Intangible Cultural Heritage, Migration and the City

IMP international conference and expert meeting, 25-26 September 2018, Berne
Sticking Around.
Over 50 years of migration to Ghent

• Large-scale but temporary project
• Focus: urban migration heritage
• 2014 ‘Year of Migration’
• Three parts: outdoor exhibit / website / walks
outdoor exhibit:
35 eye-catchers in the cityscape
project website: www.blijvenplakkeningent.be

practical information and historical background
walks:

group- and audio-guided city tours
The role of ICH in the project

• Migration Heritage, both tangible and intangible
• ICH: newly developing oral traditions on the migration experience
  – Explain the presence of the community in Ghent
  – Make the link between the past / country of origin and the present and future / Ghent
ICH practitioners in the project

• Storytellers / ‘living memories’
• 32 participants in 5 audio-guided tours
• Positive evaluation BUT not really an example of shared authority (also in other attempts at collaboration)
Contribution to the safeguarding of ICH

- Collection and preservation of newly developing oral traditions
- Link between immigrant communities and heritage institutions
- Transmission and raised awareness among the public about the importance of this heritage
- Innovation:
  - as an ICH project: attention to newly developing oral traditions from underrepresented groups
  - as a migration-related project: broad definition of migration and focus on relatedness with local heritage
Sticking Around and Urbanized Society

• The pivotal role of migration in urbanization
• ➔ conference theme: newly developing oral traditions on migration as ICH
  – Explain the presence of immigrant communities
  – Explain the pace and shape of urban change
• BUT the underrepresentation of migration heritage in museums and funding!
Impact of the project

• ICH practitioners: personal lives, recognition
• Active visitors: neighbours / guided walks / audio-guided tours (urban regeneration, social cohesion?)
• Immigrant communities: positive but also questions
• Cultural institutions: collections / connections / mainstreaming of migration heritage
Motivation, Challenges & barriers, Results

• Motivations:
  – the curators: share migration heritage widely / get immigrant heritage practitioners recognized and connected
  – the Museum: expand the network and audience / diversify the ‘Story of Ghent’
  – both: bring a balanced message of migration
• Challenges, barriers and solutions:
  
  – Collaborative participation: lack of time and resources / solution: reflection board and late outreach BUT not the desired results
    (now: focus on participation: the km2)
  
  – Immigrant audiences: generally underrepresented in the museum / solution: multilingual and directed advertising BUT not the desired results
  
  – Vandalism in the open-air exhibit: contested topic and vulnerable constructions / solution: flexible attitude and multiple replacements
  
  – Racism: contested topic / solution: bringing a balanced story BUT still problems, especially with guides
Results:

- Migration Heritage put on the map and storytellers recognized as ICH practitioners
- Expanded network for the museum in immigrant communities
- Tangible and Intangible Heritage collected, preserved and made accessible
- Participants thought differently about migration
blijven plakken