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"Words to receive. Words to be received": reflections on the Intercultural City museum work

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Résumé de l'article

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In the first part of the article, I introduce the idea of "Intercultural City museum work." I present a metadesign framework that aims to help museums emphasize the impact of diversity work on their local contexts, proposing the Intercultural City approach as a reference point. In the second part of the article, I describe the "Intercultural City museum work" and on using the metadesign framework with reference to MUST-Museo del Territorio Vimercatese, a civic museum on local history and identity in Vimercate, a town in the metropolitan area of Milan. Immigration to the geographical area over the past few decades and the resulting cultural diversity are neither reflected in the museum collections nor the permanent exhibitions. As a result, the museum decided to address these topics through services, events and special projects. In particular, I describe the exhibition *Words to Receive. Words to be Received*, designed and created by COI-Centro Orientamento Immigrati—a local immigrants' resource centre—with the museum.

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ARTICLE THÉMATIQUE

"Words to receive. Words to be received": reflections on the Intercultural City museum work

Lucia Parrino[1]

Abstract

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Introduction

Although diversity[1] has always been a fundamental characteristic of human societies, now more than ever it has become central to the political and research agenda (Ash, Mortimer, & Öktem, 2013; Pinelli, 2012). Given that the rapidly increasing ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversities that characterize western societies "has produced challenges to our living together in freedom" (Ash et al., 2013, p. 5), the question of how to tap "the potential benefits of diversity while minimising its costs" (Khovanova-Rubicondo & Pinelli, 2012, p. 1) has become a fundamental issue. Contextually, the socially active role of museums has become intertwined with cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue (Bodo, Gibbs, & Sani, 2009; Bodo & Mascheroni, 2012; Zelča Sīmansone, 2013).

Methodological premise

The concept of "Intercultural City museum work" and the connected metadesign framework developed in a research process that started from a generic interest is how museums could address local cultural diversity[2] issues, such as intercultural relationships and tensions, integration processes, etc.

In the first phase of this process, I focused on museums and local cultural diversity. I reviewed the literature on museum practices to do with cultural diversity, local development and social issues. In addition, through secondary research, museum visits and interviews with museum staff or personnel in charge of specific projects, I examined several case studies of regional and national museums that dealt with cultural diversity and related issues from various perspectives and with different aims. I learned about these cases through printed[3]and online[4] publications and from workshops and conferences[5] on museums, cultural diversity and social issues. In addition, I was mentored by Silvia Mascheroni, an expert in intercultural heritage education and the co-founder of *Patrimonio & Intercultura*[6] (*Heritage & Interculture*), on relevant case studies and issues of interest.

I developed the second focus, on local cultural diversity, through a literature review of diversity in urban contexts, local intercultural dynamics and models used to address diversity[7].

Exploring these two foci provided the premises for the second phase of the research, the development of a metadesign framework to guide local museums in activating the Intercultural City. The idea of activating the Intercultural City came from one of the themes of the fourth conference of the International Association of City Museums, "Activating the city," which focused on museums taking "an active role in the city" (Kistemaker, 2006, p. 6) to improve the quality of life and address other local issues. "Activating the Intercultural City" refers to local museums activating, from the bottom up, the elements and vision of the Intercultural City approach, even in the absence of a local policy framework that embraces this strategy. This is consistent with the idea that integration practices "can be well conceived even in a context unfavourable to [their] implementation" (Carrillo, D'Odorico, & Gilardoni, 2013, p. 29).

[1] I am aware that, depending on geographical, historical, social and other contexts, certain characteristics are more relevant than others in defining identity and diversity and that there are many forms of diversity, including, for example, gender and sexual orientation. Nevertheless, my focus is on the ethnocultural diversity linked to migrations over the last five or six decades and to the presence of migrants in Western societies and cities. Although I am aware of the complexity of super-diversity (Vertovec, 2007, 2010), in this study, I use the terms "migrants" or "people with an immigrant background" to refer both to immigrants and to their descendants born in countries of settlement.

[2] In this context, local cultural diversity is defined as the diversity that exists in a place—a city, a town, a neighbourhood—as result of immigration.

[3] For example, Bodo et al., 2009; Bodo & Mascheroni, 2012.

[4] For example, http://www.patrimonioeintercultura.ismu.org/ and http://incluseum.com/ accessed on August 22nd, 2014.

[5] For example, *Terza giornata interculturale Bicocca: Muoversi verso. Luoghi delle città, dialoghi interculturali* (Milan, 2013), *Ecomuseums 2012. 1st International Conference on Ecomuseums, Community Museums and Living Communities* (Seixal, Portugal, 2012), and *Per educare nella società plurale. Cinema, plurilinguismo, patrimonio culturale* (Milan, 2012).

[6] http://www.patrimonioeintercultura.ismu.org accessed on July 4th, 2014.

[7] For example, Amin, 2002; Khovanova-Rubicondo & Pinelli, 2012; Pinelli, 2012; P. Wood & Landry, 2008.

Then, based on the idea of the 10 elements of an intercultural strategy, suggested by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe & European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research, 2013; Council of Europe, 2013), I developed the idea of "Intercultural City museum work" that I describe below.

Another phase of the research process consisted of studying the case of MUST-Museo del Territorio Vimercatese (Vimercatese Territory Museum) through interviews, analyses of documents, participatory observations and active involvement in designing the exhibition *Parole per accogliere. Parole da cogliere* (Words to Receive. Words to be Received). This allowed me to reflect on how the Intercultural City metadesign framework could be used in the specific context of MUST and the town of Vimercate.

Intercultural City museum work

Internationally, the socially active role of museums has become intertwined with cultural diversity and intercultural relations[8]. Contributions on this subject are varied and steadily growing. Several projects and studies have focused on different aspects of the work of museums. For example, between 2007 and 2009, the European project, *MAP for ID-Museums as Places for Intercultural Dialogue*[9], enabled interventions that developed the potential of museums as seats of intercultural dialogue (Bodo et al., 2009). More recently, the *Learning Museum Network*[10] established a working group on intercultural dialogue that was commissioned to collect, organize and consolidate the efforts made in response to the demand for greater intercultural awareness in respect to the role of the museum, cultural programmes and recruitment policies. As Crooke observes,

> the rise of interest in embracing cultural diversity […] has increased the pace of changes in museum practice – interest in new forms of collecting, new histories on display and new ways of communicating. (Crooke, 2007, p. 93)

The heterogeneity and richness of the work of museums also results in a varied, ambiguous and continually evolving terminology. For example, some of the contributions play on the prefixes multi-, inter- and trans- in order to describe and/or regulate museum approaches to representation, audience engagement, education, organizational change and so on (Bodo & Mascheroni, 2012; Macdonald, 2003, 2007).

The work of museums on diversity ties in with the paradigm shift from collection-centred and inward-looking institutions to community-connected and audience-responsive centres (Anderson, 2012; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000) and with the idea of socially responsible and locally active services (Dell'Orso, 2009; Dos Santos, 2008a, 2008b; E. Wood, 2009). My interest lies in the localness of museums, not from the point of view of the nature of their ownership, management and funding resources but as locally relevant actors and heritage-based community services.

For the purposes of this study, I needed to identify an approach to addressing local diversity issues that could be embraced by museums.

As Khovanova-Rubicondo and Pinelli put it: "[f]rom a policy perspective, the challenge is to design and implement strategies for the management of diversity that can help tapping the potential benefits of diversity while minimising its costs." (Khovanova-Rubicondo & Pinelli, 2012, p. 1)

Referring to the work of Janssens and Zanoni (Janssens & Zanoni, 2009), Pinelli proposes a four-fold classification of the policy models that have been traditionally used to address diversity: segregation, assimilation, marginalization and multiculturalism. All these models have limitations and have been criticized (Pinelli, 2012). The multicultural approach is also not exempt from criticism, despite emerging in response to the inadequacy of the segregation and

[8] While, the focus was initially on immigrant communities, more recently the interpretation of cultural diversity has been broadened to include, for example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, people with disabilities and people who are generally socially excluded (Young, 2005). Although I am aware of these many forms of diversity, here I focus on ethnocultural diversity.

[9] http://www.amitie.it/mapforid/

[10] http://www.ne-mo.org/about-us/the-lem-network.html .

the assimilation models (Janssens & Zanoni, 2009). Although the first critical views of multiculturalism date from the 1960s, by the late 1990s and early 2000s the effectiveness of multicultural policies was in question (Vertovec, 2010). New approaches that acknowledge individual identities as "multiple, multilayered, contextual and dynamic" (OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, 2012, p. 14) and "value the positive potential of differences while allowing people to build relations over and above differences" (Khovanova-Rubicondo & Pinelli, 2012, p. 11) are needed. Uitermark, Rossi and Van Houtum refer to these positions as "post-multicultural" (Uitermark, Rossi, & Van Houtum, 2005). As well as emphasizing the dynamic and multifaceted nature of identity (Parekh, 2000; Sen, 2006), post-multicultural literature—not necessarily distancing itself from the term multiculturalism—emphasizes interaction and communication.

Interculturalism emerged in the context of rethinking multiculturalism by emphasizing openness and dialogue. Its development was sustained by the "pioneering work [of] the Comedia Group, assisted by funding from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation" (Cantle, 2012, p. 155). Interculturalism is defined as an approach that goes beyond respect and equal opportunities to pluralist transformation of civic culture, institutions and public space. In terms of policy development, the intercultural approach has benefitted from the support of European institutions. Through the *Intercultural Cities Programme*, policy networks involving European institutions and cities embraced and promoted the intercultural policy. Close links between cities and the formulation of the intercultural approach (Council of Europe, 2013; P. Wood & Landry, 2008; P. Wood, 2009) reflects a connotative feature of post-multicultural literature: "the city as the most promising site for the negotiation of ethnic identities" (Uitermark et al., 2005, p. 623).

The way I use it here, the Intercultural City approach conceives diversity as a source of dynamism, innovation, creativity and growth. It emphasizes the importance of interpersonal and intercultural encounters. Its development went hand in hand with the *Intercultural Cities Programme*, a joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Commission (Council of Europe, 2013; P. Wood, 2009). Khovanova-Rubicondo pointed out how the significance of the programme went beyond the outcomes for the single participating cities. Indeed,

> it exemplified the value of intercultural policy adoption/implementation for European cities with different socio-economic, demographic and political background. […] [T]he use and/or adaptation of the Programme structural and policy elements to enhance the effectiveness of diversity management in other European cities produces tangible and effective results of policy reformulation, structural and process modification, and governance principles adjustment in the Programme participating cities, which fully justifies effectiveness of the Programme implementation mechanisms and validates the advantage of their replication in the future. (Khovanova-Rubicondo, 2009, pp. 22–23)

In 2012, Khovanova-Rubicondo and Pinelli reviewed the Intercultural City approach against literature on social and economic impacts of diversity. The study "demonstrates that the advantages of the intercultural cities approach can be important and are not solely economic" (Khovanova-Rubicondo & Pinelli, 2012, p. 14). The intercultural cities approach also affects the quality of city governance and planning, education, public services, cultural and social life of residents, and civic engagement. On the other hand, policies and directives on intercultural cities are not free from criticisms. Bodirsky observes that the Intercultural City approach has been promoted as a means to support both social cohesion and economic competitiveness, but that actually it "neoliberalizes" (Bodirsky, 2012, p. 6) multiculturalism. According to the author, the neoliberal approach borrowed from the theses of Florida and Landry (Florida, 2004; P. Wood & Landry, 2008) limits its positive aspects. Practices of neoliberal governance—based on the idea of culture as a resource and individual property—favour "competitiveness in the free-market over goals of social justice" and result in preserving "de-facto hierarchies of belonging drawn on the basis of presumptions about class and 'culture'" (Bodirsky, 2012, p. 14). James uses the expression "interculturalism-as-surface-level-dialogue approach" (James, 2008, p. 4) to summarize criticisms about the risk that such approach would not be able to address structural issues of poverty, racism, power and inequalities.

To paraphrase Zukin and Braslow, these remarks highlight the ambivalence between "aspirational and industrial [inter]cultural strategy" (Zukin & Braslow, 2011, p. 131). Properly implementing the Intercultural City approach implies acknowledging these risks and committing towards the most aspirational dimension—one that "tries to narrow inequalities and broaden everyone's 'right to the city'" (Zukin & Braslow, 2011, p. 131).

While taking into account its risks, I also acknowledge the aspirational dimension of the Intercultural City approach and that European institutions and policy networks have acknowledged its aim of developing an alternative to multiculturalism or assimilation. As such, I have identified the Intercultural City approach as a reference for addressing the work of local museums.

In line with those design perspectives that acknowledge organizations' creativity and empower them to find their own specific solutions (Fischer & Giaccardi, 2006; Giaccardi & Fischer, 2008; Mitroff Silvers, Rogers, & Wilson, 2013; Norris & Tisdale, 2014), I propose a metadesign framework to guide museums in activating the elements and vision of the Intercultural City from the bottom up. The suggestions that constitute the metadesign framework are based on the 10 elements of an intercultural strategy suggested by the Council of Europe and on their working definitions as provided by the Intercultural Cities Index (Council of Europe & European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research, 2013; Council of Europe, 2013). The actions recommended by the Intercultural City were conceived for urban policies and are mainly addressed to local governments, policymakers and practitioners. Therefore, in elaborating the metadesign framework, I have selected and reinterpreted these suggestions in light of what local museums, with limited resources, can do. This reinterpretation was influenced and addressed by the museum practices and projects I observed during the research process, all of which were originally conceived and designed without any explicit reference to the Intercultural City objectives. It is a framework developed from the bottom up, starting from actual museum practices and re-systematizing museum diversity work in order to address its impact on local contexts from an Intercultural City perspective. There are 19 framework suggestions organized into five groups (**Table 1**).

Table 1. The Intercultural City museum work metadesign framework

	Framework suggestion
Representing places and people	Identifying and promoting the expressions of the cultural diversity that characterizes the local context and its history.
	Identifying and promoting practices, projects and actors that foster intercultural approach and dialogue in the local community.
	Organizing initiatives beyond the museum walls in areas that feel unwelcoming to others or that are reputed to be dangerous.
	Providing alternative representations of areas that feel unwelcoming to others or that are reputed to be dangerous.
	Acknowledging, representing and promoting immigrants' languages and literature.
	Working with local media and city information services towards the presentation and narration of local cultural diversity in a positive way.
	Introducing the local context and its heritage to newcomers.
Reforming structures	Providing cultural sensitivity training to the public services and museum staff.
	Supporting the presence of people from different ethnocultural backgrounds within the staff of the museum.
	Supporting actors promoting initiatives that address the issue of diversity.
	Developing projects and cultural networks with institutions and organizations from immigrants' countries of origin and transit.
	Implementing a range of participatory tools that would enable the engagement of the diverse stakeholders in the definition of the most appropriate interventions for representing and promoting local identity and cultural diversity..
Fostering interactions	Organizing initiatives beyond the museum walls that would foster intercultural sociability and interaction.
	Organizing ad supporting actors who organize initiatives that would foster intercultural sociability and interaction.
	Promoting chances of intercultural reflection, confrontation and mediation, especially with reference to local critical issues.
Supporting entrepreneurship and access to job opportunities	Promoting ethnic and intercultural entrepreneurship, services and products that are important to recounting local identity, history and transformations.
	Providing job opportunities and training for immigrants.
Facilitating learning	Engaging the schools—students, staff and families—in intercultural projects and initiatives connected to local history, identity and cultural diversity.
	Supporting language training in the official languages.

Because they are linked to the 10 Intercultural City elements, which are heterogeneous and involve different policy fields, the framework suggestions are also heterogeneous, involve different kinds of interventions and can overlap and be variously connected with one another. This is also shown by the case studies connected to the suggestions, which, apart from addressing the definition of the framework, suggest how museums can concretely adopt framework elements. The various interventions through which museums can implement the suggestions can differ depending on the activity—tours, workshops, staffing policy, websites and so on—their continuity, and the degree with which the museum is active. The suggestions of the framework can be used by museums to design interventions specific to their contexts or to support the participatory design of projects, whether consisting of initiatives co-created by the museum and other actors or solely hosted by the museum.

The metadesign framework should be adapted to the specific cases of museums and their contexts. The suggestions should be translated and scaled into concrete initiatives, according to the capabilities and resources of the specific museums, their networks and their territories.

I have tried to reflect on the possible uses and site-specific translations of the framework with reference to the town of Vimercate and the MUST museum.

Vimercate and bilateral integration

Vimercate is a town of 25,874 residents (Comune di Vimercate, 2013b) in the province of Monza and Brianza. About 25 kilometres from Milan, it is one of the first-level poles of that city's polycentric metropolitan area (Provincia di Milano & Centro Studi PMI, 2007). In the past 10 years, the number of foreign residents has more than doubled, from 1,267—5% of the population—in 2004 to 2,574—10% of the population—in 2013 (Comune di Vimercate, 2013b). In 2013, most of the foreign residents were from Albania (471 people), Morocco (379), Romania (338), Ecuador (246), Peru (161) and the Ukraine (150) (Comune di Vimercate, 2013b). Since 1997, Vimercate has been governed by a left-wing and centre-left-wing City Council that has explicitly adopted a positive attitude to ethnocultural diversity. It has launched a series of initiatives aimed at fostering what the current Councillor for Cultural Policies, Participation and Integration calls "bilateral integration": "it is not only the foreigner who has to integrate with Vimercate, but it is also Vimercate that has to integrate with the foreigner" (Mariasole Mascia, personal communication, July 22nd, 2014). These initiatives also tie in with the commitment towards immigrants' citizenship and political rights in Italy. For example, in 2013–2014, the Council conferred symbolic Italian citizenship to children of foreign origin born in Italy and living in Vimercate[11] and promoted events on the theme, such as the "literary boxing match" on the Italian citizenship law[12] and the public meeting with the former Italian Minister for the Integration (Giglio, 2014). Another initiative was the establishment, since 2007, of the Consultative Council of residents without Italian citizenship (hereafter called Consultative Council), instituted according to the view that

> [t]he participation of the residents of Vimercate without Italian citizenship enables the City of Vimercate to fully represent all of its citizens. At the same time, it is an opportunity to establish support for the City Council to understand the needs and requirements to do with integrating foreign residents in the local community, and to promote reciprocal awareness of the history, culture, traditions and customs, as an element of enrichment for the community of Vimercate. (Comune di Vimercate, 2012, p. 2, personal translation)

Since the mandate that started in 2013, the Consultative Council has taken a "cultural turn" (Mariasole Mascia, personal communication, July 22nd, 2014) and has been collaborating with Vimercate Council to promote cultural events and initiatives on migration and cultural diversity. A key actor supporting the City Council in implementing its policies to promote integration is COI-Centro Orientamento Immigrati (Centre Orientation Immigrants), a well-known local charity active in supporting immigrants. Approximately 120 migrant students attend COI's language courses each year (Patrizia Motta, President, personal communication, January 16th, 2014).

[11] http://www.museomust.it/drupal/eventi/2411-consegna-degli-attestati-simbolici-di-cittadinanza-italiana accessed on August 1st, 2014.
[12] http://www.museomust.it/drupal/node/1715 accessed on August 1st, 2014.

Local identity, diversity and interculturality at MUST

MUST (Museo del Territorio Vimercatese) is a civic museum that focuses on the history and identity of the Vimercate area, from the time of the ancient civilizations to contemporary society. The museum, first planned in 2004, opened to the public in 2010 (Comune di Vimercate, 2013a). The 14 rooms of the permanent exhibition area are on two floors: the ground floor is organized chronologically, from the Roman times to the nineteenth century; on the first floor, the rooms focus on themes to do with contemporary history. In addition, there are spaces for temporary exhibitions, which may also be hosted in the permanent exhibition area, and the museum organizes activities such as an outdoor cinema in the summer in its courtyard. The collection is varied and includes archaeological findings, recordings of oral traditions, historical-artistic artifacts, and videos. Similarly, the permanent exhibition is heterogeneous, ranging from the archaeological findings in the room *Origins: the myth* to scale models of nobles' villas. Rooms featuring paintings—the Sottocasa family portraits or the works by Gianfilippo Usellini for a local school—alternate with audiovisual exhibits, such as *Contemporary Landscapes*, which shows old and new pictures of local landscapes and relative changes connected to societal transformations.

Since immigration to the Vimercate area over the past decades and the resultant local cultural diversity were not reflected in the museum collections or in its permanent exhibitions, MUST decided to address these topics through the "interculturality line of intervention." According to the museum officer in charge of this,

> it is a theme that until now had not been addressed by the museum … In fact, the museum … does not have multilingual tools. Therefore, it was not an element discussed during the design phase. So we decided to address it in the form of services, events or projects to be carried out once the museum was opened. (Interculturality museum officer, personal communication, January 16th, 2014)

In the words of the Councillor for Cultural Policies, Participation and Integration, the aim of MUST and, through it, of the Vimercate City Council

> is not only to facilitate the process of social and cultural integration of foreigners, but also to make the citizenry aware of the idea that the diversity of origin, geographical and cultural, constitutes a resource, a real asset for our territory, which we must know, protect and promote. (Mascia, 2014, p. 3, personal translation)

Moreover, in the view of the Councillor, by virtue of its function, MUST has the task of inviting immigrants to express their stories and cultural backgrounds and of recording and promoting them as local heritage (Mariasole Mascia, personal communication, July 22nd, 2014).

The person in charge of the interculturality line of intervention is the museum officer responsible for communications and tourism. So far, the other staff potentially concerned with the programme (e.g., who are in charge of the collections or the educational services) have not been involved in the organization. The interculturality line of intervention has actualized in yearly festival-like events that showcase projects and hold exhibitions developed in with and by COI and the Consultative Council.

I have used the metadesign framework as a tool to analyze the MUST interculturality line of intervention—both the initial proposals by the staff and its actual developments—and how this corresponds with the Intercultural City museum work approach. Even if various stakeholders' participation is not structured in specific tools, policies or programmes, involving and collaborating with other organizations is at the core of the interculturality line of intervention (suggestion 12; see Table 1). If the initial idea of MUST staff was about asking for a contribution within a project framework defined by the museum, this was translated in working groups where the other actors involved so far—COI and the Consultative Council—helped define the contents of the initiatives and played a fundamental role in delivering them. At the same time, collaborating with COI and involving immigrant associations and organizations that deal with cultural diversity and integration related to promoting them as best practices fostering intercultural approach in the local community (suggestion 2; see Table 1). Thanks to the relationship with COI, MUST has been working on the idea of the museum as a support for teaching Italian and introducing local heritage to newcomers (suggestions 7 and 19; see Table 1). Up to now, this has neither resulted in resources linked to the MUST collections and permanent exhibitions nor in regular museum activities and visits.

Another aspect acknowledged by the interculturality line of intervention is the importance of convivial activities that foster sociability (Intercultural City museum work metadesign framework suggestion 14; see Table 1). So far, these have been promoted by MUST's partners and have not been linked to the museum's functions or contents. Most are recurring or implemented once. Contrary to initial staff proposals, interventions that affect the regular offer of the museum have not been developed.

Other aspects of the Intercultural City framework that were acknowledged by the initial proposals but not implemented are the provision of cultural sensitivity training to the museum staff, the engagement of schools and the connected job opportunities for immigrants coming from school workshops (Suggestions 8 and 18; see Table 1). The incomplete implementation is due to the lack of resources—time, staff, funds—allocated to a line of intervention, which museum management seems to conceive as ancillary rather than structural.

"Parole per accogliere. Parole da cogliere"

During *Tutto il Mondo a Vimercate* (*All the World in Vimercate*), the 2014 edition of MUST's interculturality initiative, from June 15 to June 29, 2014, the museum featured the exhibition *Parole per accogliere. Parole da cogliere* (*Words to Receive. Words to be Received*). This exhibition developed from the COI President's and the School Director's idea to realize something to do with words and languages, the core of association activities. When initially discussing *All the World in Vimercate* with MUST, they proposed an aural and visual installation of welcoming and unwelcoming words. In addition, continuing a project started the previous year, their aim was to develop and present a video of short interviews with students and volunteers about their impressions of the Italian language. Lastly, they wanted to create and sell some merchandise to fundraise for COI.

Once the museum approved the ideas, COI set up three working groups that dealt with these initiatives. The two groups that dealt with the vocal installation and the interviews created the exhibition *Words to Receive. Words to be Received*, which was held in two galleries of the museum and consisted of two parts. In the first room, two videos were projected: *In quale lingua sogni?* (*What language do you dream in?*)—created for the 2013 edition of the interculturality festival—and *L'italiano in tutte le lingue del mondo* (*Italian in all the languages of the world*), with COI's students and volunteers talking about their impressions of the Italian language. The second part of the exhibition was about the words that express inclusion or exclusion in some of the different languages spoken in the Vimercate area. This section was made up of four elements:

- cards with the assembled welcoming and unwelcoming words and stories hanging from the ceiling at eye level (Fig.1);
- a projection with the welcoming words written and spoken (Fig.2);
- labels with the welcoming words that visitors could attach to themselves and show around the museum and the town (Fig.2, 3); and
- a hanging where visitors could attach cards with their own words and stories (Figures 4,5).

Figure 1. Cards with the collected welcoming and unwelcoming words and stories hanging down from the ceiling at eye level. © COI.

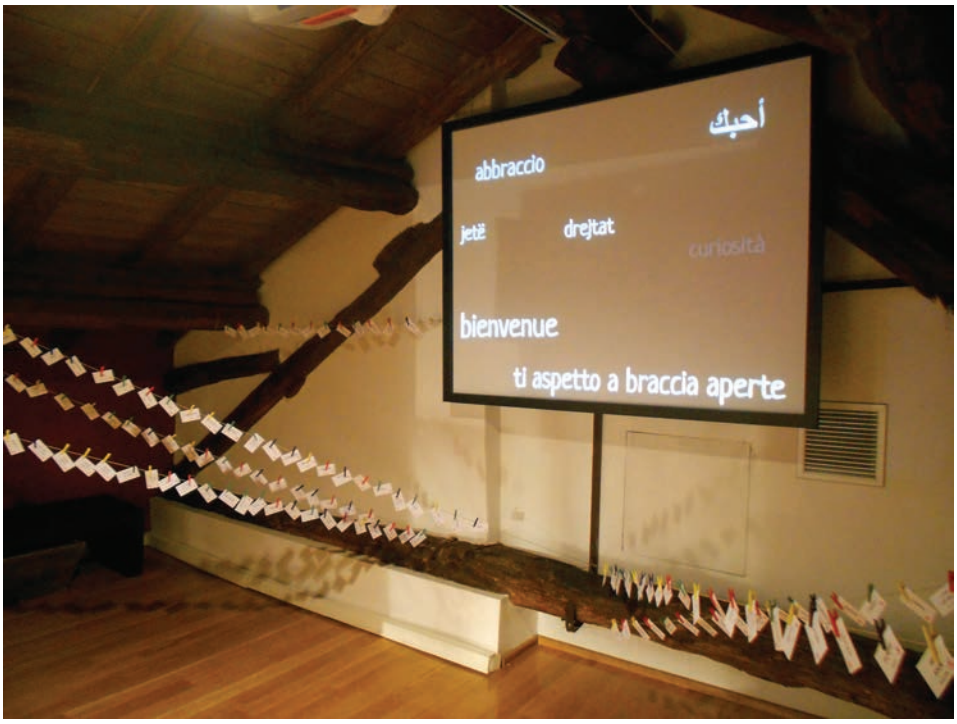

Figure 2. Projection of the welcoming words and tags with the welcoming words for visitors to take and show around the museum and the city.

Figure 3. Visitors to the museum wearing the tags with the welcoming words on site. © COI.

Figure 4. Visitors writing their own welcoming words and stories on cards.

Figure 5. Visitors words and stories on the hanging.

As a researcher interested in local museums and diversity and a volunteer at COI, I coordinated the process from the initial idea for a sight-and-sound installation to the actual exhibition, created by COI's volunteers with the support of MUST. I dealt with the graphic design of the exhibits and with some aspects of the audio-video projection, other volunteers took care of recording and editing the video interviews, and so forth.

The museum provided us with most of the materials for the exhibits (pegs, printing, cord, markers, etc.) and with tips on the arrangement.

During the design process, everything was discussed among the eight members of the working group through meetings and e-mails to verify the feasibility of the proposals. We tried to find a unifying theme and, at the suggestion of one of the members who discovered that the words "bee," "word" and "action" have the same root in Hebrew—we chose the motif of a bee for an exhibition that focused on how words can represent inclusion and exclusion (Figures.1, 3 and 5). We used some of the words collected by COI through its activities at MUST in 2013, during classes and through COI's Facebook groups, and we gathered other words and stories in Italian and in the other languages spoken by the people involved. Visitors were also invited to get involved contributing to the exhibition by writing down their own words on tags and by taking tags with welcoming words in different languages around the museum and the town.

I did not systematically use and share the Intercultural City metadesign framework with the working group when I was coordinating and facilitating the design process. Nevertheless, because I participated in the design process and the discussions with the other members of the group—who agreed on its underlying intercultural approach—some

of the elements of the framework informed the changes that led from the initial idea of the installation to the actual exhibition. Specifically,

- we aimed to foster intercultural interaction and discussion on inclusion and exclusion by showing visitors both positive and negative words and stories and asking for their input (reference to suggestion *15. Promoting chances of intercultural reflection, confrontation and mediation, especially with reference to local critical issues*);
- we emphasized the idea of promoting immigrants' languages by collecting and displaying words in the languages spoken by the participants and by inviting visitors to display the welcoming words in different languages around the museum and the town (reference to suggestion *5. Acknowledging, representing and promoting immigrants' languages and literature*); and
- we made the exhibition participatory (reference to suggestion *12. Implementing a range of participatory tools that would enable the engagement of the diverse stakeholders in the definition of the most appropriate interventions for representing and promoting local identity and cultural diversity*).

Both MUST and the Vimercate Council appreciatedthe exhibition. COI students and their families and friends were happy to see their words, languages and stories on display in the museum. The exhibition successfully engaged visitors of all ages, who particularly on the *All the World in Vimercate* core day, appreciated its participatory nature; they showed the welcoming word tags around the museum and the town and left about 100 cards with their own words in Italian and in other languages. For some of the participants, this was a way to test their Italian or to leave a thank-you note for COI. Others saw it as a "cathartic" way (visitor, personal communication, June 15th, 2014) to express unwelcoming words and situations.

Final remarks

By focusing on the case of MUST, I was able to verify the correspondence between the idea of the "Intercultural City museum work" and the views and aspirations of a local museum aware of its role in integration policies and practices.

From a design and planning perspective, I reflected on the possible uses of the framework, namely:

1. as an analytical tool to observe implemented interventions and actions from the point of view of their correspondence with the "Intercultural City museum work" approach;
2. as a tool for an individual or a team—both at the museum and outside—to design interventions that are specific to a given context and museum;
3. as a starting point for the co-design and co-creation of projects, activities and exhibitions with other stakeholders; or
4. as a set of criteria to establish some guidelines for the initiatives promoted by other actors and supported and hosted by the museum.

At the same time, this case points out the challenges and difficulties in actually implementing the "Intercultural City museum work" approach and, more generally, of socially and locally relevant interventions addressing diversity. These are mainly due to lack of resources in terms of time, people and funds. This situation is common to many museums (see, for example, Bott, 2003).

The initiatives already envisaged and implemented by MUST show the museum's awareness of its social and political role with reference to integration policies and practices. Undoubtedly, this is favoured by the vision that Vimercate Council has for the museum. Interpreting MUST's interculturality line of intervention from the point of view of its correspondence with the Intercultural City framework, I observed that many aspects of the work of the museum are in line with the suggestions of the framework. This conformity is the result both of MUST's vision of its own role with regard to integration and intercultural dialogue and of choices deriving from the involvement of other organizations dealing with migration and diversity. As previously seen, an aspect of the Intercultural City

framework acknowledged as preparatory and fundamental by MUST's interculturality proposal and actually not implemented is the provision of cultural sensitivity training to museum staff.

> We should start with a training phase. We do not have adequate preparation on these issues, because, until now, it has not been considered a priority. If we lived in the suburbs of Los Angeles, it would have been the first thing to do […], which would create the basis and the awareness by all—and not just by me—of the need of being aware of all these issues. Simply, it would be a matter of doing a few meetings: a basic training for us and for the operators that are at the museum, which are those who have the contacts with the users. (Interculturality museum officer, personal communication, July 10th, 2014)

The experience with *Words to Receive. Words to be Received* shows MUST's commitment to promoting intercultural and migrants' organizations and in involving them in the design of the projects. For a museum with limited funding and human resources, collaborating with associations and the third sector is key. Moreover, this speaks to the nature of MUST as a community museum (Interculturality museum officer, personal communication, July 10th, 2014). Unfortunately, as with the interculturality line of intervention, the focus on collaboration has been partly out of necessity —a lack of museum resources—and this has sometimes translated to a participatory model that relies heavily on the design and technical skills of the organizations involved.

In addition, the intercultural line of intervention has been characterized by the lack of proper planning and by the prevalence of one-off interventions. So far, the idea of having intercultural work as transversally integrated into other museum functions and areas is not envisaged by the museum management. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the management does not seem to conceive the interculturality line of intervention as a transformational programme structurally affecting the museum functions. Other transformations—e.g., the improvement of accessibility for people with disabilities—and the delivery of the "ordinary" cultural programming are prioritized over the development of an integrated intercultural museum work.

More generally, a last remark—not specific to the case of MUST—is about criticisms of the Intercultural City approach and of culture- and creativity-based urban development strategies, which, consequently, also concerns the "Intercultural City museum work" approach. As previously seen, European policies and directives on intercultural cities are not free from criticisms (Bodirsky, 2012; James, 2008). Similarly, the relationship between museums and local and community development is characterized by ambivalence and tensions. These are both due to risks in how museums work—for example thorough empowerment-lite, false consensus and rubber-stamping practices (Lynch, 2011)—and to their possible contributions to local dynamics such as disempowerment and gentrification (Sze, 2010). The approach proposed acknowledges these concerns and criticisms, and the complexity of the relationship between museums and local development, whose outcomes do not depend exclusively on the intervention of museums but also on the interplay with contextual factors, such as cultural, social and economic regulations and policies. Nevertheless, at the same time, it recognizes the "aspirational" dimension of cultural urban strategies, of the Intercultural City strategy and of museum work, and it calls on local museums to contribute to address local diversity issues accordingly.

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