



Mediterranean migrations: A museological perspective

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Abstract

Museums had earlier presented historical narratives about migrations and migrant communities in the Mediterranean region portraying and presenting them as deemed fit to the colonial and nation-state agenda. This article presents different museological approaches which aim to include communities like migrant communities, not normally included in the museum. Examples of fourteen museums on Mediterranean countries presenting migrations and migrant communities tend to make choices of inclusion or exclusion of migrations, both within their territory and from or within other regions, such as the Mediterranean. Mediterranean migrations gain importance and focus depending on the objectives of the museum and the message it wishes to convey to the public. Two Mediterranean grassroots museums focus particularly on Mediterranean migrations and migrants, even if migrants are transitory. The discussion revolves around the museums' intentions and activities to raise awareness and empathy among visitors and the public. The article concludes that as educators and activists, museums have the potential to change the present and future of migrations, particularly within the Mediterranean region. Their collective practices inside and outside the museum can inform the public, raise awareness, promote understanding and empathy, enhance opportunities for dialogue and inclusion, help improve well-being, and exert pressure on those in power positions to change the status quo.

Keywords: community, Mediterranean, migration, museum

1. Introduction

This study presents the theme of migrants and migrations in the Mediterranean from a museological perspective, that is, by analysing the approaches adopted by a number of museums about migrants and migrations in the Mediterranean. Migration is the seasonal or total movement from one part of a place to another. From the human perspective, migration is associated with the permanent or temporary change of residence by an individual or group, excluding transient types such as 'nomadism, migrant labour, commuting, and tourism' ('Human Migration', n.d.) Human migrations can occur within the same region, or country, or over long distances such as across countries or continents. It could involve individuals, families and sometimes entire communities. Since antiquity, people migrated in search of a better life, either owing to natural causes and disasters such as drought, floods and seismic activities or because of man-made concerns such as wars, persecution, human rights issues and other injustices.

1.1. Historical Mediterranean migrations in museums

The Mediterranean in its complexities of cultures and communities was and is a dynamic place of migration. Migrating and receiving communities reacted differently to each other. Some were welcomed and seen as liberators, opportunity creators and friendly, while others were considered hostile to a point

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which led them into conflict with receiving communities. The westward movement of the Bronze Age from the Levant caused cultures to meet, settle, colonise, or expel each other. Historiographers and traditional museums presented such arrivals as the start of a new era and higher culture with which to eradicate earlier less advanced cultures. Contrarily, migrants escaping religious, racial, or ethnic persecutions were presented as undesired rebels or threats, as those in authority sought only to secure their position and support from other powers. The imposition of power-based decisions, justified by religious belief or political creed, was always conducive to forced migrations. The medieval and modern age movement of communities like the monks escaping iconoclast persecution in the Byzantine Empire; the Knights Templar escaping the French monarch and papal authorities in Roman Catholic Europe; the Jews escaping persecutions by the Al Andalus Muslims, the Aragonese and Church authorities, Nazism and Fascism; Christians and Muslims escaping the threats of extremism and fundamentalisms in Asia and Africa; and others escaping dictatorial Communist regimes; the Amazon and jungle tribes fleeing capitalist greed aided by neoliberal governments, are examples of migrations featured in historical and current news, but not so much in museums and their narratives.

1.2. Colonial perspectives of migration in museums

Colonialism features amongst the four major types of migration: invasion, conquest, colonisation and emigration/immigration (Caves, 2004). In ancient and classical times, the Mediterranean served as a stepping-stone for colonial military and commercial activities across continents. In the modern age, the Mediterranean felt the influence of the New World, but migrants from or to those lands were higher among the monarchies touching the Atlantic Ocean than in the Mediterranean (Altman & Horn, 1991; Altman, 2014; Klooster & Padula, 2005). Colonial times provided different opportunities for migration. While colonisers consider colonised territory an opportunity for exploitation, a new adventure and leisure travel destination, the colonised saw the coloniser's territory as an opportunity for work, commerce, further education, and other opportunities unforeseen in their land. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries facilitated the movement of more people from inland Africa and distant Asian lands. The passage of troops and crews on maritime fleets, passengers and merchandise enabled the discovery of new opportunities elsewhere, even in the Mediterranean, giving birth to migrant groups from Asia and northern Europe. Meanwhile, Mediterraneans colonised southern European maritime harbours and settled on the Maghrebi coasts and other Mediterranean islands ruled by the power colonising or governing their homeland.

Colonial authorities influenced whatever was presented in museums as they aimed to promote their identity. With the arrival of the nation-state and independence, the colonised turned to present national identity in ways which mimicked the colonial image and identity of homogeneity and stability. Since the twentieth century, most of the developed and developing countries had quickly become centres of change, multicultural, and accommodating heterogenous communities. Similar changes bind museums to become more intrigued in preserving the cultural heritage of communities which are fast changing or disappearing by the impacts of globalisation. By prioritising the economy, governments had increased divisions and exclusions of many who could not cope (Gurria, 2019; Pugno, 2022). Such differences felt across continents led to wars, revolts, racial hatred, and discrimination, forcing entire communities out of their ancestral homelands.

Mediterranean migrations may seem distant to non-Mediterranean countries, however, such movements of people could reach and impact societies far away from the Mediterranean region. The Mediterranean migrations which mostly come to one's mind among Mediterranean Europeans are those which led many to migrate and seek job opportunities in, for example, North America, Australia and New Zealand: mainly countries which were underpopulated and whose development required colonialism to encourage a multitude of human resources to meet the objectives of investors, developers and exploiters in those distant continents. Although some did find paradise in the opportunities presented, others met death, poverty, hardships, unexpected degradation of human rights, disease, labour exploitation, anti-immigrant sentiments and hostilities (Chambers, 2019b; Farrugia, 2016): memories and experiences which the visitor expects to experience in migration museums and displays.

2. Literature Review

For if modernity – from voyages of discovery, foreign conquest, global trade and planetary financial flows – is all about mobility and the perpetual movement of goods and capital, it is equally, and inevitably, also about the migration of bodies, lives, cultures and histories. One comes with the other. (Chambers 2019b, p. 6)

Migrations are frequently caused by anything deemed as an abnormal course of nature or human life. The globalisation of capital and transnational political economies contributed to an ongoing movement of people across Mediterranean waters: north to south as European nations colonised the Levant and African territories and south to north as perceptions of a wealthier north grew worldwide (Chambers, 2019a). With such changes occurring in daily life and society, museums and museology were not excluded from the impacts of globalisation.

2.1. Sociomuseology and migration

As an evolution of New Museology (Vergo, 1989), the birth and practices of Sociomuseology known also as Social Museology ('Theory and Practice of Sociomuseology', n.d.), sought to respond to modern changes and scenarios of society and a globalised world (Freire, 2001a). It aimed to make museums adapt to modern-day realities and help communities normally set aside or at a disadvantage by the ever-growing divide between the wealthy and privileged and the common people who must struggle to survive. Recent studies of grassroots micro museums maintained that:

Sociomuseology seeks to adjust the museum to present-day realities, mostly resulting from neoliberal policies leading to migration, refugees, the formation of new identities, the growth of inequalities and ever-increasing poverty: matters all relevant to the Mediterranean. (Vella, 2020, pp. 46-47)

The Sociomuseological concept, like grassroots museology, seeks to give voice to marginalised and disadvantaged groups and communities (Vella, 2020) who are frequently depicted as inferiors or intruders, like migrants coming from third-world countries or other facets of poverty. This is however unreal, as often people are forced to migrate because no one dares to raise a voice or act to combat the inequalities and injustices they suffer from those in authority and their 'legitimate' mechanisms: most of which are highly corrupt, discriminatory and manipulated by a wealthiest few. Ignorance contributes largely to such situations and eases the efforts of those in power to manipulate populations, providing them with occasional monetary or tangible tokens to secure their support and easily divide communities for their own political and capital interests. Museums can do wonders whenever they engage in combating ignorance. They create space and place for different forms of learning. They present tangible and recognisable objects and displays with which people may associate and connect, thus, bringing the visitor into the museum and presenting the 'other' as an equal, not as an inferior (Vella, 2022). Such connections may not be easily realisable in most institutional or state museums which promote a homogenous national identity and the superiority of those in power positions. It is the museums that dare, care, and act to bring about change (Candlin, 2016; Freire, 2001b; Ledwith, 2005; Stevens, 2007; Vella, 2020), that may allow space and be inclusive of migrations and migrants within their spaces, displays and narratives.

2.2. Islands

Mediterranean islands are differently perceived by various people; however, the two most prominent sources of attraction for nonlocals are tourism and immigration (Tozy, 2010). Such contacts occur in the Mediterranean as Europeans north of the Mediterranean seek to explore the south and the east Mediterranean, while those to the south and east of the Mediterranean move north and west perceiving Europe and the West as a better place (Chircop, 2015; Fogu, 2010; Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), 2018; National Statistics Office (NSO), 2018; UNHCR, 2020). It is however not only perceptions that encourage migration, but also incentives and opportunities offered by Mediterranean islands and countries which intend to strengthen their workforce with more talent and qualified human resources. Within such a scenario, migrants cannot be placed in one basket, and assuming that all are the same is an incorrect approach.

Greed for wealth and power destroyed nations and communities through wars, genocides, and other negative actions, like the appropriation of natural resources, justified by those in power as legitimate and supported by the ignorance of those seeking favours and preferences from the powerful. Migrants, whether from other continents, countries or communities, are frequently presented as intruders, hostile, criminals, inferiors, outsiders, and undesired people (Arrocha, 2019), but it is rarely contemplated that the rich Mediterranean culture is the product of similar historical migrations, about which most national and institutional museums boast. Examples in Mediterranean history abound with connections created through similar events. Three types of migration, “invasion, conquest and colonialism” (Caves, 2004, p. 461), were synonymous with Mediterranean history for millennia and migrating communities were depicted under different titles: like earlier settlers, first colonisers, and cultures with which Mediterranean peoples proudly associate their roots and identity, or sometimes as the invader who did not gain much sympathy from the natives or inhabitants of the place. Emigration and immigration were intensified as colonial times of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries allowed people to travel easier and faster.

Museums, influenced by colonial images and the longing to associate their national identity with ancient cultures and civilisations, frequently present the Mediterranean through artefacts recovered from the region. Museums in Mediterranean islands or representing coastal cities present artefacts and historical narratives inspiring pride in past connections with cultures like Pharaonic Egypt, Phoenicia (Canaan), Carthage, Greece, the Aegeans, and peoples like the Trojans, Etruscans, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Jews, and Ottomans among others. Such museum narratives, frequently miss or purposefully ignore the fact that communities from such cultures reached Mediterranean islands or locations when circumstances forced them to migrate. Invasions, persecutions and sufferings imposed by those in power, added to natural calamities, scarcely spared anyone.

Maltese museums, for example, proudly present the island’s earliest connections with the Phoenico-Punic culture. Till the modern age, it was thought that they were the first people to settle, inhabit the Islands and build megalithic structures, nowadays known to be neolithic. There is no national museum narrative which tells that the Canaanites, whom the Greeks called Phoenicians, migrated westwards as others took their lands (Cell Press, 2020; Fenton, 2014; Pinkstone, 2020; Sauter, 2022) Pride about Phoenician lineage increased with the British colonial perception that British monarchs had Phoenician progenitors (Quinn, 2019). The British colonial presence in Malta and its education system favoured perceptions of common ancestry and presented the Phoenicians not as migrants, but as traders and navigators who dominated the seas, who were indispensable, and among other taught writing, navigation and sea vessel building.

The Mediterranean has long experienced what Bauman (2000) describes as liquid modernity and liquid life owing to constant changes occurring in social relationships, identities, economics and ways we travel (Bauman, 2000, 2005). Fogu (2010) likewise, claims that perceived imaginaries of the Mediterranean are strongly intertwined with current events in the region and are being further eroded, impacted and becoming more liquid in the identity, resulting from the end of colonialism and the Cold War, and accession to the European Union. Bauman (2000, 2003) maintains that the present events are caused by globalised capitalism which intends to erode the connections between work (labour) and wealth (capital), in order to weaken social and collective ties, by consequently instilling doubt in self and others and wide insecurity: thus the failure of supposedly democratic governments to protect and guarantee support to their people, as they are also hijacked by capitalist interests and objectives in opposition to the common good and wellbeing.

3. Methodology

The study introduces the theme of migration as interpreted and presented through literature, traditional museums, historical narratives, and colonial imaginaries. It intends to show distinctions existing among museums which present different migrations. The objectives of museums may, however, approach the theme of migrations and migrants in diverse ways and choose how to present them to the public with different intentions. Through the lens of critical social theory, this study is grounded within the social and grassroots museological approaches where museums may seek to raise awareness,

emotions, memories or even empathy and call for action or omit and avoid references to them, trying not to get tangled in such issues and debates.

The study identified fourteen migration museums in eleven Mediterranean countries, presenting their theme, focus, objectives, collections and methods applied to present migrations and connect with migrants, communities and visitors. The museums focus mainly on internal migrations, immigrations or emigrations, including or even excluding Mediterranean migrations. Museums in Mediterranean countries and central Mediterranean islands, where migration is a daily concern, are compared to other museums, what they present to the visitor and how they include, if they do, Mediterranean migrations (see Appendix – Information about the museums mentioned).

The data was collected through an analysis of the museums' own web-content and social media pages, scholarly articles published in academic journals, and reports and interviews which appeared in the printed and online news media,

The discussion opens on different issues concerning the presentation of migrations and migrants in museums, and how museums may choose to deal with the theme and realities faced by migrants, particularly in Mediterranean countries. The analysis of museums affording space for migrants and migrations in different countries presents ways museums seek to represent different migrations, perspectives of migrations and Mediterranean migrations, and how Mediterranean museums present migrations and migrants to the public, to visitors and to the same migrant communities represented. Comparisons with museums in non-Mediterranean countries and continents are briefly made. In conclusion, the study presents factors which facilitate acceptance, inclusivity and understanding of Mediterranean migrations, and promote dialogue between the museum, migrants, communities and visitors, in an effort to raise voices and lead to actions at higher levels as envisioned by social and grassroots museological perspectives.

4. Findings

4.1. Migration museums and Mediterranean countries

Fourteen museums in eleven Mediterranean countries were studied. Spain, France, Italy, Malta, San Marino, Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Tunisia and Morocco have some sort of migration museum. None was traced in the remaining eleven Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Cyprus, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia and Monaco (Monte Carlo) (See Figure 1).

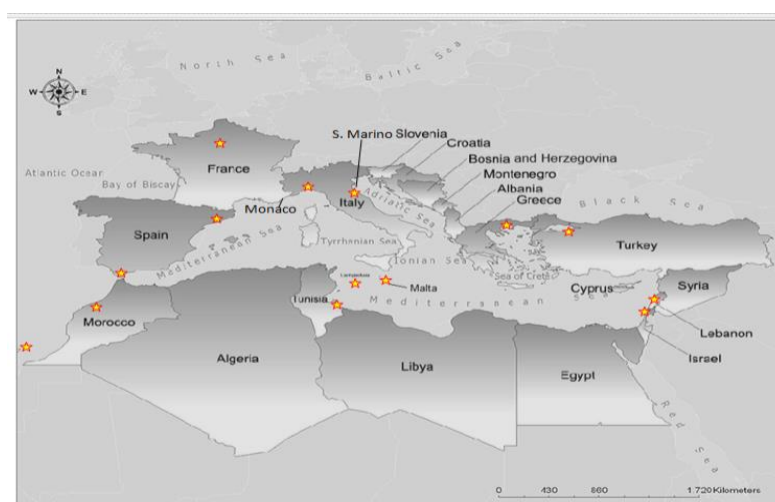


Figure 1. Location of Museums studied in Mediterranean countries (starred)²

² Base Map retrieved and adapted from <http://mapping.co/>

Syria was at the time of this study in a state of internal instability brought on by its authoritarian regime and its alliance with Russia, against its own people. The Ex-Yugoslavian states and Albania are ex-Communist states struggling to overcome and recover from impacts and divisions sown by former political regimes and war. Cyprus is divided owing to the ethnic, economic and political interests of factions seeking power, nationalistic integrations and affiliations with Greece or Turkey, political unrest which further divided the islanders and an invasion considered illegal and monitored by a United Nations buffer zone, and the British still keeping their military bases ('How Cyprus became divided', 2021; Imperial War Museum, 2023). Despite political or historical divisions, these countries have no migration museum celebrating migrants or migrations like those crossing to or from the Maghrebi coast, the Levant shores, the Aegean or the Adriatic. Cypriot migrants, for example, are presented in the Migration Museum in London (MML, 2022) but not in their country. The Albanians and nearby peoples who, for example, migrated to the Italian peninsula since, at least, the fourteenth century (ItalyHeritage, 2004) are also not recalled in their country.

Museums are borne out of the need to tell the public what other institutions omit or do tell in unacceptable ways. The findings show how museums in Mediterranean countries present migrations and act about them with the resources they own. Some museums exclude migrations because their theme or collection is scarcely or not at all associated, or because migrations could be associated with or portrayed as dark and negative events in the history of their community. Exclusion or minimal reference is sequentially employed by museums following traditional approaches and promoting what the establishment considers as valuable to tell, which instils pride and fits for promoting the homogenous nation-state identity: an illusory statement in today's cosmopolitan world. Some migration museums, even in Mediterranean countries, choose to totally exclude Mediterranean migrations and focus on selected immigrations and emigrations concerning their people.

Museums representing smaller communities exceed the geographic boundaries of place to define their community inclusive of those who left the geographic boundary through distinct types of movements such as a change of residence, emigration, immigration or changing relationships (Vella, 2020). Studies shows that grassroots museums may include community members who for some reason or another, migrated away from or joined the represented community (Vella, 2020). Practices of grassroots museums endeavour to bring community members together, voice their concerns and bring about desired changes even by becoming political and activist in society (Vella, 2020,). The element of community is strong in the successes of museums practising social, grassroots and community-oriented types of museology. Their bottom-up approaches and practices tend to produce displays and narratives closer to reality than any top-down subjective interpretation, display, and narrative met elsewhere. Similar objective approaches may not feature in museums subjected to the dictate of the establishment or those in power positions. Content and displays depicting Mediterranean migrations are almost or completely absent from museums in countries from where large migrations originate (Cimoli, 2013). While museums far from the Mediterranean, like the *Museum of Movements* (Sweden) aim to create a free place for the understanding of the movement of people and ideas, national museums in African and Asian nations torn by wars, civil strife, hatred and divisions fuelled by those in power, are less keen to present displays and narratives which remind of and represent the histories, voices, identities and cultures of migrants to and from such places. Other museums, however, seek to restrict displays and mentions of Mediterranean migrations or use them simply to meet their goals, such as presenting the Mediterranean as a region from where people migrated into their country or to locate past connections and ancestry.

4.2. Migration museums in Mediterranean countries³

4.2.1. *Clandestine Immigrations and Naval Museum, Haifa, Israel*

Run by the Ministry of Defence, the museum calls itself *The Museum of Enlistment and the Navy*. It features “the story of immigration and the struggle for immigration to the Land of Israel between 1934-1948” during the British Mandate of Palestine (Clandestine Immigrations and Naval Museum, 2018). While focusing on Israeli military naval history, it presents the irregular immigration of Jewish refugees from Europe taken into British Palestine, detention camps in Cyprus, and the attempt of Palestinian refugees, and Holocaust survivors to reach Palestine (1947). It displays historical documents, press cuttings, photographs, battle charts, weapons, ship models, audio-visual models, and video testimonials of life on board the refugee ships, and survivors’ experiences of fears and hopes. The central exhibits are a British World War Two landing craft used to intercept the Palestinian refugees mentioned, a deportation ship, and two submarines. The rest of the museum is about the navy, considered an important player in Israeli immigration history (The Council for Conservation of Heritage Sites in Israel (TCCHSI), 2020; page titled *Clandestine Immigrations and Navy Museum, Haifa*, n.d.). No reference to other Mediterranean migrations is made. Migration is used as a political tool with which to pride oneself of the nation and its common identity.

4.2.2. *Bursa Göç Tarihi Müzesi, Bursa, Turkey*

Located in an old textile factory in the industrial city of Bursa, and the main socio-cultural centre, the museum intends ‘to study and revive the migration history of the city’ (Bursa Göç Tarihi Müzesi (BGTM), 2022). Its geographic position on the Sea of Marmara which connects the Black Sea to the Mediterranean gives no importance to Mediterranean migrations but focuses on migrations from the Balkans, the Caucasus, Crimea and Asia (BGTM, 2022; Autonoumnews, 2020). It presents migrations as a consolidation of the nation-state identity (Manke, 2016). Such an approach is criticised as other routes of movement and migrations are absent from the Turkish migration museum (Karadeniz & Okvuran, 2021). Its displays consist of mannequins wearing traditional attire, craft items, and other objects supported with large printed images and narratives.

4.2.3. *Ben M’sik Community Museum, Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco.*

This flourishing museum, housed within a university, collects objects connected to traditions, crafts and life in Morocco in the past. It aims to build stronger ties with a community defined as ‘the largest, poorest, and most densely populated of Casablanca’s six districts’ and a ‘holding-room for successive waves of migrants’ from other Moroccan regions. It intends to provide a shared gathering space for the cultural and ethnic diversities of the neighbourhood, to allow different voices and views ‘to improve conditions by establishing cultural and social institutions in the area.’ The displays include artefacts, old kitchen utensils, old carpet weaving and clothes-making instruments, traditional musical instruments and photographs (Ben M’sik Community Museum (BMCM), 2022). Despite the awareness of internal migrations, it excludes migrations from Morocco to other parts of the world and other Mediterranean countries. For some reason, it seems to disregard Mediterranean migrations, frequently ending in tragedy, from its shores to Spanish territory (UNHR, 2022).

4.2.4. *Museo Territorio de las Migraciones, Llano Amarillo, Algeciras, Spain.*

Located in a modern multilevel building within the Plaza de la Cultura, the museum lies close to the parking from where African emigrants cross to Africa mostly in Summer. The original intent of the museum is to ‘Tendria varias partes, entre salas con informacion sobre migraciones de aves, cetaceos y humanos’ (have several parts, including rooms with information on migrations of birds, crustaceans and humans,’ and to boost tourism and ecotourism in Algeciras area (Selva, 2009). The museum aims

³ Some text in this section is reproduced from the websites or social media pages of the museums studied so as to remain faithful to their own descriptions and objectives. It may therefore contain grammar or spelling which is not British English. The sequence of the museums is in no particular order.

to show the prospective visitor how the city's community and culture were weaved by the cultural diversity it embraces and experiences, inclusive of the present migration issues occurring in that part of the Mediterranean.

4.2.5. Museo Atlantico, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain.

A different and one of only three underwater museums in the world is considered a commemoration of 'forgotten' refugees crossing the Mediterranean in search of a better life. The exhibit, which can be classified as a monument, consists of thirteen sculptures by British artist Jason deCaires Taylor (Perrone, 2018; The Guardian, 2016). At a depth of around fourteen metres, over two-hundred figures, a thirty-metre-long wall, a botanical garden and a ring of bodies, all spread over an area of sand are an attraction to divers and others. Although the Canaries may not experience frequent migrations, mainland Spain has a long shore along the Mediterranean most of which is close to the Moroccan-Algerian coast. It offers no artefacts or narratives, but a visual representation of Mediterranean migrations and a mnemonic of migrants' lives lost at sea, which between 2014 and 2018 amounted to at least 15,000 (Robins, 2019).

4.2.6. Malta Virtual Emigrant Museum, Valletta, Malta.

The museum intends 'to collect information relating to issues of interest to migrants and migration [and] to provide the most comprehensive collection of such information' (Malta Virtual Emigrant Museum (MVEM), 2022). It is currently limited to the emigration of Maltese persons and families during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to countries like America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Although Maltese emigration also reached other Mediterranean coasts along the Maghreb, East Mediterranean islands, and southern European maritime cities, to a point of almost colonisation, such migrations are absent in the collection.

Despite the fact that the same Migrants Commission has for long assisted and still supports immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees who reach, seek work and residence in the Maltese Islands, or relocation in Europe (Migrants table Commission tries not to murk the waters which sustain it and its efforts to help regular and irregular migrants reach the Islands safely.

4.2.7. Musée de la Mémoire de la Mer et de l'Homme, Zarzis, Tunisia.

The museum, an initiative by eco-artist Mohsen Libidheb, stands in his own private garden (Frana, 2020). Since migrants rarely carry much of their possessions with them, it aims to collect, catalogue and display such objects (Cimoli, 2013), and is the only museum telling Africans about migration out of Africa (Musée de la Mémoire de la Mer et de l'Homme (MMMh), 2022).

The museum was the focus of a photographic and video exhibition titled *La memoria del mare. Oggetti migranti nel Mediterraneo* (The memory of the sea. Migrant objects in the Mediterranean), forming part of a European Commission-financed project titled *MeLa*,⁴ *European museums in an age of migrations* which intended to reach European museums without forgetting the experiences of the southern Mediterranean shores, in search of material and tangible objects, forms of representation, places of consciousness, and memorials which narrate the phenomenon of migration to future generations (Cimoli, 2013). MeLa intended to identify methods, approaches, and innovative museum practices relevant to the conditions forced by the migration of persons, cultures, ideas, information, and acquaintances formed in a globalised world (Cimoli, 2013). MeLa also aimed to design policies for museums to enrich the European cultural heritage which they present to the visitor, by turning tangible and intangible heritage into "an effective agent of shared forms of citizenship and identity building" (Cimoli, 2013), and intercultural encounters which facilitate community building.

⁴ 'Mela' is a Sanskrit word for 'gathering' or 'meeting', today used as a reference to intercultural encounters, intended as opportunities for community building.

4.2.8. PortoM, Lampedusa, Province of Trapani, Sicily, Italy.

The museum and cultural centre is an initiative of Giacomo Sterlazzo, a Lampedusan artist and activist, in collaboration with the cultural association *Collettivo Askavusa* (Barefoot Collective) (Nightingale, 2015). It claims its creation as a tribute to “people, who risk their lives in search of safety and better opportunities” and to tell their story (Caselli, 2019, para. 1). The M in the name refers to memory, the Mediterranean, migration and militarisation (Nightingale, 2015). Giacomo started with the finds in a garbage bag: ‘letters, photographs, religious texts, music CDs’ which belonged to migrants who reached the island. Such finds at a local dump, help him collect and present objects to an audience interested in the passage of migrants leaving their African homeland via Lampedusa to Italy. The objects seized vary from small personal belongings to sea vessels used by migrants. Giacomo and the local Mayor complain that bureaucracy and disposal expenses make it difficult to get rid of the hundreds of boats and belongings seized and then abandoned on the island by the Italian Coast Guards. Both agreed on the creation of a migration museum, but circumstances forbid them from taking further steps and objects from the ‘cimiteri dei barconi’ (boat cemeteries), or other dumping sites (Askavusa, 2019). Hundreds of boats and items are discarded on the island, but the recovered objects are important despite the destroyed items.

Giacomo maintains, “we want to actively engage with memory as a political act” (Nightingale, 2015, para. 14) and that “it is fundamental to keep alive the memory of something that is still happening, with a critical perspective” (Askavusa, 2019, para. 9). He seeks to make the visitor interact with exhibits highlighting “the political reasons that push people to take the irregular route to reach Italy” and complains that the “militarized border” practices in Italy and the EU result in migrants ending “closed up in migration centers or are returned home or end up working like slaves” (Askavusa, 2019; Caselli, 2019, para. 15). Giacomo concludes that the objective behind such an art exhibition or museum is to remind the visitor of his/her historical and political context, “to fight off sentimentalism and turn art into something more useful”, as exhibitions like PortoM create spaces for reflection on realities like that of migration (Caselli, 2019, para. 16).

The Lampedusa exhibits show how personal items can help the visitor experience the horrors of forced or inevitable migrations but also lead to a sharing of meaningful objects which can generate other ways of communication between the migrant and receiving communities. An example is an Ethiopian wooden statuette of a woman holding a child in her arms, found in a migrants’ boat by fishers, and which was donated to the *Collettivo Askavusa* organisation (Askavusa, 2019). Believed to be a religious figure, it found itself in the local *santuario* (church): a place of worship which like the museum presents objects connected to experiences of slavery, shipwrecks, and interreligious dialogue. Likewise, the migration exhibit of PortoM has the potential to grow and become a centre of dialogue and serve various purposes among which the political.

Although the PortoM exhibits happen to be common things used by most of us every day, they have the potential to raise strong emotions in the visitor. They are the only witnesses to men, women and children lost their lives in search of a better life away from wars, persecution and other undesired and unbearable circumstances. They are the symbolic souvenirs of humans escaping other man-made cruelties before facing the sea, and consequently, the thousands lost at sea who transform the welcoming blue sea into a sea of death and tomb of forgotten souls.

4.2.9. The Museum of Greek Refugees, Kavala, Greece – Μουσείο Προσφυγικού Ελληνισμού της Καβάλας.

The three-room museum, temporarily located in a small house, is an initiative of the Asia Minor Association of Kavala: a branch of the Association formed in Lesbos in 1914-1936 (Pelteki, 2020), and synonymous with refugees and refugee facilities in Northern Greece. Its objective is restricted to the forced migration of Greek communities from their former homelands. It highlights “heirlooms and archival material of the refugees” of the region (Zacharopoulos, 2009, About section). The Association calls for support from the community represented and its authorities “to keep alive the memory of the lost homelands and the adventure of the “exit” of our ancestors, from their uprooting to the settlement in their new refugee homelands” (Zacharopoulos, 2009, About section). The museum maintains that

all kinds of heirlooms are precious material: costumes, images and items of worship, items of daily use, embroideries, household equipment, etc., which with the passion and care of some people came to exist until today, almost ninety years after the great uprooting (Zacharopoulos, 2009, about section).

Despite the effort to minimise potential loss or destruction of such objects, the Association also recognises that “many of them have enormous sentimental value and are kept as precious talismans by their owners” (Zacharopoulos, 2009, About section). The museum intends even to collect anything of worth such as any “document and photographic material from the refugees’ places of origin”. It gives special attention to original “documents and photographs from the first years of their lives in their new homelands”, while offering the possibilities of digitization to allow owners to keep the original objects (Zacharopoulos, 2009, About section).

4.2.10. MEI Museo Nazionale dell’Emigrazione Italiana, Genova, Italy.

Housed in the Commandery of San Giovanni di Prè, the museum spreads over three floors and is divided into sixteen sections. It helps the visitor retrace the *stories* of Italian migration, from before the Unification of Italy (1848-1871) to the contemporary era. It works closely with *Mu.Ma – Istituzione Musei del Mare e delle Migrazioni* (Institution of Sea and Migration Museums) (Mu.MA - Istituzione Musei del Mare e delle Migrazioni, 2022)⁵ and particularly with the nearby *Galata Museo del Mare* (Galata Museum of the Sea) (Galata Museo del Mare (GMM), 2022) which presents the sections ‘Memory and Migrations’ on transoceanic voyages, and ‘Italian too’ on immigration. It is situated in Genoa, the port city synonymous with the emigration of millions of Italians leaving for the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia, and to men, women and children arriving from all parts of Italy leaving everything (work, home, relatives, friends and affections) to embark on a risky voyage of no return. It presents ‘stories of migrants’ narrated through autobiographies, ‘diaries, letters, photographs and newspapers and archival documents’ (MEI, 2022, para. 3-4). It offers “compelling and empathic, multimedia and interactive” media with which to gain ‘experience, see, hear, learn and get involved’ putting yourself to the test, in the scenography of one of the oldest medieval buildings in the city, which originally gave ‘hospitality to pilgrims’ (Museo Nazionale dell’Emigrazione Italiana (MEI), 2022, para. 3-4).

4.2.11. Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration, Paris, France.

Situated in a Palace, the museum presents historical migrations by means of “Files, online articles, portraits of migrants’ as an ‘approach to the history of immigration by different entries: thematic entries (work, integration and xenophobia, migratory characteristics according to the country of origin, etc.) allowing to see how historians write history, but also through individual stories” (Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration (MNHI), 2022, History of Migrations, para. 1). In view of contemporary migrations, the museum presents “texts in the form of questions/answers deal[ing] with contemporary issues related to migration” and “answers [which intend to] provide information and synthetic definitions, making it possible to take stock of current debates in French society around migration issues and to deconstruct some received ideas” (MNHI, 2022, Contemporary migrations, para. 1). The online material offers a strong introduction to the museum’s themes and content. Besides the interior exhibitions and content, the museum aims to reach out, disseminate knowledge and educate people about migrations by means of a social science journal titled ‘Hommes & Migrations’ (Men & Migrations).

4.2.12. Museo dell’Emigrante, (Emigrant Museum), San Marino.

The museum, located in an ancient monastery, is run by the *Permanent Study Center on Emigration*. It acknowledges that “the more recent history of San Marino has inherited one of its most essential characteristics from the migratory phenomenon”. It is promoted as a “place of memory to allow the resident and non-resident population, young and old to work on a common project” and thus facilitate “a meeting between cultural research and civil and social commitment.” (MESM, 2022, Ugolini, para. 2).

⁵ Mu.Ma. as an institution is a cultural pole linked to the themes of the sea, travel and dialogue between peoples, knowledge and religions. <https://www.museidigenova.it/it/muma-istituzione-musei-del-mare-e-delle-migrazioni>

Divided between displays and research spaces, it seeks to establish a “permanent research center to collect and analyze the various aspects of San Marino emigration” and an exhibition to ‘narrate’ the San Marinense emigration, but also to show the paths of emigration and be a tool for understanding and welcoming” (MESM, 2022, Ugolini, para. 2).

It intends to act as an “interdisciplinary laboratory which, by linking historiographical research and material culture, is useful for building a historical discourse and proposing new approaches and interests for the history of San Marino” (Museo dell’Emigrante (MESM), 2022). The exhibition flows through eight rooms presenting nine themes, following an imaginary timeline and tells, through texts, images, three-dimensional graphics, documents and objects, the history of the city-state’s emigration, economy and society. The route shows stages of the migratory phenomenon, that is, the departure and escape from economic and political situations no longer acceptable, the search for work, the approach to the new, attempts at integration, the difficulties of maintaining family ties, nostalgia, and racism. All this reappears in people’s behaviour and in the succession of migratory cycles (MESM, 2022).

The museum project succeeded owing to contributions made by public and private entities, the UNESCO Commission of San Marino, and the active collaboration and participation of the whole population. School and university students held interviews with locals and other twenty-five emigrant communities (MESM, 2022).

4.2.13. Museo de historia de la inmigración de Cataluña (Museum of the History of Immigration of Catalonia), Spain.

Aiming to become “a center for research and dissemination of the migratory memory of Catalonia”, the museum presents the visitor with a permanent exhibition using “modern, interactive and didactic museographic resources”. By means of a section titled *Humanos en movimiento* (Humans in motion), it presents historical movements and behaviours of humans from prehistory to the twentieth century. Inside an old mid-twentieth-century train wagon, the *el Sevillano*, the museum pays tribute to the protagonist generation: the internal migrations of the twentieth century in Catalonia, wrapped up with testimonies and memories of those who travelled in it. The last section presents the migrations of the twenty-first century taking place in a globalised world and in continuous transformation (Museo de historia de la inmigración de Cataluña (MHIC), 2022). The museum includes a documentation and resource centre, and a collection of oral memory recorded in questionnaires filled out by migrants. The Mediterranean and its common issues feature in activities the museum holds occasionally but not in the displays focusing on migration from other regions of Spain. It offers also the services of a documentation centre, a temporary exhibition hall, and an online virtual museum.

4.2.14. The Lebanon Migration Nucleus Museum, Notre Dame University, Kesrwan, Lebanon .

The museum, which glass walls permit a “panoramic view of Mount Lebanon” (LMNM, 2008, Museum, para. 2), is the first to be dedicated to the unique cultural heritage of the Lebanese diaspora and a member of the International Network of Migration Institutions (INMI) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It “protects, preserves and presents a growing collection dedicated to the Lebanese emigrant” (LMNM, 2008, Museum, para. 2). It looks into “the historical and contemporary experience of emigrants to very different parts of the globe.” (LMNM, 2008, Museum, para. 1) The museum forms part of the Lebanese Research Center for Migration and Diaspora Studies (LERC) of Notre Dame University (NDU). It provides the visitor with “photographs, artwork, documents, and a variety of cultural items [which] lend colour and personal detail to the stories of communities and families in the diaspora” (LMNM, 2008, Museum, para. 1), and rare objects coming from the LERC Archives, the Lebanese National Archives, and private collections. The museum calls for the contribution of more objects of all kinds as it values them as “resources for academic and genealogical researchers” (The Lebanon Migration Nucleus Museum (LMNM), 2008, Museum, para. 4).

4.3. Comparisons and contrasts outside the Mediterranean

Most museums in non-Mediterranean countries, like the *Immigrantmuseet* (Denmark) limit themselves to presenting material concerning the emigration of their compatriots, or the immigration of

communities from their region or country. Others widen their scope to immigrants from other countries or continents. Few museums tend to showcase irregular or clandestine migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, except to show pride in their own roots and identity. Beyond the Mediterranean, museums like the *MigratieMuseumMigration* (Belgium), present the Mediterranean through testimonials published on their website alongside those of migrants from other world regions (*MigratieMuseumMigration* Belgium (MMMB), 2022). Objects, photographs, testimonials and audio-visual material featuring the Mediterranean are also displayed defining it as “a museum in progress, participative and interactive” (MMMB, 2022, About: Historical, paras, 2-4). Less is the Mediterranean featured in museums like *DOMiDLabs* (Germany), where the Mediterranean features as a provider of human resources for labour in the 1950s. Likewise, Mediterranean migrants feature as a new workforce and population in the *Immigration Museum* of Melbourne (Australia) (*Immigration Museum*, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia (IMMVA), 2022). Far from the Mediterranean, the *Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21*, features the Mediterranean in transcribed records narrating the experiences of people migrating, travelling and escaping the war on board ships in a section named ‘Escape by Sea’ in *Refuge Canada* (Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 2, 2022). There are museums, like the Horniman Museum and Gardens (London) and the Migration Museum (London) which went on to acquire and present authentic exhibits coming from experiences of Mediterranean migrations such as the remains of a prow from a boat upon which African migrants crossed the sea (Horniman Museum and Gardens (London) (HMGL), 2022) and objects recovered from such scenes of death and misfortune like life jackets (MML, 2022). Both British museums went further than the exhibits as they also partnered with other organisations involving and inviting migrants to tell their stories, participate and express themselves in different museum events and activities. It is however surprising that migration museums in countries receiving thousands of refugees and asylum seekers from Mediterranean countries exclude Mediterranean migrations in their museums.

5. Discussion

Migration museums are one way of reminding the visitor and the public about migrations. It is museums focused on migrant communities, specific historical migrations, and diasporic history which specifically present movements of communities and their experiences, but not all migrant communities possess resources and opportunities to have a museum or display space of their own. They may frequently seek space and voice through inclusive museums within their reach. Where resources are found, diaspora museums or displays focus deeper on migrations and present narratives which are more acceptable to the represented. Objectivity is, however, crucial and what museum professionals present may conflict with, or not always be fully accepted as authentic by either the migrants, receiving communities, or the visitor, as they may feel shocked about it. Negotiation and participation are therefore important if museums wish to present migrants and migrations. The museum visitor expects true migration stories from migration museums or connected displays, as such museum experience has the potential to raise emotions and empathy; a matter acknowledged by the *FENIX Museum of Migration* (The Netherlands). Findings demonstrate that migrations gain importance in a museum according to the theme and objectives of the same museum, its degree of agency to depart from subjectivities, and the message it wishes to convey to the public.

Political objectives and interests of owners and curators may exclude, hinder or minimise the intensity or presence of displays and narratives concerning migrations. State-run museums may restrict the scope or even manipulate content to suit political interests. Museums act in diverse ways and some, even if institutional or national, take opportunities to present their own and other migrations within or far away from their location or region. Being themselves promoters of formerly excluded identities and communities, museums enjoying agency find it easier to focus on theme and objective, and simultaneously include displays about Mediterranean migrations. Despite their scope, the museums studied found ways to practice inclusivity and integration of migrant communities and extending such practices to other museums may be easier for them. The practices presented in the following paragraphs derive from the qualitative analysis of the sources studied inclusive of literature discussing such museums.

5.1. Practices – Migration type, visual and tangible objects

A quantitative analysis shows that out of the fourteen museums in Mediterranean countries studied (see Table 1), five (35.7%) mention and present Mediterranean migrations besides those of their compatriots. Four (28.6%) focus on emigrations of their own people. Three (21.4%) focus on immigration to their country. Two (14.3%) present internal migrations alone. The presentation of authentic artefacts of migrants and migrations is found at eight museums (57.1%). This is preceded by the use of photographs in ten museums (71.4%). Following, in seven museums each, are the display or use of any other material or media, like documents, printed matter, or other objects symbolising migrants and migrations. Some museums intend to raise awareness and build empathy by presenting authentic objects reminiscent of challenges faced by migrants, particularly connected to Mediterranean migrations. Besides displaying artefacts, some museums use their resources to back up with life experiences and testimonials on audio-visual and interactive media, however, the use of photographs of real events is the most used medium to reach the visitor. The grassroots museums of Zarzis and Lampedusa collect objects left behind, lost by migrants or seized by coast guards in the central Mediterranean and display them as valuable mnemonics of the past and present history of Mediterranean migrations and challenges faced by migrants. These exhibits represent the hardships and experiences of migrants in search of a perceived paradise, which success or failure also impacts the social fabric, culture, politics, economy and future of receiving communities.

	Country / State	Ownership / Institution	What the museum represents				Display content			
			Internal migrations only	Emigrations	Immigrations	Other than their own / Mediterranean migrations	Artefacts of migrants	Photographs	Documents, printed matter	Other display material
1	Israel	local or central government, State or national entity			✓		✓	✓	✓	
2	Turkey	local or central government, State or national entity			✓		✓			✓
3	Morocco	University	✓				✓	✓		
4	Spain	local or central government, State or national entity				✓		✓		✓
5	Spain	Independent/Individually owned				✓				✓
6	Malta	Private religious initiative		✓				✓	✓	
7	Tunisia	Independent/Individually owned				✓	✓			
8	Italy	Independent/Individually owned				✓	✓			
9	Greece	Cultural NGO / association			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Italy	local or central government, State or national entity		✓				✓	✓	
11	France	local or central government, State or national entity				✓		✓		✓
12	S.Marino	educational or research institution/organisation		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Spain	local or central government, State or national entity	✓					✓	✓	
14	Lebanon	University		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 1. What the Mediterranean countries' museums represent and their display content

Some museums (see Appendix – Information about the museums mentioned) like *The Ellis Island National Immigration Museum*, and the *Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21* in North America,

the Horniman Museum and Gardens and the Migration Museum in the United Kingdom, the *Immigrantmuseum* and the *DOMiDLabs* in North Europe, and the *Immigration Museum* in Australia, intend to be inclusive and integrative of migrants, particularly immigrants, by offering services which help migrants trace ancestors and relatives who earlier migrated to the receiving country. This was absent in the museums of the Mediterranean countries studied, possibly owing to the provision of such services by other entities or as emigration in some countries is more common than immigration. Curators may also believe that the visual and tangible can be more effective on the visitor and the public.

5.2. Practices – Inclusion, integration and community wellbeing

Museums can help build self-confidence and develop skills and self-esteem in individuals and communities (Deakin, 2022). Likewise, they can help migrants overcome the challenges of starting anew in an alien place, culture and community. By means of their collections, displays, activities and knowledge, museums can alleviate the inclusion and integration process. Migrants can be introduced and helped to understand facets of the receiving community and integrate into that society and its culture. Museums may also help migrants to actively contribute to receiving communities, by sharing experiences, customs and knowledge, but without losing their own identity and culture. Museums can be effective, within their walls, as much as they can be outside, by being practitioners of inclusivity, integration and acceptance within their communities, and furthermore, by actively speaking on behalf and defending the rights of their communities, inclusive of migrants. As globalisation is frequently presented as beneficial for economic reasons, museums can help generate globalisation as a humanitarian practice to flatten separating walls and suppress political decisions and practices which divide humans, communities and their societies. Museums can help build more and stronger bridges which serve and benefit humanity for ages. An ordinary understanding among most migration museums is that migrations helped build and design cultures, identities, traditions, rituals, cities, nations and much more which make the present cultural heritage and identity of different communities in for example Europe, North America, and Australia.

Despite such recognition, some migration museums tend to dismiss or completely exclude the natives or 'first people' of their own lands. For example, *The Ellis Island National Immigration Museum* (ENIM) (USA) aims to instil pride in one's own roots for being or becoming American, which some consider the start of American identity (Nigro, 2015). It presents immigration before and after the internal migration forced on Native Americans, who fled their lands and homes to survive or died defending them from arriving colonialists, immigrants and their projects. While displaying objects and documents from different countries, the museum excludes Native Americans and African Americans justifying its action by maintaining that they are "two groups that don't tie their ancestry to Ellis Island" (ENIM, 2021). In contrast, the *Immigration Museum* (Australia) invites the visitor to explore "the histories, stories and contemporary issues of Victoria's diverse communities, and what connects us all as humans" and acknowledges the natives and works in partnership with them "to place First Peoples living cultures and histories at the core of our [the museum's] practice" (IMMVA, 2022). It also refers to migrants of the eighteenth century and the late twentieth century from Mediterranean countries in *Journeys to Australia* (IMMVA, 2022) and *The Journey to Station Pier* (IMMVA, 2022). Thus, inclusion or exclusion does not depend on location or proximity to an event, a region (such as the Mediterranean) or own migrations, but mostly on the museum's own agenda, policies and practices: factors which dictate what a museum intends to communicate and how.

While trying various forms of communication with the public, migration museums create channels with which to facilitate migrant participation and inclusivity, inviting them to contact, interact and participate in the museum and its activities. Museums intend to facilitate integration and acceptance, between migrant and receiving communities, as the intention is not to erase or subdue one's culture, identity, or traditions to another, but to build mutual understanding and cooperation between them for a better future together. Several studies propose museum projects and practices addressing migration issues, contributing to partnerships and social inclusion by means of exhibitions and educational programmes which encourage intercultural dialogue between the museum, its staff, visitors, and different communities (Sholokhov, 2020). Such examples and practices help illuminate museums to

adopt practices which enable them to fulfil objectives, with their own resources, or in partnership with other institutions, groups or organisations implicated to make a difference in society, particularly with migration issues. Truly, it is hard to overcome centuries of images portrayed by ruling authorities, cultures, religious and social beliefs, and subjective histories subsequently taught and promoted by education systems and the media. The first step in such a museological journey is to depart with the least strings attached, like migrants who leave everything behind to reach a much-desired destination.

5.3. Practice – Giving voice

No source knows the histories and experiences of migration as migrants themselves. Curators aim to present interpretations and narratives based on true experiences and free from preconceptions, discriminations and exclusions which deform the truth. For most who attempt to cross the Mediterranean Sea, the sea is not the only hurdle to overcome, but it is one in a series of other perils, like giving most of your life earnings to irregular 'service providers', stealthily crossing borders, crossing the desert rolling a water tank for survival, waiting on shore to embark on a questionable sea vessel, confronting the waves and the sun, spending days and nights at sea, hoping to reach paradise and possibly succeed to pass the checks of the receiving land. In view of such experiences, some museums are disposed to give voice to migrants inviting them to tell personal stories which are consequently presented to the visitor as text or audio-visual material. Other museums invite migrants to become active participants discussing text narratives, information accompanying exhibits, and interpreting displays concerning the experience, or even acting as guides to help the visitor understand and interact with migration displays.

As grassroots museums, devoid of institutional and hegemonic restrictions and subjectivities "adopt a bottom-up approach, engaging community members through various activities, giving them the space and voice to re-negotiate representation of the community in which they are embedded" museums have the capability to include, represent and present migrants, related displays and hold integrative activities. (Vella, 2020, p. ii). Although such approaches are scarce, it is encouraging to find that different museums are adopting similar practices. Migration museums within places of immigration may contribute significantly to migrants, particularly with emotional, health and mental well-being issues faced after migration experiences (Vella, 2020). Migrant contribution, participation and negotiation are however remote, although not impossible, in the grassroots museums of Zarzis and Lampedusa, as they lack resources and an actual presence of a participative community identifying itself with the museum and its objective. The difference between most migration museums and those in Zarzis and Lampedusa, is that migrants are only transitory and frequently clandestine. Even if both museums had to offer space and place to migrants in transit, it would be hard to achieve since such migrants are not left free to roam around during their transition.

By allowing space and place for migrants and migration displays, museums provide channels for communication and mutual cooperation, between migrants and local communities. It helps them come closer, better understand each other, and acknowledge that both were once forced to migrate for some reason. Museums, mainly those within communities, must be supported to hold activities which allow migrants to meet local communities and socialise in diverse cultural, artistic, educational and entertainment activities inside and outside the museum. Such museums can achieve more and simultaneously save costs to local and central governments. Once such collaboration between migrant and local communities succeeds, the museum has the duty to raise awareness about issues concerning migrants and migrations at higher levels of society and with government authorities implicated. Still, political governments, institutions and authorities in power may not favour such activities and deliberately ban grassroots and non-establishment museums from accessing resources to help communities, including migrants. The reason is that the prohibition of resources to such museums will consequently inhibit the production of educational material and activities for communities and cause a major setback to the museum and its beneficiaries.

5.4. Education, dialogue and activism

Horton and Freire (1990) maintain that education is not neutral as it has directiveness; thus, pedagogic and educational objectives which are not manipulative as intended by authoritarian systems.

Museums as educators have similar instructive objectives and cannot be neutral if they intend to present the realities of migrations, chiefly in the Mediterranean. Museums must stand out of the crowd, voice the voice of the voiceless, oppose injustices and have the courage to side with unpopular sides to defend the truth and promote righteousness (Horton & Freire, 1990). They are obliged to share their knowledge for the well-being of society, and as agents of pedagogy, they carry the responsibility to bring about social change, and not be neutral. (Freire, 2010).

Ways curators and museum staff behave and describe collections, displays and narrate histories, can attract or detract people from understanding the phenomenon of migrations, consequences and impacts on exiting and receiving countries, communities, cultures and identities in history and today. Migrations were beneficial to cultures as they came together and inspired each other, enriching each other's wisdom, language, and practices, such as agriculture, shipbuilding and art. They alternatively presented hardships to those obliged to leave their homes, relatives and possessions to navigate the unknown. Certainly, positives and negatives are on each side, but objectivity is mandatory. Educational activities are means by which the museum, as a space and place for dialogue, can reach different audiences, and reach out in schools and places shared by the community, to educate on what could cause migrations and ways to prevent repetition.

5.5. Political – Museums as activists for change

Mediterranean museums like those of Zarzis and Lampedusa are just a drop in an ocean capable of bringing about much-desired changes in the Mediterranean region. Political will and intentions may help or hinder actions in museums and at higher levels of society, but museums shall not remain blindfolded, dumb and deaf where human lives are at risk, openly abused by criminals and traffickers, and exploited by employers or those in authority. Not taking action about such occurrences may be assumed as becoming accomplices in crime. Inhibiting coerced migrations is also possible by putting pressure on the political sphere and power structures to desist from repeating events and practices which cause migrations and force them to take concrete actions against abusers and exploiters.

Differences among the Mediterranean shores are wide and heavily influenced by politics which care more about the economy and capital than about humans (Adragna, 2014), cultural heritage and the environment in which people live. Migration is nowadays not simply a change in the culture of communities, but an imminent death to many even before they set their first step to migrate (Fundacion ACM, 2017). It is nothing different from migrations forgotten or excluded by traditional museums and historical narratives of the colonial era. Rivalries about territories are ongoing in European, Asian and African countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea and nonetheless in Mediterranean islands serving as stepping-stones to the perceived better north and west. Migrations from other lands become habitual and an exploitation opportunity supported by those who place economic interests before humanitarian, social or environmental needs is nowadays evident (Arrocha, 2019). In such a vacuum and silence, museums become significant spaces and vehicles for the voices of victims of such occurrences frequently discarded by the political and economic elite. Both left- and right-wing politicians embracing neoliberal principles, design laws and measures which suppress the oppressed by migration further down the tracks of modern slavery and exploitation (Casciani, 2015). In opposition to such a scenario, museums have become the voices and activists for the oppressed: migrants or not. Museums are therefore not solely acting pedagogically within the community where they function and with communities seeking representation in them. They have also become awareness raisers and political activists for human rights and freedom. Within such scenarios, museums may face threats or be forced to close, but as Freire (1985, p. 122) maintains "silence and neutrality" can only help continue oppression and injustices and maintaining neutrality in matters of the struggle between the powerful and the powerless is supporting the powerful against the powerless (Freire 1985, p. 122).

Likewise, the PortoM's curator maintains that "Memory is not neutral. It is a political act: you decide what to remember and what to forget" (Caselli, 2019, para. 8). An argument which shows how museums make choices according to their subjectivities and eliminate Mediterranean migrations or other migrations, even if located in a Mediterranean country. Museums which choose to be neutral do not help solve problems, like migration, but mostly aggravate them.

5.6. Politics - The major problem lies within

Migration is not simply a phenomenon of people leaving a continent or country to seek a better life elsewhere. Supposedly democratic governments, including those of Mediterranean countries, have been practising politics and new forms of coerced migration even within their own cities and localities. Communities have been gentrified and forced out of cities and villages to transform waterfronts into yacht marinas, luxury accommodations, businesses and services for the wealthier classes who care less about local communities, their culture, their heritage or their environment (Cutajar, 2008, 2020; Cutajar & Vella, 2018). Politicians and governments at all levels who endorse such projects and practices leading to discrimination, suppression, and victimisation of their own communities, would care less about migrants from other countries or continents since these can only be exploited for economic reasons, which sequentially help their parties gain or remain in power.

Museums are just one sand granule in this whole social desert, but their contributions can have positive effects and make huge differences. Museums of all sizes and ownership can unite and voice the concerns of society about migrants and migrations. Life matters to museums because it is life that museums celebrate. Death, injustices, oppressions and similar circumstances are unacceptable to museums. Curators, museum staff and professionals, volunteers, visitors, audiences and supporters shall combat circumstances which bring oppression, exploitation and death. Migration museums, in their efforts and programmes for acceptance, appreciation and integration, seek to help migrant and local communities continue with their lives, freedom and rights, not to collect and boast with statistics of deaths and sufferings: which truly bring shame upon all who cause or permit them.

6. Conclusion

The study shows that the presentation of Mediterranean migrations in museums depends on several factors. The acceptance, inclusion and presentation of migration issues, and consequently, migrants in the museum content are dependent on the objectives, practices and educational objectives of the same museum. In more detail these can be explained as (i) the type or theme of the museum, its objectives and the message it wishes to convey to the visitor and the public; (ii) the practices adopted by the museum professionals and staff, such as the curatorial approach to the inclusivity of immigrants, that is migrants arriving within the represented community, and the ways adopted to help migrants integrate within a community, a society, its identity and its culture, without losing their own identity and culture; and, (iii) the pedagogy and educational methods used to help visitors, community and migrants understand, collaborate and accept each other as equal human beings living on one planet. All these practices tend to give voice to migrants as much as the museum gives or intends to give to its represented communities, thus becoming a socio-political actor in society, and a policy influencer capable to bring about change for the welfare of communities, who like migrants, wherever it is the case, may seek representation in them.

The presentation of Mediterranean migrations in museums, like any other migrations experienced around the globe, can spark various emotions and reactions from the public. The frequency and loss of lives wrapped in Mediterranean migrations are often countered with xenophobic assumptions and political motives which enshrine the phenomenon and vest it under different shades of imaginaries (Arrocha, 2019). From extreme negation to extreme empathy are possible, however, most reactions can be encountered in the ways museums present their artefacts, displays and narratives about Mediterranean migrations in history and today. Mostly, it is the presented migration and migrants that make the difference in how museums and their audiences perceive and understand the presented. The origins, causes and effects of migration, inclusive of those in the Mediterranean, may determine such reactions, but propinquity is not so much the factor which determines inclusion or exclusion in a museum. Preconceptions built by earlier narratives of history and society may discriminate even about the most objective view of an event and are capable to position the migrant either as an evil opportunist or a poor fellow suffering from injustices and unnecessary persecutions. It is hard for any visitor to empathise with whom the museum presents as an actor in a historical or current event, and it is even harder if the actor is in sufferance. The museum's ability to use its resources and tools can either ensure success or failure

to make the visitor knowledgeable, aware of the challenges and risks brought over by different forms of migration, and able to empathise with the presented migrant or community.

Empathy, as much as the nurture of dialogue between migrants and receiving communities, is an important ingredient in the interpretation and presentation of material concerning migrations at museums. It is what museums should communicate to the visitor and the public so that together with different audiences, they can discern, raise voices, act and bring about change. Another factor significant to the presentation of objects and displays representing migrants and migrations is their contextualisation, in a chronological and spatial way, as such factors facilitate the representation and construction of identities (Brysaert, 2012), to which visitors can consequently connect their own experiences and understand historical and present migration experiences. Likewise important for success is the use of understandable languages for communication, as the visitor and the represented may not share similar meanings, values and understandings of the presented context. This is particularly significant in the case of Mediterranean migrations or migrations specific to similar regions around the globe.

Understanding and empathy are reached as much as the museum facilitates such feelings, irrespective of preconceived assumptions or prejudices portrayed by earlier subjective media, historiographies and publications. Religious beliefs, race, ethnicity, background, appearance and other factors which had through the ages been abused to divide people, nations, communities, continents, families and close friends. Disseminating divisions, hatred and violence are much easier than building camaraderie and collaboration between different people, especially during turbulent times causing coerced or inevitable migrations. Museums have the tools to overcome such undesired responses in society. In a world which is gradually becoming a cosmopolitan globe, it is much more important that museum professionals and staff are trained to convey such a message inside and outside of the museum. Eventually, it is the lack of resources available to some museums, like grassroots museums, which restricts their activities and initiatives for communities such as those of migrants and communities within their reach. Museums cannot be spectators to an unfolding history today, or they will be blamed for not acting on behalf of the voiceless. Besides educators, museums have the responsibility to become activists, even at a political level, to create pressures for actions by those in power structures, to change matters and reduce circumstances which coerce people into migration. A collective effort can, therefore, reach the most remote places from any museum in the world and change the future of unnecessary migrations, particularly within the Mediterranean region and its continents.

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APPENDIX – Information about the museums mentioned

Museum	Location	Opened	Ownership	Main Objective	Collections / Services	Who is represented	Exclusions	Presence of Mediterranean migrations (and artefacts)	Method (tangible objects, etc) related to Mediterranean migrations
Ben M'sik Community Museum,	Hassan II University, Casablanca, Morocco	1980s	Private	Internal migrations	Attire, personal belongings, utensils, objects	Migrants from other Moroccan regions	All other migrations	None	None
Bursa Göç Tarihi Müzesi, (Bursa Museum of Migration History)	Bursa, Turkey	2014	National (Metropolitan municipality)	Immigrations	Displays representative of various migrations, historical material culture, educational activities with children, material culture, mannequins with traditional attire	Mainly Balkan, Caucasian, and Asian immigrants	All other migrations	None	None
Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21	Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada	1999 (New exhibition opened 2015)	National	Immigration	Records, oral histories, photographs, artefacts	Immigrants	N/A	Section narratives, and exhibits	Two life jackets worn by children rescued from an inflatable boat
Clandestine Immigrations and Naval Museum,	Haifa, Israel	1969	National	Immigrations in post-War years	Naval and clandestine / illegal migrations	Jews and Palestinians (legal and clandestine), naval history	All other migrations	Jewish and Palestinian in post-War years only	Sea vessels, documents, photographs, testimonials, texts, newspaper cuttings
DOMIDLabs (Documentation Centre and Museum of Migration in Germany)	Köln, Germany	1998 (Ruhrland museum Essen - today the Ruhr Museum) (2006 Opened in Köln)	Private association	tell the story of migration during three periods, and show how migration has shaped history and continues to shape society and lives together	Objects, photographs and virtual content	Labour migration to Germany	N/A	history of formal labour migration from Mediterranean countries to Germany since the 1950s	Photographs and virtual content

Museum	Location	Opened	Ownership	Main Objective	Collections / Services	Who is represented	Exclusions	Presence of Mediterranean migrations (and artefacts)	Method (tangible objects, etc) related to Mediterranean migrations
	New York, USA	1976	Federal government (national)	Immigration	Photographs, heirlooms, ancestor records	Immigrants	Native Americans, African Americans	None	None
FENIX Museum of Migration	Rotterdam, The Netherlands	To open in 2024	Private foundation	the movement of people and all the emotions that are involved	art, photography, historical objects and personal items'	Migrations to, from and through Rotterdam	N/A	Not yet	None
Horniman Museum and Gardens	London, UK	1901	Private charitable association	rethink the Mediterranean as a bridge rather than a barrier between three continents and to challenge our modern understanding of national borders and communities	inviting and involving migrants (refugees and asylum seekers) to tell their experiences of migration and perceptions of the Mediterranean	Refugees and asylum seekers	N/A	Exhibit, video about the boat's experience	Prow of Boat representing migrations in the Mediterranean
Immigrantmuseet	Farum, Copenhagen, Denmark	2012	Private institution	documenting the cultural history of immigration and telling about 500 years' of migration history in Denmark since the 16 th century	archive	Immigrants	N/A	None	None
Immigration Museum	Melbourne, Victoria, Australia	1998	National	Immigration	Collections, displays, digital content and pedagogic activities	Immigrants and First Peoples	N/A	Articles about the journeys	
Malta Virtual Emigrant Museum	Valletta, Malta	2001	Private	Emigration	Photographs, documents, text testimonials	Maltese emigrants	Immigration (legal and clandestine)	None	Limited to Maltese emigrations

Museum	Location	Opened	Ownership	Main Objective	Collections / Services	Who is represented	Exclusions	Presence of Mediterranean migrations (and artefacts)	Method (tangible objects, etc) related to Mediterranean migrations
MEI Museo Nazionale dell'Emigrazione Italiana, (MEI National Museum of Italian Emigration)	Genova, Italy	2022	National	Emigration of Italians	autobiographies, diaries, letters, photographs and newspapers; offers 'compelling and empathic, multimedia and interactive' media	Italian migrations	N/A	Only that related to Italian migrations	None
MigratieMuseumMigration	Brussels, Belgium	2019	Private foundation	tell the story of migration to the city, honour the migrants 'who have shaped' the city	objects coming from migrants and migrations experienced by the city, boat wrecks, life jackets, personal life experience testimonials	Migrants and migrations in Brussels	N/A	Objects and photographs featuring the Mediterranean	Mediterranean through testimonials
Migration Museum	London, UK	2013 (New exhibition opened 2020)	National	Migration as the movement of people which made Britain	Space, place and activities for migrants' participation, pedagogic and artistic events displays, temporary exhibitions, networking, political displays, culinary, film	Various	N/A	Exhibits and narratives	Objects recovered from scenes of death and misfortune
Musée de la Mémoire de la Mer et de l'Homme	Zarzis, Tunisia	2013	Grassroots	Migrants and migrations in the Mediterranean	Personal objects, sea vessels	Migrants and migrations in the Mediterranean	Non-Mediterranean migrations	Yes	Objects left / lost by migrants
Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration (MNH)	Paris, France	2012	National	Immigration and current migration debates	files, online articles, portraits of migrants'	Migrants	N/A	Indirect through contemporary migrations	Publication
Museo Atlantico,	Las Coloradas, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain	2016	National	Migrants and migrations in the Mediterranean	Artistic sculptures	Lives lost at sea in the Mediterranean	Non-Mediterranean migrations	Artistic representation	Representative statues

Museum	Location	Opened	Ownership	Main Objective	Collections / Services	Who is represented	Exclusions	Presence of Mediterranean migrations (and artefacts)	Method (tangible objects, etc) related to Mediterranean migrations
Museo de historia de la inmigración de Cataluña (Museum of the History of Immigration of Catalonia), (MHIC)	Barcelona, Spain	2004	Provincial Council	Immigration	modern, interactive and didactic museographic resources; documentation and resource centre, and a collection of oral memory recorded in questionnaires filled out by migrants; a temporary exhibition hall, and an online virtual museum	Catalonian emigrants and immigrants	N/A	None	None
Museo dell'Emigrante (Emigrant Museum),	San Marino	1997	National	Emigrant communities from San Marino around the world	texts, images, three-dimensional graphics, documents and objects, the history of the city-state's emigration, economy and society	San Marinese migrants	N/A	None	None
Museum of Movements	Malmö, Sweden	2018	Private company & Charity	Migrants and Democracy, a free place for understanding the movement of people and ideas	Oral history (so far)	Migrants	N/A	None	None
PortoM,	Lampedusa, Province of Trapani, Sicily, Italy	2005	Grassroots	Migrants and migrations in the Mediterranean	Personal objects, sea vessels	Migrants and migrations in the Mediterranean	Non-Medit. migrations	Yes	Objects left / lost by migrants
The Lebanon Migration Nucleus Museum	Notre Dame University, Kesrwan, Lebanon	2005	Lebanese Research Center for Migration and Diaspora Studies (LERC)	the historical and contemporary experience of emigrants to very different parts of the globe	photographs, artwork, documents, and a variety of cultural items of communities and families in the diaspora, and rare objects; resources for academic and genealogical researchers	Lebanese diaspora (emigrants)			
The Museum of Greek Refugees,	Kavala, Greece	2018	Grassroots volunteers	Remembering forced migration of Greek communities	all kinds of heirlooms, precious material, photographic material and various types of documents	Greek refugees	N/A	None	None