

Representing ethnic minority communities in City Museums

The representation of ethnic minority communities by the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam to increase the museums' social relevance

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Abstract

In this day and age it is of vital importance for museums to be socially inclusive and relevant for their communities. The Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam, two Dutch City Museums, are actively concerned with the inclusive representation of ethnic minority communities. They exemplify current issues in the theoretical discourse, and what other museums deal with in their policies and practices. The policies and practices of both museums connect with their aims to be socially relevant and inclusive institutions. Their most common practices in accomplishing this involve exhibition-making, organising activities and community projects, collecting new heritage, and forming partnerships. The combination of a theoretical framework and the case-studies of the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam provide a specific insight on the connections that both museums make between exhibitions, representing ethnic minority communities, and the social and community relevance of museums. Their approaches show both similarities and differences.

City Museum – exhibition – representation - ethnic minority communities - community building - cultural diversity

Introduction

Though matters concerning the inclusion of ethnic minorities are considered to be important in most Western museums, actively engaging ethnic minority communities and contributing to communities in general are not high on the agenda in many museums. At the same time there exists a current urgency for museums to be relevant for their communities and a common presumption that museums can affect social change. Museums might hesitate to involve themselves because they are not fully convinced of their ability to (positively) influence their communities, or their focus can for instance be directed towards meeting high demands in visitor rates.

The Dutch government emphasises the importance of community building by cultural institutions; since the issuing of the *Code Culturele Diversiteit* (2011) a particular focus lies on cultural diversity.¹ This leads to wonder how museums in The Netherlands combine the representation of ethnic minority communities and the museums' relevance for their communities as a whole. Also, how should museums properly represent ethnic minorities? And, what role do the objects and

¹ Translation: Code cultural diversity (translated by the author). See: <http://codeculturelediversiteit.com/> (October 2016).

museum collections have in accomplishing this? City Museums can be considered the most relevant type of museum from which to look at these matters. This is specifically the case for City Museums of larger Dutch cities whose audiences are characterised by diversity in the broadest sense, and should therefore naturally concern themselves with their relevance for ethnic minority communities as well. For that reason this thesis focusses on the City Museums of The Hague and Rotterdam, which are the *Haags Historisch Museum* and *Museum Rotterdam*. The Hague is the seat of the government and is the nation's third largest city. Rotterdam is the second city of the Netherlands and has Europe's largest harbour. Amsterdam is the nation's capital and largest city. Its City Museum, *Amsterdam Museum*, has an important role to fulfil in tourism, which is for instance apparent in its largest permanent exhibition *Amsterdam DNA*. This means that there is a distinction in a substantial part of the target audiences between Amsterdam Museum and the other two museums, which is the reason that this thesis involves the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam. The populations of Rotterdam and The Hague show a high variety in ethnic diversity; in Rotterdam 49 percent (2014) and in The Hague 50.5 percent (2011) of the residents is of non-Dutch descent. After the Second World War, mainly during the 1960s, both cities employed migrant workers from Italy, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Tunisia, Yugoslavia, and mostly from Turkey and Morocco. Because of the decolonisation of the Dutch East Indies and Suriname, people from Indonesia and Suriname also settled in the cities. More recently, international refugees reside in Rotterdam and The Hague as well. Both museums narrate the history and the present of their city, mainly in the form of exhibitions. They both display semi-permanent and organise temporary exhibitions that show particular intent towards community relevance. Therefore, this thesis asks and how Museum Rotterdam and the Haags Historisch Museum represent ethnic minority communities in order to increase the museums' relevance for their communities as a whole.²

I have studied secondary literature in order to build a scholarly framework. The combination of this theoretical framework and the two case-studies enables me to answer the research question. The most significant concepts that structure both the theoretical framework and the case-studies are 'community building', 'representation', 'objects', and 'cultural diversity/super-diversity'. The material that I used to study the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam are the museums' policy plans, museum documentation (both tangible and online), current exhibitions, and extensive interviews with Kiran Sukul and Jacques Börger.³ Sukul is Curator and Project Leader of Urban

² Main research question: How do Museum Rotterdam and the Haags Historisch Museum represent ethnic minority communities in order to increase the museums' relevance for their communities as a whole?

³ At this point the policy plan of Museum Rotterdam (2017-2020) is not yet publically available. The sources that are used for this version are the museums' policy plan of 2013-2016 and an extensive account of Jacques Börgers future vision and plans. He is also responsible for the official museum policy plans on the concerning subjects.

Diversity and Migration at the Haags Historisch Museum, and Börger is Head of the Communication Department, which at Museum Rotterdam involves curatorship and content. The interviews are used to grasp the intentions of both museums on matters concerning the thesis subject that are not specified within the museum policies, and are implemented as such in the case-studies. This means that when providing a general view or specifically mentioning choices of either the museums or Sukul and Börger, I am referring to an interview or museum policy. The exhibitions that are highlighted in the case-studies are chosen for their relevance in accordance with the research question. It is important to note beforehand that this means that the other exhibitions generally do not reflect an evident orientation on cultural diversity. These exhibitions mainly focus on the city's history and art, and are meant to share a historical narrative and canon. In this type of exhibitions the challenges for the museums lie in making an evident connection between history and the present.

The part of the thesis following this introduction is the theoretical framework. Here, questions that derived from theoretical concepts within the framework are formulated as well, for they address specific issues that are relevant for the case-studies. Thereafter, Chapter 1 involves the case-study of the Haags Historisch Museum and Chapter 2 forms the case-study about Museum Rotterdam. In the final part of the thesis –the conclusion-, the main research question and associated questions are answered, relevant comparisons between the museums are made, and both general and specific findings are described.

I expect the answers and conclusions that are drawn from the research to provide specified insight in both museums' practices and intentions in respect to the main question. Hopefully this forms practical directions and conceptual knowledge for museums to represent ethnic minority communities and employ community building, in relation to making exhibitions, which after all is a core purpose of museums with which the majority feels most comfortable. In addition, I hope to make a modest contribution to the subject of social relevance within the field of Museum Studies.

Theoretical Framework

Perhaps the largest overlapping topic within museum studies is the purpose and value of the museum, which is closely linked to what characterises, or should characterise, a museum in this day and age. Most publications within museum studies from the end of the twentieth-century onwards derive from the change in focus from objects to visitors. The prevailing concepts are concerned with the social relevance of museums and how to attain this, education or learning in museums, and curatorial matters, like exhibition-making and collecting policies. Within this contemporary paradigm of theory and practice two common perspectives are characterisations of what makes a museum inclusive and/or participatory.

Since the late 1990s it has become a norm for museums to strive towards inclusiveness in the broadest sense. The notion of the 'inclusive museum' derives from the work of Richard Sandell, Professor of Museum Studies at University of Leicester. With 'Museums as agents of social inclusion' (1998) Sandell reacts to a political debate that was going on in Great Britain about the exclusion and inclusion of minority groups.⁴ Sandell responds to the debate from a museological point of view, and the political demands on museums to contribute to this matter. Sandell reasons that if museums can exclude minorities, they should also be capable to include them, which can be established by resolving the exclusion in matters of participation, representation, and access.⁵

The matter of participation is thoroughly addressed by Nina Simon, Executive Director of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (United States), in *The Participatory Museum*.⁶ Instead of passive receiving, the 'participatory museum' asks visitors to engage actively, and is an institution where people can "create, share, and connect with each other around content".⁷ The principles, techniques, and tools presented by Simon for cultural institutions to (re)connect with their audiences and affirm their relevance for present-day life and societies have proven to be influential within the museum discourse.

The notion that museums ought to strive towards being inclusive and participatory forms the conceptual base of this thesis. The thesis is structured by the theoretical key concepts 'community building', 'representation', and 'objects'. They originate from the broader concepts of social relevance of museums and curatorial matters. Other concepts that are connected to the research, for instance 'cultural diversity/super-diversity' and 'collecting policy', are addressed within the key

⁴ Sandell 1998. The term 'social exclusion' originates from a complex international political and economic discourse, and became commonly used in the 1990s. In most cases the term addresses the exclusion of minorities on an economic, social, political, and cultural level.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 410.

⁶ Simon 2010 (online version, April 2017).

⁷ *Ibidem*, 'Preface: Why participate?' (online version, April 2017).

concepts. The most evident connections exist between community building and cultural diversity on the one hand, and objects and collecting policy on the other. It is obvious that, for instance, the concepts of cultural diversity and collecting policy also hold a connection. Although all are linked to a certain extent, the concept of representation has the most evident connections with every concept. Nevertheless, the concepts are described as, more or less, separate elements in an effort to structure the thesis. In this theoretical framework the key concepts are clarified and illustrated through publications that enable me to answer the research question of the thesis, starting with community building and cultural diversity in museums. Thereafter, representation, objects, and collecting policy are described in subsequent order.

The thesis specifically involves two City Museums. As stressed by the International Committee for the Collections and Activities of Museums and Cities (CAMOC) and several authors, among them are for instance historian and museologist Jean-Louis Postula and former CAMOC secretary Ian Jones, City Museums can play a vital role in societal development.⁸ City Museums are often safe keepers of the city's history and art. Generally, their foundation and existence are a direct result of a collection that represents (parts of) the history of the city and the city itself, which is also true for the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam. In the current discourse City Museums are expected to focus on visitors and be museums *of* the city and its residents, instead of solely *representing* the city.⁹ The majority of the world's population lives in cities, though many people were not born in the city in which they reside. Therefore, it is apparent that the connection between a City Museum and a city's residents is important and not to be taken for granted. Because of their particular place in connection to the city's history, present, residents and visitors, City Museums seem to have a unique position within the paradigm of community building and cultural diversity.

Community building by museums can involve the evolvment and/or strengthening of a certain community through museum practices and the evolvment and/or strengthening of the bond that museums have with their communities. A community cannot be approached as fixed and homogeneous. It is important to be aware of its dynamic and pluralistic nature. Therefore, it is problematic to define a community. Even so, in working with and writing about communities a definition needs to be provided. This thesis addresses the 'city community', involving individuals, 'sub-communities', such as ethnic minority communities and youth communities, and residents and tourists in relation to the city.

⁸ CAMOC: <http://network.icom.museum/camoc/about/about-camoc/> (October 2016). CAMOC is a subcommittee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

Postula 2012.

Jones 2008.

⁹ Dickenson 2006.

The notion of culture can be just as complex. Because culture is inherently diverse, it could make the term cultural diversity seem redundant. For instance, anthropologist and director of Museum Victoria (Melbourne, Australia) George F. MacDonald and his former co-worker at the Canadian Museum of History (Ottawa) Stephen Alford state that culture's "constant process of recreation ultimately defeats attempts to 'museumize' it" in a static manner.¹⁰ Nevertheless, cultural diversity is commonly used to address a notion of culture that is more inclusive, for instance in terms of ethnicity, religion, gender, descent, age and disability. The thesis draws on this approach towards cultural diversity.

An important term within the same realm is 'super-diversity'.¹¹ Nasar Meer, Professor of Race, Identity and Citizenship within the Social and Political Sciences department of the University of Edinburgh, defines super-diversity as being "emerged both as a description of empirical phenomena (the proliferation of diversities) and as a normative claim that increased pluralism (both associated with migration as well as wider changes in our understanding of identity categories) requires social scientists and policy makers to develop approaches to register this."¹² In other words, besides addressing the intrinsic pluralism of societal diversity, the notion of super-diversity brings forth the need for consciously open and more inclusive approaches towards policy on diversity. There appears to be a correlation between the terms cultural diversity and super-diversity which can best be described as a tension field. Where cultural diversity often shows a focus on diversity itself, for instance through an exhibition about the place of a minority community in present-day society, super-diversity is meant to be diverse by not focussing on it per se, but instead attain inclusive diversity by addressing overlapping concepts, such as an exhibition about leisure activities. The case-studies ask if and how cultural diversity and super-diversity have an effect on the policies and practices of the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam, especially since the populations of both cities are super-diverse. They also ask how the museums concern themselves with community building. Furthermore, the case-studies specifically look at the involvement and place of ethnic minority communities in the museum policies and practices, and therein which connections the museums see and make with community building.

Publications on how museums can successfully employ cultural (super-)diversity and community building show three overarching commonalities in their arguments. Museums should include multiple perspectives, engage in open dialogue, and increase community participation. If

¹⁰ MacDonald 2007, p. 276.

¹¹ The concept of super-diversity originates in the work of sociologist and anthropologist Steven Vertovec, first in an opinion piece and secondly in a peer reviewed article.

S. Vertovec, 'Opinion: Super-diversity revealed', *BBC News*, 20 September 2005.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4266102.stm (April 2017).

S. Vertovec, 'Super-diversity and its implications', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 (2007) 6, pp. 1024-1054.

¹² Meer 2014, p. 144.

museums are (indeed) assigned with a certain social responsibility, they have to consciously favour multiple viewpoints and dialogue over one authoritative voice.

Sandell's call for social equality stands in direct relation to the importance given to community building and the promotion of cultural diversity. In several publications Sandell advocates the important role of museums and galleries in contributing to the increase of social equality.¹³ According to Sandell, many museums hesitate to involve themselves in social change, because they believe autonomy and impartiality to be the most appropriate choice. He goes as far as to state that these museums are at risk in becoming irrelevant.¹⁴

The relevance of museums is increasingly defined through their communities and their community involvement. Elisabeth Crooke, Professor of Museum and Heritage Studies at Ulster University, for instance states that "the concern to make museums relevant to the 'community' has swiftly moved to combining museums with some of the key social policy issues, such as tackling exclusion, building cohesive communities, and contributing to community regeneration."¹⁵ To a large extent, Crooke's quote summarises how the subject of this thesis is directly related to what is current in the museum sector and museum studies.

In this contemporary focus as described by Crooke, MacDonald and Alford observe three models of cooperation that museums use to involve minority communities in museum work.¹⁶ The first is a project-based approach; communities are invited to represent (aspects of) their culture at certain events or a community member is consulted by the museum in the organisation of an exhibition. The second model is that of *co-curatorship*; here the museum policy and actions show a continuous partnership with the communities and a more substantial role in curatorial matters. In the third model, *community authorship*, the representatives of the community function as the curators and the museum merely provides what is necessary. Another point of view is provided by Simon, who distinguishes two broad categories within collaborative projects, in order to increase community participation. In *consultative projects* the representatives of the community provide advice and guidance to staff members during the process of making for instance exhibitions and educational programs, whereas the cultural institution and community members actually work together during a *co-development project*.¹⁷ To be able to successfully engage in projects like these, it is of vital importance for museums to form networks and/or build partnerships. Museums for instance initiate partnerships with other (local) cultural institutions, or organisations and individuals that represent sub-communities, in order to connect, share knowledge and build a relationship.

¹³ Sandell 2007, Sandell 2005, Sandell 2002, Sandell 1998.

¹⁴ Sandell 2002, p. 21.

¹⁵ Crooke 2011, p. 170.

¹⁶ MacDonald 2007, pp. 284-289.

¹⁷ Simon 2010, 'Chapter 7: Collaborating with visitors' (online version, April 2017).

Simon stresses that in order to become an effective and long-term collaborative partnership it has to be “built on mutual trust, shared understanding of the project’s goals, and clear designation of participant roles.”¹⁸

An example of an attempt to enlarge community relevance in the form of co-curatorship and co-development is Jill Saunders’ (PhD Candidate in Conservation, UCL Qatar) argument for the involvement of non-professionals in heritage management and object conservation in service of community empowerment.¹⁹ The relationships the non-professionals establish with the meaningful objects have an empowering effect on their self-esteem and their attitude towards others. An example of community authorship and co-development is given by Viv Szekeres, the former program coordinator and Director of the Migration Museum in Adelaide (Australia).²⁰ Since the opening of the museum in 1986 staff members continuously concern themselves with questions such as: “Whose history? Told from which point(s) of view? Who is included and who is left out?” seen from a migration point of view. Already in the 1980s, this museum was aware of the challenge and importance of involving communities. It opened a Community Access Gallery, *The Forum*, which now is a common phenomenon in Australian history museums.²¹ Every few months a specific community group sets up an exhibition about its history, with the deemed necessary assistance and guidance of the museum.

A more literally example of reaching out towards communities is organising exhibitions or events outside of the museum premises. These ‘off-site’ exhibitions or events enable the museum to reach individuals who would most likely not visit the actual museum. Thereby the museum increases its accessibility, which in turn, as stressed by Sandell, contributes to its inclusiveness.²² Additionally, it offers the museum the opportunity to present itself in another fashion, attract new visitors, and consequently strengthen the bond with its communities.

The persuasion of the museums’ important social role and responsibility towards communities is embedded in the present-day museum discourse. Only some express themselves to be deliberately against it, therefore opposite views appear to be rare. An explicit example is provided by journalist and author Josie Appleton. Appleton stresses that when the main focus of the museum is aimed at people, the collection will automatically decline in value and importance.²³ For Appleton, museums should merely be concerned with the preservation, display, study, and collecting of objects, because this is the only thing they are suited for.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*

¹⁹ Saunders 2014, pp. 1-13.

²⁰ Szekeres 2007, pp. 234-243.

²¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 239.

²² Sandell 1998.

²³ Appleton 2007, pp. 113-126.

Wherever its focus lies, either on the intrinsic quality of the object or the engaging of communities, a museum display is always an act of representation. The concept of representation is widely discussed in cultural academic discourse. This thesis uses the widespread definition of the renowned cultural theorist and sociologist Stuart Hall. He defined representation as the production of meaning through language, discourse and image.²⁴

The concept of community representation in exhibitions raises numerous questions. For instance, how to represent communities and cultural diversity/super-diversity in exhibitions? Should communities be represented in exhibitions specifically devoted to them, or is it not done to single out a community and better to focus on what binds different communities? Or, should the concept of communities be replaced by a focus on the individual stories, and how meaning is a personal and unique construction? Evidently, there are no definite and straightforward answers to these questions. The case-studies will elaborate on the perspectives of the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam on the representation of ethnic minority communities, and how these communities are represented in exhibitions, and additionally in the museum collection and policy. Despite the numerous questions involving the theoretical discourse of representation in exhibitions, what is evident is that there exists an important connection between communities, community building, and representation. Narrating the history or present of communities involves the risk of excluding people with a different (vision of) history and present. This is specifically relevant for City Museums whose communities are characterised by (super-)diversity. The unique position of City Museums within this paradigm is emphasised by Graham Black, Professor in Museum and Heritage Management at Nottingham Trent University (United Kingdom), who pleads for City Museums concerned with the city's history to reposition towards a high degree of, what he defines as, 'civil engagement'.²⁵ According to Black, City Museums should be "a shared space representing multiple perspectives, and exploring the relevance of the past to people's lives today and in the future", and therefore purposely move away from presenting a singular vision on the city's history.²⁶

Though it seems obvious, it is important to remark that display methods are a powerful tool in exhibitions and representation as well. According to Sandell, methods of display can have effects on individuals, including change in social values, behaviour, and perception.²⁷ Additionally, to illustrate the complexity of exhibitions and representation, late Professor of Art History (University of California, Berkeley) Michael Baxandall argued that an exhibition is full of dynamic relationships, due

²⁴ Hall 1997, pp. 15-64.

²⁵ Black 2010.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 129.

²⁷ Sandell 2002.

to what the intentions of the exhibition makers, the arrangement of the exhibition, the objects and the visitors bring to the field, all of which differ per exhibition.²⁸

In relation to representation in exhibitions, Serena Iervolino (lecturer Museology and Curatorial Studies, UCL Qatar) observes a direction change in representing ethnic minority communities. She sees a shift in projects that concern 'migrant participation', from a focus on outreach programs and education, towards revising permanent exhibitions and temporary exhibitions that are organised with the participation of migrant communities.²⁹ Her observation illustrates that the subject of this thesis directly relates to the current discourse in the museum sector. Another, more general shift is emphasised by historian and museum theorist Rosmarie Beier-de Haan. She points at the shift that history museums underwent during the past thirty years, from the representation of facts towards emphasis on emotion and context.³⁰ According to Beier-de Haan, this shift has led to the critical attitude of museum staff members towards their construction of historical narratives. Evidently, at the basis of the construction of narratives in museum exhibitions lies the concept of representation.

In addition, the connection between representation and objects is of vital importance. Traditionally, a museum works with meaningful objects; this is also the case for the majority of museums today. Nevertheless, what qualifies as a meaningful object is distinctly broadened. Objects can be tangible, such as sculpture, archaeological artefacts, historical documentation, and everyday appliances. Objects can also be intangible, of which oral history and folklore dance are examples. Every type of object can be of profound meaning for a museum, its collection, and its audiences. The objects behold different meanings, for instance through periods in time, per type of meaning (factual, cultural, emotional, and historical), through institutional interpretation, and individual interpretation. One object can have, convey, and be ascribed with numerous meanings. In reference to this, Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, Professor Emeritus of Museum Studies at University of Leicester, states that "objects have shifting and ambiguous relationships to meaning" and "their significance is open to interpretation."³¹ Objects have the unique qualities to trigger conversations and connect people, features that can be of great use for museums. Simon emphasises that these so-called *social objects* make it easier for people to converse and connect, because it enables them to focus on a third subject.³² Another characteristic that works in the museums' advantage according to Simon is that a particular shared object is generally responsible for the connection between people that form a social network. Therefore, "by identifying and enhancing pre-existing social objects in the

²⁸ Baxandall 1991, pp. 24-28.

²⁹ Iervolino 2013, p. 113.

³⁰ Beier-de Haan 2011, pp. 186-187.

³¹ Hooper-Greenhill 2000, p. 3.

³² Simon 2010, 'Chapter 4: Social objects' (online version, April 2017).

collection” museums can make use of “pre-existing stories and connections between visitors and collections”, which enables them to improve the use of objects, the inclusiveness of representation, and overall visitor participation.³³

Since the shift in focus from object to visitor, the function and place of objects in the museum context has changed. Most publications about objects in museums are concerned with the place and role of objects in a twenty-first century museum. Should they be the focus of attention, or elements in a narrative? Should objects be regarded for their material and/or inherent qualities, or for what they mean to people on an individual and social level? Should curators stimulate additional meaning given to objects, so that the visitors can see a connection with their own reality and personal stories, and if so how? How should objects be reinterpreted for the connection they have with this day and age? Obviously, there are no straightforward answers available. This will also become clear in the case-studies, which ask and show how both museums use their objects. Every situation is different, simply because every museum, object, visitor, exhibition, subject, and purpose is different. Therefore, the questions should repeatedly be asked and answered, to suit the given situation.

Only some seem to express themselves deliberately against the use of objects for representational purposes, societal aims and visitor participation, of which Appleton is an example. Within the more object-centred approaches there are also scholars who instead incorporate their ideas in the current focus on people. Sandra H. Dudley, social and material anthropologist and Associate Professor of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, sees embodied and emotional engagements with objects as the essential component in a museum visit.³⁴ She proposes this, not as an alternative, but as an addition to an emphasis on society and education.³⁵

It is important to also be aware of the more concrete dimension of the representation of communities and objects. In museum exhibitions that display objects from the museum collection, it can be problematic to represent communities that are not represented in the objects of the museum collection, which consequently hinders inclusiveness and participation. How can and/or should museums deal with the absence of objects that represent certain communities? The case-studies ask and clarify how the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam handle the obvious gap in the collecting of objects that represent several ethnic communities. Black states that representation in museum collections and exhibitions is of vital importance in affecting a feeling of inclusion, especially for the local communities that were previously left out of the collection and historical narrative; therefore, the content that is on display must be inclusive and representative to these

³³ *Ibidem*

³⁴ Dudley 2012, Dudley 2010.

³⁵ Dudley 2012, p. 12.

communities.³⁶ Many museums for instance incorporate contemporary interpretations on the historical objects that are on display, juxtapose them with current everyday objects, or actively accumulate and display oral testimonies. In addition, to appropriately represent their communities the museums' current collecting policies must be pro-active in terms of inclusive contemporary collecting and re-evaluating research on the current (historical) collection. The important connection between the museum collection and social or community value is aptly described by Hooper-Greenhill in the following statement: "Museums uphold specific accounts of the past through the objects they chose to collect, and the expository juxtapositions they choose to make. Museums and their collections embody and exhibit social values."³⁷ An inclusive and participatory museum must be aware of this fact and incorporate its collection and collecting policy in the realisation of its aims.

The case-studies that follow hereafter will focus on the practices, policies and intentions of the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam concerning the subject and questions of the thesis. The case-studies are organised in three paragraphs, which are 'Representation in exhibitions', 'Representation in objects and collection', and 'Community building'. The questions that are asked about the museums correspond with the theoretical concepts as described above and the main question of the thesis. The case-studies ask about the place and role of cultural diversity and super-diversity in the practices, policies and intentions of both museums. And more specifically, what the involvement and place of ethnic minority communities in these practices, policies and intentions are. On matters of representation in exhibitions the case-studies answer what role cultural diversity and/or super-diversity have in the exhibitions, how ethnic minorities are present in exhibitions, and what the intentions of the museum in representing ethnic minority communities in exhibitions are. The questions surrounding objects and the museum collection involve the types of objects that are used by the museums, and how they are used, how the museums deal with the absence of objects, mainly in the case of ethnic minority communities, and how this is defined in the museums' collecting policies. Within the subject of community building it is examined how the museums concern themselves with community building, and what they want to achieve through this. Also, which connections do the museums see and make between representing ethnic minority communities and community building? And, what is the role of exhibitions in all of this?

³⁶ Black 2010, p. 133.

³⁷ Hooper-Greenhill 2000, p. 19.

Chapter 1. Case-study Haags Historisch Museum

Looking at the last two decades, the Dutch government has emphasised the importance of a broad approach towards culture that embraces and stimulates diversity. For instance, during the second half of the 1990's State-Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science Rick van der Ploeg invested in culture-education programs, in order to reach all children and youths early on. In 1999 the government published the report *Ruim baan voor culturele diversiteit*, which focusses on attracting new audiences, mainly migrants and youth.³⁸ After years of a varying political climate towards culture, the Dutch cultural sector joined forces to develop the *Code culturele diversiteit* in 2011.³⁹ The code is meant to embed cultural diversity in the policies and practices of cultural institutions. In 2015 the code was reinvigorated by Jet Bussemaker, Minister of Education, Culture and Science.

The Hague's cultural policy over the last few years is in line with the developments on a national level. The municipality's cultural policy of 2013-2016, which is written in 2011, *Cultuur van iedereen* is aimed at cultural diversity and cooperation.⁴⁰ Subsequently, The Hague has implemented the renewed importance of the *Code culturele diversiteit* in its cultural policy of 2017-2020.

The museums' policy of 2013-2016 was directly influenced by the municipality's cultural policy of the same time period. The overarching plans of the museum, as described in the policy, are that the museum optimises its societal value, and that the museum actively encourages involvement with the city, its history and heritage among its residents.⁴¹ Though the museum leans towards being a modern-day City Museum with an apparent focus on societal development, as defined by CAMOC, the museum appears to be balancing between this and being a museum about the city's history and art, like a classic art historical institute; it seems as though a clear-cut choice has not (yet) been made.⁴²

The three paragraphs that follow hereafter ask the questions that derived from the theoretical framework and the theoretical concepts of representation, objects, and community building, and answer them through the practices, policies, and intentions of the Haags Historisch Museum.

³⁸ *Ruim baan voor culturele diversiteit*, Zoetermeer, Ministry of OC&W, 1999. Translation of the title: Make way for cultural diversity (translated by the author).

³⁹ Translation: Code cultural diversity (translated by the author). See: <http://codeculturelediversiteit.com/> (October 2016).

⁴⁰ Gemeente Den Haag, *Cultuur van iedereen*, Den Haag, 2011.

⁴¹ *Beleidsplan Haags Historisch Museum 2013-2016*, Den Haag, 2011, pp. 9.

⁴² CAMOC: <http://network.icom.museum/camoc/about/about-camoc/> (October 2016).

1.1 Representation in exhibitions

The Haags Historisch Museum, located across from the national government, houses a collection of approximately 7700, mainly historical, objects and artworks. The seventeenth-century building has three storeys which are used as exhibition spaces. On the ground level is a semi-permanent exhibition on display that shows the top pieces of the museum and an overview of the city's history. Part of the ground level and the first floor are used for temporary exhibitions. Often, these are exhibitions on historical subjects concerning the city that in addition highlight and disclose the museum collection. The third floor displays a semi-permanent exhibition about the city's recent history and present state.

The current exhibition *Den Haag Vandaag, 1945 tot nu* (2015) gives an account of the city and its history from the end of the Second World War onwards (Fig. 1). The choice for a semi-permanent exhibition, instead of several temporary exhibitions on the subject, is largely influenced by subsidy-cuts the museum endured. Situated on the top floor of the museum, the lower ceilings and narrow spaces, together with the placement of partitions and use of dimmed lighting, give the exhibition an intimate atmosphere. Various media are used to represent the exhibition narrative; among those are texts, photographs, sculptures, documentary videos, furniture and every-day objects, and a video-art installation. The exhibition clearly aims to emphasise the city's ever-changing state as a characteristic feature for this time period. The changes that the city underwent are arranged in several themes, which are the reconstruction of The Hague after the war, new residents, urban regeneration, youth culture, and entertainment.

Individuals from ethnic minority groups and the ethnic communities as a whole are visible and mentioned throughout the themes of the exhibition. One of the explanatory wall texts states that the image of the city is shaped by migration and the diversity of its residents, and that their interconnection lies in The Hague being their home. On the whole, the exhibition texts celebrate the diversity of the residents. Nevertheless, it does not shy away from addressing the impoverishment of neighbourhoods where large numbers of migrants settled and the role this has in the migration patterns and regeneration of the city.

A prominent element of the exhibition is the video-art installation *Stad van aankomst* (2014, *City of arrival*) by Geert van Kesteren (1966) and Conny Luhulima (1962) (Fig. 2). It consists of five screens that are placed next to each other in the form of a half round horizontal curve. Every screen shows the face and upper body of an individual. Alternately, one of the individuals tells a short personal story; at the same time the other screens display the people breathing and blinking, as if they are listening and awaiting their turn to speak. The videos display fifteen *Hagenaars* of various international origins, such as Egyptian, Nigerian, American, Chinese, Surinamese-Hindustani, and

Bulgarian.⁴³ The conversational topics revolve around migration and The Hague on a personal level. People for instance speak about homesickness, reasons for coming to the Netherlands, favourite spots in The Hague, parents, combining two worlds, love, and making money. The intangibility of the videos and stories is transformed into an intimate experience that requires little effort and participation from the visitor. The installation seizes the city's ethnic diversity in an artistic form, as opposed to for instance text and documentary photography. Another project by Van Keesteren and Luhulima, *Flitsportretten* (2014, *Snapshots*), shows photographs of small groups of people who randomly crossed paths on the street, naturally resulting in portraits that display a variety of people, concerning for instance age, type, and ethnicity. Furthermore, every segment of the exhibition is complemented with portraits of the project *MijnDenHaag*, which will be elaborated upon later in this chapter, showing people of different age and origin that are holding a personal object, including a short personal statement (Fig. 3). These displays illustrate the theme they relate to. Beside these contemporary portrayals of cultural diversity, the exhibition also displays objects that directly illustrate the historical narrative, for instance three photographs of the Turkish migrant workers community in the 1960's. These photographs represent the everyday lives of the Turkish community at that time; they show a man working in his bakery, young women lying in their bunk bed, and a group of male workers in front of their local community centre.

These examples point out that the concept of cultural diversity and the representation of ethnic minorities are interwoven with the exhibition narrative. Moreover, Meer's definition in connection to the way that diversity is presented shows an attempt for the exhibition concept to be super-diverse.⁴⁴ The development towards becoming the multi-ethnic city that The Hague is today is an important feature in the story of the city after the war. Because the essential role ethnic minorities have in the development of the city, their stories are included and function as building blocks within the exhibition narrative. Furthermore, the story of ethnic diversity forms a logical element in the exhibition narrative as a whole, because of the emphasis on The Hague's ever-changing state as a general characteristic. The overall result of this 'production of meaning' through representation, as defined by Hall, is the image of a city that embraces cultural diversity, equality, and progress.⁴⁵ Because of the extensive use of tangible objects, photographs, and art that illustrate the exhibition narrative, it is also comprehensible on a more superficial level for visitors who do not read the texts. Nevertheless, the overall design and narrative of the exhibition does not actively

⁴³ *Hagenaar* is a common Dutch word to address someone that lives in The Hague. Another popular term is *Hagenees*, which is mostly used by people of Dutch-The Hague origin that speak in the local dialect.

⁴⁴ Meer 2014, p. 144.

⁴⁵ Hall 1997, pp. 15-64.

engage the visitor to participate, nor does it stimulate people to connect around the content, which according to Simon are basic characteristics of a participatory museum exhibition⁴⁶

The focus on diversity is also visible in the museums' temporary exhibitions that concern ethnic groups. Since approximately three years the approach towards temporary exhibitions shifted from a focus on one particular ethnic minority community towards exhibitions characterised by cultural diversity. An example of a culturally diverse exhibition is *Bouwen aan de stad, arbeidsmigratie in de jaren '60 en nu* (2014), about the connection between labour migration and the infrastructural development of the city, which was held off-site in the atrium of the city hall.⁴⁷ The exhibition displayed photographs and written testimonies of migrant workers of Moroccan and Turkish descent in the 1960's, together with present-day stories of Romanian and Bulgarian workers. Another example is the traveling exhibition *De wereld in Den Haag, portretten van migratie* (2015).⁴⁸ The stories of several individuals that formed this exhibition showed the influence of migrants on The Hague from the seventeenth-century onwards. It tells the story of the Turkish owners of one of the largest Dutch herring companies (Atlantic B.V.), whose mothers cleaned the herring at the fish auction in the 1980's, and for instance how the nineteenth-century terrazzo floor in the *Haagse Passage*, which is the country's first shopping centre, is made by Italian migrant workers. The approach of the subjects of *De wereld in Den Haag* and *Bouwen aan de stad* clearly preceded the perspective and exhibition narrative of *Den Haag Vandaag*.

One of the exhibitions that instead focus on a specific culture is *Indië en Den Haag, een eeuwenoude band* (2013), for it celebrated the bond between the former Dutch East Indies and The Hague.⁴⁹ The exhibition included a historical narrative, characteristics of Indonesian popular culture, in the form of food and music, and personal stories. Moreover, in 2012, the year that the Netherlands and Turkey marked their 400 years of diplomatic relations, the museum organised *Haagse herinneringen aan Turkije*.⁵⁰ In this exhibition personal stories of Turkish *Hagenaars* were shared and displayed in correlation with objects, borrowed from the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam. Before that, in accordance with the municipal cultural policy and the *Code culturele diversiteit*, the museum organised the exhibition *MijnSurinaamsDenHaag** (2011).⁵¹ This exhibition aimed to show the diversity that defines Suriname culture, through personal stories, photographs, paintings, film, and culturally specific objects. A recent example shows a more particular focus on one element

⁴⁶ Simon 2010 (online version, April 2017).

⁴⁷ Translation of the exhibition title: Building the city, labour migration in the 1960's and now (translated by the author).

⁴⁸ Translation of the exhibition title: The world in The Hague, portraits of migration (translated by the author).

⁴⁹ Translation of the exhibition title: Dutch East Indies and The Hague, an age-old bond (translated by the author).

⁵⁰ Translation of the exhibition title: The Hague's memories of Turkey (translated by the author).

⁵¹ Translation of the exhibition title: MySurinameTheHague* (translated by the author).

within Suriname, in this case Surinamese-Hindustani, culture. The pop-up exhibition *De sari en andere internationale mode in Den Haag, nu en vroeger* (2016) puts the *sari*, a popular Hindustani folkloric costume, at the centre of attention.⁵² The exhibition, appearing in five locations throughout the city, displays several *saris*, specific information about their use and history, and personal stories. The *sari* is taken as a distinctive example of culturally specific clothing that is worn and seen by The Hague's residents. This well-known costume forms the starting point from which other international folklore clothing that people see on the streets is displayed also, thereby broadening the cultural scope of the exhibition.

According to the museum, during the period of organising 'one culture' exhibitions the question of where the connection with The Hague lies became more and more apparent and significant. Because of that, nowadays everything the museum expresses or concerns itself with has an evident connection with The Hague. The question that the museum asks itself continuously is: "What is *Haags* about this?"⁵³ Now, the museum organises exhibitions that are culturally diverse, inclusive and have a subject that is clearly connected to the city. This is in line with Sandell's vision that museums are capable of being inclusive if they wish to be, and representation being an important matter in accomplishing inclusiveness.⁵⁴ The city is meant to be the overarching concept that connects everything whilst simultaneously being characterised by diversity. Nevertheless, the museum still deems it important to make one particular cultural the centre of attention on occasion, as long as it underlines inclusiveness and has an obvious connection with The Hague, as the recent *sari*-exhibition demonstrates.

The museum is currently planning several temporary exhibitions, three of which are interesting to mention here. One exhibition provides a present-day overview of the *MijnDenHaag* project. The museum is also working on an exhibition about Cupido and Sideron, who were African servants for the Dutch royal family in the eighteenth-century, called *Afrikanen aan het hof*.⁵⁵ Cupido and Sideron are depicted on a top piece of the museum collection, an eighteenth-century painting by Hendrik Pothoven (1725-1807), on which they stand next to the stadholder. The third is a large exhibition about the differences between the living conditions of rich and poor people in the past and present, called *Arm en Rijk / Rijk en Arm*.⁵⁶ The process of organising this exhibition makes it all the more clear that the preserved history is not comprehensive; historical accounts of the poor are scarce. The exhibition will probably include a virtual reality as a way to enable the visitor to

⁵² Translation of the exhibition title: The sari and other international fashion in The Hague, now and in the past (translated by the author).

⁵³ Interview Sukul, 22-11-2017. The original question in Dutch is: 'Wat is hier Haags aan?'.

⁵⁴ Sandell 1998, Sandell 2002.

⁵⁵ Translation of the exhibition title: Africans at the court (translated by the author).

⁵⁶ Translation of the exhibition title: Poor and Rich / Rich and Poor (translated by the author).

experience the living conditions of poor people in the past, which is a significant example of how museums nowadays make an effort to fill gaps in the historical narrative and collection.

It is clear that the museum not only intends to, yet actually incorporates cultural diversity and, albeit to a lesser extent, super-diversity into the exhibition subjects and narratives. Ethnic minority communities are represented in various exhibitions, namely the semi-permanent exhibition on The Hague after the Second World War and various temporary exhibitions. In some cases the exhibitions intertwine individuals from ethnic minority communities or the communities as a whole with the broader narrative; other exhibitions focus on one specific ethnic culture, or place the culture in relation to other cultures in The Hague.

The next paragraph discusses the (absence of) several types of objects in the collection, and, in a broader sense, the museums' approach towards the representation of ethnic minority communities in objects and the museum collection.

1.2 Representation in objects and collection

In the current museum policy plan the emphasis within the collection policy lies on the preservation of the collection.⁵⁷ For the expansion of the collection the museum depends on donations. Consequently, acquisitions are only made sporadically. In the policy plan there is no mention of matters of representation; for instance, on how the museum intends to use the objects in exhibitions, or how the museum deals with the absence of objects that represent many of The Hague's residents. Nevertheless, the museum does indeed actively concern itself with the representation of its residents in the collection. This is evident through the substantial and long-term project *MijnDenHaag**.⁵⁸ Since 2007 this project aims to collect and preserve history through personal tangible objects and stories of the city's residents. Individuals and groups can partake in several workshop-days during which they choose a showpiece from their own personal (family) history they deem worthy to preserve. The condition that the objects, or what the museum refers to as *Topstukken*, should comply with is to represent a connection with The Hague.⁵⁹ The written accounts of the intangible heritage, being the accompanying stories, together with photographs of the participants holding their object, become part of the museum collection. Sometimes an actual object is displayed during an exhibition. All the *Topstukken* can be consulted online, and part of the photographs and stories are continuously displayed throughout the museum building.⁶⁰ In the hallway and lower staircase of the museum a changing selection of frames with photographs and

⁵⁷ *Beleidsplan Haags Historisch Museum 2013-2016*, Den Haag, 2011, pp. 11-12.

⁵⁸ Translation of the project title: MyTheHague* (translated by the author).

⁵⁹ *Topstuk* is a Dutch word that refers to a highly valued (art) object, or, for instance, the top piece of a museum collection.

⁶⁰ <http://www.mijndenhaag.org/> (November 2016).

handwritten stories is permanently exhibited. Such a selection shows the variety of objects and stories that are accumulated by the museum, whilst also functions to promote the *MijnDenHaag** project and attract participants. Yet, in other parts of the museum the display of a *Topstuk*-story often functions as a way to enhance the narrative of a certain exhibition. Placed at the end of the exhibition on 350 years of Jewish history in connection to The Hague, called *Joods Den Haag* (2016), were for instance five frames that each contain a picture and handwritten story (Fig. 4).⁶¹ These stories and objects are specifically relevant within the subject of this exhibition and generated during a *MijnDenHaag* workshop devoted to Jewish heritage. One of the frames shows a photo album of a Jewish wedding ceremony that took place during the Second World War. Another frame contains the commemoration of a gentleman's Jewish neighbours that died during the war, through an old press clipping. This use of *Topstukken* in order to enhance an exhibition narrative is more successfully established at *Den Haag Vandaag*. There they are displayed throughout the exhibition and placed alongside an object, video or text that they share a connection with (Fig. 3). In this way, the professionally designed panels draw connections between past and present, and provide personal examples of a subject that is described in a wall text, making them a unified element within the narrative. A young girl for instance shows the cd from the famous The Hague singer Anouk that she bought herself. This story is placed alongside the text about the history and high variety of youth culture in the city, and a video that shows a legendary concert of The Rolling Stones in the *Kurhaus* in 1964. Another example is a Surinamese-Hindustani woman holding a picture of her husband and herself, which is the first picture that was taken since they moved to The Hague in the 1970's (Fig. 5). It is shown together with various other *Topstukken* alongside the wall text about the city's new residents.

On several accounts, either because of a preceding themed workshop or randomly, the museum was able to assemble stories into a theme for an exhibition. The project has brought exhibitions forth as *MijnDenHaag*Winkelt* (2012), about the history of shopping in The Hague, and *MijnDenHaag*Werkt* (2010) on the industrial past of the city.⁶² The exhibition *MijnSurinaamsDenHaag** demonstrates that the project brings opportunities to specifically involve ethnic minority communities in the museum collection and exhibition program. The personal stories and objects that the museum collected with the *MijnDenHaag** project formed the point of departure and direction of this exhibition. In fact, the subheading on audience policy and societal support in the current museum policy plan states that the museum will continue the successful project.⁶³ This also includes the mobile recording studio that tours through the city across, for

⁶¹ Translation of the exhibition title: Jewish The Hague (translated by the author).

⁶² Translations of the exhibition titles: MyTheHague*Shops, MyTheHague*Works (translated by the author).

⁶³ *Beleidsplan 2017-2020 Haags Historisch Museum*, p. 10.

instance, libraries, schools, festivals and retirement homes, to enable people to be photographed with their *Topstuk*. Through organising these off-site activities, as opposed to the workshops that are held in the museum building, the museum is more likely to involve people that would normally not participate. Moreover, the museum therefore has the opportunity to increase the number of stories of those that are often underrepresented, such as youth and ethnic minorities, which in turn contributes to the inclusiveness of the museum, as explicitly pointed out by Black.⁶⁴

Another off-site project is *Verhalenkast*, which literary means ‘story closet’. In cooperation with *Riboet Verhalenkunst*, a video art foundation, the museum collects intangible objects and heritage. The videos of *Hagenaars* that tell their personal migration stories are personal, whilst also recognisable for many people. The videos are available online, and a small selection is on display in the museum. Because the videos are recorded throughout the city and the approachable characteristic of the medium, the museum is able to involve people and communities that it usually cannot. Unfortunately, not much is done with the videos in terms of active disclosure.

The concept of a story also has a significant role within the museums’ concern for tangible heritage. Whether it regards a *Topstuk*, an acquisition, or a loan, the story that surrounds the object is the most significant for the museum. According to this point of view, a seemingly insignificant object, such as a pen, is worthy to preserve if its story is meaningful. Specifically, in the case of an object concerning another culture, in order to be meaningful it has to carry a migration story that is clearly connected to The Hague. This makes collecting migration heritage rather complicated. The attitude of the museum towards both tangible and intangible objects, in that they have to possess meaningful qualities, draws a connection with Simon’s vision of social objects.⁶⁵ Consequently, the museum obviously sees value for the preservation, obtaining, and use of oral history. Next to the historical value, it also forms a partial solution for the absence of tangible objects that represent certain cultures, and is employed as such by the museum. The *MijnDenHaag** project seems to be of important value in this sense, as it is often used as a source for exhibitions and educational purposes. Nevertheless, the main (historical) collection still holds opportunities for the representation of different cultures, of which the painting of Pothoven and the *Afrikanen aan het hof* exhibition form an evident example. Moreover, this artwork and exhibition demonstrate how one object can contain different meanings and is open to several interpretations, as stressed by Hooper-Greenhill.⁶⁶ A specific and thorough analysis on the significance and/or depiction of other cultures in historical and tangible objects has not yet been done. Moreover, as stressed by Simon, the re-evaluation of the

⁶⁴ Black 2010, p. 133.

⁶⁵ Simon 2010, Chapter 4: Social objects’ (online version, April 2017).

⁶⁶ Hooper-Greenhill 2000, p. 3.

museum collection will in all probability identify existing social objects.⁶⁷ An important element in Sukul's future vision is to further enrol and emphasise the importance of inclusive representation in the main collection.⁶⁸ In addition, the recently granted long-term subsidy from the municipality opens up opportunities for Sukul to actively encourage and implement equally long-term collection policy concerning migration heritage.

It is evident that the museum uses a range of objects, from tangible and intangible, to historical top pieces and social objects, which are used in exhibition narratives, to become heritage, and to represent ideas, individuals, and communities. Although the collecting policy of the museum does not mention it specifically, the museum aims to resolve the absence of objects that represent ethnic minority communities, mainly through the *MijnDenHaag** project and collecting oral history. A comprehensive reinterpretation of the objects in the historical collection offers the museum another opportunity to resolve this issue.

The last paragraph of this case-study will draw further upon the museums' intentions and efforts towards community building, especially the connection that the museum makes between community building, representation of ethnic minority communities, and exhibitions.

1.3 Community building

In 2011, following the intention to optimise its community relevance, the museum started to focus on The Hague's "changing middle class", which forms the largest and most diverse group of residents.⁶⁹ Since then, the museum policy and exhibition program is directed towards creating a higher degree of connection and communication with its communities. The museum Director at that time, Antoinette Visser, found municipal support for her plans, with the precondition that the museum would initiate cooperative relationships in the field of museums, heritage, and education, and form a network with migrant organisations.⁷⁰ The museum formed a small network, named *Convenant Stadsmuseale Regioketen*, of three regional City Museums, together with *Stadsmuseum Zoetermeer* and the Haags Historisch Museum; they support each other in being City Museums and work together on a content level in the form of joint exhibitions and educational projects.⁷¹

During the same year that the museum got municipal support for its plans it established the *Netwerk Erfgoed Haagse Migranten*.⁷² Presently, this network and long-term partnership, a form of

⁶⁷ Simon 2010, Chapter 4: Social objects' (online version, April 2017).

⁶⁸ Interview Sukul, 22-11-2017.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*. 'Changing middle class' is a translation from the Dutch term *veranderende middenklasse* (translated by the author); it is the museum's turn of phrase when referring to its target audience, which is diverse and changable.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*. Antoinette Visser was the Director of the Haags Historisch Museum from 2005 to 2013.

⁷¹ Translation of the network name: Agreement of regional City Museums (translated by the author).

⁷² Translation network name: Network Heritage The Hague's Migrants (translated by the author).

collaboration whose importance for involving communities is stressed by Simon, consists of thirty-seven organisations.⁷³ Ten of which are professional heritage or cultural institutions; the others are migrant organisations that concern themselves with the preservation of cultural heritage and identity. The members and leaders of the migrant organisations are, in almost every case, volunteers with no professional background in the field of museums or heritage. The diversity of the organisations accentuates the variety of migrant communities amongst The Hague's residents, though often the organisations only represent a specific part of an ethnic community. For instance, there is an organisation that mostly represents Turkish men and another that specifically represents Turkish women. Surinamese culture is especially diverse and, to a certain extent, divided; in the network there are organisations that represent Afro-Surinamese, Hindustani-Surinamese, or Javanese-Surinamese people, Surinamese elderly, and organisations of higher or lower educated people. The network shares knowledge and comes together at least four times a year. This sharing of knowledge goes back and forth; heritage professionals educate migrant organisations, and in turn these organisations re-focus the established institutions and provide specific knowledge about their cultures. Through the network the museum intends to disclose and show the richness of heritage connected to diversity and migration for the entire city's residents, and strives towards equal and long-term collaborative relationships with the organisations. In making exhibitions the organisations in almost every case provide the museum with information, knowledge and occasionally objects. Their form of working together corresponds with different types of cooperation as described by MacDonald and Alsford, and Simon.⁷⁴ Although the level of responsibility and involvement of a migrant organisation in the exhibition-making process can differ, the cooperation never fully reaches the level of co-curatorship; the actual practice of working together often reveals the form of a consultative project.

Since 2011, the museum has worked together with migrant organisations in the realisation of fourteen exhibitions, including the exhibitions mentioned earlier in this chapter. The first of which was the off-site exhibition *MijnSurinaamsDenHaag** in the atrium of the city hall. For this exhibition, the museum co-developed with the *Sarnámihuis*, which is a The Hague-based online community on Surinamese-Hindustani identity, cultural heritage and history. It is obvious that the network was still in a premature stadium, since the exhibition aimed to include every Surinamese subculture whilst only actually working together with the *Sarnámihuis*. During the next year, the museum started a consultative project with six heritage institutions in establishing *Haagse herinneringen aan Turkije*, three of which are part of the network, and two are specifically devoted to Turkish heritage.

⁷³ Simon 2010, 'Chapter 7: Collaborating with visitors' (online version, April 2017).

⁷⁴ MacDonald 2007, pp 284-289, Simon 2010, 'Chapter 7: Collaborating with visitors' (online version, April 2017).

Although not on a comprehensive level, also in 2012, the museum consulted migrant organisations of various ethnic communities on one particular project for the first time, with the off-site exhibition *Den Haag, stad van aankomst*.⁷⁵ Information about various migrant groups' cultures in The Hague was on display in the city hall. Although it was small and only ran for two weeks, this exhibition is the first public expression by the museum that presents The Hague as partly shaped by migration and diversity. Another example of the museum simultaneously working together with migrant organisations of multiple ethnic communities is the realisation of *Bouwen aan de stad, arbeidsmigratie in de jaren '60 en nu*. For this off-site exhibition the museum consulted the knowledge of *Turks Museum Nederland*, the *Bulgaars Centrum*, the *Marokko Instituut*, and *Stichting KenZ* (Moroccan culture, dissolved). Currently, the network is involved in the process surrounding *Afrikanen aan het hof*. Because it directly relates to the former Dutch slave trade, colonialism and racial inequality the subject of this upcoming exhibition is of a sensitive nature. The museum is aware of the importance of involving multiple perspectives in the exhibition and the process surrounding the exhibition. Sukul formed a project group with the organisations that have an African, Afro-Surinamese or (former) Netherlands Antillean background.⁷⁶ The project group comes together to discuss the subject and advises the museum on its approach and communication, which despite the familiar consultative nature of the partnership shows a new level of dependence of the museum.

The cooperative nature of the activity programs related to these exhibitions paints another picture, for they are often initiated or even organised by the concerning migrant organisations. The museum provides what is necessary and oversees the larger picture, which comes close to MacDonald's and Alford's model of community authorship.⁷⁷ For instance, the organisations connected to *Bouwen aan de stad* have arranged several storytelling events on different locations in the city. During those events, people could share their labour migration story with the audience whilst being filmed by the narrative-art collective *Riboet*. As a result, eleven of those films are part of *De wereld in Den Haag, portretten van migratie*. This off-site travelling exhibition was held in city hall and four community-engaged neighbourhood theatres, which are also part of the network. The activity programs of the theatres, which for instance included a play on the exhibition subject, storytelling events, and activities for children, are in turn promoted by the museum.

In Sukul's experience, both the migrant organisations and the museum are mostly content with the outcome of the exhibitions and activity programs.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, it is not uncommon that migrant organisations expect the museum to produce an actual exhibition *for* them, although it is

⁷⁵ Translation of the exhibition title: The Hague, city of arrival (translated by the author).

⁷⁶ Interview Sukul, 22-11-2017.

⁷⁷ MacDonald 2007, pp. 284-289.

⁷⁸ Interview Sukul, 22-11-2017.

made clear from the beginning that the purpose of the network is to advise and work together.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the museum acknowledges that it aims to reduce its leading role in making exhibitions and that the municipality strongly encourages co-curatorship, yet that this scenario is not feasible in everyday practice. It is understandable that the organisations being mostly led by non-professional volunteers could make the process of co-curatorship complicated and time-consuming. To co-curate such an exhibition with limited resources could diminish the quality of the exhibition, which in addition would not suit the professional standards of the museum. Whatever its exact considerations on this matter, is clear that for the museum the actual outcome of the exhibition is leading over the production process.

The same goes for community building through exhibitions; the museum acknowledges that it sees the opportunities of exhibition-making in contributing to its communities, yet that it is not its initial goal. The museum sees more value for the community, and practical attainability, in the activity programs formed by the network's neighbourhood theatres and migrant organisations. On the other hand, it is evident that the museum does aim to achieve community relevance via exhibitions through inclusive representation and often exhibiting off-site in public places, like the city hall or a local community centre. In correlation with matters of inclusive representation, the museum expressively uses the term super-diversity. Sukul acknowledges that by focussing on super-diversity, as defined by Meer, the museum aims to make their current focus on deliberately representing ethnic minorities in exhibitions obsolete.⁸⁰ To further develop this super-diversity and inclusiveness in representation are Sukul's main future perspectives; migration heritage will be more interwoven in the whole of the museum policy and practices and the importance of inclusiveness needs to be implemented amongst the whole of the museum staff.⁸¹ Looking from a more practical point of view at the implementation of inclusive representation and super-diversity, migrant organisations within the network do not represent all of the ethnic communities in The Hague. Even if this would be the case, the organisations would not cover the plurality of sub-cultures, let alone represent everyone's personal experience of their ethnicity and heritage. Naturally, the organisations in turn are also dealing with issues of representing their community, and the effort or intention in doing so differs per organisation.

In conclusion, the initiating, leading, investing, expanding, and collaboration of the *Netwerk Erfgoed Haagse Migranten* are the main efforts of the museum in contributing to community building, especially towards ethnic minority communities. Despite this, contributing to and strengthening the sub-communities per se is not the museums' principal purpose. The museum

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

Meer 2014, p. 144.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*

mostly comprehends the importance of representing and investing in ethnic minority communities for the sake of forming The Hague's heritage in general and the social relevance of the museum. The role of exhibitions in contributing to community building is of a rather consequential nature; exhibitions are deployed by choosing a cultural diverse subject, striving towards inclusive representation, choosing off-site locations, and including accompanying activity programs.

Chapter 2. Case-study Museum Rotterdam

Museum Rotterdam currently resides in the *Timmerhuis* in the centre of the city, a postmodern building complex designed by the well-known architecture firm OMA. In contrast, the museum collection consists of mainly historical artworks and objects. In 2011, when the museum was located in the historical *Schielandshuis*, the museum changed its name from *Historisch Museum Rotterdam* to Museum Rotterdam. This also marked its transformation from a classic art historical museum into a modern-day City Museum. Since then the museum is faced with several challenges; in the Netherlands art museums are significantly more popular than City Museums, a City Museum wants and needs to be appealing to all residents, which is difficult to achieve, and in the case of Museum Rotterdam the municipality also has a hard time grasping the museums' significance. The recent move to the *Timmerhuis* in 2016 brought its own set of challenges; the museum was meant to move into the *Forum*, another prestigious architectural project, until the municipality decided otherwise, after many plans and arrangements had been made already. The museum also did not receive any municipal funding for the move.

This is emblematic for the general climate of Rotterdam's politics towards culture. The Dutch economy declined because of 9/11, resulting in severe budget cuts for the cultural sector since 2002. In most cities and on a national level these cuts were largely undone several years later; in Rotterdam's municipality culture remains to be very low on the agenda in terms of significance and budget division. The amount of subsidy that Museum Rotterdam receives is so small that, according to Börger, their continued existence beyond 2020 is uncertain.⁸² This does not paint a pleasant picture, though since it is this reality that the museum is faced with it has to be addressed.

Luckily for the museum, coping with challenges and setbacks, and building towards a better future is part of Rotterdam's DNA ever since it was heavily bombed during the Second World War. Thus the museum does as much as is possible with their small budget, trying to raise their visitor numbers and increasing the feeling of appreciation towards the museum amongst residents and the municipality. The fact that Börger's position combines public relations (in the broadest sense) and curatorship makes it evident that the focus of the museum lies on what its audiences want. Börger is also responsible for writing an extensive future plan for the museum, on which he is currently working. The fundamental idea within his plans is to direct the museums' approach and choices

⁸² Interview Jacques Börger, 10-01-2017.

For the municipal budget division see: <https://www.rotterdam.nl/vrije-tijd/cultuurplan-2017-2020/> (May 2017).

towards what the residents and the municipality want, whilst also maintaining its own standards in social and community relevance.

The three paragraphs in this case-study ask the questions that derived from the theoretical framework and the theoretical concepts of representation, objects, and community building, answering them through Museums Rotterdam's practices, policies, and intentions.

2.1 Representation in exhibitions

In an anecdote about a Cape Verdean man that expressed his wish to make an exhibition about his roots Börger bluntly and emphatically reacted that the museum is not at all interested.⁸³ This straightforwardness was appropriate, for Museum Rotterdam has never organised an exhibition about a specific sub-culture or ethnic minority community. Directly after his remark, Börger told the man that the museum however is interested how he, also -but not only- as someone with roots in Cape Verde, creates a life for himself in Rotterdam.⁸⁴ It is, and always has been, a well-considered choice of the museum to not focus on ethnicity per se. In the representation of cultural diversity in exhibitions, the museum is curious how, in this case, ethnicity plays a role in people's lives in Rotterdam.

Knowing the preconditions that the museum sets, how then are ethnic minorities visible and represented in exhibitions? In an exhibition that opened in 1998 about the working-class neighbourhood Oude Noorden, an important figure in the exhibition and its realisation was a Moroccan woman who owned a local bridal shop. Mainly because of her strong social involvement, the shop had a significant role in the neighbourhood-community. Börger stresses that this is the reason for her participation in the exhibition, not her Moroccan background.⁸⁵ Around the same time the museum organised an exhibition about a variety of community celebrations in Rotterdam, called *Rotterdamse Feesten*.⁸⁶ In the realisation of the exhibition the museum went to different neighbourhoods in order to connect with residents, gather information, and built cooperative relationships. The museum had established a lot of connections with people from ethnic minority communities. Through working together with several of them, the museum displayed important 'new' celebrations of Rotterdam, such as Chinese New-year, the Latin-American and Cape Verdean inspired *Zomercarnaval*, and the Hindustani *Holi-Phagwa*. The exhibition was a major success in terms of ethnic diversity amongst visitors; around sixty percent of the visitors were of non-Dutch descent. Still, the total number of visitors was very low, according to Börger because the subject of

⁸³ Interview Jacques Börger, 10-01-2017.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*

⁸⁶ Translation of exhibition title: Celebrations of Rotterdam (translated by the author).

the exhibition did not appeal to the people who generally visited the museum.⁸⁷ Although the museum was, to a certain extent, aware of the disadvantages of subordinating community outreach, the focus was directed at the demanded visitor rates and numbers. As an intended solution the museum organised numerous small-scale and low profile off-site exhibitions throughout the city, such as in local community centres and schools. For instance, the off-site exhibitions from 2008-2011 resulted in the *Panorama Rotterdam* (2011) overview exhibition, which included photographs of three hundred children of ten different neighbourhoods with their most meaningful object, automatically including children of all Rotterdam's ethnic communities (Fig. 6).

With another photo-project, after moving out of the *Schielandshuis* in 2013, the museum organised the large-scale off-site exhibition *Echte Rotterdammers* (2013-2014) on the *Wilhelminapier*, which is considered a top location in Rotterdam.⁸⁸ The exhibition comprised one-thousand photographs of residents. Each individual holds up a piece of paper with a hand-written statement of what is typical for a *Rotterdammer*, such as being straightforward in communication, hardworking, and future-minded.⁸⁹ With this large number of photographs the museum seized the opportunity to show the richness of cultural diversity in the broadest sense that characterises Rotterdam's population. The exhibition was held in a former harbour hangar of the well-known Holland America Line and the top pieces of the collection were on display in a setting that resembled a ship's hold; this draws a strong connection with Rotterdam as Europe's largest harbour industry. A catwalk made of pallets was set up in the centre of the space, which showed the museums' costume collection from the seventeenth-century onwards. The last few decades on the catwalk showed the richness of clothing styles of Rotterdammers, including for instance styles of youth cultures and several religious costumes.

Similar to the hangar of the *Echte Rotterdammers* exhibition the current museum consists of one large space. The second half of the floor lies on a higher level and is used for temporary exhibitions. The first half of the museum space is parallel to the pavement, which visually are only separated through a wall of glass. It consists of the entry hall, the semi-permanent exhibition *Rotterdammers en hun stad* about present-day Rotterdam, and the history exhibition *Geschiedenis van de stad*.⁹⁰ The exhibition about Rotterdam's history is set in a clearly defined rectangular space through the placement of sea-containers (Fig. 7). Inside the space, each container holds and displays a certain time-period behind glass, forming a historical narrative from left to right. *Rotterdammers en hun stad* is a large open space with no defined walking route. The exhibition consists of four life-size

⁸⁷ Interview Jacques Börger, 10-01-2017.

⁸⁸ Translation of the exhibition title: Real citizens (*Rotterdammers*) of Rotterdam (translated by the author).

⁸⁹ *Rotterdammer* is the Dutch word for a resident of Rotterdam.

⁹⁰ Translation of exhibition titles, in subsequent order: 'Rotterdam residents and their city' and 'History of the city'.

sculptures of Rotterdammers, each placed on an installation of three horizontally placed circles (Fig. 8). On one of the walls, visitors can place a sticker on the map of Rotterdam, to pinpoint a location that holds a special memory for them, which they can share in the accompanying book. Another wall depicts typical architectural landmarks in a playful and colourful way. The museum education materials are set up in front of this wall.

The move to the current location brought forth several challenges and adjustments in the original layout and design of the semi-permanent exhibitions. According to Börger, a lot of ideas perished due to the lack of financial means and the features of the current museum space. The most significant difference between the original plans and the actual realisation is interweaving past, present, and history versus them being displayed as separate elements. The museum had to set up *Geschiedenis van de stad* the way they did, because the inadequate climate control and large amount of natural light would severely damage the historical objects. Ideally, the museum wanted an open display that would create a spatial connection between the exhibitions about the city's history, present, and future. Now, because of the placement of the containers the effect of the open space is considerably diminished. Moreover, that the objects are displayed in the containers creates not only a physical but consequently also an emotional barrier. This effect is intensified by the fact that the museum could not afford anti-reflective glass.

Unlike the large role that objects have in the exhibition on the city's history, the narrative of *Rotterdammers en hun stad* is instead of a more conceptual nature. The exhibition puts, both figuratively and literally, four figures on a pedestal. These people symbolise present-day life in Rotterdam and form the subject of the exhibition. Each of them is an ordinary Rotterdammer with an extraordinary passion. The circular installations underneath them display information about their passion, family, friends, and important locations in the city (Fig. 9). Their passion is linked to what is happening in the city on a larger scale, in the form of other people or places that are pinpointed and linked on a map of Rotterdam. Their passions illustrate the bigger concepts of Rotterdam as a diverse city, city of arrival, green city, and caring city, which ultimately forms the museums' intent for what Hall defines as the 'production of meaning' of the exhibition.⁹¹ For instance Zeynep Altay, she is a young fashion designer and a daughter of Turkish migrant workers; her story is linked to the large amount of businesses in clothing repair, tailor-made clothing, bridal fashion, or fashion design, many of which are owned by Turkish Rotterdammers. The other people are Kamen Vladimirov, a construction worker from Bulgaria, Max de Corte, a Dutch permaculture entrepreneur who came to Rotterdam in 2007, and Joyce de Lima of Dutch-Antillean descent who is a social icon and pie maker. These four individuals present an image of Rotterdam as a city with (ethnically) diverse residents

⁹¹ Hall, 1997, pp. 15-64.

who naturally partake in the city's current tendencies. More generally, the exhibition invites visitors to make and/or feel a personal connection with what is presented about life in the city, for instance through the locations, the city characteristics, and the passions that are shown. In order to grasp the intentions of the exhibition makers, or even just to take in the information that is given, the visitor must be quite pro-active. In other words, the exhibition requires a lot of effort in reading and actively overseeing the bigger picture, without actually challenging visitors to participate; this brings to mind the importance of challenging visitors to actively engage themselves as stressed by Simon.⁹² According to Börger, the main critiques by visitors is that they do not understand why the focus is on these specific individuals, what the presented networks should mean to them, that it requires too much reading, and that the installations are not worthy of a museum.⁹³ In response, the museum is planning to make a few minor adjustments in the near future; the sculptures will be placed on the floor, and atop the installations will instead be placed an aesthetically appealing object that connects to the displayed Rotterdammer.

Several years ago, the museum made a very extensive 'visitor matrix', which presented in detail what the specified target audiences of the museum desire in an exhibition. Their largest audience, the audience that actually visits the museum, are retired Rotterdammers of Dutch descent; they wish to see nostalgic exhibitions about Rotterdam before and just after the Second World War. Börger admits that he regrets that the matrix was not used when (re)designing the exhibitions in the Timmerhuis, for the exhibitions are now solely a product of the curators' vision.⁹⁴ The minor adjustments that are going to be made in *Rotterdamers en hun stad* stand in contrast to the grander near-future-vision of the museum that Börger is working on. In Börger's opinion, the museum space is best suited to be used as a spectacular showroom, where he draws a connection with large car dealer showrooms.⁹⁵ In order to survive this period of financial shortage, the future plan proposes that the museum makes a large exhibition that is directed towards city marketing and displaying its top pieces, in order to satisfy the city municipality and the museums' more traditional and largest target audience, whilst organising small-scale and low-cost exhibitions throughout the city in order to maintain a sense of community relevance.

In conclusion, the museum organises exhibitions where ethnic minorities are represented for their apparent participation and place in present-day life in Rotterdam. Their ethnicity is addressed where it is relevant for the exhibition subject or narrative, but is not focussed on per se. These observations reflect the museums' intentions about inclusive representation in exhibitions; namely, that ethnicity or descent is not the desirable focus. This approach of Museum Rotterdam

⁹² Simon 2010, 'Preface: Why participate?' (online version, April 2017).

⁹³ Interview Jacques Börger, 10-01-2017.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*

demonstrates an obvious connection with the concept of super-diversity.⁹⁶ By focussing on everyone's partake in city life ethnic minority communities are naturally included. The semi-permanent exhibition *Geschiedenis van de stad* and most temporary exhibitions about the city's past rarely include ethnic minority communities in the narrative.

In the next paragraph the (absence of) different types of objects in the collection are discussed, and, in a broader sense, the museums' approach towards the representation of ethnic minority communities in objects and the museum collection.

2.2 Representation in objects and collection

In the current semi-permanent exhibitions there are next to no objects on display that represent ethnic minority communities. The last container, which presents the second half of the twentieth-century, of *Geschiedenis van de stad* shows a circumcision-costume that is worn by Islamic boys during the ceremony. *Rotterdamers en hun stad* involves almost no, tangible and intangible, objects from the collection at all (Fig. 8), only illustrative objects as a tea towel at Altay's installation and cooking utensils next to De Lima's sculpture. There can be made a connection between the installations of *Rotterdamers en hun stad* and Simon's notion of social objects, in the sense that the museum aimed to create their own social objects through the intended purpose of the installations.⁹⁷ Tangible objects that represent several ethnic communities are used where relevant in temporary exhibitions to illustrate the narratives, such as the dragon of the Chinese New Year celebration in *Rotterdamse Feesten*. Afterwards the museum received the dragon as a gift, after it was used by the Chinese community in Rotterdam for over twenty years; the museum also received several celebratory objects from the Hindustani and Cape Verdean communities. Collecting objects because they represent a certain ethnic community, does not automatically make it valid for Museum Rotterdam to have it in the museum collection. The objects have to possess an evident connection with Rotterdam, which often means that it involves a personal story. Furthermore, often enough people do not have meaningful objects to share, in which case the museum focusses on the personal stories per se. This mostly happens in the form of projects, such as in the case of *Vrouwen van de Velden* and *Roffa5314*.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, it turns out that the museum did include new tangible objects in the museum collection due to these projects. An artist made an installation of a large breakfast table to illustrate what was typical for the women involved in the neighbourhood-community project *Vrouwen van de Velden* and the museum acquired several of their personal objects and stories. The

⁹⁶ Meer 2014, p. 144.

⁹⁷ Simon 2010, 'Chapter 4: Social objects' (online version, April 2017).

⁹⁸ Translation of exhibition title: 'Women from the Velden' (Velden is the name of their neighbourhood, translated by the author). *Roffa5314* is not translatable; Roffa is a common nick-name of Rotterdam that is popular amongst Rotterdam's youth.

museum also bought the outfits of the youths that were involved in the large youth culture project *Roffa5314* in order to exhibit and collect. The experiences during the *Roffa5314* project led to the awareness of the museum that it is best to collect through participation and cooperation. The museums' policy states that the collecting and heritage plans, which aim to enlarge the heritage capital for all residents, are to be accomplished through participation, mainly in the form of local off-site projects and connecting on an individual level.⁹⁹ With the community project *Panorama Rotterdam* the museum acquired a lot of photographs that feature a personal object with a brief story (Fig. 6). Because of their strong connection with community building, these three projects will be elaborated upon in the next paragraph. Börger points out that despite the opportunities they presented, what is done with these projects afterwards mostly has the form of project reports, not additions to the museum collection.¹⁰⁰ The museum also struggles with the proper presentation of this kind of heritage. The actual stories are often not listened to when presented online or in exhibitions, and the personal objects, or pictures with people holding their object, need a lot of elucidative information and ask a considerable level of involvement and attention from the visitor.

Despite these practical challenges that the museum -just like any other- faces, the policy plan of 2013-2016 states that it has a proactive collecting policy that is specifically directed towards cultural diverse heritage.¹⁰¹ The importance of this focus is stressed by Black, in order to be able to properly represent people and affect a feeling of inclusion amongst all residents.¹⁰² Within the plans, the museum noted five priorities in types of heritage: that of recent social and cultural changes in the city, current living conditions and domestic design throughout the city's neighbourhoods, the city's new rituals, new (family) entrepreneurship and the networks they have created, and Rotterdam as a city for youth. The heritage-types do not specifically focus on ethnic communities, yet instead automatically include them due to the nature of the subjects. The actual execution of the plans has not been feasible, mainly because of the practical complications surrounding the budget and the move to the Timmerhuis. At this moment the oral history accounts that are collected are the ones mentioned earlier, which is not much considering the total amount of residents. The museum collection involves a couple of hundred objects that represent ethnic minority communities, which is less than one percent of the collection in total (120.000 objects). It is unlikely, due to their limited means, that the museum is able to actively enlarge their collection. According to Börger, the museum will however continue to organise projects in the form of local activities and exhibitions.¹⁰³ In turn this will lead to new accounts of heritage, accumulated through participation.

⁹⁹ *Herzien Meerjarenbeleidsplan Museum Rotterdam 2013-2016*, Rotterdam, 2013 (no page numbers).

¹⁰⁰ Interview Jacques Börger, 10-01-2017.

¹⁰¹ *Herzien Meerjarenbeleidsplan Museum Rotterdam 2013-2016*, Rotterdam, 2013 (no page numbers).

¹⁰² Black 2010, p. 133.

¹⁰³ Interview Jacques Börger, 10-01-2017.

It has become clear that the museum collects different types of objects that are connected to ethnic minority communities, mostly tangible objects and photographs, whether or not connected to a personal story, and oral history accounts, all of which carry a meaningful connection to Rotterdam. The museum attempts to deal with the absence of objects in the collection that represent ethnic minority communities through collecting objects with attached personal stories and oral history accounts, mainly through larger community projects. A notable fact is that the museum's collecting policy does not focus on expanding heritage of ethnic minority communities, but again –just as in their exhibition practices- on larger subjects that naturally include Rotterdam's communities.

The following paragraph draws further upon the museums' intentions and efforts towards community building, and the connection that the museum makes between community building, representation of ethnic minority communities, and exhibitions.

2.3 Community building

With the accomplishments surrounding the exhibition about Oude Noorden and *Rotterdamse Feesten* (1998) the museum seemed to be quite ahead of the time in terms of actively connecting with ethnic minority and neighbourhood communities. Museum Rotterdam had established close contacts with people from several of Rotterdam's ethnic communities, based on open dialogue and cooperation. If the museum had proceeded to invest in these relationships it would in all probability have resulted in long-term cooperative partnerships, which in turn would have led to a stronger position and relevance of the museum within and for its communities; unfortunately the museum did not follow this direction. According to Börger, who was project leader at that time, the curator of the exhibitions, who had established most of the contacts, decided to go another direction with future exhibitions.¹⁰⁴ It was decided that all museum employees were responsible for connecting with residents, which in reality meant that it did not receive enough attention to actually develop.

Since 2005 the museum emphasises the significance of connecting with all audiences. It was reinvigorated by municipal policy, *Actieplan Cultuurbereik 2005-2008*.¹⁰⁵ The policy was aimed at involving youth, ethnic minorities, and residents from neighbourhoods outside the city centre in participating in Rotterdam's arts and culture. One of the categories for which cultural institutions could receive subsidy involved cultural activities in neighbourhood locations that usually not serve a cultural purpose per se, such as community centres, schools, and public squares. There is an obvious

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*

¹⁰⁵ Gemeente Rotterdam, *Toelichting Actieplan cultuurbereik 2005-2008*, Rotterdam, 2006. Translation of the municipal policy title: Plan of action for culture's reach (translated by the author).

connection between this municipal policy and the many off-site exhibitions the museum organised after the publication of the policy. In response to the *Actieplan Cultuurbereik* Börger and his co-worker went to the neighbourhoods to visit primary schools, which resulted in the *Panorama Rotterdam* (2008-2011) project. Through this project the museum took a chance to involve children in their own heritage, enlarge their emotional connection with each other and their surroundings, and awaken their interest for the museum and culture in general. They asked the children what they find important to preserve. The objects they chose were often connected to family (migration) history or their present life, such as a family heirloom or a prize they won with their soccer team. As a result these small-scale local exhibitions showed a historical connection as well as an account of children's lives in the neighbourhoods. Together with the *Panorama Rotterdam* overview exhibition the museum published a voluminous magazine that reported and promoted the project, offering an extensive account of the three hundred children and the ten neighbourhoods they live in. A shift in approach is noticeable after this project ended, for the museum since then not only organises local off-site activities, but brings local communities into the museum sphere as well.

This approach is evident in *Roffa5314* (2008-2011), the project that followed shortly after the start of the *Panorama*-project. The museum discovered the existence of a large and diverse group of youths who referred to themselves as *Roffa5314*; *Roffa* is a popular nick-name of the city and 5314 addresses the *Rotterdam-Zuid* area-zone of public transportation in which they lived an exclusively used. It turned out that *Roffa5314* actually existed of three sub-communities; the male hooligans, the male hip-hoppers, and the more diverse 'urban' youths. Over the course of two years the museum built strong connections with the groups. The groups and the museum intensively worked together on the proper representation of their cultures; their co-curation, as defined by MacDonald and Alsford, resulted in four magazines, three large events, a *Hyves*-group, an overview exhibition, and an accompanying book.¹⁰⁶ Although the contact between the museum and the youths took place on an individual and personal level, they always came, communicated, and moved in small groups, which is a common characteristic of current youth culture. The museum started collecting everything that carried the *Roffa5314* inscription, such as clothing, graffiti, tattoos, and internet nicknames. The specific clothing styles of the groups were captured during several photoshoots. The largest event that took place during the project was a fashion show, where the groups showed off their clothing styles. Afterwards the museum bought several of their outfits to include in the museum collection.

Another project that was strongly connected to what is happening in Rotterdam is *Vrouwen van de Velden* (2011). The museum started working with a group of seven women who came together during the radical rebuilding and transformations of their beloved neighbourhood the

¹⁰⁶ MacDonald 2007, pp. 284-289.

Velden. Although they were actively campaigning against decisions made by the municipality, they were also able to organise activities, and strengthen the connection between residents and their neighbourhood. In cooperating with the museum, this group of women and their cause got a lot of media attention and accomplished minor adjustments in the rebuilding plans; they were empowered by the project. By closely following the women, the museum was able to report on their significant social value, both on an individual and community level. Afterwards the museum accumulated several personal stories, photographs, and objects for the museum collection, such as an apron, several portraits, children's Uggs, and a handbag, all of which are meaningful in connection to their personal story. After closely working together on their proper display and the content, which also resembles the model of co-curating, the museum and the women published a thick glossy magazine that depicted both the project of the women and the museum, whilst based on real life, instead of an idealised depiction of reality. The project became a supporting foundation for the group, which, according to Börger, collapsed after it ended.¹⁰⁷ As a result, the group fell apart and most of them declared in retrospect that they were not helped after all; they did not get a (better) job or more money, which in the end actually form their greatest needs.

Because of this experience, the museum is now particularly clear beforehand in communicating roles and expectations between the museum and the cooperating individuals; the museum points out what and what not to expect from the museum and vice versa. The museum admits that this often surfaces the painful and unpleasant distinction between priorities, because many people are in actual need for a social worker that helps with filling out social security applications. The museums' requests and stressing that they are an important segment of the city is understandably often insignificant to them.

In connecting and reaching out towards residents the museum acquired its own signature approach over the years. Since early on, even before the *Oude Noorden* and *Rotterdamse Feesten* exhibitions, Börger, Van de Laar, and sometimes another colleague literally go into Rotterdam's neighbourhoods. They choose a local spot and just sit there alone, for several days, sometimes for longer periods of time; people are curious, so eventually it results in conversations with the neighbourhood's residents. They actively connect with individuals, whilst observing at the same time, asking questions such as: what happens here, how do people live, what are important factors in their lives, how do they create and use influence, and what do they collect? At one point Börger for instance often sat in a shawarma-diner in the neighbourhood *Bos en Lommer*. In his experience, it was obvious that he did not belong there, which, after gaining some trust, led to conversations that

¹⁰⁷ Interview Jacques Börger, 10-01-2017.

became more and more interesting and personal.¹⁰⁸ This is the museums' way to keep informed and connected to what is happening in the city and what is important in the lives of Rotterdammers. Beside this, going into the city and connecting with individuals is also how the museum actually finds the people that are part of projects, activities, and exhibitions, such as the ones mentioned in this chapter. It is important to stress that the individuals that the museum carefully chooses to work with nearly always have strong communication skills and a large pre-existing personal network; of which the four people of *Rotterdammers en hun stad* are evident examples. Against the background of this unique and personal approach, stands the fact that the museum does not cooperate with community and/or migrant organisations. Due to several experiences, such as unwillingness to work together with other organisations and not keeping to the agreements, it has become a conscious choice of the museum to focus on connecting with its communities on an individual level. On the other hand, the museum has formed partnerships with other professional institutions. Its partners from within the city are two heritage organisations, namely the city archive (*Stadsarchief Rotterdam*) and *BOOR*, which is Rotterdam's archaeology institute. Beside this, the museum is of course part of the *Convenant Stadsmuseale Regioketen*, together with Stadsmuseum Zoetermeer and the Haags Historisch Museum.

In the future the museum indicates that it will continue to stimulate people to discover their neighbourhood without having to leave it, in the form of local activities and off-site exhibitions, in order to be of relevance for its communities. Part of the museums' future plans is to incorporate a platform for joint activities and participation with an event-like character in the 'showroom' exhibition space. Through this the museum continuously wants to provide visitors the opportunity to understand what is happening in the city, which role they can have, and what this means for them. In the near future Museum Rotterdam is for instance planning the *Buzz-tour* project in cooperation with several Rotterdammers with Cape Verdean and Surinamese roots; which is aimed at people finding each other through creative –mainly musical- expressions, instead of focussing on cultural differences. A city bus will regularly take fifty people along for a tour, starting and ending at the museum, visiting one or two places in the city where it is 'buzzing' with creativity. This takes people further than their own familiar places, whilst they make music, talk, dance, and cook together. The museum will continuously report on what is happening during the day. The project intends to make a virtual map of creative places, which indirectly shows a social binding factor in Rotterdam. It is notable that here again the museum involves individuals that become part of a larger project.

It is evident that for Museum Rotterdam community building implies actively including people in forming their heritage and connecting them to their city, the museum, and, albeit to a

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem.*

lesser extent, to each other. Because of the super-diversity of Rotterdam's residents, as defined by Meer, the museum automatically includes individuals from ethnic minority communities.¹⁰⁹ Including individuals in projects, activities, and exhibitions, and subsequently showing this to a larger public, mainly in the form of exhibitions, is the connection that the museum makes between community building, representation, and exhibitions. Therein, the exhibition can be part of a larger project, as well as the point of departure in reaching out and connecting with residents.

The following and final element, the conclusion, will bring the case-studies of the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam together, make comparisons where they are evident, and answer the main questions of the thesis.

¹⁰⁹ Meer 2014, p. 144.

Conclusion

The case-studies make it evident that the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam each developed their own approach towards including and representing ethnic minority communities and at the same time are searching *how* to most effectively and most appropriately do this. The Haags Historisch Museum for instance changed direction in how ethnic minority communities are involved in the subject of exhibitions and Museum Rotterdam is searching for the most effective display techniques of newly acquired accounts of heritage. As noted before in the introduction, there exists a difference between the exhibitions that are meant to be culturally diverse and focus on the present, such as the ones included in the case-studies, and the exhibitions that focus on the city's history and art, which are meant to share a historical narrative and canon, and thereby meet the expectations of a large group of visitors. The exhibitions from the case-studies indeed show that cultural diversity is either a point of departure within the exhibition subject, or a relevant element in the narrative as a whole. More specifically, a focus on ethnic diversity, or how ethnic minorities are present in the exhibitions, is implemented in several ways. In this there exists an obvious distinction between the approaches of the museums, both of which intentionally involve ethnic minorities in their exhibitions. At the Haags Historisch Museum the focus is often on ethnicity, either when an ethnic minority community is the main subject of the exhibition or being elucidated within a broader exhibition narrative. Museum Rotterdam however automatically involves ethnic minority communities by focussing on larger subjects relating to Rotterdam. This reveals a difference between their exhibition-making that correlates with the tension field between cultural diversity and super-diversity.¹¹⁰ Although the Haags Historisch Museum also attempts to implement a super-diverse focus, it has evidently not yet reached the 'level' of Museum Rotterdam. From the exhibitions in the case-studies can also be concluded that an exhibition with a historical narrative almost automatically involves cultural diversity, because stories about diversity and/or communities are told and therefore focussed on. On the other hand, exhibitions about present-day subjects appear to be more suitable for a super-diverse approach. Both museums acknowledge that there is a contrast between their aim to focus on super-diversity and the explicit wish of some communities to be seen, which also underlines the correlation between cultural diversity and super-diversity.

The general focus-change of museums that intend to represent ethnic minority communities, as described by Iervolino, towards adjusting exhibitions with the participation and cooperation of the communities themselves, is also visible at the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam.¹¹¹ The cooperative relationships in exhibition-making show a preference for, in respect to the models

¹¹⁰ Meer 2014, p. 144. For the 'tension field', see p. 7.

¹¹¹ Iervolino 2013, p. 113.

by MacDonald and Alford, a short-term and project-based cooperation of a consultative nature.¹¹² It can be deemed remarkable that the long-term cooperative partnerships between the museums and community organisations or individuals are also mostly used for consultation purposes. In making exhibitions a full level of co-curatorship, let alone that of community-authorship, is not sought after. The nature of cooperation within projects and activities paints another picture. The exhibition activity programs that are almost independently organised by the migrant organisations that the Haags Historisch Museum has long-term partnerships with resemble a degree of community-authorship; during *Roffa5314* and *Vrouwen van de Velden* Museum Rotterdam asked a high level of commitment and input towards content from the participants, making them co-curators or co-developers of the projects.

Both museums have their own approach towards community building in respect to ethnic minority communities and reaching out to them. The *Netwerk Erfgoed Haagse Migranten* is the Haags Historisch Museums' resource and starting point in representing and connecting with ethnic minority communities, by working together with organisations that represent several ethnic communities. Museum Rotterdam however chooses to invest in partnerships with individuals, often originating in community projects. The nature of the relationships between the museums and the organisations or individuals also differs in terms of focus on ethnicity; the very principle of the bond between the Haags Historisch Museum and the organisations is based on ethnicity, whereas at Museum Rotterdam the 'place' and lives of the individuals in the city forms the museums' motivation. Here again, a connection can be drawn with and between cultural diversity and super-diversity. The Haags Historisch Museum deliberately chooses to work with a network and organisations as a way to reach out to ethnic minority communities. Museum Rotterdam has made the conscious choice to reach out to communities on an individual level, often by literally sitting in the city's neighbourhoods. Despite their different methods, both museums acknowledge that they regard representing ethnic community groups, also in respect to community building, to be a vital part of the museums' social relevance. Furthermore, the practices of both museums show that their focus is directed towards their own social value and bond with their communities, not the involvement of the communities per se. The role of exhibitions in community building lies in the fact that the museums either reach out towards communities in order to establish an exhibition, or that an exhibition is a result from a community project. Both museums also often use off-site exhibitions as a way to reach out to their communities. Despite this, the Haags Historisch Museum does not deliberately use exhibitions for community building purposes, whilst Museum Rotterdam expressively uses small-scale and off-site exhibitions for their community value and relevance.

¹¹² MacDonald 2007, pp. 284-289.

In relation to objects it is obvious that the museums display and collect tangible and intangible objects that are meaningful. The purpose of objects in exhibitions brings Hall's definition to mind, as they are used to represent (part of) the narrative in the 'production of meaning'.¹¹³ The objects are for instance used to complete the exhibition narrative, to tell the story of the city, to draw a connection to the present, and to represent the city's residents. This is true for both tangible and intangible objects, and oral history accounts. The photographs of individuals with a meaningful object that are accompanied by a personal story, which is a common phenomenon at both museums, form another type of object, for they are a combination of a (written) oral history account and two meaningful tangible objects (the object and the photograph). These observations about the objects make the current focus on visitors evident, for they are used in that sense, not for their intrinsic and material qualities as such. A remarkable detail from the case-study on Museum Rotterdam is that the museum barely involves objects in its largest semi-permanent exhibition *Rotterdamers en hun stad*. Despite this, objects fulfil a significant role at both museums, not only in the exhibitions, but also in representing ethnic minority communities and community relevance. In exhibitions objects are used to represent ethnic minority communities.

The connection between representing ethnic communities and objects also lies in the museum collection. Both museums are aware of the fact that their museum collection does not properly represent ethnic minority communities yet. They each strive towards inclusive representation in their museum collection, the importance of which is stressed by Black to enable people to actually feel included.¹¹⁴ The Haags Historisch Museum tries to fill this gap through the long-term participatory project *MijnDenHaag*/Topstukken* and Museum Rotterdam combines its community projects with accumulating accounts of present-day heritage. Important to note is that the current collection policy of the Haags Historisch Museum does not mention inclusive representation, whereas the policy of Museum Rotterdam aims to be inclusive by prioritising five types of present-day heritage. The case-studies make it evident that both museums are searching for the most effective display of these new 'objects' in exhibitions and that there is much room to expand their efforts in accumulating new heritage. Perhaps the most fruitful chance for both museums in expanding the inclusiveness of representation through their museum collections is the re-evaluation of its existing collections. By acknowledging that objects are open to reinterpretation of (different) meanings and significance -as stressed by Hooper-Greenhill- as well as their opportunities to be social objects -as Simon states-, the current museum collection has enough to offer in matters of inclusive representation.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Hall 1997, pp. 15-64.

¹¹⁴ Black 2010, p. 133.

¹¹⁵ Hooper-Greenhill 2000, p. 3.

It turns out that super-diversity is an important concept within the museums' approaches and intentions. Attaining super-diverse inclusiveness through a focus on subjects that concern the city and present-day life in the city is the direction that both museums chose. The Haags Historisch Museum strives towards a super-diverse approach within inclusive representation and the museum in general. However, at this point super-diversity is not fully implemented in its museum policies and practices. An apparent reason for this is the approach of (ethnic) diversity within the organisational structure of the museum, which shows a specific focus on ethnic minority communities –and therefore cultural diversity-, which is evident in Sukul's position at the museum and the *Netwerk Erfgoed Haagse Migranten*. On the other hand, at Museum Rotterdam super-diversity seems to be self-evident and inherent in its policies and practices. It has to be noted that Museum Rotterdam has adopted this approach seven to twelve years earlier than the Haags Historisch Museum, which indicates an obvious advance for Museum Rotterdam in terms of experience and degree of implementation.¹¹⁶

When connecting all of the practices, policies, and intentions of both museums to the main question of the thesis, which asks how they represent ethnic minorities in order to increase the museums' relevance for their communities as a whole, it is clear that representation of ethnic minority communities and community relevance are not particularly accomplished through exhibitions per se, nor that this the intention of both museums. In other words, inclusive representation of ethnic minority communities and social and community relevance are not intentionally achieved through the exhibitions themselves, but all the more through overarching projects connected to exhibitions. Both museums are well aware of the importance of engaging ethnic minority communities for their own social relevance. Museum Rotterdam as a whole emphasises this more articulately, whilst at the Haags Historisch Museum engaging ethnic minority communities is assigned to a particular department of the museum. On the other hand, because of the clear-cut goals and visibility of *Netwerk Erfgoed Haagse Migranten*, at first glance it appears that the Haags Historisch Museum is more committed in including ethnic minority communities than Museum Rotterdam. After a closer look, it is apparent though that for Museum Rotterdam including ethnic minority communities is more interwoven as a natural element in the museum in general.

Looking at the use of exhibitions by the museums in terms of inclusiveness and participation, there is almost no effort noticeable in engaging the visitors to participate. The exhibitions show that both museums run behind in the present-day focus of the participatory museum, both in the actual exhibitions and the lack of community participation in organising and forming the exhibitions.

¹¹⁶ See pp. 18-19, p. 25, pp. 27-28, and p. 33. Museum Rotterdam had already incorporated the approach in 1998 (perhaps even earlier) in a premature stadium, and fully implemented it in 2005, and the Haags Historisch Museum adopted it in circa 2012.

Involving communities through participation is to a larger extent implemented in their projects and activities. The notion of the inclusive museum seems to have more influence at both museums, as it is an important principle in their policies and practices, which is for instance visible in their exhibitions, collecting policies, and community projects.

The combination of the theoretical framework and the case-studies of the Haags Historisch Museum and Museum Rotterdam provided an exemplified insight of the connections that City Museums in the Netherlands make between exhibitions, representing ethnic minority communities, and the social and community relevance of museums. It has become clear that both museums see and make evident connections between these concepts, and that there exist both similarities and differences in their approaches.

Appendix 1. Illustrations



Fig. 1: View of the exhibition *Den Haag Vandaag, 1945 tot nu*.



Fig. 2: Geert van Kesteren and Conny Luhulima, *Stad van aankomst*, 2014.



Fig. 3: Example of the usage of *Topstukken* in the exhibition *Den Haag Vandaag, 1945 tot nu*.

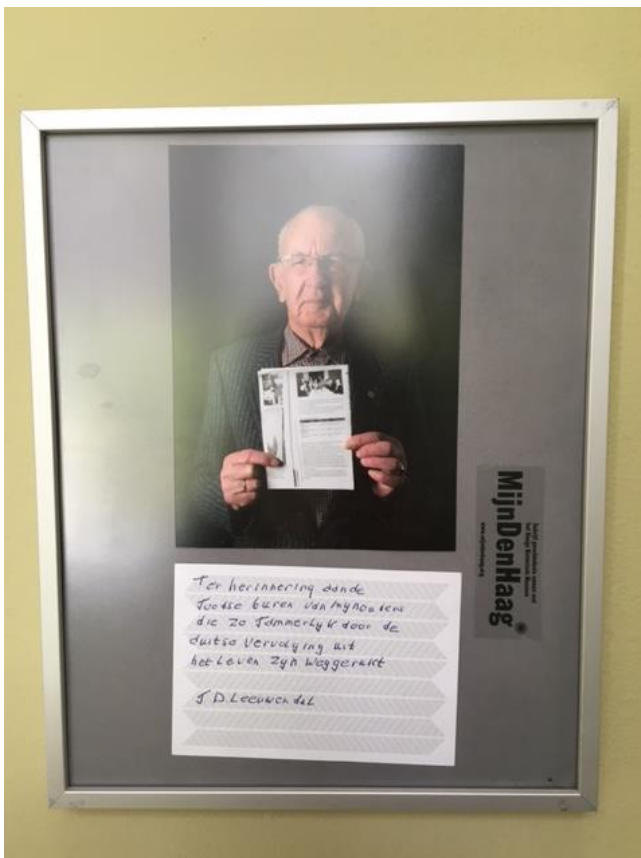


Fig. 4: Example of the usage of *Topstukken* in the exhibition *Joods Den Haag*.



Fig. 7: View of the exhibition *Geschiedenis van de stad*.



Fig. 8: View of the exhibition *Rotterdamers en hun stad* and the four life-size sculptures of Rotterdammers.



Fig. 9: Detail of the circular installation and information about Zeynep Altay at the exhibition *Rotterdamers en hun stad*.

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