Workshop Reporting 1:

Day 1 – Comment wall analysis

Overview

Workshop participants were asked to write their thoughts, concerns and questions about migration and museums on post-it notes and thought clouds following the four presentations and associated discussion groups. These comments were shared by pinning the cards to a wall.

The 41 comments were collated and made available to participants the following day. Alison Phipps referenced the comment wall as part of her presentation on Day 2 at the Maryhill Integration Network.

Comments have been categorised into 5 groups – 'connecting', 'issues', 'good & bad', 'invisible visible' and 'role'. Some comments could have been grouped in more than one category. Where that was the case a secondary group was identified. The comments are listed in the appendix on page 8.

The categories were used to help identify 5 'key points' from the spectrum of comments that can be considered when thinking about migration within a museum context. These points are equally relevant to other themes that museums and city museums might be working with.
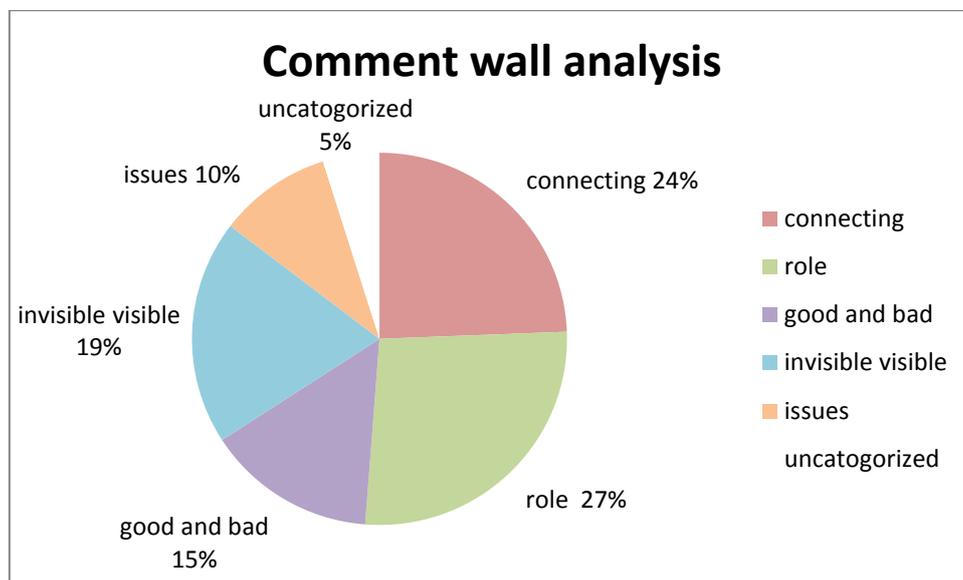
'Connecting' relates to the function of museums linking communities together typified in comment 21, 'How to bring both the new and established communities together?'

'Role' relates to the purpose of museums such as comment 33, 'Role of museums in challenging stereotypes about migration and educating.'

The 'good and bad' category includes comments that emphasise the need for museums not to flinch from the difficult, emotive or challenging aspects of migration. 'Are we equipped to deal with difficult themes and responses?', comment 31.

'Invisible visible' embraces the idea that museums must work hard to illuminate hidden stories, 'Making the 'invisible' projects 'visible' within our venues', comment 10.

'Issues' has been used to categorize comments that cover a particular challenge for museums – one where objects may not support the representation of a story, 'Which is more important – the story or the object?', comment 32.

Marlen Mouilou, Gege Leme and Nicole van Dijk discuss museums and migration during a break.

Represent migration stories in museums

The need to 'represent migration stories in museums' is a succinct and very appropriate way to combine the 4 most popular words identified in the word cloud that was generated from a combination of everything on the comment wall. 'Represent' or 'representation' was mentioned explicitly in 8 of the 41 comment wall responses with 'reflect' appearing twice.

As Professor Alison Phipps summarises in her address, representation is at the centre of the work that museums engage with around migration,

'And it strikes me that that's a question at the heart of much of what we're struggling to do.'

Representation was the most important concern raised over the course of the workshop. It is part of all discussions. It is central to all of the key points noted here and comments made in the other 'Workshop reporting' documents.

Key Point: Issue based stories

By chance 'issues' appears in the centre of this word cloud. Glasgow Museums has often struggled with 'issue' based stories by fact that objects, or tangible heritage, aren't always available for display or collection. This is a challenge and not a barrier for museums.

Key Point: Making the invisible visible

This museum specific concern around issues is perhaps even more acutely felt in terms of migration. Migrants will often travel with few objects. So a double-challenge is faced when dealing with an issue which itself has few objects or at least objects that are harder to collect. This has been raised very concisely in this comment:

'Making the "invisible" projects "visible" within our venues.'

Comment 20 reveals some additional thinking on why stories are more or less visible and furthermore outlines a balancing act between mainstream and unconventional practice that practitioners may face willingly or otherwise,

'Museums… while continuing with the visible (higher-profile) work ALSO keeping going the less visible (more subversive) work that may be more useful and effective!'

Some participants have been able to identify specific concerns around working with these 'invisible' stories. Some further questions are noted here:

Trans-national journey

How can the 'trans-national' *process* of migration be represented (28)? Practitioners may wish to consider how both the physical and emotional journey can be considered and made visible.

Process versus outcome

By making these stories visible within museum venues how will that process [of engagement] change project impacts and outcomes (10)? Is there a concern in this comment about how project outcomes and processes are valued? What ethical concerns might there be in terms of a dynamic engagement process being overshadowed or secondary to an exhibition outcome?

Rapidly changing

Comment 4 asks, 'how to represent fluidity of migration issue?' Museums can often be ponderous institutions. Practitioners need to consider processes and outcomes that are fleet enough to move with the issue as it evolves and the participants' needs.

> 'Museums <u>must</u> trace the social changes that are happening now in society…', is the an appeal set out in comment 14.

Key Point: Connecting people, connecting stories

The fact that museums 'must' represent these stories is noted in 4 of the comments with one comment emphasising 'must' by underlining.

Comment 8 highlights the 'cultural right of representation'. This is an over-arching principle for practitioners to think about. Perhaps thinking about this as a two-way process where migrants [and in fact any other group] have a right to be represented within museums *and* audiences have a right to hear these stories.

Comment 9 further reinforces that museums *must* respond locally and to new 'social configurations'. Museums still remain slow to respond to changing communities.

Key Point: Good and bad, positive and negative

The Key points so far have suggested concerns around organisational responsibilities to representing migration stories. Once the *need* to tell these stories is accepted (all round) questions about what is told naturally follow. Comment 5 asks,

> '… are we and our … funders brave enough to represent the controversial, the difficult issues?'

Museums can and do represent controversial issues. Berlin's German History Museum exhibition *Sticky Messages: Antisemitic and racist stickers from 1800 to the present* is an example of public discourse around migration and refugee experiences in Germany historically and contemporary, very contemporary.

Two participants noted the emotions that arise, with one asking, 'are we equipped to deal with difficult themes and responses?' comment 31.

Key Point: Role

Questions around the role of the museum came through significantly. For the Open Museum the traditional role of the museum, focussed on four walls and a roof with visitors 'consuming' displays is less important – active engagement with collections can happen and be represented anywhere.

However for city museums this contested role is a continuing discussion point. Perhaps the theme of migration brings this discussion into sharper focus? 24 hour rolling media coverage drives the publics' exposure to the stories for the most part. Museums, in the 'traditional sense', are far less responsive. So the essential question around the key theme of 'role' for city museums seems to be summed up with this comment (29),

> 'How do museums keep up with, or ahead of, the changing nature of the city? Or can we even try?

Yes we can. The successful, and sometimes not so successful, examples that we heard from the speakers suggest that 'partnerships' (comment 40) with communities and other organisations with similar aims and concerns is needed. The presentations about project work in Berlin, Rotterdam, Glasgow and Sau Paulo are great examples and can be viewed on the CAMOC youtube channel.

Many of these key points will be familiar to museum practitioners and perhaps especially those working in social history and/or museums of cities. Migration has been a major political and social concern in Europe in recent years and perhaps provides a lens for these points to be examined again.

Whilst comment 29 highlights an issue of 'cultural confidence' in museums, comment 8 offers a useful starting point for considering the role of museums within the migration debate and the reasons why this work is important, in fact 'fundamental':

> 'The cultural right of representation, discussion, construction of self-identity is fundamental.'

Comment wall analysis

No	Comment	Primary category	Secondary category
1	I love the museum in Rotterdam is planning to pay participants as curators. We need to think about how we value different contributions.	**connecting**	
7	Engage with relevant groups to ensure the history of migration is captured appropriately.	**connecting**	issues
9	Museums must respond to new social configurations within local contexts. We are capable of not only speaking but also listening to the audience.	**connecting**	role
13	Each of us has many identities, not just one. Museums must help people to express themselves through various of their identities.	**connecting**	role
19	Maps (local) and sites as a focus for 'stories' which bring together diverse migrant (or non-migrant) experiences.	**connecting**	
21	How to encourage people from the communities to become involved and to become co-producers? How to bring both the new and established communities together?	**connecting**	
22	The term hyper-diversity. Diversity has some complex contemporary meanings. It's great to have a term which speaks of intersectionality (?) Kreuzberg Museum is so inspirational! Love the idea of co-producing and co-curating.	**connecting**	role
24	To make cities better we need to connect people and museums must connect to each other.	**connecting**	
30	Stories	**connecting**	
41	How stories interact with daily life?	**connecting**	
3	There is no 'us' and 'them'. Migration is a constant and we are all migrants This is not systematic. How do we tell that potentially confused story?	**good and bad**	connecting
5	City museums reflecting society and social values – are we or our municipal funders brave enough to represent the controversial, the difficult issues?	**good and bad**	issues
26	Representing loss and void in migration.	**good and bad**	
31	How do we deal with emotions that arise in response? Are we equipped to deal with difficult themes and responses?	**good and bad**	
35	How to not avoid the bad part of immigration processes? Loss, death, rupture(?).	**good and bad**	
39	We invite our audiences to disagree.	**good and bad**	role
4	Question – how to represent fluidity of migration issue.	**invisible visible**	
10	Making the 'invisible' projects 'visible' within our venues. How does this change the impacts and outcomes of these projects?	**invisible visible**	connecting
11	What is the role of representation? Can we represent something which is ever changing, fluid and multiple?	**invisible visible**	

#	Statement	Category 1	Category 2
12	Invisible processes (for example about migration) and identities making visible. Doing so it enriches what we are/have.	**invisible visible**	
14	Museums <u>must</u> trace the social changes that are happening now in society (ie more from social cohesion issue/ to issues of security) and see how they can develop projects that reflect on these moves.	**invisible visible**	role
20	Museums… while continuing with the visible (higher-profile) work ALSO keeping going the less visible (more subversive) work that may be more useful and effective!	**invisible visible**	issues
28	How do we represent the invisible? The trans-national process of migration?	**invisible visible**	
38	Take time to build relationships and networks. Have confidence that these stories (migration) matter. That confidence nurtures these stories.	**invisible visible**	role
17	Free movement of people is a basic human right.	**issues**	
18	Connect. How do we create spaces for dialogue, exploration of contentious, contextual issues?	**issues**	role
25	What objects represent migration? (Collecting Policy!)	**issues**	
32	Which is more important – the story or the object? Which objects and stories have most value?	**issues**	invisible visible
2	How museums adapt to authorities agendas and how much effort the museum should do to be faithful to what it believes in.	**role**	
6	Museums should be a place and an umbrella for all communities, offering a space for exploring migration themes, values and glory of new input to change people's lives and connect us from society.	**role**	connecting
8	The cultural right of representation, discussion, construction of self-identity is fundamental.	**role**	issues
15	Use of our approach of the ecological principle.	**role**	
16	The relevance/urgency of cultural spaces (not just museums) to open up sites for complicated debate and discussion.	**role**	issues
23	Still worried about the 'normative' aspect of 'migrant work' in which we create the 'museum effect' on behalf of government (local and national) agendas and effectively erase complexity and conflict.	**role**	invisible visible
29	How do museums keep up with, or ahead of, the changing nature of the city? Or can we even try?	**role**	
33	Role of museums in challenging stereotypes about migration and educating. 'We are all migrants' – getting people to think about their own journeys.	**role**	
36	Who is the expert? Is there one?	**role**	connecting
37	Have we come to an end using personal stories? Are we asking too much from one story and how do we deal with issues around representation?	**role**	
40	Partnership	**role**	
27	The term hyper-diversity. Important to have a term to…	**uncategorized**	
34	Experience	**uncategorized**	

connecting	10
role	11
good and bad	6
invisible visible	8
issues	4
uncategorized	2
	41

Notes and report prepared by Glasgow Museums staff 2016.