ICOM international council of museums Europe

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE 2016

**National Museums**
Past, Present and Future

**Novembrer, 28 and 29**
Lisbon

# PROGRAM

Key-speakers

**Chris Whitehead**, Coordinator of CoHERE Project (Critical Heritages: performing and representing identities in Europe) and Professor at Newcastle University (UK) - **Daniele Jalla**, President of ICOM Italy - **Dominique Poulot**, Member of the CulturalBase European platform and Professor at the Université de Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne (France) - **Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins**, Coordinator of the Faro Convention (Council of Europe) and Administrator of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation - **Hans-Martin Hinz,** former ICOM President -
**Karen Brown,** Coordinator of EU-LAC MUSEUMS Project and Head of the Museum, Galleries and Collections Institute, St. Andrews University (Scotland, UK) - **Monika Hagedorn-Saupe,** Europeana Foundation Governing Board Member - **Luca Basso Peressut**, Coordinator of MELA Project (European Museums in an Age of Migration) and Professor at the Politecnico di Milano - **Peter Aronsson**, Coordinator of EUNAMUS Project (European National Museums) and Professor and Pro-rector of the Linnaeus University (Sweden) - **Verena Perko**, Curator at the Regional Museum of Kranj and Professor at the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)

## November, 28

**9h30**- Opening session, **10h00**- Hans-Martin Hinz: "New National Museums in a globalized world – Still Memory of Nations?", **10h45**- (coffee-break), **11h15**- Peter Aronson: "National Museums in a Changing Europe", **12h00**- Discussion, **12h30**- (lunch), **14h30**- Luca Basso Peressut: "Crossing Borders: Designing European Identities through Museums", **15h15**- Verena Vidrih Perko: "National Museums, political regimes and social changes in Eastern Europe: from late XIX century up today", **16h00**- Discussion, **16h30**- (coffee-break), **17h00**- National case-studies: Nina Zdravic Polic, Slovenia: National Museums and national identity sustenance; Teti Hadjinicolau, Greece: National museums, folk culture and national identity in Greece; Luís Raposo, Portugal: Holistic National Museums and national consciousness; Karen Brown, Scotland: Displaying the Nation: The Case Study of Scotland; Darko Babic, Croatia: A national museum without a nation state, a nation state without a national museum, **18h15**- Discussion

## November, 29

**9h30**- Chris Whitehead: "National museums and the negotiation of difficult pasts", **10h15**- Dominique Poulot: "National Museums: an historic critical perspective", **11h00**- (coffee-break), **11h30**- Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins: "National Museums and the *Common Heritage of Europe*", **12h15**- Discussion, **12h45**- (lunch), **14h45**- Daniele Jalla: "National Museums' management models: the Italian example as a pretext for critical evaluation of current European trends", **15h30**- Discussion, **15h45**- (coffee-break), **16h15**- Panel with invited coordinators of European Projects. Coordinated by Luís Raposo, President of ICOM Europe, **17h15**- Debate, **18h15**- Closing session, - José Alberto Ribeiro, Chair of ICOM Portugal, Luís Raposo, President of ICOM Europe and Hans-Martin Hinz, former President of ICOM

**ABSTRACTS**

## New National Museums in a globalized World –Still memory of Nations?

Hans-Martin Hinz

Be proud of belonging to your nation! This was the core educational incentive of cultural policy for the newly established National Museums in the modern countries of the late 19th and early 20th century. Offering history and culture as a "golden age" in times of industrialization and rapid social changes should stabilize identities among people and give them a halt in times of Nation-building.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, when globalization and Europeanization had dramatic effects on almost everyone's life, when uncertainties rose because of political conflicts, wars and ecological crises and a new dialogue among diverse groups of society was needed, cultural policy reacted to these developments. In the most advanced post-industrial societies new national museums and new national history museums were established, often in modern and representative buildings.

Unlike the old National Museums, the new or newly conceptualized National Museums of the 80s questioned burning issues and started to explain history and culture in a multi-perspective manner, which allows visitors to come to terms with the past not only of their own country, but internationally. The success of this conception led to a new museum boom all over the world and museums again became frontrunners for meeting the challenges of the time.

In recent years and as results of shrinking economic growth-rates and restricted social politics, societies have at least partly changed from a "social modernity" to a "regressive modernity", a process which is accompanied by new, often nationalistic views on the nation and a growing concern about international institutions, like the EU.

How do National Museums deal with this current development and what does museum-work in the service for society mean nowadays? Are National Museums in the position of having a voice, which is heard in the public discussion about the future of society. What might be the content of National museum's work in helping stabilizing identities in our times? These burning issues should be discussed by museum professionals as well as among politicians responsible for museums.

## National museums in a Changing Europe

Peter Aronson

What is a national museum and how do they interact with the making of nations and states? I will in this talk argue that the contribution and function of a national museum in negotiating national identity is a decisive part of creating a cultural constitution working as a decisive counterpart to the political constitution of the nation. The political and public process of imagining, discussing, establishing and reforming the institution on the political arena is as much a part of its production of meaning as the actual collecting, exhibiting and visiting experience. Hence the museum needs to be understood as a cultural process of negotiating different logics and historical change. This complex work can be pursued with more or less success. Examples will be given where the spiral of societal trust is positiv and where museums seems not to be able contribute. Failure has potentially disastrous consequences for states and nations leading to disintegration and even civil war.

The argument is mainly based on the findings of the Eunamus – European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen – a research programme comparing 37 European nations, funded and supported by the European Commission between 2010 and 2013.

Publications are available Open Access on www.eunamus.eu and in Peter Aronsson and Gabriella Elgenius, (eds.) (2015) National Museums and Nation-building in Europe 1750-2010. Mobilization and legitimacy, continuity and change, London: Routledge.

## Crossing Borders: Designing European Identities through Museums

Luca Basso Peressut

As stated in the program of the recently completed European Research Project MeLa - Museums in an Age of Migrations, the redefinition of the museum's role in contemporaneity is a key component of current political agenda, because the museum institution emerges as the one that can cross political, cultural, disciplinary borders, holding together the tensions between local and global, self and other, inclusion and exclusion as representation issues of contemporary world.

This is especially true for those museums that focus on such themes that were born out of our post-colonial and post-industrial age, when great national narratives have given way to a variety of stories and voices. Yet, since the consequences of migrations and globalisation are so pervasive of every aspects of present day life, all museums are called into question to be involved in an innovative strategy of re-definition of their mission, role and form.

In the light of the global transformations occurring in this new millennium (migration, mobility, the nomadism of people, ideas and things), museums are scheduling a very hectic agenda, including the recognition and representation of minorities and 'other' cultures (for instance, in ethnographic and anthropological museums, and in musées de société), as well as the inclusion of 'difficult' or 'hot' topics (e.g. wars, conflicts, racism, slavery, diaspora, violence, human rights, etc).

Within this scenario, it is becoming increasingly clear that museums are powerfully committed to the task of representing contemporaneity and its complexity. Thus, it is necessary to develop a culture of complexity; in museums complexity should be dealt with as an area of investigation that is continuously in progress, and is not limited to amassing information but repeatedly redesigns the network holding together knowledge and skills that are always moving.

Talking of identity, while nationalism still represents a way of 'being in the world', it is obviously not the only one. Another is localism, intended as a sense of belonging to a more or less extensive community that is strongly rooted in a territory and its traditions. Other ways of belonging are now becoming more visible: in a context characterised by diaspora, migration, nomadism, mobility, 'being in the world' today may be ascribable to the Heideggerian condition of Unheimlichkeit, to say a sense of disorientation or "not feeling at home". This state may be intended as a fundamental aspect of the ceaselessly moving human condition; it brings about the need to appropriate the places in which we find ourselves living, though temporarily, and thus to claim our entitlement to be visible, to declare our existence, and to be recognised as individuals or members of a group or community. Indeed, compared to just a few decades ago, the concepts of identity and citizenship among individuals, groups or communities now consist less of similarities and more of differences; they have become composite and contaminated, and have hybridised into an array of possible affiliations and differences.

Museums, as places that are 'inhabited' by their visitors, are mirrors of identity; by using the museum spaces, people manifest their presence as active subjects, and develop particular relationships with the exhibited

content, and with its relevance in their everyday activities and experiences. Museums must represent the multiplicity of today's identities.

In museums architecture and display spaces create the physical conditions for representation through exhibitions. Museums exhibitions are the physical framework that enables the interpretation and representation of tangible and intangible heritage, narratives are staged through the practices of curatorship and architectural and exhibition design

Against the crisis of rating systems based on clear separation between disciplines, as adopted by modernity to organise knowledge and the political structures relating to power hierarchisation and social class differentiation, nowadays museums have to discover new ways to represent identities, as well as to tell many stories, coping the inter-multi- and transcultural conditions that are affecting every area of thought and social action.

This involves enacting practices that draw on a number of different disciplines in designing contents, narrativities and forms of museum and exhibitions, while highlighting the need of an ever-changing museum model, where some elements are more stable (architecture, the collections themselves) whilst others (the exhibitions) are more mobile.

## National Museums, political regimes and social changes in Eastern Europe: from late XIX century up today.

Verena Perko

*Imitation is often the most potent form of revenge.*
Kenneth Hudson

I will discuss the role of museums in the 19th century in the formation of national states, as were, for example, for a large part of Eastern Europe, the *Kunsthistorisches* and the Museum of Natural History (*Naturhistorisches Museum)* in Vienna. They were the pillars of western imperialistic discourse and had a fundamental educational and identity-promoting mission. Regional museums (of that time) had similar missions but with the primary goal of fortifying the identity and role of umbrella states and nations. The disintegration of the **Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and** the Ottoman Empire stimulated the emergence of new states in Eastern

Europe, where the main regional museums were given the status of national museums. Their national missions were proportional to the political status of a specific national group in a newly-formed state. After World War II, the national museums (as well as all the others) in the Eastern European communistic countries were promoting topics that supported the Communist revolution and the Marxist ideology. The museum doctrine in Eastern European countries after World War II was based on scientific objectivity (properly interpreted) documentation as well as (very sophisticated) metaphor. Geology, and especially archaeology, played an eminent role in creating and defending the appearance of scientific neutrality and objectivity of heritage institutions and their disciplines. The representations of peasant and anti-Turk uprisings were a metaphor for a people's revolution and anti-imperialistic fight. Ethnological exhibitions, through presenting traditional topics with a 'primitive' rural way of life, served more as a promotion of the socialist progress than of glorifying a nation's lore.

An exclusive status with an especially accentuated and more or less expressed imperialistic role belonged to the 'important' nations that ran the joint states. Internationalism was 'reserved' for minor and politically subordinate nationalities whom Marxism never favoured. Despite the criticism, the museums of Eastern Europe were important bearers of the education and identity processes. They led many important international and national research and exhibition projects, and some of them played a unique role in the development of museological disciplines (Brno, Zagreb, Dresden, and Moscow etc.).

After the fall of the Berlin wall, the newly formed states each went (seemingly) its own way. Many leaned on their (previously formed and expressed) national identity; others literally sank into fragmentariness and opportunism (especially those that cultivated a *mono-cultural internationalism*). On the one hand it could be said that national museums 'blew' into the breaths of growing nationalisms, however, on the other, museums could be seen as walking a winding path of conformism and utilitarianism, which they hide very well behind the walls of the almighty (objective and apolitical) science.

Therefore, what is the role of national institutions in today's modern, fragmented, globalised and identity-lacking society with a specific (and typically careless Eastern European) attitude towards its own heritage? There is no simple answer, since there is more than one point of view – and some are diametrically opposed. I am very positive; our priority task is to research the multi-layered phenomenon of national museums in ex-communistic countries and to identify the agents that determined not only the role of museums, but also primarily the preservation of heritage as a value of life. In the end, *every hermeneutics is thus, explicitly or implicitly, self-understanding by means of understanding others* (Paul Ricoer).

**National Museums: an historic critical perspective**

Dominique Poulot

The legitimacy of art does not coincide with the sovereignty of the state within national frontiers: a national museum of art is always between universalism and localism. It may offer a cosmopolitan panorama of artists, but also illustrate and emulate the nationality of the different versions of European art – being a perfect display of the Englishness of English art, of the Frenchness of French art, and so on. The importance of the notions of ethnicity and of archaeology grew from the 1850's and led to the vicious debates that raged over the nationality of material in a number of 'national art galleries'. This legitimacy developed beside the older antiquarian tradition, providing both an ethic and aesthetic canon, according sometimes to a quasi biology of art related to primitivism. But now the developments of national museums are more or less directly placed in an international context that goes largely beyond a national scale and even a European one. In the same time, anachronistic considerations replace the sense of a linear progress of art and nation.

Art museums have always had complexly shifting relations with environment, buildings, and politics, because they offer a possible and ever-changing mode of appropriating sense, art and action. As art historian Timothy J. Clark wrote in a meditation about Poussin and the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake in the National Gallery: « Paul Valéry says somewhere that a work of art is defined by the fact that it does not exhaust itself – offer up what it has to offer – on first or second or subsequent reading. Art-ness is the capacity to invite repeated response ».  National museums are today faced to a similar challenge.

**National Museums management models:**

**the Italian example as a pretext for critical evaluation of European trends**

Daniele Jalla

Italy, first at all, is characterized by a paradox and an anomalous situation.

The paradox is that it is the only country of the world whose national museum is abroad (in the Vatican State). The anomaly is that national museums (archaeological sites, historical monuments) are more than 400, or 9% of the total ones.

So it's a very particular situation, the result of the recent formation of the national (united) state, of a state-controlled centralist policy in the management of cultural heritage and of an assimilation of everything belongs to the state to 'national'.

Beyond Italian distinctive feature, what reflections can we learn from a European perspective?

1. The use of the qualification of 'national' must be independent from the state membership and should be based only on the identity (the value of museum and its collections), on its placement (the national and/or international range of influence) and its mission (its ability of representing the values of the history of the Nation, with its myths and realities).

2. The national museums belong to the first generation of the modern museums, in general as evolution of dynastic collections of the Ancien règime, and thus are part of the historical heritage of Europe in the long period that goes from the making of the national states till today .

3. Therefore they represent the past and the present, but not the future, uncertain and in crisis, of a Europe just trying to achieve a Museum of the Europe.

4. In line with the Faro Convention (2005), each museum should identify the 'heritage community' that its identity, placement and mission may refer, by qualifying "local", "regional" or "national", fearless that it may correspond to a hierarchy of value and importance. It should also identify the museums that, by nature of their 'heritage community' are 'trans national' museums.

5. The same logic requires that - by referring to the heir heritage community - museums establish a special relationship with it, offering itself as a place of encounter and mediation between the present cultural heritage of this community and their interpretation offer of its past.

6. The governance of museums must seek to represent the heritage referring community according to a principle of subsidiarity which is not in antinomy with the construction of networks at local, regional and national and if possible European level.

7. ICOM Europe and the European National Committees can play an important role in seeking that all the museums anchor their action to an European dimension and encouraging, as regards to the national museums in particular an update of their role and their interpretation of the collections in this perspective.

8. Museums, beyond the national or administrative partitions, should feel part of Europe and, in this way, of the heritage of humanity by offering cultural diversity of the heritage communities which are the product and the mirror, as a value beyond any territorial, nationalist or regionalist closure.

9. Existing museums can contribute their history and their collections to present the complex nature of territorial identities, which are always the result of exchanges, meetings, contaminations that exceed the limits of belonging to a local, regional or national community.

10. The new museums, if necessary, should assume a vision that goes beyond national, administrative, cultural boundaries of the place, or the region or the state they belong, and even the current European boundaries, to open up more and more to the world.

## National Museums and the *Common Heritage of Europe*

Guilherme d'Oliveira Martins

The aim of the new Faro Framework Convention is to recognize the "value" for society of the historical heritage and culture viewed as dynamic realities, the outcome of a fruitful interchange between the human creation handed down to us and handed down by us to our descendants. The values in question are not ideal objects. Cultural phenomena partake of this quality and cannot be fenced into "static models" or "closed precincts" but must merge with the horizon of "historical experience".

We have before us a reference instrument capable of influencing other legal instruments in states and in international relations. What this means is that we have a document which, without duplicating the action of UNESCO (particularly as regards the concept of intangible heritage), sets general objectives and identifies fields of action, as well as directions and paths which member states can accept as the way forward, each being left the capacity and independence to choose other means of implementation better suited to their constitutional organisation and their political and legal tradition. We have before us a framework convention, not defining "enforceable rights" directly applicable in the states parties, but initiating a process of co-operation among members of the Council of Europe, invited to update and advance their official policies on cultural heritage for the benefit of society as a whole.

The original feature of the concept "common heritage of Europe" lies in being an active agent of an open citizenship. Thus the "value" is evident in the "horizon of historical experience", outside any abstract conception. Common heritage, then, is at the crossroads of several affiliations, where remembrance, legacy and creation intersect. So it is understandable to have adopted machinery for mentoring and assessing co-operation among signatory states. A common database and a resource center will help government departments towards efficiency and reliance on good practices. The convention goes further than other legal and political instruments and further than the other conventions since the text also purports to guard against misuse of the heritage and the risks of debasement due to misinterpretation as a "source of conflicts" (we all remember the examples of the Mostar bridge and Dubrovnik). The culture of peace and respect for differences compels a fresh understanding of the cultural heritage as a factor of proximity, comprehension and dialogue.

## National Museums generating the awareness of cultural identity
## A case study: National museums of Slovenia

Nina Zdravič Polič

Museums around the world are our cultural memory by which people maintain their identity - a medium that has the potential to communicate with many people in many places.

Museums have often been portrayed as "sites of identity construction and as important stat-making and state-maintaining 'memory institutions' that educate and inform the public on the history and heritage of nationhood and nationality" (Booth 2014).

This paper offers some observations on the role of national museums, (which will be illustrated by the case study of National museums of Slovenia), in shaping the public's understanding of their national past and in defining a nation's identity and consciousness, of how is national identity transmitted by museums, and of how they seek to present histories, tangible and intangible heritage, cultural diversity, etc. through their structures and collections.

This much discussed and analyzed topic lately is to be explored in the first part of this debate through a brief explanation of some analytical views on the concept/phenomena of ethnic/national identity, especially on its manifestations. Characteristic are different views of scholars on the implications of national identity.

The second part of this paper looks at the National Museums of Slovenia and their share in raising awareness about national cultural identity. The tradition of the oldest museums in Slovenia goes back to the beginning of the 19th century. Today, Slovenia has thirteen national museum that have been founded by the Government of Slovenia in view of the particular nature of their collections of national importance and their activities offering discursive building of identity "in situ".


## National museums, folk culture and national identity in Greece

Teti Hadjinicolaou

In Greece the concept of the National Museum is charged with particular ideological significance. In the wake of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 and the establishment of the New Greek State, the National Museums were called upon to forge and promote a cohesive national identity. The new country had to be linked with its ancient past. As a consequence, cultural heritage as a term was ipso facto identified with the antiquities. Their unearthing and valorization provided the Greeks with the strongest argument that would enable the determination of their cultural identity.

The National Archaeological Museum was established in 1829 in Aegina which had become the first capital of the emerging Greek State. Then the capital was transferred to Nafplion and after that to Athens where the temple of Hephaestus at Theseion served in 1834 as the Central Archaeological Museum. In 1834 the first Law for the protection of cultural heritage was enacted and concerned only the antiquities. A series of events followed that in effect institutionalized the existence of the ancient world within the nascent state.

The first attempt to form a collection of artefacts of the Neo-Hellenic culture took place in 1882 with the foundation of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece (today's National Historical Museum) that

signaled a shift of emphasis towards folk culture. These objects were characterized as 'national monuments'. Folklore would now serve the ideal of 'national culture' alongside Archaeology.

In 1899 the new archaeological law extended the protection of monuments to the byzantine antiquities. In 1914 the Byzantine and Christian Museum was founded, which was thought of as the second National Museum of Greece since it intended to display the evolution of the art from the 4th to the early 19th century.

The first folklore museum was founded in 1918. It was the Museum of Greek Handicrafts (today's Museum of Greek Folk Art) that covered the Ottoman Occupation and spanned the period from the Fall of Constantinople to the emergence of the New Greek State (1453–1830). This museum is considered as the third Greek National Museum as it was now essential to prove the unbroken continuity of Hellenism.

In 1930 the Benaki Museum was established in Athens, which was destined to play a key role in the collection of artefacts that bear testimony to the Neo-Hellenic culture. The Benaki Museum received the support of the State and served also to represent the historical-cultural continuity of Hellenism.

After World War II and the social changes that took place in Greece, a growing tendency for the formation and establishment of folklore collections and museums becomes apparent. It was motivated, amongst other reasons, by nostalgia for the past, whereas simultaneously emphasis was laid on the need to safeguard tradition as the authentic national identity. Also during the postwar period a new shift towards antiquity symbolized the spiritual revival in the country.

In the 21st century the promotion of the entrenched national narrative was further accentuated by the New Acropolis Museum which was inaugurated in 2009.


## Portugal: Holistic National Museums and national consciousness

Luís Raposo

Portugal is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, nation-country in Europe. Language, nation, territory… were virtually the same since the XII century. There is not in Portugal any "national problem". National consciousness is extremely acute and, maybe because of that, there is no need for state institutions to teach or to reinforce it. The impectus to celebrate and protect heritage is deeply rooted in the country: In early eighteen century (1721), for instance, it was produced the first legislation in Europe protecting monuments and "museums" collections have been produced.

However, in early nineteen century major events did confront Portugal and Portuguese with their own self-confidence and faith in future: Napoleonic invasions (having as consequence the departure of the Royal family to Brazil allowing for the its subsequent independence), Liberal Revolution and Civil War, extinction of religious orders, conducting to the nationalisation and sale of their heritage with heavy heritage damages. In the second half of the century new developmental policies (the so-called Regeneration) gave raise to huge external debts, especially to British banks. In consequence, Portugal faced an Ultimatum from Britain (also linked to colonial policies) in 1890, being bankruptcy declared in 1892. The Monarchic Government was forced to accept British demands, conducting to strong popular reaction against the Monarchy as an all.

It was in this extremely nationalistic momentum that the already existent quest for an holistic National Museum gained enough political favour as to be putted forward: in 1983 it was created the Ethnographic

Museums, theorised by José Leite de Vasconcelos, founder and first director, as a "Portuguese man's Museum", kinking past (archaeology) and present (ethnography).

The momentum passed and the complete program of Vasconcelos was never putted in practice – the museum turned with time to be devoted mainly to archaeology. The quest for a holistic National Museum never returned back in Portugal.

After the implantation of the Republic (1910) a new global frame for museums has been putted forward, favoring the concepts of "regional" and "national" museums, being these ones divided disciplinarily. During the dictatorship important regulatory frames for museums have been originated in 1965, giving rise to the administrative classification of National Museums. Finally, in democracy (after 1974) a few more National Museums have been created, some from new others by the upgrading of existent ones.

Today, there are eleven National Museums in Portugal. They are disciplinarily or thematic oriented, being the classification merely administrative, most of them are located in the capital, Lisbon, only a few (three) are located north of Lisbon (Coimbra, Viseu and Porto) and no one exists south of Lisbon.

## National Museum of Scotland: Past, Present, Future

Karen Brown

This short presentation concerns the history of the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh (NMS), established in the nineteenth century as the Industrial Museum of Scotland (1854), and subsequently becoming the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art (1864), through to the National Museum of Scotland as we know it (2006), as an amalgamation of the Royal Scottish Museum and the adjacent Museum of Scotland in Chambers Street. From its conception, the museum was designed to foster Victorian ideals of education, and its architecture was inspired by London's Crystal Palace of 1851. Taking its cue from the Victorian idea of a "nation on show" in Universal Exhibitions, my presentation will focus on questions of national identity, considering how NMS has represented in the past and continues to present Scotland's place as a Nation to their national museum communities, and to the wider world.

## National Museums in Croatia: Aspirations for the Creation of a National Narrative

Darko Babic

The question of national museums and the narratives they present largely depends on the geo-political situation of individual countries throughout their history. While some European countries developed national museums concurrently with the formation of their nation-states, these two developments in Croatia went in somewhat different directions. Taking into account intricate relationships between politics, history and museums in Croatia the paper aims to shows how the aspirations for the creation of a national narrative which would reflect a homogenous image of the Croatian people through a museum have always been a step away from achievement. With Croatia's entry into the EU all these issues become twice as interesting.