

**Christopher Whitehead, Katherine Lloyd, Susannah Eckersley and  
Rhasannon Mason (eds.), *Museums, Migration and Identity in Europe:  
Peoples, Places and Identities*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, 325 pages,  
ISBN: 9781472425188 (hbk)**

*Review by Marius Ioan TĂȚAR*

Migration as a complex phenomenon entails multiple challenges both for migrants themselves as well as for the host and sending societies. It crystallizes tensions between the needs of different groups, between exclusive and inclusive forms of belonging, between xenophobic reactions and cosmopolitan identities, between tolerance and intolerance, and between place and displacement, between past and present movements of population. How can these multiple tensions be reconciled? Adopting migration as the paradigm of the contemporary and multicultural world, the contributions to this book reflect on the relationship between museum practices and the politics of place and identity. How can museums raise awareness of an inclusive European identity that can facilitate mutual understanding and social cohesion? As the editors note in their introduction, the book aims to contribute to studies of the role of European museum in representing flows of migration, with particular reference to questions relating to place (p. 1).

Representation is one of the key issues addressed in the chapters of this book. Here the editors distinguish between two apparently different but in fact connected senses: representation in museum displays of history and society (such as objects, images and documents relating to migration), and the matter of audiences feeling that their interests are 'represented' in the more political sense (p. 5). This links to the fundamental question on how museums conceptualize their social role: as forum, arena, contact zone, map of culture, mirrors of society, political agent, educator or platform for debates, and so on (p.5). It also points to the potentially balanced mission that museums might assume: promoting

progressive and egalitarian identities without misremembering difficult histories or ignoring actual social cleavages.

The book is part of the broader research project 'European Museums in an Age of Migrations' (MeLa) that reflects on the role of museums and heritage in the twenty-first century. While the book stands on its own it can also be understood intertextually in conjunction with other publication resulting from this project and which set the broader theoretical and methodological framework for this study. Written by a network of museum professionals and scholars, the chapters of this book touch upon a very high variety of issues regarding current museum practices relating to place, identity and migrations in European museums. In the first chapter, the editors make the case for a renewed sense of the museums as a vital space in which discourses on the social contests over places and social divisions are expressed and addressed. In the second chapter, Cathy Ross reflects on the way museums might approach the issues of migration and cultural diversity and illustrates the practice of representing migration at the Museum of London. In the second chapter, Ullrich Kockel warns against the danger of falling into a representational trap either by essentializing migrants' culture or by focusing solely on integration and ignoring migrant experience specificity.

Focusing on the controversial topic of the post World War II German population expulsions from East of the Oder-Neisse line, Susannah Eckersley problematizes the issue of museum representations that are inherently political and thus incapable of escaping bias. Jakob Ingemann Parby points out the expert role of the curator that can bring evidence on the pervasive character of mobility throughout history in order to counter public debates that tend to promote Rightist views on immigration and citizenship. In her chapter, Katherine Lloyd emphasizes how and why visitors might reject or mediate museums' attempts to represent the fluid nature of national identity and its connection with place and diversity. Kylea Little and Iain Watson advocate for an education and social justice role of museums by highlighting the contribution of migrants to the wellbeing and development of local community. Annemarie de Wildt discusses the representational challenges for the Amsterdam Museum in dealing with the legacies of slavery with more contemporary issues such as racism in the Netherlandish society. Tuğba Tanyeri-Erdemir and Gözde Çerçioğlu Yücel focus on the current repercussions and representations of the Turkish migration to Germany which started in the 1960s with the 'guest worker' program (p. 233). Another chapter on Turkish identity by



Christopher Whitehead and Gönül Bozoğlu examines the way in which identity is constituted in museum representations through the management of difference: repelling difference, assimilating it, marginalizing it or denying it (p. 255). In the last chapter of the book, Anna Chiara Cimoli, bridges past and present migrations by showing how museum representations connect historical Italian emigration with contemporary immigration to Italy.

Drawing on contemporary debates on migration and identity in Europe, this book provides a valuable contribution to the literature on the role of museums in representing the complex and sometimes conflicting relationships between place, people and culture in an increasingly globalized world.