De-Marginalize Migration*. In *Social Semiotics*, 2020, vol. 30, no. 4, p. 614.

⁵³ PELSMAEKERS – VAN HOUT, *People on the Move: How Museums De-Marginalize Migration*, p. 614.

⁵⁴ HEILIG, Nadine. *Authentizität und Musealität historischer Bauwerke* [online]. [accessed 6 August 2025]. Available from: http://www.unter-hamburg.de/Authentizitaet_und_Museal.419.0.html.

⁵⁵ EDWARDS, Elaine. *Story of 70 Million Irish Told at New Dublin Visitor Centre*. *The Irish Times* [online]. 5 May 2016 [accessed 17 October 2025]. Available from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/story-of-70-million-irish-told-at-new-dublin-visitor-centre-1.2638073>

(Muzeum Emigracji) in Gdynia, Poland. The museum was opened in 2015 on the site of the city's seaport built in the 1930s, a crucial site of pre-war passenger traffic, including the transoceanic routes.⁵⁶ The establishment of the museum was no accident – on one hand, can be read as a response to Poland's position as the EU member state with the largest group of its nationals living abroad, whose diaspora has been constantly being torn between the loyalty to its homeland with a harrowing history (and the possibility of ultimate return) and the integration into the new communities. It should be noted that ever since the conception of the museum's idea in 2007, it has been proposed as a way to present the role of the Polish diaspora in Polish history.⁵⁷ It is no accident that the first piece of text a visitor encounters in the exhibition is an analysis of the Polish national anthem.⁵⁸ The permanent exhibition's narrative remains deeply rooted in a romanticised, tragic national imaginary — one in which departure does not sever ties to the homeland. A pronounced emphasis on individual experience and oral history (as represented in the "Emigrant Archive") reinforces the notion of a permanent bond between the Polish diaspora (Polonia) and the Polish state.⁵⁹ As Kobielska and Herczyńska point out, the exhibition's narrative presents the decision to emigrate as an individual act, rooted in a sense of hope and a belief in one's own agency. 'Success' is the keyword that permeates the entire chronological exhibition. It is exhibited in stories of emigrants who became successful or even exceptional in their new destination (all the while upholding their Polish identity), and ultimately returned back home, as well as, on a larger scale, success in defeating the enemies of the nation. It should be noted that the exhibition focuses primarily on the communists in this role, emphasizing the isolation of Poland and the temporarily severed ties with the diaspora in the former Western block. In the exhibition, surprisingly the portrayal of the European Union⁶⁰ functions primarily as a conceptual tool—a framework enabling both the symbolic reconnection of Polish diasporic communities with the homeland and the facilitation of outward mobility, with the implicit expectation of an eventual return.

The Gdynia museum deviates significantly from the usual narrative present at the Western-European migration museums. Instead of emphasizing multiculturalism and globalization as opposed to the idea of unsustainable national states, migration as a phenomenon that transcends cultures, nations and historical eras, the Migration Museum focuses on building and sustaining symbolic and identity links with the Polish diaspora. The exhibition narrative was without doubts directly influenced by the migrant crisis and the rise of national-conservative Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice) party that culminated in their overwhelming election win the same year as the museum's opening.

⁵⁶ STEFANEK, Tomasz – GRABOWICZ-MATYJAS, Karolina (eds.). *Emigration Museum in Gdynia: Permanent Exhibition Catalogue*. Gdynia 2016, p. 29.

⁵⁷ SZERLE, Marcin. *Konieczność a przymus. Zagadnienia migracyjne w założeniach ekspozycji stałej Muzeum Emigracji w Gdyni*. In *Studia Historica Gedanensia*, 2014, vol. 5, p. 395

⁵⁸ KRAKUS, Aleksandra. *What Does it Mean to be Polish? Europe and Identity in Two Museums in Poland*. In *Curator*, 2020, vol. 63, pp. 629.

⁵⁹ SZERLE, Marcin. *Konieczność a przymus. Zagadnienia migracyjne w założeniach ekspozycji stałej Muzeum Emigracji w Gdyni*, p. 395.

⁶⁰ Krakus notes that "based on the museum's website, which attributes such importance to the mass-emigration caused by the open borders of the EU, one would expect a large part of the exhibition to be about the condition of contemporary Poles, yet there is only a short text about the EU and a video located on the back of seats in a small replica of an airplane." KRAKUS, *What Does it Mean to be Polish? Europe and Identity in Two Museums in Poland*, p. 630.

However, the rapid transformation of Poland in recent years — from a country traditionally defined by emigration to one experiencing large-scale immigration, including from Asia and Africa⁶¹ — as well as the gradual shift in the political situation prompted an expansion of the museum's activities to include a wider variety of migration-related topics, target groups and approaches. Since 2021 the museum has been including contemporary issues such as the debate on the challenges of the modern world, such as climate migration, migration stereotypes, migration of highly skilled people, or the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border.⁶²

The dynamics of the development of migration museums in recent decades offer another possible framework for differentiating these institutions — namely, the extent to which they arise from the bottom up, based on civic initiative, or from the top down, as part of official memory politics. Similarly to the earliest examples of overseas ethnic museums mentioned above, recent bottom-up initiatives have also been largely driven by representatives of specific communities and activists. Conversely, top-down initiatives have primarily aimed at two objectives: to revitalize abandoned industrial sites — such as port buildings — and to transform them into polyphonic meeting places where the frameworks of old national narratives can be transcended. However, the encounter and confrontation between national stories of emigration and the experience of immigration do not form the only context. In former imperial countries, there is a gradual revision of the colonial past, both within museums and in their collections. Yet even in this respect, the process has often been, and continues to be, a painful one.

An exemplary case is the development of the French migration museum, established in the Palais de la Porte-Dorée, a monumental building constructed in 1931 for the Exposition coloniale internationale, adorned with reliefs narrating the story of France's so-called civilizing mission in the world.⁶³ As was the case with the so-called „new nations,” Europe, too, can be divided between nations founded on civic versus ethnic principles.⁶⁴ The French model of civic nationalism presents a paradox: although it promotes a universalist ideal grounded in secular republican values, it can also produce forms of epistemic violence—that is, the silencing or marginalisation of alternative ways of knowing and being. This is evident not only in how it has excluded the histories and identities of peoples from former colonies, but also in how it has overlooked France's own internal cultural diversity, including groups such as the Basques, Bretons, and Alsatians.⁶⁵

⁶¹ EWL GROUP; CENTRE FOR EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES, University of Warsaw. Migration 2.0: Poland in the Global Race for Talent from Asia and Latin America [online]. Warsaw, 2024 [accessed 7 August 2025]. Available from: https://ewl.com.pl/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Raport_Migracja-Polska-w-globalnej-walce-o-talenty-z-Azji-i-Ameryki-Lacinskiej.pdf.

⁶² RACZYŃSKI, Rafał – LANGOWSKA, Kinga Alina. Activities of the Emigration Museum in Gdynia with Regard to Developing Symbolic and Identity Ties with the Polish Diaspora. In *Studia Migracyjne – Przegląd Polonijny*, 2022, vol. 2, p. 114.

⁶³ GÖKALP, Sébastien. Une histoire en mouvement. In GÖKALP, Sébastien (ed.). *Une histoire de l'immigration en 100 objets*. Paris 2023, pp. 23–24.

⁶⁴ SHULMAN, Stephen. Challenging the Civic/Ethnic and West/East Dichotomies in the Study of Nationalism. In *Comparative Political Studies*, 2002, vol. 35, no. 5, pp. 554–585.

⁶⁵ See e.g. DYMOND, Anne. Displaying the Arlésienne: Museums, Folklife and Regional Identity in France. In BAYCROFT, Timothy – HOPKIN, David (eds.). *Folklore and Nationalism in Europe During the Long Nineteenth Century*. Leiden, Boston 2012, pp. 137–160.

The creation of the Paris migration museum was shaped from the top down as a political project. The museum's constitutive decree of 2007 claims its purpose as collecting, safeguarding, presenting and making accessible the history of migration in France in order to incorporate the immigrant population in the French society and French historical narrative.⁶⁶ In fact, it was the French response to the American memorial on Ellis Island in an attempt to thematise immigration in the imagination of the French community. Le musée national de l'Histoire de l'immigration stands as significant testimony to the exhaustion of national concepts forged during the 19th century. However, the notion of a French melting pot, or *le creuset français*,⁶⁷ given France's colonial context, was even further removed from the social reality of the late 20th century than the American myth. This fact is inevitably reflected in the exhibition, which has drawn significant criticism since its opening in 2017. One point of contention is the overly heavy emphasis on a dominant "integration" discourse that highlights the celebratory narrative of immigrant contributions that often obscures France's colonial history⁶⁸ and, especially in the part of the exhibition centered on the contemporary experience and issues of immigrants to France, heavy emphasis on positive narratives of seamless migrant and refugee integration and a welcoming French society. The problematic aspects of the migrant situation is exhibited only once - two photographs of the migrant tent slums on the Paris outskirts are however immediately overshadowed by the opposite panel with a block of text praising the welcoming attitude of the French society towards the Ukrainian refugees.

While previously mentioned museums were state-initiated projects aimed at supporting a cohesive state-sanctioned identity in a multicultural society, the projects of migration museums "from below" are of no lesser importance. Initiated by migrants or their descendants themselves, their aim is to primarily document and archive migrant memory and heritage, which is to serve as a medium through which both personal and collective identity can be established and reestablished. In Germany, an example of a major museum project established "from below" is The Documentation Center and Museum of Migration in Germany DOMiD. Its origin can be traced directly to the initiative of the Turkish immigrant community (prior to its merging with Museum of Migration in Germany in 2007 it carried the name The Documentation Center and Museum of Migration from Turkey DOMiT).⁶⁹ While initially the museum strived to document history of "guest workers" (*Gastarbeiter*) from Turkey who have been coming to FRG starting with 1961⁷⁰, nowadays it presents a wide scope of immigration to Germany. As one of its founders points out, the purpose of the organization is "to show the history of migration as a part of global social change and as one of the major forces of this change,"

⁶⁶ GÖKALP, Une histoire en mouvement, p. 21.

⁶⁷ NOIRIEL, Gérard. *Le Creuset français: histoire de l'immigration XIXe-XXe siècle*. Paris 2006.; BANCEL, Nicolas – LÉBOVICS, Herman. Building the History Museum to Stop History: Nicolas Sarkozy's New Presidential Museum of French History. In *French Cultural Studies* [online], 2011, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 271–288. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957155811417069> [Accessed 7 Aug. 2025].

⁶⁸ LABADI, Sophia. The National Museum of Immigration History (Paris, France), neo-colonialist representations, silencing, and re-appropriation. In *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 2013, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 310–333.

⁶⁹ GOGOS, Maryem. *Das Gedächtnis der Migrationsgesellschaft: DOMiD – Ein Verein schreibt Geschichte(n)*. Bielefeld 2021, pp. 164–171.

⁷⁰ ERYILMAZ, Aytac. The Political and Social Significance of a Museum of Migration in Germany. In *Museum International*, 2007, vol. 59, no. 1–2, p. 133.

with an emphasis on the visualization of migrant history as an essential premise for an integrative society.⁷¹ Eryilmaz opposes the notion of museum as a ritualistic space of remembrance of nationalistic ideas; instead his vision of DOMiD embraces Clifford's idea of museums as "contact zones,"⁷² facilitating contact between diverse actors – in this case, between migrants and the majority society. An important aspect of reinforcing this role is the self-representation of migrants at the executive core of the organization – as Can-Mollaer points out, this "from below" approach is supposed to ensure that the diverse perspectives and experiences of migrants who have been historically always perceived as "other" are adequately represented and their representatives are at the forefront of the dialogue and democratic negotiations.⁷³

An approach like DOMiD's highlights migration as a transformative force narrated from the perspective of migrants themselves, challenging nationalistic memory and foregrounding self-representation. Yet the varied landscape of migration museums in Central Europe also demonstrates other, sometimes contrasting, narration approaches. While DOMiD emphasizes participatory, "from below" practices, institutions such as the Erinnerungsstätte Notaufnahmelager Marienfelde reveal how migration is also framed through state histories, political ruptures, and Cold War legacies. The Erinnerungsstätte Notaufnahmelager Marienfelde, located on the site of the former reception center for refugees from the GDR, shows to what extent a museum narrating the story of refugees fleeing communist dictatorship can also serve to thematize migration in the contemporary context.⁷⁴ The interweaving of various different horizons of perception of migration within a historical framework represents, particularly in Central Europe, an idea of how cultural institutions might respond to the challenges posed by migration and globalization in recent years.

While the formation of museums from the top down always brings with it the challenge of critically reflecting on dominant memory politics, bottom-up initiatives are sometimes perhaps too uncritically celebrated for their emancipatory dimension. Yet even in such cases, it remains essential to consider the extent to which ethnocentric or colonial prejudices continue to exert their influence. The lived experience of inhabitants from former colonies long remained overshadowed by the grand narrative of the civilizing mission of European empires, which had defined them for decades. After the dissolution of the colonial system, many people from former colonies migrated to European countries, often only to confront — with a sobering perspective — the illusion that they were part of the same nation. The story of Caribbean immigration to the United Kingdom, for example, is narrated through the community-based "museum without walls" project *Museumand*, as well as through the archive and memorial Black Cultural Archives in Brixton. In Brussels, one can visit the Musée de la Migration located in the former industrial suburb of Molenbeek, which, after the Second World War, became a major destination for labour

⁷¹ ERYILMAZ, The Political and Social Significance of a Museum of Migration in Germany, p. 132.

⁷² Clifford, James. *Routes : travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge, p. 192.

⁷³ CAN-MOLLAER, Esra. Representing Migration in Museums 'From Below': The Case of DOMiD As a Migration Museum in Germany. In *Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2024, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 151.

⁷⁴ STIFTUNG BERLINER MAUER. *Nach der Flucht. Wie wir leben wollen* [online]. *stiftung-berliner-mauer.de*. [Accessed 7 Aug. 2025]. Available from: <https://www.stiftung-berliner-mauer.de/de/notaufnahmelager-marienfelde/besuch/ausstellungen/nach-der-flucht-wie-wir-leben-wollen>

migration from Italy and Morocco.⁷⁵ In the Belgian example, the migration museums emphasized not only the colonial imaginaries, but the imaginaries of the Eastern European diasporas and others as well.

Yet migration offers other horizons of understanding that are increasingly reflected in museum narratives. In 2025, the Musée de l'Homme in Paris presented the exhibition *Migrations, human odyssey*, focusing precisely on the general anthropological dimension of human movement. A distinctly different imaginary is offered by art-focused migration museums that aim at performative approaches to migration, such as the FENIX museum in Rotterdam. Projects such as MUSMIG at the Volkskundemuseum in Vienna do not insist on community collections or the revision of former colonial collections; nor do they seek primarily to tell authoritative stories of integration. Rather, they aspire to be open forums, places of encounter and living deliberation, subversive toward the idea of an institutionally fixed migration narrative.⁷⁶ Similarly, participatory projects such as Mutlaka: Treffpunkt Museum exemplify museums taking on an active role in facilitating direct integration of the migration communities into the cultural education.⁷⁷ This illustrates the potential of new museums to actively participate in deliberation within the public sphere. Migration narratives are not presented as static truths or mere collections of artifacts; rather, the museum becomes a living space of continuous fusion of individual horizons.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is essential to resist interpreting the development of migration museums as a linear historical progression from nationalistic and ethnocentric narratives to transnational and participatory models. While distancing from the traditional codes of nation-building remains a critical objective, the identity-forming function of museums must not be overlooked. As in the past, museums that foreground exclusive narratives to reinforce the collective consciousness of forcibly displaced ethnic communities continue to play a vital role in fostering identity and solidarity—evident in the contemporary experiences of refugee communities from Ukraine or the Crimean Tatars. Imposing a uniform transnational perspective on such narratives risks replicating hegemonic Western frameworks, potentially silencing the legitimate articulation of collective and personal traumas associated with the loss of homeland and the fragility of identity.

The normative imperative in these cases remains a call for dialogue, wherein museums become spaces for embracing diverse experiential horizons and acknowledging historical and cultural situatedness—ultimately in the interest of promoting solidarity. As this analysis has demonstrated, museums are inherently hermeneutic spaces marked by tensions among the varied expectations of communities, political actors, academic experts, and the general public. Interpretations within these institutions constantly oscillate across multiple axes: between exclusion and inclusion, between community voice and memory

⁷⁵ TORREKENS, Corinne. Concentration des populations musulmanes et structuration de l'associatif musulman à Bruxelles. In *Brussels Studies* [online], General collection, document 4, published 5 March 2007 [Accessed 7 Aug. 2025]. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/brussels.369>

⁷⁶ KOLLEKTIV MUSMIG. Kollektiv MUSMIG fordert ein Museum der Migration in Österreich. musmig.co/ [online]. [Accessed 7 Aug. 2025]. Available from: <https://musmig.co/>

⁷⁷ MULTAKA. Konzept & Vision. multaka.de [online]. [Accessed 7 Aug. 2025]. Available from: <https://multaka.de/konzept-vision/>

politics, between the framing of emigration or immigration, between patrimonialisation and polyphonic narration, and between object-based and deliberative approaches.

Within this broader framework, it is also crucial to consider the conceptual and strategic orientations museums adopt—whether through immersive exhibitions, collection-centered storytelling, or educational outreach. Importantly, recent trends in museum communication and presentation—particularly participatory formats and digital tools—have enhanced the capacity of migration museums to respond more flexibly to shifting political and societal contexts. This adaptive potential not only increases the relevance and accessibility of museum narratives but also enables critical reflection on the power structures within which migration is continuously redefined and contested.

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