



Old city centre of Celje
Photo: Archive of Museum
of Recent History Celje.

Statement from the Chair

Léontine Meijer-van Mensch

Dear readers,

COMCOL goes global! COMCOL Board member Claudia Porto from Brazil has initiated and created a special COMCOL site for the Brazilian context, which will hopefully develop into a site for a larger Portuguese speaking community interested in issues that COMCOL wants to address. For more information please look at: <http://comcolbrasil.wordpress.com/>

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I recently heard of an initiative to form a COMCOL community in Venezuela. That would of course be wonderful and I am looking forward to meeting representatives of ICOM Venezuela at our annual conference in Celje. You will find information about our annual conference in this Newsletter. I am already very excited and the program looks very promising. Please follow our COMCOL website and Facebook for relevant news and updates about the conference.

If you are interested in establishing such a local, or national COMCOL community, please feel free to do so, we as COMCOL want to be a truly international and lively community of practice.

You might be aware that the COMCOL board was asked to be the editorial team for the coming issue of *Museum International*, this issue will reflect on contemporary discourses and practices on collecting. The response to the call for papers was enormous and a confirmation that the themes that COMCOL deals with are relevant and of interest for the museum world. Hopefully the issue will be published in November. In 2102 our annual conference was in Cape Town. We addressed the theme 'Museums and the idea of historical progress' and we held this conference in partnership with ICOM South Africa and ICMAH. Our colleagues from South Africa are working hard on the publication of the conference and I hope the publication will be ready soon.

Unfortunately the last couple of months were not happy ones for all of us. I have been in frequent contact with ICOM Korea, since we are planning our 2015 annual conference in Seoul. Through such personal contacts, the news gets a personal face. This is I think one of the strengths of ICOM as an international organization. I was as COMCOL chair also invited to speak at the annual museum conference in Seoul on collecting. Due to the terrible ferry accident, the conference is postponed. My thoughts are with our colleagues from ICOM Korea, dealing with a terrible national tragedy of the ferry that was wrecked. My thoughts are also with our colleagues in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, where collections have been severely damaged, due to the terrible floods. I hope that our COMCOL network can provide aid, expertise and concrete hands to overcome the worst. And last, but certainly not least, I think of our colleagues in the Jewish Museum in Brussels, where on a casual Saturday afternoon four people were murdered. Collections should enrich and celebrate diversity, but

unfortunately here the museum became a target of hatred.

For me COMCOL is most of all a community of practice, therefore we had the idea to "introduce" new members via our Newsletter. Why do museum professionals become COMCOL members, what are their background and professional interests and how do we get into contact with each other? One way of getting to know each other is at our annual conference. I hope to see many of you in Celje and please share with us your thoughts and ideas!

Have a good summer!



Léontine Meijer-van Mensch, Deputy Director, Museum of European Cultures, Berlin



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COMCOL Annual Conference 2014

Collecting and Collections in Times of War or Political and Social Change

Welcome to COMCOL Annual Conference, which will be held 3-6 December, in Celje, Slovenia. The call for papers resulted in many interesting abstracts, and the programme committee had a hard job to select the proposals for papers to be presented at the conference. We were particularly interested in papers from museum professionals, researchers and students that address the impact of changing ideological perspectives on the formation and development of collections, including, but not limited to, the following topics:

- The triangular relationship between political & social ideology, museum mission and collection profile
- The adaptation of museum missions to ideologies and adaptation of collection profiles to new missions
- Using collections to memorialize World War I

Background and conference context

The aim of COMCOL is to discuss the theory, practice and ethics of collection development. One of the issues is the social context of collection development, in particular the impact of prevailing ideologies. The 2014 annual conference is the last of a series of three conferences in which COMCOL explores this issue from different perspectives.

In 2012 (Cape Town) we discussed how the concept of utopia influenced and influences the forming of collections. In 2013 (Rio de Janeiro) we discussed the re-interpretation of older collections, focusing

on exhibitions as medium for re-interpretation. In 2014 we would like to explore the triangular relationship between ideology, institutional mission and collection profile. In particular we would like to explore how museum missions are influenced by changes in political ideologies and regimes, and to what extent collection profiles are adapted to the new missions.

During the conference we would like to focus on theoretical views and different recent and contemporary examples. Since in recent decades significant regime changes took/are taking place in different parts of the world, we would like to ask participants to look at the impact of changing ideological perspectives on the formation and development of collections. Furthermore, the conference takes place in the year in which the start of World War I is commemorated – a war that had a huge impact on political developments in Central Europe and in other parts of the world. How did museum collections respond to the aftermath of the turmoil of war, and how are they being used in today's commemorations?

About the programme

The four days in early December will be filled with presentations, discussions, study visits and social events – keynotes, papers, panel discussions, students' poster exhibition, receptions, annual meeting, and sessions for COMCOL working groups. An important session will be the proposals for the agenda of the Collections Mobility working group (see page 11). Updated information will be published on the website and on Facebook, so please check <http://network.icom.museum/comcol/> and <https://www.facebook.com/comcol.icom> for the most recent news about the programme.

About Celje

For over two millennia, the city of Celje has represented the crossroads connecting the East and West, South and North of Central Europe and Slovenia. From the ancient roads and cities, captured on the famous Peutingeriana tabula itineraria, to today's modern wide motorways, Celje has acted as a "black hole",

absorbing different peoples, their customs, art etc. It has been the mirror for the rise and fall of great civilisations. The Illyrians, Celts, Romans, Germans and Slavs all left their architectural marks in the city.

Celje has never reached the monumental magnitude of European capital cities; however it offers tourists a unique and illustrative approach to learning about Europe's history and art history. In no more than two hours, visitors can learn about archaeological discoveries from the antique and late antique periods and marvel at the medieval sacral Gothic architecture, which was built on Romanesque foundations and has been interlaced with modern styles. Due to the capricious torrential River Savinja, the city centre has been moved to the north and from the right to the left river bank several times throughout its history.

The view of the city from Celje Castle, the official residence of the influential royal family, the Counts of Celje, reveals an architectural blend of all the above-mentioned periods, the late Habsburg period as well as modern and postmodern architectural designs. In Celje you can find one of the oldest railway stations in Europe, which was built on the Vienna-Trieste route. It is thus no surprise that the city also has a rich history of industrial and demographic development. But what the residents of Celje love most, is that it takes you only fifteen minutes on foot to reach the city's forests, meadows, rivers, playgrounds, surrounding hills, panoramic locations, shopping centres and even the most remote picnics in the city.

Conference partners

National Committee of ICOM Slovenia
Museum of Recent History Celje – department School of museology Celje
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts

Conference information

For programme and registration, please see the programme on COMCOL website
<http://network.icom.museum/comcol/>

Conference fee:

ICOM members € 150,

Students and accompanying persons € 100,

Non-members € 200.

Bank details, see programme.

**For questions, please contact
comcolcelje@gmail.com**



Conference host: Museum of Recent History Celje. Photo: Damjan Švarc.



Toy Den, new permanent exhibition at the Museum of Recent History Celje. Photo: Sherpa.



Old city centre of Celje.

Photo: Archive of Museum of Recent History Celje.

Why is it important to Work with Sounds?

Marinette Fogde

Sound has always been a part of our work and everyday lives. It is always there, whether we notice it or not. Sound is therefore an important aspect when we want to experience, explore, reconstruct and understand different landscapes, environments and our cultural heritage. This article introduces a new European museum project focused on collection and use of sound – *Work with Sounds*.

Different sounds are representative for different regions and countries and tell us about their history and traditions. Therefore we need to map and preserve sounds so that we can investigate and deepen our historical understanding, teach about and encourage younger people to explore the wider history of industrial society in new exciting ways.

The aim of the project is to collect sounds from historical working life environments in Europe and to create a publically available database with free sounds. The goal is to collect six hundred sounds altogether, i.e. one hundred sounds from each country involved. The sounds will mainly be reconstructed by using collections from historical work environments such as working life museums and similar collections, but the sounds from rapidly disappearing work environments can also be captured.

Although sound is such a natural part of our lives they are seldom captured, let alone recorded – despite the fact all European countries work hard to preserve our cultural heritage. Especially historical sounds are hard to find. The historical sounds preserved are mostly music or media broadcastings, like films, TV and radio shows. In these sources some historical sounds of everyday and working life can be found, but specific sounds from a sound environment which are recorded as a whole cannot be isolated and reused. Therefore we need separate recordings of more specific sounds. The separate sounds can be used to recreate historical environments or new ‘soundscapes’ as they are sometimes called. With the sounds of for example, tilt planes, lathes, drills, millings, fans and shaft conduits, we can reconstruct the soundscape of an



Map of cities involved in the project. Layout: Ariom.

old mechanic workshop or other environments that have never been recorded.

The everyday life of the industrial society was multifaceted. Collecting a broad range of sounds from environments such as laundries, cottage hospitals and schools is therefore very important. We can see from pictures what these environments looked like, but how did they sound? Fortunately there are still some environments where separate historical sounds can be reconstructed and recorded, for example in industrial or working life museums where whole places of work – buildings, furniture, tools and machinery – are preserved. The people connected to these museums are often people that once worked in that specific environment or know a lot about it, which enable us to interview them and learn more about the sound and its origins. There is also a possibility to capture sounds and experiences from working environments that are still in operation, but will very soon disappear.

The project *Work with Sounds* involves six museums across Europe. The Museum of Work in Sweden, Finnish Labour Museum Werstas in Finland, Technical museum of Slovenia, the Westphalian Industrial Museum in Germany (LWL-Industriemuseum), La Fonderie Brussels museum of work and industries in Belgium and Museum of Municipal Engineering in Poland are



all collaborating on this project. The Museum of Work in Sweden and their curator Torsten Nilsson is coordinating the project. The former Head of Research, Sofia Seifarth, did great work coordinating the application to the Culture programme of the European Union.

History come to life

The aim of this project is to develop a database with sounds created, recorded and documented by qualified museum workers. Every sound will be described, providing the right and relevant information about the sound, where it is from and the circumstances under which it was recorded. This means that the sounds will get a sort of 'museum quality stamp'. Sound is essential when we want to bring history into life, in schools, museums, media productions etc. A publicly available digital source of historical sounds with metadata would offer first of all great possibilities for schools, museums and other educational institutions to promote a deeper historical knowledge and understanding of this area. Secondly it would offer a valuable source for innovative creators and media entrepreneurs, for example film, game and music productions, storytelling, animations, dance performances and artistic work in and outside of schools.

Picture from the first project meeting, the Museum of Work, Norrköping, Sweden, September 2013.

Photo: Niklas Cserhalmi, The Museum of Work.

Collecting everyday sounds is not part of regular museum work. There are no existing standards or models for collecting these sounds, and therefore nothing is really being done in order to collect and preserve them. This project will develop tools for more systematic collecting, preservation and dissemination of sounds. These tools can also be used by other museums. The documentation of this project will therefore be essential so that the results can be used by others and stimulate more museum initiatives in this neglected area. Thanks to new techniques the reconstructed sound can nowadays be recorded, preserved, used and easily made accessible to everyone through Internet. Through sound we can explore European history in new ways. This is the background of the project *Work with Sounds*.

The special target group for this project is young people and in order to reach them successfully the museums will develop close collaborations with

schools. However, the sounds will be available for all types of creative productions. The aim is to facilitate the use of sounds in education, different productions and to promote new opportunities by offering easy and free access and free use under a CC-BY license. The sharing of the collected sounds, instead of institutions and countries trying to record different types of sound, will be of help in many different cultural and educational activities across Europe. There is also a growing public interest in the old industrial environments all across Europe, abandoned places like old mills, factories, production plants etc., which engages subcultures like urban explorers and a growing number of innovating art creators using new media.

Actions within the project

The first recording sessions take place in all countries during the period of March 2014 - August 2014. The results from these recording sessions will be collected and summarized during autumn 2014 and early spring 2015. Based on these results we will obtain new recording sessions in May 2015 - August 2015, to populate the database with more sounds.

Since the first project meeting in September 2013 a website and a database that present the collected sounds have been constructed. The website www.workwithsounds.eu tells about the project and is one of the interfaces for searching and bringing up sounds from the database. The sound database developed within this project is based on FileMaker and connected to the Swedish web service SOCH. This web service will fetch the data from the Work with Sounds-database and deliver it to Europeana. This way the sound collected in this project will be easy to find, widely spread and possible to use for all through Europeana.

Currently the Europeana interface is available in all the languages of the EU member states. We need a common language to facilitate the sharing of sounds and information in the database across Europe. Therefore the metadata will be English, and the searchable keywords will be both in English and national languages. The vast and reliable metadata in this database also offer an extra educational dimension, which makes it different from the sound-databases that can currently be found on Internet. There will be photos and, in some cases films, to illustrate the sounds.



Water wheel, Gränna, Sweden.

Photo: Torsten Nilsson, The Museum of Work, Norrköping, Sweden 2014.



Automatic telephone Iskra Eta 80, 1986.

Photo: Barbara Grilc, Technical Museum of Slovenia 2014.

The co-operations during the first year are to result in activities that stimulate usage of the sounds in all countries. The database will be launched and open for use in September 2014 but the website is already open. During autumn 2014 and spring 2015 schools in the different countries are encouraged to work together across Europe, stimulated by the museum educators. The museum educators will also develop an inspiration material that shows how sounds can be used in education connected to the national curriculum. The inspiration material will be spread, and hopefully widely used, in order to highlight the educational potential of sounds on a long-term basis, in schools as well as in museums. In May 2014 and 2015 joint events will take place at the same time in all the museums – presenting the sounds in entertaining ways – in cooperation with schools and the involved media producers. These events will be arranged on the International Museum Day

The project will end with an international conference *Sound of Work – Work with Sound* in Dortmund. The aim is to highlight the importance of collecting sound in order to capture the surrounding society, as well as to promote the project and database, and to highlight the possibilities of the sounds. At this stage of the project the projects partners will be able to present illustrative examples of different innovative and creative ways of using sounds, a form of ‘best practice’ to a wider audience. The conference will stimulate further initiatives on sound collecting and stimulate innovations and creativity by new actors and further co-operations.

For more information about the project please visit <http://www.workwithsounds.eu> or contact the project coordinator Torsten Nilsson at The Museum of Work in Sweden. torsten.nilsson@arbetetsmuseum.se.



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Floral refrigerator in a flower store.
Tampere, Finland.

Photo: Teemu Ahola, Finnish Labour Museum
Werstas, Tampere 2014.

Meet a new COMCOL member

Kim Smit interviews Priscilla Kaela Kangwa Banda

In this issue of COMCOL Newsletter we introduce a new section where new members present themselves. We would like to find out a bit more about our members and their interests. This way we hope to get to know each other better in the committee and create connections between the members. So from now on we will approach new members and ask if they would like to contribute with a brief Q & A.

Perhaps “old” COMCOL members would also like to introduce themselves? We kindly invite you to contact the editors!

The first colleague to respond with a presentation is Priscilla from Zambia:

Can you please tell us a little bit about yourself? Do you study, research, work in the area of culture?

My full name is Priscilla Kaela Kangwa Banda. I have been working for the National Museums Board of Zambia for 10 years. I was initially based at the Copperbelt Museum as Keeper of Palaeontology until 2011 when I was transferred to the Lusaka National Museum which is also one of the museums under the National Museums Board as Keeper of Archaeology. I am currently the Vice President for ICOM Zambia, the executive which was ushered into office in March this year. The museum I work for is a cultural-history museum comprising of Archaeology, History, and Ethnography and has in its custody the national art collection.

Why did you decide to become a member of COMCOL? Where does your interest in collecting/collections come from?

I have been an on and off member of ICOM since 2005 and this year I decided to renew my membership and opted to join the COMCOL Committee. Museums in Zambia operate in such a way that as a Keeper I am responsible for various different areas such as collection development, documentation, exhibitions and so on. I therefore



Priscilla Kaela Kangwa-Banda on a field trip to Chirundu.

Photo: Sam Chilapwa, Lusaka National Museum.

opted to join this particular committee as it's one of my core duties as a Keeper and would like to network with a group of people that have similar interests.

What is your favourite museum in your own country? What kind of collection does it have?

I wouldn't necessarily say it's my favourite, however, Livingstone Museum is the oldest and largest museum in the country under the National Museums Board and therefore has more collections and exhibitions. For this reason, I would say Livingstone museum. The museum has rich collections in Natural history, Ethnography, History and Archaeology.

Do you feel that it is important that collections keep developing and growing or do you think that some collections have reached their full potential and are 'finished'?



The Lusaka National Museum.

Photo: Alfred Hakoola, Lusaka National Museum.

It is important that collections keep developing and I don't think there are collections that one can say have reached their full potential. As more research is conducted new areas and objects are discovered which need to be collected. Therefore collection development cannot reach its full potential unless museum professionals stop doing the work.

Do you feel that it is important for cultural institutions to share their collections with each other on a regional, national and international level?

I strongly feel that it is important for cultural institutions to share their collections with each other. It is through this sharing that one can appreciate each other's collections and the related information that these collections carry.

What topic relating to collections and collecting would you like to see COMCOL focus on?

Generally I would be happy for COMCOL to concentrate on topics such as collection development and the issues surrounding this such as ethics and so on. This, at times, becomes a challenge especially

when there is political change and pressure from "the powers that be" to collect what relates to them and in some cases get rid of collections that related to previous governments. So I would be happy if issues like these are focused on by COMCOL as this would go a long way in helping museum professionals do their work diligently.



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Proposals for Working Group on Collections Mobility

Hillary Bauer

We take as our guiding statement: *All users would benefit if museums shared their collections more widely, as well as collaborating on collections management and collecting.* (UK Museums Association Collections for the future report 2005)

And as our Chair Leontine van Mensch has said: *Sharing collections and experience among museums is a good way to improve comprehension and emphasise intercultural exchanges. Partnerships with other structures, cultural or not, can also contribute to the museum's mission.*

Having been asked by Leontine to take over the Collections Mobility Group, I am setting out here ideas for what we might discuss between those who are interested in this important topic. It is focussed on practical, rather than theoretical suggestions.

A good deal of work has been done already on various topics connected with *making it easier to borrow and lend cultural objects between countries* (in the EU, see for example www.lending-for-europe.eu) so we do not propose that we should focus on all of those again. However; some of these topics need further work, so we might wish to consider which should remain on our agenda, where we agree that progress still needs to be made. They are:

- State indemnity schemes and also non-insurance (shared liability) arrangements
- Risk assessments
- Valuation issues
- The use of internationally recognised forms and documents
- Improving networking between museum workers
- Reducing the costs of transport
- Production of a glossary of terms



Working carefully together we can achieve great results through sharing our collections.

Photo©Museum of fine Arts, Budapest.

As to new topics – the proposal is for discussion of these by email and through Newsletters before the Celje conference in December. At Celje the Group could work on them more intensively, focus on good practice and draw up an agenda for future action.

These are suggestions for the Group's future work, focussing overall on international partnerships and collaboration:

1. Regarding State Indemnity Schemes: how can we deal with the problem of countries refusing state indemnity and insisting on expensive commercial insurance? (This has apparently arisen in the case of loans from the USA, Germany, Italy and France.)

2. What tools and expertise do museum and gallery staff have to be firm in resisting excessively high valuations (for the purposes of indemnity/shared liability or insurance)?
3. Regarding risk assessments – how can due diligence best be carried out, in order to establish clear ownership, before lending, borrowing and also acquiring cultural objects for a collection? This is in order to limit the chance of claims or seizure.
4. Also as part of risk assessment – how can costs be reduced, for example by sharing transport and using fewer couriers?
5. The need to strengthen the Registrars'/Collection Managers' network even further, by encouraging shared websites/databases/networking events.
6. Venturing into the world of digital sharing of collections
7. And finally, if means of sharing are improved and strengthened, this could lead to an interesting debate between museums and galleries around the world about sharing collections – for example sharing new purchases between two or more museums and also for how long can or should museums carry on collecting or should they focus more on sharing, both physically and digitally?

Please give us your views and suggestions on these topics for the Group – whether you think they are a good or bad idea; whether they are relevant to different types of museums around the world and what else you would like to discuss in this Group! Please email hbauer@hotmail.co.uk or freda.matassa@tiscali.co.uk or ksmit@ngi.ie



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EDITORIAL

COMCOL – Committee for Collecting – is the International Committee of ICOM dedicated to deepening discussions and sharing knowledge of the practice, theory and ethics of collecting and collection development.

COMCOL Newsletter provides a forum for developing the work of COMCOL and we welcome contributions from museum professionals and scholars and students all over the world: short essays on projects, reflections, conference/seminar reports, specific questions, notices about useful reading material, invitations to cooperate, introductions to new research or other matters. Views and opinions published in the newsletter are the views of the contributors. Contributions for the next issue are welcomed by **1 September 2014** to the editors, and contact us also if you wish to discuss a theme for publication.

COMCOL Newsletter is available at COMCOL's website <http://network.icom.museum/comcol/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/comcol.icom>



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