

Change of museums by change of perspective: reflecting experiences of museum development in the context of “EuroVision — Museums exhibiting europe” (EU culture programme)

Susanne Schilling

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Editors

Cultural Heritage in a Changing World



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RICHERS
RENEWAL, INNOVATION AND CHANGE:
HERITAGE AND EUROPEAN SOCIETY

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Change of Museums by Change of Perspective: Reflecting Experiences of Museum Development in the Context of “EuroVision—Museums Exhibiting Europe” (EU Culture Programme)

Susanne Schilling

Abstract

Europe is growing closer and closer together, society is getting more and more diverse and characterized by migration. Museums need to adapt themselves to this process and to become places where all members of society feel represented and are stakeholders in their cultural heritage. But what about local and regional museums which are preserving cultural heritage? Are these museums ready for this type of Europe? For a society that is getting more varied, with more frequent migration, and resulting in more mixed audiences and modern viewing habits and learning habits, how can museums prepare themselves for this challenge?

The museum development project “EuroVision—Museums Exhibiting Europe” (EMEE), funded by the Culture Programme of the European Union, sees these as fundamental questions. The core element of the project is the idea of Change of Perspective (COP), a three-layered concept which encourages multi-layered meanings in museum objects to become more visible, aiming to renegotiate the roles of museum experts and visitors and to strengthen international networking between heritage institutions in order to broaden national perspectives on heritage and overcome Eurocentric views.

The EMEE project develops theoretical input on Change of Perspective but also puts into practice the ideas and reflects the experiences of international and interdisciplinary cooperation. The concepts developed by EMEE project are put to the test and conveyed to visitors and museums experts not only through the contest for young designers and scenographers, but also through the EuroVision Lab., an experimental series of exhibitions and actions. Ideas as well as statements of the executive museum partners provide an insight on how the Change of Perspective can be implemented in the museum work and contribute to presenting cultural heritage in a contemporary European way. The

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experiences of EMEE are conducive to the discourse and dialogue on cultural heritage in a changing world.

1 Societal Changes and Challenges for Museums

Societies are never a static and unchanging construct, this is also true for the European society, which is constantly transforming itself. As museums are closely connected with the society in which they are situated, societal developments bring with them the need to react and adapt. Museums are supposed to keep and display cultural heritage, to make it accessible and to transmit its meaning. This can only be done successfully when museums closely observe societal changes, identify the challenges, and change their way of interpreting, exhibiting, and mediating cultural heritage. The twenty-first century brings many challenges for museums, four of which will mainly be tackled by the museum development project “EuroVision—Museums Exhibiting Europe” (EMEE).

Firstly, there are demographic changes that call for museums to react. The European society is getting older with the population pyramid loosing its shape as more and more elderly people are replacing a diminishing group of younger people (Gans and Schmitz-Veltin 2010). This brings numerous challenges mostly discussed with relation to the economy and to pension schemes, but also relevant for museums as young people are the visitors of the future. Migration has also changed and continues to change the society. People with different migration histories and with different backgrounds with regard to culture, identity, values, and experiences do not only form the European society, but also the one in which the respective museum is directly located. So for museums the task is to represent different communities instead of concentrating only on the majority society (Kaiser et al. 2012).

Secondly, a shrinkage of public space is noticeable, public in the sense of being open to all individuals unconditionally (Leggewie 2015). This development can be counteracted by museums by opening their premises not only for exhibitions but by turning them into social arenas where everybody is welcome and respected and allowed to speak and be heard.

Thirdly, the developments in the sector of new media have led to a lower rate of face-to-face communication since many communication processes are now run digitally (Keller 2013). With the opening of museums as public spaces they can also become places of direct communication and exchange of knowledge and opinions. Finally, tendencies of individualization and privatizing can be seen in the European society which seem to endanger democratic participation (Beck 1986; Giesen 2007). By offering meaningful and engaging social experiences, museums can become places of close communication and bring people together.

These challenges museums face in the twenty-first century are a starting point for the museum development project “EuroVision—Museums Exhibiting Europe”.

The project develops strategies on how to react to contemporary changes and attempts to offer museum tools for their daily work.

2 Role of Museums in Societies and the European Union's Ideas for Museum Development

The vital and important role of museums in the process of transmitting cultural heritage and with it cultural values is generally accepted. Because of the importance of museums in this process their role has been under review, especially when it comes to questions of whose culture is transmitted by whom and who belongs to the desired public (Ambrose and Paine 2012, 25). Two fields of debate are opened by these questions. First, museums need to define which story they want to tell and in doing so, whose cultural heritage and values they want to transmit. Those of the majority society or those of a society characterized by diversity, those of a nation and its rise or trans-regional ones showing connections beyond borders? Second, museums are facing the challenge of determining who is going to tell the story. Researchers and academics as experts on certain topics or museum users and members of the community whose story is on display? Museums cannot ignore the increasing demand for representation within a museum context voiced by different groups. Groups who have been underrepresented, be it subjectively or objectively, e.g. women, minority ethnic groups or people with special needs, are more actively claiming their representation in heritage institutions such as museums (Ambrose and Paine 2012, 25).

Museums arose in the time of nation building and helped in forming the national identity: something that is nowadays deeply contested. Museums gathered and displayed what was and still is regarded as cultural heritage, as well as expressed national identity by exhibiting that which was declared a common and shared culture of a nation. Establishing social cohesion amongst individuals usually works through social relationships. As this is not a working concept in larger groups, a common shared culture served as a foundation and further on, as legitimisation of being a nation (Macdonald and Sharon 2003). Of course museums did not only display and transmit what was and still may be regarded as national culture, but also objects from other cultures and nations were collected in order to show the power of the exhibiting nation. The singularity was frequently made perceptible by strict spatial segregation dividing 'home' and 'foreign' into their own special room or section of the museum (Macdonald 2003). The concept of national identities has been called into question and substituted by some with identical concepts of "post-national" character (Macdonald 2003, 123). When regarding national identities as non-sustainable, the question is raised as to which identical concepts could be fostered instead. Identity is more and more regarded as being shapable by each individual in a process of individualization. Museums as places where identity can be transmitted and articulated therefore they need to change along with the identities of its visitors.

Museums play a crucial role as “keepers of the collective memory”, in the best case they reflect change and continuity in cultural values (Ambrose and Paine 2012, 7). Museums are not only delegated to present and reflect on bygone history but also make a connection to the present. Another task that needs to be fulfilled by museums is to connect citizens with their region or community, to represent all groups forming this community, and this includes vulnerable, underprivileged, or underrepresented groups.

The European Union perceives museums as being of great importance for societies and understands museums as keepers of the European cultural heritage in an integrated Europe. Museums shall interpret and present their collections in European contexts and thereby help to develop a collective identity in multi-cultural societies, following the EU motto “United in diversity” meaning, cultural diversity shall not be negated but preserved (European Union 2007, Lisbon Treaty, Article 167). Strong national narratives are not supposed to be the basis of the European identity but cultural diversity and its acceptance and appreciation. Also the EU sees participation and activation of the visitor together with social integration of disparate lifeworlds as an important tool for present and future museum work (Kaiser et al. 2012). This means much more than implementing a so-called welcome culture, but perceiving visitors as co-constructors of topics and meanings and in mutual negotiations.

3 EuroVision—Museums Exhibiting Europe (EMEE)

The EU recommendations on how museums should perform in order to strengthen the European identity does not answer the question of how a museum not explicitly engaged with European history can succeed in this the EMEE project. Geared to local and regional museums that tries to preserve the cultural heritage on site, the EMEE project tries to find an answer by developing and making applicable the concept of Change of Perspective (COP) which offers ways to broaden the meaning of museum objects by integrating trans-regional, trans-national and cross-cultural European layers. Additionally the COP concept proposes a modification in roles that characterise those between museum users and museums experts and fosters closer networking between cultural institutions.

The starting point of the project EuroVision—Museums Exhibiting Europe—which is located at the intersection of science, practice, tradition and innovation—is the principle of multiperspectivity. It is one of the postulates of the academic discipline of history didactics. One of the premises of this rather young discipline, emerging in the second half of the twentieth century, is the understanding that historic cognition and exposition is always perspectively situated. As historic events have been experienced differently by various social groups it is necessary to perceive and depict those different perspectives. The postulate of multiperspectivity should not be confused with tolerating different personal points of view, but is always connected to social stands such as religious, political, ethnic or sociological stands (Pandel 2013). On this theoretical groundwork the project

consortium of the museum development project EMEE, supported by the European Union Culture Programme, started to think about how museums can be encouraged to Europeanize themselves on multiple layers.

The project consortium combines the theoretical and practical competences of museum professionals from three national museums, with internationally renowned scholar practitioners of scenography/exhibition design and media technology, and academic disciplines in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences:

- National Museum of Archaeology, Portugal
- National Museum of Contemporary History, Slovenia
- National Museum of History, Sofia, Bulgaria
- Atelier Brückner GmbH, Stuttgart, Germany
- Monochrom Kunstverein, Vienna, Austria
- University Roma Tre, Rome, Italy
- University Paris-Est Créteil—ESPE, Paris, France
- Augsburg University, Augsburg, Germany

The project has an ambitious aim: to make museums more accessible in many ways. With the innovative concept of Change of Perspective the project wants to re-interpret museum objects and put them into a broader context of national and trans-national history. Visitors should view objects not only on a regional and national level, but also discover trans-national and European perspectives by means of new ways of presentation, performances and possibilities for participation. At the same time, the project develops creative concepts for audience development and visitor participation. Particularly by involving and activating the visitor, the project aimed to attract a rather large number of previous ‘non-visitors’ to the museums. The EMEE project aims at the europeanization of museums, whereby the term europeanization is to be understood in the first instance as “[e]uropeanization of objects and museum presentations” (Fuhrmann et al. 2014, 35) by making visible the European dimensions of museum objects and presenting their multi-layered meanings from regional via national to European and finally globally. Secondly, europeanization is understood as an “implementation of the EU guiding principles for the development of museums in Europe” (ibid.) by activating visitors and modifying the roles between museum users and experts. Thus turning museums into social arenas and fostering their internationalization.

The project is structured in four phases:

The first phase, ‘Planning the Change of Perspective’, lays the theoretical basis and provides the framework. In this stage a base line study was implemented, called ‘mapping process’, which collected and reviewed good practices from different country and allowed the formulation of some basic trends in the modern development of exhibition practices in Europe. This mapping allowed the approximation of the main concerns for: re-interpreting concepts, re-interpretation of examples, social integration, learning and information, public opinion studies, participation, activation, language of design. Running parallel to this was an intensive cooperation with non-visitor groups that laid the groundwork for the later ‘bridging-the-

gap' activities. The project created five Toolkits, intended as manuals which provide practical help and ideas for how the museum might re-interpret its objects within a European focus. These Toolkits include looking at: museums as social arena; bridging-the-gap to (non-)visitors; scenographic translation of multiperspectivity; as well as the usage of a social web which helped set the theoretical framework and define the main directions for further project research. A workshop accompanies every manual.

The second project phase, 'Creating the Change of Perspective', opened up several opportunities for applying the outcomes of the first phase. In so called 'Exemplary Change of Perspective Units' the five toolkits will evolve to explore specific museum objects, giving ideas on how to re-interpret objects in a European way, staging them according to their multiple layers of meaning, letting visitors participate in the creation of meaning, engaging non-visitors and using social media for interaction. In addition, an international contest for young scenographers has been launched that invited students and young professionals to stage re-interpreted objects and to make Europe visible within museums via scenographic tools. Phase three, 'Performing the Change of Perspective' is dedicated to the EMEE EuroVision Lab., an experimental series of exhibitions and events taking place at seven EMEE partner institutions. The EMEE EuroVision Lab. also works in part as a travelling exhibition where outstanding contributions to the EMEE Young Scenographers Contest are shown in four venues. To complete the project, phase four, 'Sustainability of the Change of Perspective' will sum up all the outcomes and conclusions in a final publication and conference.

The leading principle through all project phases is the Change of Perspective (COP). The concept is based on a discipline specializing in the area of historical culture, historical consciousness and historical identity: Didactics of History. Having its roots in the didactics of history, the concept of Change of Perspective (COP) proceeds from the assumption that the construction of 'European identity' is not something that is static. It is also not intending to replace national, regional and local identity references. Rather, this approach highlights the complexity of identity and the diversity of historical experiences and perspectives in a European context. In this method, European identity is understood as a willingness and ability to acknowledge and embrace diversity and to deal with it in a way that is aligned with the principles of mutual understanding, reciprocal recognition and tolerance (Rüsen 2002).

The second basis for the COP approach is the understanding that the meaning of museum objects is not inherent, but a result of deconstruction and construction. The message of museum objects is mainly generated by its recipients and depends on the context in which the objects are embedded (Thiemeyer 2011, 11). This understanding of the meaning of museum objects can also be found in Krzysztof Pomian's *Semiophoretheorie* [Theory of Semiophors] where an object is considered to be a carrier of a sign, a *semiophor* (Pomian 1998). Only when thinking of the meaning and message of museum objects as something emerging from interpretation processes, can the COP approach can be applied because it is mainly based on multiperspectivity. Visitors will be able to discover changes in meanings of one and

the same object depending on whether it is situated in a local, regional, national, European or even global contexts. Taking different perspectives and exploring a variety of possible meanings helps to raise the visitors' awareness of his or her own identity and illustrates to the visitor, whilst perceiving the European in the local and vice versa, that the 'European is not the 'other' when compared to the national, but the 'self'. Thus visitors are able to realise that various perspectives and identities pervade each other and can yield an expanded or deepened understanding of the cultural heritage within contemporary Europe.

Applying the COP concept to museum exhibitions in Europe implies reviewing and renegotiating existing and passed-on narratives. Multi-layered meanings, different perspectives on objects from other nations, cultures and social experiences need to be revealed and made perceivable for visitors (Schumann and Popp 2011; Macdonald 2003). Furthermore, emphasis should be placed on European links represented by objects. Trans-regional, trans-national and cross-cultural aspects should be highlighted and made more accessible and visible. Thereby the European dimension in objects is not meant to extinguish other, more regional, national or culture-specific ones, but to extend and complement them (Fuhrmann et al. 2014, 38).

The EMEE project has developed these three layers of COP in order to facilitate its practical application. The first layer of COP focuses on re-interpreting objects or object groups not in a one-dimensional, mostly regional or national way, but as multi-faceted objects with the potential also to present trans-regional, European contexts. The results of this re-interpretation are not intended to destroy previous interpretations but exist alongside and with them. The particular challenge is to communicate these multiple layers of meaning to the visitors by means of spatial and scenographic tools. The second layer of COP aims at activating visitors. Museums are asked to share their prerogative for interpreting cultural heritage and invite and acknowledge museum users as co-interpreters. Not only will this change of roles help to engage visitors and users more strongly with their museum, it will also help to turn museums into social arenas where people "continuously and routinely interact to produce, exchange, and consume messages" (Handler 1997, 9) and a voice is given to underrepresented groups who want and need to be heard. The third layer of COP calls for stronger international networking of museums and cultural heritage institutions. In order to re-interpret objects in a trans-regional, trans-national and cross-cultural context an international exchange is not only desirable but is in fact necessary in order to look at objects and collections from different points of view and to reveal their multi-layered meanings.

The COP concept is meant to be implemented in the everyday practical work of museums and heritage institutions. In order to make the theoretical concept applicable, five manuals known as Toolkits, as discussed earlier have been developed under the scope of the EMEE project. They shall function as the conveyance from theory to practice. Besides the EMEE ideas, they also transfer applicable ready-made concepts on how to implement the COP. Each toolkit thematically focuses on one EMEE topic. The first Toolkit '*Making Europe visible. Re-Interpretation of museum objects and topics. A manual*' introduces an analysis tool that helps to

re-interpret museum objects in a trans-regional, trans-national and/or cross-cultural way. The analyzing tool thus opens eight categories¹ in which the object might reveal its European dimensions and gives examples of how objects can be questioned. Toolkit two '*Integrating multicultural Europe. Museums as social arenas*' takes the concept of museums as social arenas as its starting point and develops ideas on how to open museums as public spaces to underrepresented and minority groups. The third Toolkit '*Bridging the gap. Activation, participation and role modification*' analyses obstacles hindering people from becoming active museum users and proposes strategies to bridge the gap between museums and non-visitors. Toolkit four '*Synaesthetic translation of perspectives. Sketchbook Scenography*' compiles tools and ideas on how to convey the multi-layered meanings of re-interpreted objects spatially and by means of scenography and taking into account visitor activation. The fifth and last Toolkit '*Social Web and Interaction. Social media technologies for European national and regional museums*' provides ideas on how to use social media for museums and heritage institutions not only as an advertising tool but as platforms to enable real communication and involvement by visitors and users. All five toolkits will not linger on a theoretic level only, but present best practice examples and actual implementation recommendations thus making them manuals to consult in everyday museum life.

As noted earlier, the EMEE Young Scenographers Contest was an EMEE project which implemented an international contest for young designers and scenographers through a public invitation to young people for their ideas of how to make Europe visible in objects of multi-layered meaning with the help of spatial design. Called 'One Object—Many Visions—EuroVisions' the central idea of the contest was to highlight the COP concept that museum objects should reveal their complex diversity of meaning. A trans-national or trans-regional object has various meanings spanning from national or local significance to the broader European dimension—and thus demands a multiperspective scenographic approach. Young designers were asked create ideas and develop design concepts for a multiperspective, scenographic presentation of museum objects. In this way the simultaneous appreciation of objects as elements of the local, regional, national or European collective memory were be offered to the visitor. At the same time, the goal was to find new trans-cultural approaches in order to stage national objects in a European context via scenography as a contemporary design language and new

¹ The eight categories are:

1. The object as migrant
2. The background circumstances of the making of the object
3. Cultural transfer by means of trans-regional networks
4. Culture-spanning contexts
5. Cultural encounters as theme of the object
6. Aspects of the perception of the self and the other
7. The object as icon
8. 'Object-narration'

For details see Fuhrmann et al. (2014).



Fig. 1 View into the travelling exhibition of the EMEE Young Scenographers Contest, here at the Museum im Palais in Graz, Austria, photo: Janine Pichler

formats of presentation to help initiate a European perspective for future generations of visitors.

The participants were free to choose between museum objects already re-interpreted as provided by the analyzing tool in Toolkit 1 or freely chosen objects. The assignment of task clearly defined that submissions were to make visible:

Change of Perspective from a local/regional museum object to a European/trans-regional object showing the European dimension” and “to provide a scenographic translation of perspectives that gives a multiple and synaesthetic approach to objects with a local, trans-regional or cross-cultural meaning” at the same time enabling visitors to “discover that one and the same object can be perceived in various ways and thereby can change its meanings (EMEE Young Scenographers Contest 2014).

From 60 entries coming from 7 European countries, 29 made it to the shortlist. The four winners (see Figs. 1 and 2) were chosen by a jury comprising of EMEE partners and international experts. The best submissions were put together for display in a travelling exhibition that will be shown in seven European countries.

The submissions reached very high standards in respect of their conceptual and plastic features. Nonetheless, many of them were superficial and worked with the obvious: stories of migration concerning people and objects. Expressing interdependent influences and connections, making different layers of meanings in objects perceivable and offering a possibility of injecting oneself in the process of the construction of meaning were unfortunately not realised by most of the participants. Ruedi Baur, EMEE jury chairman and communication designer states:

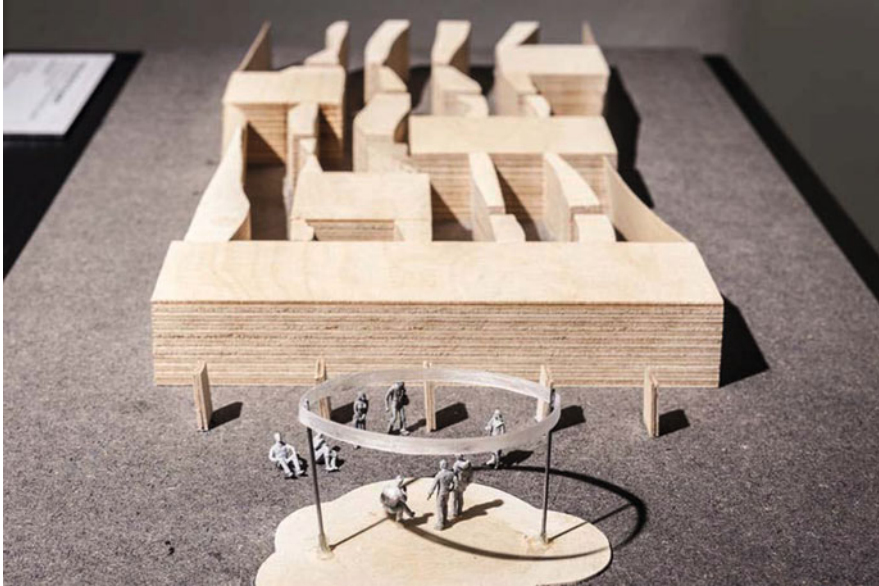


Fig. 2 First prize of the EMEE Young Scenographers Contest: “Did you hit the jackpot?” by Mirjam Scheerer, photo: Janine Pichler

[...] I am not quite certain whether the competition’s deeper meaning has been entirely decoded. The offered exercise was downright a revolution in the face of the current perception of history. The point was not only to make museums accessible to everyone by cultivating multilingualism and offering explanations incorporating knowledge gaps of visitors coming from afar [...]. (Baur 2015, 19).

This assessment aligns with the EMEE consortium view. Bringing out different, sometimes even contradictory layers of meaning in cultural heritage with respect to museum objects requires curatorial and scientific research. The process of staging objects in a way that makes multiperspectivity visible requires not only the creative work of the designer, but also constant input by the curator who has internalized the concept of Change of Perspective and is able to impart it to the designer. Staging objects in a way that will allow access to different layers seems to be a challenge which is not easy to solve. The visibility of different interpretations in one object and engaging the beholder to explore them is a feature rarely realized in the submissions. “The proposals we came to judge were rather mutual, which didn’t bother, but—I have to repeat—of real conceptual and plastic quality. But is this enough to change our view of Europe?” (Baur 2015, 23)

The final step in the EMEE project is an experimental series of exhibitions and activities called EuroVision Lab., running under the headline ‘One Object—Many Visions—EuroVisions’. COP is put into practice in various museums through a



Fig. 3 Museum speed dating in the MNZS, photo: Urška Purg, National Museum of Contemporary History Slovenia

variety of activities with public appeal and also in different exhibitions. This implementation in all consortium members' institutions and further associated institutions can be regarded as a field test of the theoretical framework developed in the initial project phases. By applying the Toolkits the participating museums take a step towards further europeanization and also gather valuable experience on the practicability of the EMEE ideas and concepts. At this juncture the EMEE EuroVision Lab. is still in the start-up phase. Two museums have opened their EuroVision Lab.s: the *Muzej Novejše Zgodovine Slovenije* [National Museum of Contemporary History Slovenia, MNZS], which is an EMEE consortium member, and the *Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Dortmund* [Museum of Art and Cultural History Dortmund, MKK] in Germany, which is a museum associated with EMEE. Both museums prepared an exhibition using participatory technologies.

The MNZS started an intensive collaboration with a group of young people who formerly belonged to the 'non-visitors' groups. Fifteen young people and fifteen museum experts from Slovenia and other countries were invited to take part in the project. From the beginning roles were switched: the group of young people were given the role of museum curators in charge of conceptualizing and realizing an exhibition. In a new format, called 'museum speed dating' (see Fig. 3), the museum experts presented their favorite objects of national cultural heritage with European references. The experts had three minutes to introduce their object to each of the young people who then as a group chose five objects based on their knowledge acquired in EMEE workshops on re-interpretation beforehand. With those five objects as a core, the group then created an exhibition that worked as a time capsule, bringing the visitors back to a living room in 1990 (see Fig. 4). The chosen objects were presented in the room and were accessible i.e. touchable and usable for all



Fig. 4 View into the EuroVision Lab., co-curated by visitors, of the MNZS, photo: Sašo Kovačič, National Museum of Contemporary History Slovenia

visitors who were ready to explore them and to discover their trans-regional, trans-national, cross-cultural and European layers. The exhibition was enriched by an accompanying programme, which for example, offered guided tours in sign language.

The MKK also developed an exhibition (see Fig. 5) using participatory technologies, but from a different starting point: migration in a specific area of Dortmund. From the beginning, it planned to give current and former residents of the street Münsterstrasse, often perceived as problematic district, a voice in the exhibition. The exhibition was not to be supported by items from its own or other museum collections but be put together through this form of co-curating. The curators fieldwork then began by interviewing residents of Münsterstrasse. In dialogues with the community, the exhibition grew; objects and topics found their way into the concept. People were encouraged to tell their stories and also stories of their ancestors who lived or worked in Münsterstrasse. Individual sections of the exhibition were developed by including topics and objects proposed by the residents. The MKK also created an accompanying programme, offering walks through the area depicted in the exhibition and initiating panel discussions and open forums on the topic of migration.

Both museums documented and reviewed the process of the exhibition development by using participatory techniques carefully and critically. It seems rather obvious that the traditional role of the curator had to be adapted in both projects. The question of how curators can and should fulfill their role in the curatorial process when using inclusionary practices and participative techniques has been



Fig. 5 View into the EuroVision Lab., co-curated by citizens of Dortmund, of the MKK, photo: Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Dortmund, Madeleine-Annette Albrecht

raised for decades. The imbalance of power between visitors and museum experts is a vivid field for discussion and representatives of new museology have spoken out in favour of including museum communities and audience participation which allows a critical debate on mono-perspectivism along with elitism and exclusionary practices since the 1980s (Carpentier 2014). Finding a new professional identity as museum expert is a process that is not without pressure and assessing the audiences in respect of co-curators needs is not easy: “Those arguing for constructing the visitor as relatively ignorant were accused of being ‘patronizing’ and of ‘dumbing down’, those who constructed the visitor as more educated faced charges of ‘elitism’ and of being potentially ‘exclusionary’” (Macdonald 2001, 133). Balancing the relationship between audiences and museum experts therefore depends on knowing the audiences and on building long-term relationships. Carpentier describes a participatory fantasy:

as a respectful and balanced negotiation in cultural production processes, where all become authors [...] in interpretation and production, where difference is acknowledged, and where all voices can be heard and used to structurally (and not occasionally) feed the decision-making processes (Carpentier 2014, 126).

The museum experts working in the EuroVision Lab. so far, have based their relationship with the co-curating audiences on dialogue and acknowledgment of their expertise. Concerning the development of the visitors’ engagement with their museum, the MNZS states:

The biggest treasure we gained from this process, besides connecting with other museums and helping the young to test themselves in the unknown situations, is the knowledge on how the young wish that history would be presented in museums, such that it would raise interest among their peers (N.N. 2015).

Also the curator of the MKK says that the participatory techniques applied eventuate in getting people in contact with the museum who have not been there before and to strengthen and intensify relationships.

On the downside, the establishment and continuation of those relationships requires more personnel than most museums can invest. Kaja Širok, director of MNZS, sees her museum turned into a place she always wanted it to be: "It's a place of sharing, it's a place for accepting diversity [...]" (Mayer-Salvi 2015, 00'25"). She also states that museum experts can learn from their audiences while co-curating. Nonetheless she admits that there were some doubts about the enduring commitment of the group they worked with. In the course of the participatory project a high drop-out rate was noticeable, the initial group size was nearly halved at the end (Širok 2015). The MNZS attributes this high drop-out rate mainly to two reasons: first, the participants, as non-visitors, could not estimate whether their personal interest suited the project's content enough as the field of museum work was new to them. Second, some participants underestimated the expenditure of time the project would demand. The high drop-out quote influenced the project progression as it forced museum staff to play a more active role at the beginning than first intended which in turn had an impact on the participatory character of the project and the switch of roles between museum users and experts. Moreover, criticism from the museum staff was voiced concerning the scientific quality of the exhibition curated by the non-visitor group. Isolde Parussel, curator for the MKK, noticed a change within the museum's audiences through the participatory project, they became more diverse and co-curators felt a strong connection to the museum. The awareness of and interest in the museum rose noticeably also among group alliances and clubs active in the fields of migration and urban development, the anchorage within the urban society became stronger (Parussel 2015). Both museums noticed that participatory offers cannot be and are not used by museum visitors without constant encouragement and support and demand an enormous amount of commitment from the museum staff.

When reflecting their own role as curators in the whole process, Isolde Parussel notes that the thematical depth and richness of details would not have been possible without the co-curating, saying: "Without including the citizens, deep drilling to this extent would not have been possible. [...] The participatory approach also allowed a significantly more detailed presentation of the Münsterstrasse within the exhibition." (Parussel 2015) On the other hand, an enormous amount of time has to be expended to successfully implement participatory approaches and she always felt a risk of not being able to cover important topics due to the lack of objects or contemporary witnesses. The process of planning and shaping the exhibition gets more dynamic when using participatory techniques (Parussel 2015). Kaja Širok sees the necessary adoption as a fundamental change of how visitors are perceived

and calls for history museums to accept the need for “active people and not static visitors” (Širok 2015). Also she states that participatory techniques, once applied, need to be taken serious and used in a responsible way with the aim to connect visitors and curators. Transferring power to the co-curators requires a new way of curating: curators can no longer be only the interpreters of cultural heritage, but become active workers in public relations by building strong relationships with the audiences and not only seeing them as tools for realizing a project, but as partners with acknowledged expertise. In this sense, curators and cultural professionals in the EMEE project are facilitators between audiences and heritage institutions, they encourage museum users to become active and enter the process of interpreting cultural heritage and ensure multivocality: “EMEE works in giving different voices to objects which were interpreted unanimously only by curators [. . .]” (Širok 2015, 2).

4 Conclusion

The EMEE project as a museum development project offers museums help and ideas for europeanization which is understood as making visible trans-regional, trans-national, cross-cultural and European dimensions in objects. It also strives for making museums more accessible, including museum users more effectively in the interpretation of cultural heritage. As a key concept for implementing this project, the Change of Perspective has been developed. This is a three level concept that calls first for re-interpretation of museum objects in a trans-national, cross-cultural way; secondly, for turning museums into open spaces closely following the concept of museums as social arenas; and thirdly, for stronger networking of museums from different countries and subject fields. The project started off by laying the theoretical groundwork and progressed into manuals, workshops and exemplary units to help to put the COP into practice. In order to test the ideas and to spread the COP concept further, the EMEE EuroVision Lab. was initiated, which included a series of experimental exhibitions and activities that tested the EMEE concept and give feedback. The first two EuroVision Lab.s—one by a consortium member museum, one by an associated museum—give an insight in how the three elements of COP can be connected and disclose both obstacles and challenges, but also the benefits and rewards of europeanization in museums. Crucial for successful implementation is the adaptation of the role of the curator in a sense that makes visitors active and serious partners in the process of re-interpreting cultural heritage in a trans-regional, trans-national, cross-cultural and European way and in order to show multi-layered meanings in objects.

Making and conveying history in a diverse Europe is one of the current topics in museology, the project *European national museums: Identity politics, the uses of the past and the European citizen* (Eunamus)² has created an overview of Europe’s

²Eunamus was a project funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme from 2010 until 2013. Find more information on the website: URL: <http://www.ep.liu.se/eunamus/index.html>

museumscape and examined museum practices connected to European identities in order to give suggestion on how to determine their future roles, focusing on national museums. Following up on this, the EMEE project broadens the addressed audiences by reaching out mainly to smaller regional museums and offers concrete tools for implementing concepts of multi-perspectivity. Enabling museums to help building an inclusive, democratic European citizenship and developing new museum practices that help museums in mastering challenges that arise from processes of globalization, migration and mobility was the main objective of the project *European Museums in an age of migrations* (MeLa).³ The EMEE project partially seizes on MeLa's ideas and expands the theoretic approach by putting to the test implementation concepts in museums, both of consortium members and partner museums of different size and alignment.

Anchoring multi-vocal dialogue and the tolerance of different perspectives within museums is a process that needs constant and structured work and is time consuming. Museums willing to shoulder this responsibility have the opportunity to get closely connected to their audiences, to turn their institution into an open space where everyone's voice can be heard and to contribute to the emergence of a European identity in the EU motto "United in diversity".

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³ MeLa was a project funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme from 2011 until 2015. Find more information here: URL: <http://www.mela-project.eu/>

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