

# Workshop Reporting 3:

## Day 2 – summary of workshop discussions



Participants consider key issues that they think should be taken forward after 2 days of discussions.

### Outline of the Session

Participants were asked to reflect on Day 1 comments<sup>1</sup> as described by Alison Phipps and think about which **key issues to take forward** and the **connections** that have been made among the group.

<sup>1</sup> See 'Workshop Reporting: Day 1 – Comment wall analysis' and 'Workshop Reporting 2: Day 2 - Professor Alison Phipps's address, including reflections on Day 1's comment wall'



**Key Issue: Understanding your community**

Beginning with a word cloud created from the notes generated across the 4 discussions, there is clear mention of 'communities' and 'stories'. This suggests our first key issue – understanding the needs of audiences and/or communities involved in projects.

As group 2 recognised, 'the foundations are there but the house still needs to be built.' So to ensure effective foundations museums working on migration themed projects need to understand their own particular contexts – there is no one solution.

**Key Issue: Museums that change**

The key issue that museums need to change, to reflect and to be representative was highlighted by all of the groups in one way or another. The notion that museums 'become a fluid institution that is always gonna be changing...' needs to be developed by 'putting people at the centre'.

Again, group 2 gave this idea a poetic description by explaining that they, '... see[ing] the museum as a garden – something that's always growing...'. But be well aware that whilst museums *are* able to change, and *must* change, the presentations on day one highlight that this can be a resource and staff hungry process.

**Key Issue: Create together with feeling**

Terms such as co-production and co-creation are currently popular. It goes without saying that for museums to actively reflect communities they need to be working in this way and many projects have successfully been doing so for a long time.

Curators were identified as facilitators or moderators and play an important 'balancing' role during project work. This idea is perhaps further developed through the concept of project participants leading the 'curation of relationships through objects, ([objects] - in brackets).'

To think about creating together around migration seemed to need more 'soul' as group 3 indicated. Group 2 highlighted feelings of homesickness and longing and

there was discussion by three of the groups about the ‘pain’ that such projects can bring forth.

But this ‘pain’ has a place and should be seen within museum displays which can be ‘too clean’. Group 4 went further with this concern and worried about the use of personal stories. However they did put forward the idea that, ‘integrating personal stories with grand narratives and stories that subvert the narrative’ is needed.

### **Key Issue: Space**

All of the groups raised issues around what sort of space or place a museum needs to be. There seems to be broad agreement around the idea of the museum being a ‘meeting place’, ‘providing a welcome’, ‘safe space’ and ‘a space for both sides [old & new communities] to come together’.

Defining and explaining how or in what form these perceptions of a museum exist wasn’t taken much further. Although group 3 stated, ‘Think about *spaces* – where do these interactions happen?’ and group 2 felt that, ‘people are welded to their buildings’, which both suggest that traditional museum spaces may not be an appropriate solution or environment.



Prof Alison Phipps, University of Glasgow, provided an interpretation of the ‘Comment Wall’ content.

### **Other issues of note**

Each group noted and presented issues that were pertinent to those involved at that time and in that space. The following issues didn’t appear out-with the group that raised it but are worth highlighting.

### **Collecting**

Perhaps surprising by its almost complete absence, the issue of collecting only appeared in one comment – ‘collect all stereotypes and break them apart’. However, as a potential key issue, this comment provides a succinct reminder that challenging

existing perceptions and representations of migration is key to creating successful dialogue through project work and displays.

Building on the issue of collecting another group commented on the difficulties that migrant artists can have in completing paperwork and went on to suggest that, 'Museums can empower them directly.'

### Sharing

It's easily recognisable that museums are about sharing stories, collections and experiences among communities and audiences. But in the case of one discussion group there was concern about a lack of sharing. This was in relation to researchers and academics working in and on the theme of migration. Identified as a barrier, it has implications for funding with institutions and individuals chasing limited resources.

### Closing Statements



Chris and Marlen brought the 2 day workshop to a close.

'... all we did was what everyone is suggesting we do, which was create a space. That's all we did, really.'

Chris Jamieson



Notes and report prepared by Glasgow Museums staff 2016.