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Master Thesis Title : Representing Migration History in Museums - Visual representation of
the ‘Other’ in Museums and exhibitions: The case of the Greek Labor immigrants - Guest
workers (“Gastarbeiter”) in the Republic of West Germany (BRD), 1960-1980 .

Completion Semester :Wintersemester 2012 , 5th Semester

Theoretical Background: The great sociologist and post-modern critical thinker
J.Baudrillard in his highly acclaimed work “Simulations” points out that “the museum instead
of being circumscribed in a geometrical location, is now everywhere, like a dimension of itself
(J. Baudrillard, Simulations: S.Macdonald, G.Fyfe, 1996, p.1).

Museums occupy a strikingly paradoxical position in global culture nowadays. Closely
associated with much that signals the coming of its end - stability and permanence,
authenticity, grand narratives, the nation-state and even history itself- their numbers are
growing on an unexpected pace (Macdonald, Fyfe,1996, p.1). However, this achievement
does not function as a “safety net”. On the contrary, museums face a relentless questioning,
concerning their identity, role and meaning within our ever changing and globalised post-
modern society. Through their public displays and exhibition projects they undoubtedly raise
questions on issues concerning knowledge and power, permanence and transition, identity
and difference (Macdonald, Fyfe, 1996).

It is precisely these last two features that have been thoroughly discussed, re-examined and
scrutinized under the movement of the “New museology “(Peter Vergo, 1989) which has
made its appearance in the scholar tradition of social and cultural studies since the middle
1980's. Under this new wave of critical and self-reflexive stance, new modes of representing
came to surface along with a whole radical re-evaluation of the role of museums.

Moreover, the “museum boom “of the last decades, as well as the more open context of globalization phenomena, as trans-national identities, mobility and the emerging self-confidence of immigrants communities and minority groups, previously “unspoken” and unheard” gave rise to the issue of immigration.

We should not neglect that Migration within the European continent, as well as migration flows within Europe’s individual nation-states, has shaped its social, political and cultural status (J. Motte, R. Ohliger, 2002). Yet, as these two historians argue, there is almost no room for the representation of trans-bordering phenomena such as migration in recent public history debate. Migrants are written into European national memories and historiographies as ‘Others’. In the case of our particularly examined minority group, a bilateral state agreement-contract (“Anwerbeabkommen”) between Germany and Greece initiated in March 1960, led a to massive Greek labor movement to Germany, which saw until 1973 almost 400.000 Greeks settling as a new “labor force” in West Germany.

Whether the migration phenomenon represents a typical and integral part of the Greek cultural tradition and mentality, or appears as a forced consequence of specific economic-political circumstances, it should be pointed out that it has proved to be a transformative factor for the lives of people involved in it (S.Boura, 2006) as well as an essential and significant historical “lived experience”, which has every legitimate claim for representation.

Statement of Task - Questions: How can/do museums and exhibitions deal with the important issue of labor immigration and the representation of its history? How were the theoretical fundamentals set towards institutionalizing “Migration” in Museums and exhibitions in Germany (and in Europe generally)? By which practices/ methods can this issue “museologically” be depicted/ staged?

What can be applied to the case of the Greek labor immigrants –Guest workers in West Germany (BRD), 1960-1980? Is their history and chronicle sufficiently documented in museums and exhibitions and does it correspond to the increasing phenomenon of immigrant's museums and its institutionalization?

Methodology : Analysis on texts, documents (Hermeneutic research). Source interpretation-source analysis from specialized Literature, as well as on-line sources. Statistical data collection from archives and sources of specialized Literaturure, regarding the period of Greek labor immigration in West Germany (BRR), 1960-1980.

Critical and comparative museological analysis on museum exhibitions, showcasing the phenomenon of Greek labor migration. Our museological analysis will be further supported by the method of ‘close reading’ of texts and documents (method referring to Visual Semiotics, Visual Rhetoric [Korff /Roth: 1990:p.23]) .This will assist us in trying to observe

and critically assert how this phenomenon is showcased so far in museums and exhibitions in Germany and if it corresponds to the whole phenomenon of Immigration, either as a type of museums or as a topic in exhibitions.

Sources : Specialized Literature from the fields of Social and Cultural Studies: Sociology, Social Anthropology, Ethnology, History, Museum Studies ,Conservation of Monuments and Sites of Cultural Heritage, Migration Research. Statistical Data concerning Labor Migration in the Federal Republic of Germany. Documentaries and audiovisual material on Migration. Web-based, multi-media material, as well as archival material from past exhibitions, regarding “Migration History “.

Conclusions -Findings : On the course of our Master Thesis, we tried to tackle the main questions we set on the “Statement of Task”. On highlighting the theoretical background, through which museums and their museal products, exhibitions 'embraced' the terminal and multilayered issue of Migration, we discussed issues of representation in both theoretical and practical framework.

We were faced with the notion, reinforced and propagated by numerous and acclaimed academics, as well as experts from a wide scope of fields, both convergent and parallel - from Social and Cultural Sciences to Heritage and “Memory Boom” professionals with practical know-how and experience - that Migration, either as a topic or even as a whole new “genre”, Hybrid Category of the 'Historical Museum' challenges drastically the very idea of the 'Nation'. Immigration museums could serve as a strategy for managing a crisis in representing the nation and by provoking the “Master” Homogenous national historiographic readings and paradigms- which is a 'common ground' in historical museums - they bring a wider, inclusive and multi-perspective dimension in the Museums-Heritage Sector.

Furthermore, there is still an on-going debate, regarding the museological practices upon “staging“, visually representing this difficult topic. A sort of contradiction is detected, between the use and implementation of Objects in correlation with Conceptual Narratives in those type of Exhibitions with convincing arguments by both 'sides'.

So far in the museum praxis, we observe an inclination towards a non-unilinear narrative concept with aesthetical, even artistic interventions and clear “storytelling” guidelines, with the accompanying means of visual or audio-visual “enactment” (“Inszenierung”) -Contemporary Art, New media, photography, or the essential method of “Oral history”. This concept would properly use objects and artifacts, but attempt to actively place them in another context, thus “re -presenting”, “re-producing” and transforming them, drawing out

the historical and aesthetical quality, whilst avoiding stereotypes, commonalities and 'easy', non-critical and "a-historical" assumptions. In the long -run it is argued that Multi-perspective prism, "Polyphony" and an overall multidisciplinary attitude is a due demand.

During the course of this Thesis, we realized that the establishment of Migration as a theme in Exhibitions, even its establishment as a single "Type" of Historical -in principle- Museum is on a relatively satisfying, fairly promising path. Most initiatives we "scanned" so far are partly regional or local and partly national. Although In France, a National Museum on Immigration ("The Cite Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration", CNHI) was inaugurated in 2007, there are still numerous problems (i.e, collections management, administrative issues), while in Germany the emerging voices and initiatives have been working rigorously almost the 10-15 years for this goal, mentioning its overdue demand in German historiography.

Greek-Labor Migration History in Germany, one of the numerous cases of this great current, was finally examined in this paper. We could argue that this crucial historical phenomenon has been documented and displayed so far in Exhibitions and Museums in Germany only in various occasions, mostly in the form of temporary exhibitions and in the framework of Greek-German Cultural Festivities and other events.

From the 'case examples' we detected in the scope of conducting this Thesis, it could be argued that it does not correspond to the phenomenon of "Musealization of Immigration" in quantity, but it bears for sure - due to involved museum experts and initiators, already implicated in seminal "genre" projects in Germany -major influences, aesthetically and by practical means of staging- representing this phenomenon.

The expectation is expressed that on a future Museum of Migration in Germany, at least an exhibition regarding the 'Greek Guest- workers' period should be included. Hopefully, through increasing awareness on this seminal issue in Europe the last years, a trans-European project for commemorating Immigration will emerge as a mixture of ongoing and established projects, thus fairly well representing what Europe normally stands for: diversity, fusion, multiculturalism.