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MIGRATING HERITAGE

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The research activities developed by the MeLa Project are fostered by the cooperation of nine European Partners, and articulated through distinct Research Fields.

RF01: Museums and Identity in History and Contemporaneity
examines the historical and contemporary relationships between museums, places and identities in Europe and the effects of migrations on museum practices.
RF02: Cultural Memory, Migrating Modernity and Museum Practices
transforms the question of memory into an unfolding cultural and historical problematic, in order to promote new critical and practical perspectives.
RF03: Network of Museums, Libraries and Public Cultural Institutions
investigates coordination strategies between museums, libraries and public cultural institutions in relation to European cultural and scientific heritage, migration and integration.
RF04: Curatorial and Artistic Research
explores the work of artists and curators on and with issues of migration, as well as the role of museums and galleries exhibiting this work and disseminating knowledge.
RF05: Exhibition Design, Technology of Representation and Experimental Actions
investigates and experiments innovative communication tools, ICT potentialities, user centred approaches, and the role of architecture and design for the contemporary museum.
RF06: Envisioning 21st Century Museums
fosters theoretical, methodological and operative contributions to the interpretation of diversities and commonalities within European cultural heritage, and proposes enhanced practices for the mission and design of museums in the contemporary multicultural society.

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Migrating Heritage

Experiences of Cultural Networks and Cultural Dialogue in Europe

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ASHGATE

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Chapter 11

City Museums Beyond the Museum: Networking as a Strategy for Twenty-first-century European City Museums

Francesca Lanz

Introduction

Cities and Their Museums: An Ongoing Change

It is widely believed that the contemporary period of mass migrations, the Internet and accelerated mobility of people, information and goods, and the process of the creation of the European Union are challenging all contemporary museums. These phenomena pose new questions and require a rethinking of the museums' role and strategies in the creation, conservation and communication of knowledge and identities, ultimately triggering a slow, yet significant change.[1] As far as city museums are concerned this shift seems to be particularly relevant and deep. If we consider the number and characteristics of city museums that have been opened and renovated over the last decade across Europe and further afield, it seems possible to affirm that this museum type is currently undergoing an important change that is affecting their approaches and curatorial practices as well as their practices of display and museographical models.[2] This ongoing evolution may be, on one

1 This assumption lays the basis for the MeLa project, a four year long interdisciplinary research project funded by the European Commission under the Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities Program (FP7th) in 2011 (MeLa 2011–2015, Basso Peressut and Pozzi 2012, Basso Peressut, Lanz and Postiglione 2013). Several other cooperative research project, funded both by local institutions and at a European level, have been recently carried out to investigate different aspect of these issues and the ongoing evolution of contemporary museums in Europe. By way of example the following are worthy to be mentioned here for they relevance and relation with the topics of this paper and the MeLa project from which it ensues (MapforID 2007–2009, Migration in Museums 2006–2008, Exhibiting Europe 2008–2013, EUNAMUS 2010-2013, EMEE 2012–2016).

2 This phenomenon is also attested to by the increasing attention that has recently been focused on city museums, the lively debate which has developed around the subject in the last decade, as well as the significant economic investments recently made in them (UNESCO 1995, Fleming 1996, Kavanagh and Frostick 1998, Bertuglia and Montaldo 2003, MacDonald 2006, Kistemaker 2006, Aymonino and Tolic 2007, Jones,

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hand, related to the above mentioned transformations nowadays affecting many different museums despite their focus and characteristics, on the other hand to those transformations engendered by these same dynamics on the actual subject and context of city museums: the city itself.

Extensive research studies, as well as statistical surveys, have already pointed out how the new economic and cultural opportunities offered by globalisation, and current political, social, economic and cultural scenarios, are deeply affecting the development of several European cities from a variety of perspectives, entailing also a reconfiguration of the urban system at a transnational level (Sassen 1991, Martinotti 1993, Sassen 1994, Amendola 1997). On the one hand, cities are setting up transnational networks, enabling power and economic, as well as cultural, relations that go beyond the nation-state organisation;[3] in turn, they compete with each other for a larger share of the market, to generate tourism and attract economic investment and international events. Furthermore, cities are undergoing intensive transformations from within. Many major European cities are experiencing urban changes that are today taking place faster than ever and that are related both to the cities' physical configuration and to their social structure. While the global economy is making the architecture of cities progressively less diverse and more homogeneous, the demolition of large industrial districts and the construction of new areas and buildings are reconfiguring their architectural features (Rykwert 2000, Boeri 2011). These cities are also facing a new demographic growth that is mostly related to migration flows and the population mobility occurring at both European and international levels and that is ultimately reconstituting cultural diversity

Macdonald and McIntyre 2008, Calabi, Marini and Travaglini 2008, Jones et al. 2012, van Kessel, Kistemaker and Meijer-van Mensch 2012, Lanz 2013a, Lanz 2014).

3 It is not the purpose of this paper to explore issues related to recent urban political and economic organisation (for example, Sassen 1991, 1994). It is, however, worth mentioning here a few ongoing cultural networking projects among European cities that specifically deal with some current issues concerning urban transformations in relation to social diversity, cultural encounters, globalisation and migrations. Examples include 'EUROCITIES', a network of over 130 of Europe's largest cities that, between them, contain some 130 million citizens across 35 countries. Founded in 1986, the network engages in dialogue with the European institutions across a wide range of policy areas affecting cities including: culture, economic development, the environment, transport and mobility, social affairs, the information and knowledge society, and services of general interest (www.eurocities.eu). Another example is 'Intercultural Cities', a project that is striving to develop a model that supports intercultural integration within diverse urban communities. It was launched in 2008 as a joint pilot initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission and sets out to examine the impact of cultural diversity and migration from the perspective of Europe's cities. It identifies strategies and policies which could help cities work with diversity as a factor of development and implied a comparative analysis of eleven European cities, fostering dialogue and mutual confrontation among themselves and with other cities involved in the project.

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inside them, while also producing a social and physical transformation of many cities' historical neighbourhoods.

Consequently, even if all these processes bring further energies to European cities, they pose exceptional new challenges and may foster a surge in new social issues and frictions (UN-HABITAT 2008). It is widely believed that within this complex scenario, city museums, as institutions historically in charge of representing the city, recording its transformations and conserving its memory and history, should and could play an important role, not only registering these urban changes, but also acting as cultural tools capable of influencing and driving them (Galla 1995, Lohman 2006, Lanz 2014). The current repositioning and transformation processes that city museums are currently undergoing can be understood in relation with the scenario briefly mentioned above and traced back to a shift in their role towards a more significant involvement in contemporary urban issues.

New Tools for New Roles

As many authors have already pointed out, it is very difficult to provide a unique definition of the 'city museum' (for example, Galla 1995, Bertuglia and Montaldo 2003, Kistemaker 2006: 5–6, Visser Travaglini 2008 and Postula 2012). It is a relatively recent museum type, whose origins in Europe can be traced back to the second half of the nineteenth century, when the biggest cities – which were involved in the urban, economic and social transformations of the time – attempted to preserve documents, stories and memories from the past and thus developed museums to conserve and display their history. Indeed, the term is usually identified with historical museums. Today, however, this is often not the case for many new and renewed city museums, whose mission and purpose go beyond the mere collection and display of the city's history towards a more active social role. The transformation that city museums are experiencing often means that their role is questioned and reconsidered; they are frequently asked to go beyond their traditional role of repository of city history and deal with contemporary urban and social issues, participate in the communication and promotion of the city (including tourism generation) and contribute to the creation of a pluralistic and intercultural civic community by fostering dialogue within different urban communities. (Johnson 1993, UNESCO 1995, Kistemaker 2006, UNESCO 2006, Jones, MacDonald and McIntyre 2008).

City museums are in an excellent position to perform these new roles. However, in order to do so, they need to rethink their own identity and develop new working tools. Many of them are experimenting with new strategies aimed at reaching out beyond their walls in a conceptual, effective and physical sense. They are promoting new intercultural programmes, redesigning their spaces and galleries, reorganising their collections, broadening their activities, rethinking their narratives and communication approaches and developing new temporary

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exhibition programmes, expressly aimed at improving the museum's relevance to the city and its citizens.

Understood from this perspective and in relation with the contemporary European urban scenario and the current evolution of city museums, networking can also be a specific and valuable working strategy for contemporary city museums that may have several strategic benefits. Several city museums are nowadays beginning to investigate and experiment with networking at different scales and for different purposes, and some of their experiences provide interesting suggestions and indications for development, which should be more widely shared and debated. This paper aims at presenting some selected examples as an evidence of the potentialities of this approach and possibilities it may offers as well as to pointing out issues to be further explored and enhanced.

Transnational Networking in City Museums: A Glocal Dimension

In 1993, the First International Symposium on City Museums was held at the Museum of London:

> The term 'city museum' made its big entrance into the public arena at that time, with the creation, at the end of the London symposium, of … the International Association of City Museums … Since then, this term [city museum] has been directly linked to the concept of a network of museums, and circulates exclusively within the museum community' (Postula 2012).

From that time on, many city museums have joined together in several kinds of association and professional network aimed at exchanging ideas and promoting shared projects.[4] However, only recently have city museums actually started to extensively develop projects based on international and interdisciplinary partnerships.

The Musée d'Histoire de la Ville de Luxembourg (Luxembourg City History Museum) is among them. The museum 'understands its mission of representing history as the visualization of the political, cultural and social development of the city, in order to stimulate the public to dialogue with its cultural heritage'

4 Such as the International Association of City Museums, in operation from 1993 to 2005, or CAMOC, the International Committee for Collections and Activities of Museums of Cities, one of the newest committees of ICOM. CAMOC was founded in 2005, 'in recognition of the special role and multiple values cities hold in the twenty first century'; it defines itself as a 'network of urban museums', a '"think-tank" for ICOM on cities and city museums', and 'a project-based organization that seizes upon opportunities for partnerships with other International Committees of ICOM, museums and various social and urban actors' (personal communication).

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(Jungblut 2008: 77). Since its opening in 1996, it has largely worked with temporary exhibitions conceived according to this vision (Jungblut 2001, 2008, 2011). Several exhibitions promoted by the museum have dealt with contemporary topics related to social urban transformations and issues, some of which have been put together in cooperation with other history and city museums around Europe and worldwide.

Jeder ist ein Fremder – fast überall ('Everybody is a stranger – nearly anywhere') (2003–07) was a travelling exhibition funded mainly by the European Union and promoted by the Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in collaboration with eight other museum partners, including two city museums – the Helsinki City Museum and the Luxembourg City History Museum.[5] It toured for a three-year period in the eight countries of the partner-museums and further afield. Highlighting specific examples of migration from ancient times to the present day, the exhibition presented Europe as a 'transit-continent'. As described in its presentation, the exhibition was aimed at raising awareness about the fact that 'in all sorts of circumstances, the permanent influx of new population groups leaving their homes and finding a new home in Europe is a continuous process' and that, consequently, the European continent owes its distinct profile to this diversity, whereas what used to be 'foreign' is now often taken for granted. The exhibition presented migration as a European feature over time, focusing on recent centuries and on the period from the end of the Second World War to the present day. Each of the eight partners presented topics illustrating the issue of being a foreigner in a foreign land in everyday life as well as in the past.[6] The exhibition was designed to make its movement and customisation as simple as possible, according to the needs of each host institution.[7]

5 Exhibition Partners: Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Workers' Museum in Copenhagen (Arbejdermuseet), the Biblical Museum in Amsterdam (Bujbelsmuseum), the German Historical Museum in Berlin (Deutsches Historisches Museum, DHM), the Helsinki City Museum, the National Historical Museum in Athens, the Musée d'Histoire de la Ville de Luxembourg and the Swiss National Museum in Zurich.

6 The Swiss National Museum made a contribution to the history of Swiss mercenaries in foreign armies and Italian guest workers in Switzerland as well as, in collaboration with the German Historical Museum in Berlin, to the successful story of Huguenot refugees from France. The Haus Der Geschichte Museum in Bonn used the example of the mediaeval Hanseatic League to illustrate international exchange and economic integration. The Helsinki City Museum showed how the German architect Carl Ludwig Engel shaped the look of the Finnish capital. The Workers' Museum in Copenhagen commemorated Denmark's journeymen, the 'navers'. The Biblical Museum in Amsterdam told the story of the integration of the German Claus von Amberg as the spouse of the Dutch Queen Beatrix. The suffering of the Greek citizens who were driven out of Asia Minor was portrayed by the National Historical Museum in Athens.

7 It is interesting to note how the exhibition programme and topics also influenced the exhibition design. The display cases, for example, were designed in a metaphorical and

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Other examples include the exhibition *Watch Out, Gypsies! The Story of a Misunderstanding*, organised in 2007 by the Luxembourg City History Museum in cooperation with the Museum Astra in Sibiu (Romania) and subsequently adapted for Finland by the Helsinki City Museum in 2009. Its aim was to 'challenge conventional ways of presenting the Roma' and encourage visitors to 'reconsider their prejudices and stereotypes' (Haukkavaara 2011). Another earlier example is an exhibition put together by the Luxembourg City History Museum in collaboration with the Minnesota Historical Society, the Helsinki City Museum, the DASA Arbeitswelt Ausstellung, and implemented by the Koln International School of Design. This is a virtual exhibition called *Explore Poverty* (Figure 11.1) whose goal is to show that poverty depends on environmental circumstances and 'means something different in different places at different times' (Explore Poverty n.d.). The exhibition consists of a website, which gathers together several objects and documents from the collection of the institutions involved and many other museums, which can be browsed and explored in different ways (generated by filters such as time or aspects affecting poverty – food, home and money – or, for example, by sorting the documents according to cross-cutting questions). The exhibition is also implemented in some social media and an external page, which acts as a 'virtual space apart', displays the ongoing discussions on Twitter and Facebook.

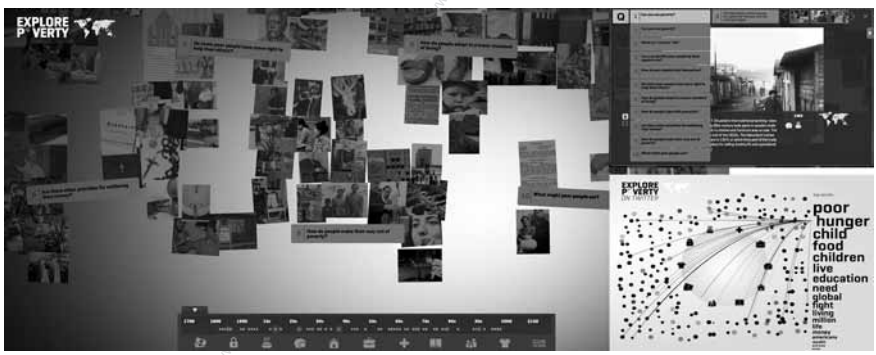

Figure 11.1 The online exhibition *Explore Poverty*

Note: Explore Poverty is a project by the Musée d'Histoire de la Ville de Luxembourg, in collaboration with DASA Dortmund, Helsinki City Museum, Minnesota Historical Society and realised by the Köln International School of Design.

Source: Screen shot of the home page, an in-depth presentation of contents, and the social media Web page (www.explore-poverty.org).

practical way as trunks, each containing several objects, pictures, videos and other kinds of media, such as excerpts from films and radio programmes.

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These examples provide food for thought concerning the possibilities offered by international partnership projects between city museums and other cultural institutions to deal with topics that may be difficult or even problematic, by framing them in a wider international scenario. Moreover, they are also able to work on the interferences between local and global, between history and contemporaneity, and investigate issues which have real local relevance but, at the same time, a wider transnational scope.

Local Networking for City Museum Engagement

As mentioned above, currently one of the main issues for many city museums is to find a way to become more relevant to their city and the communities living there and to develop increased involvement in the city's social and political life. In this sense, the construction and implementation of local networks for the development of joint actions with the other cultural institutions and social realities of the city and the promotion of outreach projects involving the municipality, inhabitants and other local institutions can play a fundamental role.

City museums are experimenting widely in this field, building on a long tradition and experience of working locally with other cultural and social actors, such as schools, libraries, cultural centres and associations. Examples abound, including educational activities, participative projects, exhibitions and events. With these projects, the museum seeks to go beyond its own walls and beyond its usual approaches to collecting, communicating and exhibiting, towards major involvement in the life of the city, developing a strengthened relationship between the museum, the city and citizens in and through the city's places, which are the very roots of city museums.

Networking within the city and with the city's cultural institutions and urban communities may become a powerful starting-point for the museum itself to help people rediscover the city and its places, the history of those who have lived and live them, the events which have taken, and still take, place there and the memories embedded in every corner, especially at a time when cities are undergoing rapid and dramatic change. This means giving a sense to places in order to better understand them and better live them, as well as deciding whether to preserve or change them, in the light of an awareness that this is the precondition for conscious choices concerning the future of the city and for a rise in an authentic and democratic idea of citizenship as a genuine sense of belonging (Lanz 2013b).

This idea was at the core of a new museographical model developed in Italy during the 1980s, with the specific aim of empowering and fully exploiting the social role of local and city museums. This model is known as *museo diffuso* (Emiliani 1974a, 1974b, Drugman 1982, Emiliani 1985, Drugman 2010). It was developed mainly by Andrea Emiliani and Fredi Drugman and today still characterises many debates in the field of museum policies and strategies. The *museo diffuso*, a term which is impossible to translate into English, is a kind of

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museum that aggregates different places and complementary functions. It can be translated literally as 'widespread museum' or 'diffused museum' but probably the most accurate translation would be 'network-museum'. Traditionally speaking, it has a main base and a collection, but is not constrained by them; it is, in fact, the main nexus of a network of local cultural resources. This network is not merely a partnership agreement but rather a widespread cultural system of different cultural places that include not only other museums, cultural services and institutions (such as libraries, schools, universities), but also archaeological and historical sites, records and evidence of local material culture, industrial remains and any kind of resource which is relevant to the cultural life and identity of the local area. Moreover, by implementing, exploiting and enhancing the local heritage as a rich, integrated network, the museum also performs the role of 'access portal' to the region, making the most of local resources (including both promotional and tourism perspectives) in a fruitful collaboration between public and private institutions.

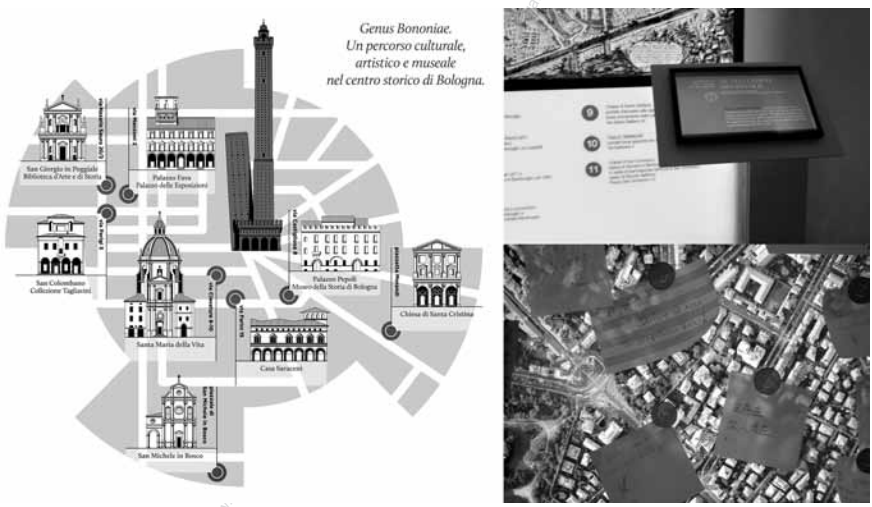

Figure 11.2 'Genus Bononiae' a network museum within the city

Note: On the left, map of the 'Genus Bononiae' museum network including several museums within the city restored and turned into satellite museums within the city. On the right, view of the back-lighted panel in Palazzo Pepoli, referring to the geo-tagged blog 'percorsi emotivi' (http://percorsi-emotivi.com) and used as a visitor book in the museum collecting feedback on the exhibition.

Source: Photo by Massimo Negri and Francesca Lanz, courtesy of Genus Bononiae.

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Unfortunately – due to the organisational structure of Italian civic museums, which, at the time of the elaboration of this model, did not provide the necessary autonomy, economic cover and management support – this idea remained mostly theoretical speculation for a considerable period. However, recent years have seen the opening of new city museums that in different ways attempt to embody and implement some of the theories and ideas so far developed within the Italian museographic and museologic tradition, including the very concept of the *museo diffuso*.[8]

One of these is Palazzo Pepoli. Museo della storia di Bologna (Museum of the History of the City of Bologna), inaugurated in 2012. Unusually for most city museums – especially in Italy – this is a private museum. The city museum is actually the final step in a wider project started in 2003 under the management of the CARISBO Bank Foundation and called 'Genus Bononiae – Museums in the City'. 'Genus Bononiae' is a city cultural network (Figure 11.2), which includes several historic buildings which have been renovated and rehabilitated for public use. Beside those buildings directly involved in the project, 'Genus Bononiae' exploits the existing system of civic and cultural institutions of the city, with the aim 'of telling the history of the city through a variety of instruments: direct acquaintance with the places of the city, permanent exhibitions and the integration of the physical witnesses of the past and the present, through a continuous and structured programme of activities'.[9]

The core of this network is the city museum hosted in Palazzo Pepoli, a mediaeval palace that has been redeveloped and turned into the city museum.[10] The museum tells the story of the development of the city and its culture, from the Etruscans to the present day. It is organised chronologically, through key episodes, symbolic figures and anecdotes; the narration is then interrupted by some cross-cutting themes devoted to representing a particular feature of the city in a diachronic way. The presentation of these contents is through a combination of objects, images and multimedia elements. In fact, the museum collection only includes items already owned by the Bank Foundation, and is therefore not particularly large. Consequently, the curator made the choice to set up what he defines as a 'narrative museum', focusing on story-telling, rather than being collection oriented. Thus, on the one hand, the exhibition display and the graphic design play a fundamental role,

8 Meaningful examples are the Santa Giulia Museum, in the city of Brescia (Tortelli and Frassoni 2009) and MuseoTorino, the virtual museum of the city of Turin (Jalla 2007).

9 '… di una narrazione della storia della città attraverso una pluralità di strumenti: la conoscenza diretta dei luoghi, la comunicazione delle esposizioni permanenti, l'integrazione delle testimonianze fisiche del passato e del presente in un programma di attività continuativo e strutturato ... ' (Genus Bononiae n.d.).

10 The restoration took seven years and was the project of Mario Bellini Architects, who designed and put in place the museum exhibition in partnership with the architect Italo Lupi, who curated the graphic design, the multimedia design studio Studio Base 2, and Massimo Negri, who was entrusted with the museological and scientific side of the project.

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filling information gaps and contributing to building and conveying the contents, while on the other hand, the museum's collection is virtually enlarged by including the palace hosting the museum, the buildings of the 'Genus Bononiae' network and the city as a whole with its cultural resources and physical places. Cultural links with the city are established in various ways, not only through educational activities carried out in cooperation with the various city museums, loans of works and finds and scientific cooperation initiatives launched by the many museums and cultural entities of the city of Bologna, but also through and by the exhibition itself. Here, particular attention has been paid to graphic communication, in order to create a link with the city. This has been done, for example, by including several references to places – such as with historical and contemporary city maps, and pictures – and establishing cross-references with other museums and cultural events of the city through 'video points' – which present those civic museums which are connected to a given theme of the exhibition – and 'balloons' – which highlight some temporary events that are relevant to the topics of the museum.

The museum has the dual aim of creating a cultural system both for the people of Bologna and for the promotion of tourism in the city via beneficial partnership among various agencies – including private and public sectors, different kinds of museums, and other local cultural institutions and resources. The museum's intent, its structure based on a local network and its communication strategies, transform Palazzo Pepoli into a stimulating and highly suggestive example of the potential of local networking for city museums.

Conclusions

Today, it is assumed that networking at every level, be it local, national, European, or even worldwide, is a fundamental strategy for all kinds of contemporary museums and cultural institutions (for example Innocenti 2012). As far as city museums are concerned, networking – either developed at transnational level, or locally based – if properly implemented, could be even more relevant and become a specific working strategy for this museum type in relation to its current redefinition and the broader urban political and cultural context.

The development of transnational cultural projects among European city museums and other cultural institutions may primarily have an important economic impact on the museums due to the possibility of sharing expenses related to the exhibition budget and can also help to enhance the visibility of the museum (and its host city), even at an international level. In addition, these international and interdisciplinary cooperations provide the museum staff with an important

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opportunity to improve their skills and establish contacts with other curators. But, above all, they offer the possibility of widening the exhibition contents, pushing them forward and exploring some difficult topics in a less restrained way,[11] ultimately contributing to the implementation of the museum's social role.

On the other hand, at a local level, city museums, owing to their potential for building privileged and enduring relationships with local communities within urban areas, can also contribute more than other museums to the reconfiguration and dissemination of a multifaceted sense of belonging and participation and to the identification of an active citizenship in and with the public space. Networking with other cultural institutions and actors from the city, as well as within the city places themselves and with their inhabitants, can enhance the city museum's social impact and make its actions more widespread and effective. In doing so, it can count on existing networks of civic cultural infrastructures that could be effectively exploited and enhanced, thus nurturing their local engagement and also contributing to the cultural, touristic and economic development of the city.

In both cases, the city museums and the city itself would benefit from these strategies. However, the questions of *to what extent* and *how* networking is actually changing the museum as a whole are aspects that need to be explored further. On the one hand, it is evident that networking is influencing the museum from a programming point of view – including its collecting strategies, educational activities and curatorial approaches – and offering new exhibition topics. On the other, it should be investigated further how this working strategy also affects, or may affect, the museum's communication, exhibition design and spaces, and ultimately nurtures the development of new museographical models for contemporary city museums.

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11 It is the case for the mentioned example of the experiences carried out by the Musée d'Histoire de la Ville de Luxembourg, as the former deputy director Marie-Paule Jungblut recently pointed out both in an interview with the author (Lanz 2013a) and in her speech to the conference 'Digital Urban History. La storia della citta' (raccontata) all'epoca della rivoluzione informatica', organised by the Department of Architecture and Design (DAD – Dipartimento Architettura e Design) of the Politecnico di Torino, Turin, 29 May 2012.

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