



Migrants and Cultural Heritage by the Piedmont Centre for African Studies

At the beginning of 2005, the Region of Piedmont had pointed out the necessity and the opportunity of carrying out a project, that conceived the “other” cultural goods (mainly African and Asian ones), present in several museums of the Piedmont, as an instrument for social and cultural inclusion. Starting from a developed sociological reflection, applied in first place specially in Anglo-Saxon countries and recently also in Italy, the Region of Piedmont aims to develop a theoretical and operative approach towards cultural heritage - material or immaterial- that recognizes the products and processes of cultural mediation, inserted in a social multi-ethnic context, characterised by vivacious migratory and intercultural dynamics.

A first serial of research on the territory have pointed out, that in reference to the relation between immigrants and cultural consumption, the phenomenon of migration - now distinguished by stability and long term settlement - contains, as a result from the achievement of new social, cultural and citizenship needs, a growing need for services. Particularly, it has gained great importance, seen the statistic information and the demographic and social development that aims to integrate and make a social cohesion, that the need for knowledge in migrants has experimented a transformation, above all in migrant of second generation. It is, if not identical, than at least very similar to the ones of contemporaries of Italian origin.

Recent studies further show, that the public at museum is composed by a minimal part of foreign migrants, who are hold back by economic or temporal causes or a lack of interest and curiosity. Within this context of study and analysis, the museums, places of construction and representation of cultural identity, have been called to challenge the stereotypes and to offer a inclusive view of the society, based on the active participation of the public, foreigner or Italian, and on the reciprocal comprehension.

Form this assumption the project **Migrants and cultural heritage** (*Migranti e patrimoni culturali*) was born, an initiative with the aim of bringing closer the foreigners to cultural goods, specifically Piedmont ones. This is going to be done through an activity of forming Mediators in Cultural Heritage, a real model for accessing and using their expectations - after a previous analysis of their perception comparing cultural institutions and their offer. Final objective of the project is the realization of a route explained by the conserved foreign heritage in the museum of the Piedmont, where the identity of the migrants is expressed and represented from an intercultural point of view, about exchanging, participating and challenging the conceptual categories traditionally adapted by the museum during the phase of recollection, conservation, interpretation and communication of cultural goods.

Actors

It is an institutional network composed by the Region of Piedmont, the Piedmont Centre for African Studies (CSA) in Turin, HoldenArt and Mondo Minore onlus in Turin as well as the Civic Museum of Antic art and the Palace Madama in Turin, the History Museum of Valdesde in Torre Pellice and the Museum of the Bielleses Territory in Biella

Addressed

The project is addressed to cultural mediators, referents in Museum, the public of the museum, Italian or foreigner, adult or students and the “Non - public” of the museums (for instance youth, foreigner citizens)

Objectives

First phase - Preliminary Studio

- taking a census of the communities, associations and different foreigner realities that are gathered in the Piedmont
- identifying the needs regarding cultural consumption of foreigner citizens, specially the fruition of museums and cultural goods
- pointing out and analysing the perception several foreigner groups have about cultural goods (in the origin countries and in the Piedmont) by means of qualitative and quantitative investigation instruments
- individualize institutional politics in the Piedmont and creating synergies
- individualize the relations between museum institutions and foreign communities, giving a priority to the African realities
- individualize one or more museum institutions where mediation of extra-european cultural heritage can be carried out, specially African and Italian in the Piedmont

Second phase - Formation

- form foreign mediators in cultural, material or nonmaterial heritage, able to interpret and explain the own identity through the goods conserved in the museums of the Piedmont, giving special attention to the storytelling technique

Third phase - Experimentation

- increase the value of extra-european heritage, specially the African one, that is conserved in History, Art and Ethnology Museums, present in the territory of the Piedmont
- experiment with inclusive proposals on Foreign and Italian Cultural Heritage Mediation in the Piedmont, developed from an intercultural point of view
- experiment with a first applicated phase of the project
- carry out a seminar or a workshop with the aim of presenting and sharing the project
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Vision and awaited results

- achievement of a good planning and cultural practice
- increasing the public at the museums that are participating
- increasing the social and cultural participation of the foreign migrants
- carrying out an innovative politic for social inclusion
- enhancement of the extra-european cultural heritages in the Piedmont, African ones in particular,
- increasing the institutional visibility of the participating museums, even for the ones currently closed to the public
- construction or consolidation of the social and institutional network in the territory of the Piedmont
- producing a range of cultural products and services, that are usable in a long term perspective (which will last longer than the duration of the project)
- producing a range of usable cultural products and services for a wide public: adults, youth and children, foreigners and Italians, families and school

Duration

Expected duration: January 2005 - December 2007

Effective duration: January 2005 - February 2008

Fields - disciplinary areas

It is not foreseen to involve scholastic or university institutions, but this will depend on the development of the project. In this case, it would be hypothetically in the fields of history, art history, education and visual education, cultural anthropology, literature, history of religions, economic geography etc.

Strategy and instruments

- First phase - Preliminary study: documental research, interviewing families, work tables
- Second phase - interactive formative encounters (not opposable) and laboratories, guided visits at the museums and investigating the extra - european collections, shared planning laboratories, exercising and simulating
- Third phase - narrative routes in the museums

Evaluation and auto-evaluation personal and by post: questionnaires, counselling interviews, free exchange of opinions and considerations

Production

- “Oggetto di incontro. Storie di Viaggi, persone, culture, paesi (Object for encounters. Travel stories, people, cultures, countries)”, a cycle of the narrative courses about cultural heritage curated by the cultural mediators
- Workshop “Oggetto di incontro (Object for Encounters)” - Turin, February 25th 2008
- It is planned to create a website, which is going to be accessed from the CSA website (www.csaPiedmont.it)
- For autumn 2008 it is planned to publish the volume with the provisional title *Patrimoni in migrazione (Migration Heritage)* curated by Anna Maria Pecci for the Centre of African Studies - collection “Pubblico, professioni e luoghi di cultura (Public, profession and cultural places), publishing house Franco Angeli, Milan

Documentation

The planning procedure has been documented and is available for any consultation at the CSA

Verification and evaluation of the procedure and the final results

Since the beginning, the planned procedure has been documented. Further than the production and the work material, reports draft were made for every project reunion, giving to the working group and the collaborators the shared content of the discussions and decisions that have been taken. Moreover the “verbal” that have been written down, have constituted a modality of auto-evaluation, useful for the continuous follow of the coherence planned procedure and the defined objectives.

For each module of the formation course, several models and instruments of different evaluation were provided:

Module A: after each formative encounter, the participants were invited to fill in anonymously an evaluation file about their satisfaction about the lecturers. As a conclusion of the five formative encounters, a questionnaire about the whole complex of the module (needs and expectations, staff’s efficiency, organisational aspects) was distributed.

Module B: after the visits to the museums a moment of *counselling* was done, consisting of individual interviews with the courses' participants. The aim of this counselling was to create a moment of reflection between the modules and to offer some inputs in order to reflect about the figure of the Intercultural Heritage Mediator

Module D: the participants did a final auto-evaluation

Within the experimental phase, after each narrative route, an evaluation questionnaire was distributed.

Further than an auto-evaluation for the working group (relating to the project's partner) and an evaluation of the participants, to verify *in itinere ed ex post*

Presentation and Communication

- workshop "Object for Encounters" - Turin, February 25th 2008
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Points of strength

- originality of the initiative
- innovative thematic and methodology
- institutional partners
- interdisciplinary approach, that emphasizes the speciality of each partner
- vision of cultural heritage as a process and not just a product
- a perspective for a "cultural protagonism" for migrants
- activation of an innovative inclusive social politic
- considerable commitment and enthusiasm of the participants
- participants acquire a good/perfect level in Italian language and cultural knowledge
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Emerged critics

- initial difficulties to share a "planning language" (concepts, methods, objectives) between the project's partners
- initial difficulty to motivate the participation for cultural mediators due to a lack of professional/ occupational perspectives
- African citizens were not very familiar with museums
- Low participation of the museum referents at the Module A "Common Formation in Turin"
- The museum referents' low adhesion to take part at the Module C "Planning in mini equips" and the resulting experimentation of the narrative routes of African heritage
- Insufficient time to deepen the proposed thematic in the Module A "Common Formation in Turin"

Some elements / aspects that need to be consolidated

- encourage the modality for a continual and motivated participation of the museum institutions
- identifying between the actors and the addressees of the projects also schools of any kind and grate, including universities (Education Science, Formation Science etc)
- schedule a higher number of hours for the Formation course for Intercultural Heritage Mediators

more info: <http://www.csaPiedmont.it/sezioni/cooperazione.htm>