Heritage, migrations and multiculturalism. Towards a design perspective for museums.

Eleonora Lupo\(^1\), Lucia Parrino\(^2\), Sara Radice\(^3\), Davide Spallazzo\(^3\), Raffaella Trocchianesi\(^1\)

\(^1\)Assistant professor, \(^2\)PhD Candidate, \(^3\)Research Fellow

INDACO department (Industrial Design, Arts, Communication and Fashion), Politecnico di Milano, Milan, Italy

This paper aims at describing the early findings of an ongoing research activity developed within the general framework of the EU FP7\(^{th}\) funded project “MeLa - Museums in an Age of Migrations”, a four year research project carried out by an interdisciplinary group of nine European partners.

MeLa is an interdisciplinary programme which reflects (among scholars like museologists, architects, designers, art curators, historians and experts of interactive technologies) on the role of museums and heritage, by addressing the urgent issue of intertwining together migration, multiculturalism, identity and memory, in order to envision scenarios for the 21\(^{st}\) Century Museum for transnational societies.

In this paper these issues are regarded from a design perspective, to strive for providing an innovative contribution in the heritage studies by increasing the authoritativeness of design thinking in the heritage field.

In the “age of migration” scenario, novel practices to continuously re-discuss, re-create and re-negotiate interculturally the heritage need to be enabled and designed, in order to face the new expectations from people with different cultural values. In this frame, digital technologies are tools at the same time for increasing the opportunity to make different cultures meet each other and for de-intermediating the experience of heritage, allowing the users to play an always more active rather than passive role (participation and co-creation of contents). Both these factors impact the nature of heritage itself, whose sense and meaning is always more related to practice and appropriation, than to a tangible form, with the result of assuming as heritage the diverse cultural representations of people.

In this intersection between cultural frictions, evolving heritage and enabling devices we pose the design discourse: analysing cases and best practices (within museums), we explore the combination of technological tools and contents that enable diverse dynamics of cultural representation, being them aimed at creating multicultural narratives, fostering intercultural dialogue or stimulating transcultural practices.

These first findings of the research will inform some design hypotheses aimed at supporting museums and cultural institutions in consciously addressing the wicked issues of cultural frictions and integration in designing heritage experiences.

Keywords: heritage, multiculturalism, design thinking, migrations, digital technologies, interdisciplinarity