I. Participatory Museum Work with Forced Migrants

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1. Contextualising Participation in Museums

Despite participation not being a new concept in museums, participatory practices are only slowly starting to develop within the rigid infrastructures that define these memory institutions. Though the urge to engage people through participatory approaches varies between the different types of museums, the themes of participation and migration have become relevant across most of them. The increased interest in participation as a part of museum work has become especially prominent in approaches to engaging with forced migrants. In response to what is often referred to as the 'summer of migration' or the 'refugee crisis' of 2015 (Bock and Macdonald 2019), museums often adopted participatory approaches with the aim of 'giving a voice' to these inadequately represented 'communities'. Participatory work with forced migrants (as well as with other migrants) has taken on different forms and functions. However, these projects rarely lead to sustainable outcomes for the museum and for the people engaged in this museum work. As pointed out in the introduction to this study, there has not yet been thorough discussion of these outcomes and their (potential) long-term relevance for both institution and participants. In practice, reflections on participatory work or evaluations of participatory practices and their outcomes are rarely considered an integral part of the work. Museum practitioners often take a formulaic approach to such participatory projects, putting the objectives of the museum – such as collecting objects or works, and taking part in pressing and highly mediatised debates – at the centre of their work. They apply a 'logic of contribution', a term proposed by Nuala Morse to underline the focus on the museum's motivations in community engagement work (2021).

Recent studies call for further development of these practices, applying notions of care (Morse 2021), activism (Janes and Sandell 2019) and anti-discrimination (Bayer et al. 2017), and considering the long-term outcomes

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(or sustainability) of this work (Brighenti 2020; Tietmeyer 2016; Golding 2013). These prospects for the future of museums should not merely be envisioned, but also need to be actively pursued in practice. Many museum practitioners want and are trying to shift their practices towards caring, activist, anti-discriminatory and sustainable methodologies, yet their work is limited by funding (or the known objectives of funders), confined by the local and national political context, and by time constraints and the social, psychological and personal capacities of staff members (Munro 2014). Shaped by its history and the institution's infrastructures, including all stakeholders, participatory projects sit within tight, often inflexible frameworks. Changing participatory practices and their potential for sustainable outcomes is easier said than done.

In this chapter, I lay the foundations for this study through an introduction of infrastructure and actor-network theory in order to discuss the relevant forms of museum infrastructure and the ways in which these enable and shape participatory work. This infrastructural context in which participatory practices take place is studied in more detail with reference to museum stakeholders and the relations between them, with the infrastructural backdrop becoming visible through museum's organisational structures and their relations to funding bodies. The second sub-chapter references more specific studies on participatory work with forced migrants. It highlights broader participation-related questions about organisational infrastructure (as a potential restraint on participation) and the ethics of participatory work in general. In outlining these different aspects and their influence on participatory projects, this chapter sets the scene for the discussion of the case studies in the following chapter and for my analysis thereafter.

1.1 Museums and their (wider) infrastructures

As I have already addressed, museum practitioners and researchers have both signalled the need for institutional change. The museum as an institution, however, tends to be seen as unchangeable, rigid and inflexible (Wajid and Minott 2019; Cameron 2015; Janes 2007). Friederike Landau (2020) refers to a recent shift in the ICOM museum definition, with the new proposal from the ICOM conference in Kyoto (2019) not emphasising the museum's permanence for the first time in 75 years. The definition proposed at the time reads:

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> Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing. (ICOM 2019)

Rather than reflecting a perception of museums as rigid and inflexible, it suggests they are continuously changing institutions. This aligns with what Fiona Cameron described in her plea for a 'liquid museum' (2015). Cameron proposes a more flexible institution, which can be understood as "nested in multiple networks and flows, as open-ended institutional structures that are light, liquid, mobile, horizontal (as opposed to hierarchical), relational, and adaptive" (2015, 354). This approach identifies a flexibility that is deemed necessary for museums' practices to change, in order to allow for more adaptable approaches. However, in order to understand exactly where this flexibility is required, and how this might be relevant for future museum work, the museum and its wider infrastructures need to be evaluated.

Infrastructure has been described as a useful subject of study, due to the insight it provides into the underlying systems that define relations between actors and practices, since infrastructure can be seen as a "complex social and technological process that enables – or disables – particular kinds of action" (Graham and McFarlane 2015, 1). Referring both to analogue and digital infrastructures, they are understood as sustainable structures which gain permanence but continue to be adaptable in response to technological or sociopolitical developments (see Star and Bowker 2006, 241). In her work on infrastructures, Gertraud Koch points towards the tension between sustainability and temporal relationships (2017, 86). Despite the fact that Koch's focus is on digital infrastructures, her analysis mirrors problems that define museum infrastructures, such as the different temporalities of "financing periods, staff availability, institutional contexts" (Koch 2017, 86). The infrastructures in, of and for museum work are similarly bound by different temporal frameworks; they are organised around specific funding periods and deadlines, are reliant on the availability of museum

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practitioners or facilitators, and inflected by institutional histories and ties to other institutions. As this study focuses on the sustainable outcomes of participatory museum work, it is necessary to understand which types of infrastructures make these processes and their sustainability possible (or impossible).

In this sub-chapter, I further explore the relationship between infrastructures and the sustainability of (temporal) participatory museum projects. I define the infrastructures in and around museums to provide a more in-depth overview of the ongoing processes and their defining frameworks, and study the most clearly relevant infrastructures in more detail. The first section focuses on infrastructures in general and identifies the aspects that shape participatory museum practices. The second section addresses a dominant infrastructure which is often viewed as highly rigid, namely the organisational infrastructure of the museum. It outlines the significance of departmental structures for participatory work and points to the (in)visible hierarchies between departments and practitioners. The third section of this sub-chapter draws out the colonial infrastructures that continue to affect museum practice today. In doing so, I bring together research from STS (science and technology studies), museum studies and anthropology to describe these infrastructures and assess their impact on the capacity of participatory practices to achieve sustainable outcomes.

1.1.1 Museum infrastructures

To understand the museum and the broader infrastructures that determine and contextualise museum practices, we need to first take a closer look at the meaning of infrastructures and their relevance for museums. Gaining an understanding of the underlying infrastructures helps us to explore the ways in which they affect the work done in and by museums; the often-invisible structures that shape the practices that take place within the walls of the museum. In this section, I briefly address the notion of infrastructure in relation to actor-network theory (ANT), referring to structural contexts as well as the human and non-human actors that make up the contexts in which museum work takes shape. I outline different studies that sketch out the roles of various infrastructures in museum practice, and connect this to the potential outcomes of museum work, and of participatory museum projects in particular.

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The definition of infrastructure is widely debated across various disciplines and does not hold a singular meaning or takes a single specific form. In anthropology, infrastructures that take a physical form, such as sewage systems (Hecht 2018; Harvey et al. 2017), and those less tangible, such as digital infrastructures for online practices (Koch 2017), are defined as socio-material processes (Larkin 2013) that are inherently connected. Infrastructures can be understood as relational entities that provide "the scaffolding for knowledgable human action" (Huvila 2019, 4), which become visible when they fail or obstruct certain actions (Star and Ruhleder 1996). Within institutions, infrastructure can be seen as the backdrop to social actions such as participatory practice (Harvey 2017, 3). These definitions suggest that infrastructures should not be understood as passive structures but ought to be addressed as active systems, and thus viewed as 'actors' when studying a particular process. The infrastructure as a process makes certain actions possible (and others impossible), reflecting relationships in everyday life. In keeping with this understanding, infrastructures perpetuate existing power relations and keep practices of exclusion in place (Graham and McFarlane 2015, 1). Further studies on infrastructure and the potential of "'infrastructuring" (Karasti 2014; Pipek and Wulf 2009) define it as a means of understanding social hierarchies and how these are performed by different actors (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012, 402). It is the performance of hierarchies within infrastructures that is deemed of particular relevance for participation, as museums tend to apply participatory practices to break down hierarchies between museums and participants, and the 'communities' they are considered to be a part of (Simon 2010). Through supporting marginalised people to develop autonomous infrastructures, Noah Lenstra argues, museums can address social inequalities (2017, 103). Lenstra's suggestion points towards a collaborative practice that requires participants to take on an active role in changing existing infrastructures, or in building separate infrastructures outside of the museum to allow for a more inclusive practice. Rather than further separating collaborative processes from what is understood as 'regular' museum work, this study looks at how these can actually be brought closer together. How museum infrastructures shape, limit or obstruct museum work and its outcomes is based on the activity of their stakeholders, their roles, and the way they perpetuate or disrupt the hierarchies in place.

This focus on the relationships that make up museums and museum practices is drawn from the increasingly common assemblage-based

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approach to museum work, which understands the institution as a network of people, things and ideas (Morse 2021, 160). Central to this work, Morse explains, is "a view of museums as collectives (or 'meshworks') in which human and non-humans – staff, artefacts, funding bids, display cases and collections management software – are held together in provisional and contingent wholes" (2021, 160). A similar approach was suggested by Knudsen (2016), who pointed to ANT as a means of mapping different processes and tracing participation. Landau (2020) proposes a view of future museums as para-infrastructures, which allow for new connections to be drawn between practices and places for museum practices. She refers to the work of Shannon Mattern (2019) when defining museums as "network[s] of integrated, mutually reinforcing, evolving infrastructures – in particular, architectural, technological, social, epistemological and ethical infrastructures" (2020, 176). As such, she brings the concept of infrastructures closer to the 'actual work' done by museum practitioners. The approach suggested here underscores the relevance of the relationships between museum actors, narratives, values and collections (Landau 2020, 176); between human actors and non-human actors. At the same time, Landau singles out particular relevant infrastructures, describing the relevance of spatial, relational and contextual factors, the available digital infrastructures and the ethical framework of museum work. It is above all these infrastructures, and their role in participatory processes and their outcomes, that are central to this study. Following Knudsen, a mapping of the processes and roles of different stakeholders provides a framework for understanding participatory processes in relation to their products, or outcomes (2016, 197).

Further defining the contextual, epistemological and ethical infrastructures for museum work allows us to situate the museum within its broader framework, so as to avoid viewing the institution (and its work) as an island (Macdonald et al. 2018, 140). Rather than analysing the museum as an isolated institution, or projects as isolated aspects of museum work, the museums and projects studied are discussed against the backdrop of their respective sociopolitical and institutional contexts. Understanding the museum as a node within a network of people, things and ideas allows for a more distributed view of the rather peripheral role of the museum within this network (Morse 2021, 160). This broader contextualisation of the institution and its relations to human and non-human actors emphasises the relevance of further actors within this 'network', and can facilitate a practice of care (see Morse 2021, 160). This is reflected in Lenstra's approach

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to infrastructures (2017), which outlines 'cultural heritage infrastructures' that exist outside of the institution but are inherent to the work done within it. The institution's links to other organisations, funding bodies and governments, as well as its connection to audiences (in the museum and online) are relevant for understanding decisions made 'on the ground'. At the same time, Macdonald et al. seek to "urge attention to non-connections and to the ways in which 'doing organizations' in practice can also limit collaboration and change" (2018, 140). This focus on the disconnect between stakeholders – or the exclusion of important stakeholders – allows for an assessment of the practical limitations of museum work.

As infrastructures – ranging from digital to underlying ethical structures – become visible through the ways in which they fail to support contemporary museum practice, it becomes clear that infrastructures themselves are actors in museum work. These do not need to be static and immutable, but might be more flexible and dynamic than often thought. Fiona Cameron has described museum structures as "organic, evolving with society or the organization they support, defining it as much as they are defined by it" (2005, 243). The potential dynamic aspect of infrastructures and their ability to adapt to changing contexts suggests that they are both inherent to, and the result of, processes of continuous social learning, hence facilitating a more sustainable practice. This adaptability is necessary right across the institution, as an element of all relevant infrastructures, in order to make a sustainable practice possible. A better understanding of how these infrastructures are used, navigated and challenged is needed to see how they might become as flexible as Cameron suggests. Through a study of the relevant infrastructures for museum work, these relational aspects and how they are performed through and by these infrastructures becomes evident. This supports the study of the different processes and their potential outcomes, which will reveal these infrastructures more clearly by addressing how they fall short.

1.1.2 Organisational structures and change

One central infrastructure of museums (and other organisations) is the organisational infrastructure, which constitutes the museum's departmental structure and staff roles, as well as the relational aspects of these structures that enable connections across the institution. This section sketches out these organisational infrastructures in order to provide insight into the workings of the institution and the relations and power structures that determine

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museum practices. I will outline the foundations of participatory practice, and point to different aspects relevant to the processes studied in the following chapters.

Cameron's work cited above (2015) addresses the need for a certain institutional flexibility which requires a rethinking of organisational infrastructures. Hierarchies within organisational infrastructures define the dynamics between these different parties as well as the point in a process where they play a role. Macdonald et al. have referred to the organigram as a way to visualise these relations, yet this visualisation is unable to present how these relations take shape.

> Organigrams can tell us that a museum is part of a larger organization or that some of its functions – such as creating a new exhibition or undertaking educational outreach – may be distributed beyond its walls. What they don't tell us is how this works on the ground, and how these relationships are experienced in practice and with what effects. (Macdonald et al. 2018, 156)

The understanding of the roles of, and relations between, all stakeholders, as well as their objectives and experiences of the process and its outcomes is necessary if we are to consider the need for, and the perceived success of, a project. In *The Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon addresses the organisational structures within which participatory practices take shape. In her description of co-creation, such participatory practices are often limited to one museum department. "There are several museums where co-creation occurs in pockets, and these pockets tend to reside in education departments" (2010, chapter 8). Simon outlines how education staff is expected to have empathetic qualities that are not necessarily deemed relevant for work in other core departments of the museum. Due to the nature of education work being about engaging people in activities, it seems that participatory work, and co-creation in particular, fits into these practices. This means, however, that participatory work rarely becomes part of the work done by other departments, and education departments tend to become "participatory ghettos" (Simon 2010, chapter 8). Though this has shifted slightly, and curatorial staff and collection departments are more likely today to introduce participatory aspects to their work; much of the practices are still done "in silo" (Morse 2021, 88). According to Morse, these silos are "maintained by staff's perceptions of their roles and the roles of other teams" (2021, 88). The roles are not only defined by the organisational structure but also by the ways in which people

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compartmentalise their work within this structure. These structures that shape this departmentalised work can be recognised as infrastructures.

The organisational infrastructures in museums constitute the different departments (the structure of the museum), the relationships between these departments, and between them and external stakeholders. Within this context, stakeholders and their roles define a project's format, focus and function: if a participatory project is created as a supplement to an exhibition by the education team, it will take on a format familiar to this department and will not often feed into curatorial processes. This pattern of departmentalisation defines the potential goals and outputs of a project before it even starts. As such, more wide-ranging outcomes require an opening up of the organisational infrastructures, and of how these are used for participatory processes across the institution. Organisational infrastructures exist on smaller and larger scales, but even without clearly defined or hierarchically structured roles, practitioners are likely to stick to what they know and focus on a certain aspect of the collection or become specialised in a particular practice. The potential for departmental separation increases with the size of the museum, yet it is most heavily determined by the practitioners who work with(in) these infrastructures. In a conversation with the project curator of the *So sehe ich das…* project at Museum Friedland (a museum and project that will be described in more detail in Chapter 2), they described the relevance of participation across the institution as follows:

> I believe that participation is an expansive field, depending on how one defines this concept, that can only be successful if everyone benefits from it. That is, if the museum benefits from it, if it serves the museum's purposes, but also if it brings gains for the participants. And for me that actually means that it has to be wanted throughout. So from the museum management to the finance department to the curatorial department to the education department, and it is not enough if only the education department says: "we're now doing a participatory project". Because otherwise I don't think you get the possibilities for the structure that you actually need to make it ethically or actually possible to participate. (MF-S01)[1]

1 I conducted a number of interviews for this study. The interviewees remain anonymous, but more information about their role in the project and the context of the interviews can be found in the bibliography

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Here, the disconnect between the different departments becomes visible, as does the need to see the museum not as a single stakeholder, functioning as a unified front, but to extend the practices and purposes to the involved staff as individuals as well. This affects not only the processes of participatory projects within the institution, but also the possibilities to extend participatory practices across departments effectively. With reference to a quote from one of her interview partners, Morse described this as the "professional boundaries and professional understandings of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities" (2021, 110). The division between roles and departments can lead to tension and misunderstandings among museum staff. This also means that the outputs of participatory projects remain invisible, confined to the museum's educational or outreach work, and rarely providing sustainable outputs that are preserved within the institution, unless this was agreed upon by curatorial staff or the conservators beforehand. Additionally, the outcomes of the project do not often go beyond the goals set by the museum, even if the intention was to benefit the participants.

Goals that might benefit the museum often take the form of immediate outputs, such as an exhibition or a contribution to an ongoing public or political debate. However, as discussed by Sara Ahmed, working in an institution inevitably involves working on an institution (2012, 15). In response to this, Morse described how practitioners conduct a form of 'institutional work' through their (participatory) practice; addressing the organisational and other infrastructures and negotiating necessary shifts to enable their work (2021, 94). Tinkering with infrastructures is easier in some institutions than in others, as the flexibility is determined by the complexity of the organisational structure and heavily impacted by relationships between practitioners and departments. This could, however, lead to (necessary) organisational change, which provides the museum with an outcome: organisational development in response to the learnings generated by the input from participants. A rather long-term process, which Robert R. Janes describes as the "messy, paradoxical and non-linear reality of organizational change" (Janes 2013). The process is not straightforward nor immediate, yet at any point, the work could feed into the institution and its structures, benefitting the institution. The question remains, though, of what is relevant for the participants, considering how they might benefit from these changing infrastructures. This aspect was explored by Rachel C. Smith et al., who referred to the ongoing concern of "what participation is for whom and in which contexts" (2018, 5). "A concern which should not merely

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focus on securing the 'quality and gain of participation' in the design process, but also its relevance to the longer-term impact of engagement in various environments" (Smith et al. 2018, 5). This aspect is central for this study, but outcomes for participants are likewise dependent on the organisational infrastructures, as will become clear in the following chapters.

Looking at participatory practices, museum infrastructures seem to limit the extent to which a project can become embedded in the institution, or the ways in which a project might inform future institutional practices or discourse. These underlying structures partially inform the work of museums and help us to understand the relations between different actors. The visible structures and actors will be outlined in the initial description of the cases, while their limitations or invisible elements sometimes only become apparent upon studying the various elements of the processes in more detail. The infrastructures, visible through the limitations they impose upon the work, help to explain the authority of human and non-human actors in a museum project.

1.1.3 Shaped by colonial frameworks

Having outlined the internal infrastructures and related processes that determine museum work, this section addresses the historical frameworks that form the foundations of these infrastructures, as well as their relationships to infrastructures outside of the museum. In her book *Museums and Racism*, Kylie Message discusses the "links between museums and the political and administrative structures, cultures, histories and doctrines within which they work" (2018, 110). These structures – which exist both inside and outside of the museum – are inherent to the colonial frameworks that inform institutional practices, as will be further explored in this section.

Though there might seem to be no direct link between museum practices with forced migrants and the institution's colonial legacies, museums are still defined by historical epistemological frameworks rooted in colonial ideologies. To better understand the institution's social and political roles in contemporary society, it is important to understand the institution's past role(s) and how practices might take shape from there. Philipp Schorch states that "museums have played an active role in imperial colonisation and its political decolonisation, scientific and anthropological knowledge production and its postcolonial critique, and contemporary cultural revitalisation and economic development" (2017, 31). This broad statement applies most directly

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to ethnographic museums, yet many museums hold objects with colonial histories (Weber-Sinn and Ivanov 2020), perpetuate colonial perspectives (Von Oswald 2020) and present colonial relations as the 'norm', by differentiating between 'us' and 'others' (Meza Torres 2013). Historically, museological discourses and collections constructed 'otherness' through defining (national) identities (Macdonald 2003). Former colonial practices in museums emphasised the differences between local audiences and people from faraway countries, but current practices tend to perpetuate colonial relations between (European) institutions and cultural 'others' (Meza Torres 2013; El-Tayeb 2011). With a focus on migration, however, this 'othering' can take place much closer to home. Working with a 'community of forced migrants' presents similar complexities. Recent practices are in line with the long-standing interest in 'other' heritages, which emerged with the foundation of ethnographic collections and museums (Johansson Dahre 2019, 66), but have recently shifted from depicting life in faraway places to the lives of those who have migrated from these places to the Global North. This does not reflect the intentions of the museum practitioners who have addressed these urgent topics, but the discrepancy between these intentions and the outcomes does reflect the complexity of these colonial frameworks and related hierarchies.

This situation implies that the colonial framework of the museum remains intact, and continues to inform museological practices. "On the historical level, colonialism has neither been complete in the past nor completed in the present – it is not an event but a process" (Schorch et al. 2019, 11). Schorch et al. refer to the perpetuation of colonial relations and power dynamics that are not easily left behind, but rather need to be resolved over time. This connects with Robin Boast's analysis of the nature and historical context of museums as inevitable obstacles towards creating a project of mutual benefit, making it impossible for the museum to become a site of reciprocity. Boast refers to a collaborative project studied by Clifford in articulating his definition of the 'contact zone' (1997), reflecting on this work through a more contemporary lens. Clifford speaks about a project for which the collaborators had expected long-term outcomes, but in which the 'contact zone' had instead been temporary in nature (cited in Boast 2011, 63). He argues that museums "remain sites where Others come to perform for us, not with us" (2011, 63). In line with this, Boast describes museums as neo-colonial rather than post-colonial institutions; a designation I have adopted in this study to demonstrate the necessity of rethinking contemporary

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museum work in relation to its enduring colonial frameworks. Rather than assuming that museums have reached the stage of being post-colonial, I would like to consider the complexity of decolonisation and all that this process necessitates. In agreement with Sumaya Kassim, I emphasise that "decoloniality is a complex set of ideas – it requires complex processes, space, money, and time, otherwise it runs the risk of becoming another buzzword, like 'diversity'" (2017).

Coloniality continues to frame museum practices, including the collection and the interpretation of previously and newly acquired objects and artworks. If we zoom in on a museum's practices, its collection, for example, is defined by infrastructures that represent colonial knowledge systems and categories (Von Oswald 2020), limiting the interpretation of materials to out-dated and unethical ideals. However, Larissa Förster and Friedrich Von Böse point out that one should also be careful when broadly recognising this framework. They highlight that the "sole emphasis on the colonial dimensions of collections reduces ethnological museums to 'witnesses of colonial violence', displaces other layers of meaning and tends to ignore the agentive powers of collections" (Förster and Von Böse 2019, 48). While acknowledging that museums currently reflect their colonial histories, they suggest that despite the colonial framing of museum databases, objects themselves can be understood as acting against these infrastructures (2019, 48). Importantly, however, museum practitioners need to act on this, and edit information in the databases to represent what is currently considered a more ethical practice.

Though these colonial frameworks are particularly visible in the museum's collection practices and the structure of its database (see Chapter 7), they affect other aspects of museum practice as well. As outlined by Boast, they continue to function as a site where the involvement of perceived 'others' in a public-facing endeavour is a demonstration of unequal power relations. The discourse developed through the outputs of participatory practice, conversations between participants and visitors, as well as interactions with the press and other external parties reflects these relations through the ethical considerations applied. The ethical considerations (further addressed in section 1.2.3) reveal the ongoing presence of underlying colonial frameworks. An example of these colonial legacies was revealed in the recent discussions about a 'decolonial' artistic intervention at the Grassi Museum in Leipzig, where a pedestal that used to hold the bust of an important ethnographer was demolished during an exhibition opening. The action was not appreciated by

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all visitors, with some deeming it unethical. Despite the unethical practices of this ethnographer and the deeply colonial aspects of his work, this was not considered an appropriate way of deconstructing the frameworks he had built. What this example clearly shows, however, is that different ethical frameworks seem to be applied to different people. In a written commentary on the action, Anette Rein (2022) implies that the ethnographer's practice should be assessed within the ethical context of the time, yet looking back, it is clear that at the time, the practice was not considered ethical by all involved. The ethical framework that museums apply are designed and adapted based on the gradually increasing awareness among practitioners in the so-called Global North of structural inequalities. On a very basic level, these ethical considerations are neglected in the museum's act of prioritising its own goals in a project with marginalised people. The museum focusing on its own goals before considering how to work towards the goals of participants mirrors colonial relations. Justifying this model of prioritisation no longer suffices, as museums are expected to take on a more socially engaged role and for this to be reflected in their practice.

1.2 Making participation possible?

The changing role of the museum and its inclusion of migration as a key focal point suggest that museums are not merely displaying social issues but are actively taking part in larger political debates. The objectives have changed and so has the focus of the institution. In a recent chapter on the transformations of ethnographic museums, Ulf Johansson Dahre suggests that the current debate on the social role of ethnographic museums in multicultural societies is "not so much on how to interpret or discuss objects and collections, but to put the museums as such in a new political ideological context" (2019, 62). Within a new political and ideological context, the museum could move away from its original function as a pedagogical institution (Macdonald 2003; Bennett 1995) towards a more pro-active role serving society at large.

The described shift in the museum's role from being an 'object-based institution' to focusing on engagement and audiences requires an updated perspective of who might be involved. Morse claims that this transition has "led to the introduction of a range of new terminology in museum practice (communities, audiences, stakeholders, consumers, visitors, citizens, etc.),

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each signifying different relationships between the museum and its public" (2021, 37). Applying these terms in practice, translates to museums building different types of relationships with different 'publics'; those close to the museum or perhaps directly involved in projects – the stakeholders, which the museum sometimes refers to as communities – and those visiting the museum or perhaps 'consuming' what is exhibited in, and produced by, the museum. Additionally, the museum relates to publics that might not yet engage with what goes on inside of the museum, but whom the museum aims to draw in through new thematic foci and through outreach projects that engage 'communities' outside of the institution. These different publics play a central role in the reception of a project, exerting a significant influence on museum practice. Through the development of participatory projects and the perception of their outputs, visitors, non-visitors and other 'users' of the institution are involved in museum practice. The public dimension of museum work frames the institution and anchors its role, but it does not mean this role cannot contain further social dimensions that ensure the inclusion of otherwise excluded people and narratives.

Museums are public institutions, but their role is taking on social aspects that require structures that enable a practice of care. Within a contemporary context, these structures are created by and within museums, and in response to the financial and political context that shapes them. By initiating collaborative work with forced migrants, museums engage in a practice with participants whose needs must be acknowledged and catered to. This sub-chapter outlines the increased interest in addressing migration in the museum, as well as the social and ethical frameworks that inform the related participatory work.

1.2.1 Participatory work with forced migrants

Engaging in participatory work with migrants in order to reflect upon and present stories of migration in museums is not a new phenomenon, but the interest in forced migration and stories of flight specifically is a more recent development (Golding and Walklate 2019; Whitehead et al. 2016; Morse 2021). In this section, I outline the range of projects and migration-related museums that have cropped up in recent years, especially since the refugee protection crisis of 2015. I look at the ways in which these themes are addressed within museums and how this relates to the 2019 museum definition by ICOM, which continues to be the subject of heated debate.

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Experiences of migration and the social integration of migrants have formed the basis for a range of projects over the years, such as *Belonging: Voices of London's Refugees* (2006–2007) at the Museum of London, the exhibition *Telling Our Lives* (2001 and 2002) at the Manchester Museum, and the wide-ranging project *Multaka* (2016–present), which started at the Museum für Islamische Kunst (Museum for Islamic Art) in Berlin and has since been adopted by other museums. The case studies selected for this investigation – *daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives* at the MEK in Berlin, *Museum Takeover* at Leicester Museum & Art Gallery, *So sehe ich das…* at Museum Friedland, and *Aleppo* at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam – only add to this list. More recently opened exhibitions include *Refugee: Forced to Flee* (2020–2021) at the Imperial War Museum in London, and *Museum auf der Flucht* (2019–present) at the Volkskundemuseum Wien. In addition to these examples, the increased interest in migration can be seen in the recent foundation of dedicated migration museums. Recently, the Migration Museum in London, the new wing of the German Emigration Center in Bremerhaven, the Documentation Centre for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation in Berlin (recognised as a project with a political agenda due to its direct governmental funding) and the Flugtmuseum as part of the Vardemuseerne in Denmark opened their doors. Other institutions that are yet to be completed are the Central Museum of Migration planned by DOMiD (Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland) in Cologne and the new museum building of Museum Friedland. In addition to these museums, the recently aborted projects of migration-related museums in Rotterdam and Malmö reveal a heightened concern with the museological framing of this topic. Despite the theme already gaining attention in museums, the political and social developments regarding forced migration have demonstrated the urgency of further public discussion and additional narratives; as migration remains an urgent topic in politics that continues to evoke unethical political responses.

In these museums and projects, instead of the initial narratives *about* 'other' cultures, people with a migrant perspective are invited into the museum to tell their own stories. Morse claims that "the first direction for community engagement in museums, then, has been a response to the challenges of representation and attempts to democratise the museum by including more voices – in particular those voices that had previously been systematically side-lined in the museum – in order to better reflect contemporary society and redress previous exclusions" (Morse 2021, 33). These and other museums and projects have addressed the topic of migration

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and more recently forced migration by involving migrants, but might also explore how to include people in their practices based on further qualities, experiences or interests. According to Emily Miller, head of learning and partnerships at the Migration Museum in London, the inclusion of certain groups leads to the exclusion of others. Museum visitors themselves expressed that there was a lack of stories that reflected their personal experiences of migration, while also reporting being confronted with ones they could not identify with (Miller 2020).

The role of the museum as a "contact zone" (Clifford 1997) becomes especially important when addressing stories that are unfamiliar to the museum staff and not yet included in the museum discourse. In keeping with this concept of a contact zone, Dahre suggests that ethnographic museum projects are currently being reordered to become "multicultural social arenas" (Johansson Dahre 2019, 65). The reconfiguration of the museum's role, which was discussed within ICOM in the attempt to develop a new museum definition (ICOM 2022; ICOM 2019), includes a shift in approach that is increasingly dependent on the participation of so-called 'community groups'. This becomes evident in the 2019 version of the revised definition, which identifies inclusion and democratisation as necessary characteristics of the (future) museum, and suggests that participation could be a means to achieve these institutional goals. The more recent proposal that has been selected as the new definition no longer refers to democratisation, but does contain references to participatory museum work (ICOM 2022).[2] With the aim of making a meaningful contribution to current social debates, museums need to establish active partnerships with diverse groups, since a diverse set of perspectives is not usually represented within the museum team itself. The conviction that migration needs to be addressed using a participatory approach is widespread; most museums that have recently considered this theme within their museum walls have deemed it necessary to invite migrants

2 The new museum definition reads: "A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing" (ICOM 2022b). The definition was put forward alongside another option on 9 May 2022 (ICOM 2022a). The final definition that aligns "with some of the major changes in the role of museums" (ICOM 2022b) was announced on 24 August 2022..

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themselves to speak about their experiences. By defining *heimat* (home) through a "'bottom-up' process of formation" (Römhild 2018, 30), museums and migrants collaboratively negotiate shared spaces, such as those in the museum. Museums invite forced migrants to participate in, contribute to, and even directly create, the exhibits (Römhild 2018, 30). Katarzyna Puzon describes this approach as being highly relevant to "migration and the ways in which museums 'do belonging' in their participatory projects" (2019, 43). This recent shift in focus towards forced migration and the accompanying need for a participatory approach reflects changes in the museum's role. In this new role, the institution increasingly engages with sociopolitical issues, taking an 'activist' and subjective stance rather than attempting to remain neutral (Gesser et al. 2020; Janes and Sandell 2019; Vlachou 2019). With these developments comes an increased interest in relevant, effective and sustainable participatory approaches.

This shift can also be discerned in the academic work done and the practical guides recently developed in this specific field. An example is the guide by Acesso Cultura, Associação Cultural entitled *The Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees: The Role of Cultural Organisations* (2017). The guide includes two parts: the first part listing practical examples from the field, and the second part being a guide initially published by Museumsbund e.V. (the German museums association) and later translated and published by NEMO – Network of European Museum Organisations (Brehm et al. 2016). This collaborative publication states: "The experiences and needs of people with and without immigrant backgrounds should play a bigger role in museums and exhibitions in the future" (Brehm et al. 2016, 4). The guide stresses that museums should reflect the continuous societal transformations in their practices and output through "new points of view and new narratives" (Brehm et al. 2016, 5). This idea, of course, is not new, but what is also interesting here is that it reflects the short-term focus of museum projects, since it refers to practice and output rather than pointing to potential long-term outcomes of participatory work.

Maria Vlachou's publication of this guide discusses problematic practices and contexts using a set of examples drawn up by museum practitioners (Vlachou 2017). This publication – along with more recent ones, such as Sergi (2021) and Labadi (2018) – reveals a more thorough description of what it means to work in a participatory manner with this particular 'community'. The guide points to the need to adapt different practices to different 'groups' – a process that requires knowledge about the people that make up the

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'group' (further discussed in relation to the invitation of 'communities' in Chapter 3). It also proposes that practices might take shape according to a selected theme or topic. The publication also demonstrates that museums have indeed focused excessively on this topic and related themes, possibly in order to provide an alternative to the prevailing discourse on (forced) migration (Vlachou 2017, 8). The projects that engage with the topic vary greatly in terms of their role within the institution, their wider position within society and the framework or method applied to engage this envisioned 'community'.

Though the number and variety of such projects is high, not many projects have maintained a virtual, physical or even an emotional presence in the museums in which they took place. The way in which their presence has materialised is manifested in the museum's structure and approach to participatory work more generally, but can also be found in assessing the outcomes and impact for the participants. The lack of integration of these projects or their approaches into the broader institution explains the recognised need for migration museums, as well as the increased wish for more sustainable participatory project outcomes. This sustainability is partially determined by the institutional, social and political contexts of museums, as discussed in the next section. The societal changes driving the described trends in museums affect our understanding of ethical practices and consequently shape the ways in which museums work with (or are expected to work with) these 'communities'.

1.2.2 Contextualising museum work

As seen in the previous sub-chapter, museum practice is defined by its infrastructures, and these include the organisational infrastructures and the colonial infrastructures that continue to inflect museum work (and staffing). In practice, this means that the work takes shape according the stakeholders' different priorities. These stakeholders may be internal (such as the staff members who are intrinsic to the organisational infrastructure), or external, including governments and (other) funding bodies, along with project participants and museum visitors. In this section, I consider which stakeholders make up the context of museum work, highlighting the role of funding bodies and governments in determining the museum's political context and dependency.

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As described in a previous section of this chapter, organisational infrastructures are founded on the connections between different organisational structures and the people who inhabit them. However, these structures and the museums' objectives and practices depend on the financial infrastructures in place. This particular infrastructure automatically places the museum within a broader context. The political aspects of institutional contexts often influence the available funding, but this funding is equally often tied to requirements for museums to address socially relevant themes. As Vikki McCall and Clive Gray have pointed out, today's museums are faced with several (sometimes conflicting) policy-related expectations, which demand work from the museum that goes far beyond their 'traditional' object-based practices (2014, 22). The museum's dependency on national or local government funding shapes the stakeholder relations present within the museum, which in turn affect how the practitioners operate. Robert R. Janes and Richard Sandell describe that in this situation, museums are often dependent on individuals or governments that are largely unaware of the practical challenges of museum work (2019, 7). With the funding in place, museums can act autonomously, while their costs are monitored or reviewed retrospectively. In spite of their ascribed social role museums run the risk of compromising future funding by assigning funds to costs not deemed relevant by the funder, or by proposing topics that are (deemed too) politically challenging.

This financial infrastructure is necessary for making exhibitions, preserving the collections and employing staff; but on top of long-term, core funding, temporary, project-specific funding often also contributes to structural costs which are required to keep the museum running. In an analysis of the financial management of museums, Katja Lindqvist has described how the complexity of this situation is influenced by both internal and external factors. She states the work is affected by:

> numerous objectives and schedule constraints, as well as by revenue streams that do not follow for-profit revenue models. In addition to these complex internal factors, there are complex external factors in the museum sector at work as well. These include the increased competition for funding due to an increase in the number of museums; a decrease in the public subsidy for heritage projects; changing political priorities, and the ongoing interest of donors and politicians in supporting the establishment of new museums

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rather than underwriting standard museum maintenance. (Lindqvist 2012, 10–11)

Museums in the era of 'new museology' (Vergo 1989) require more funding and have to meet additional, politically driven expectations (McCall and Gray 2014). In "service of government priorities historically as well as today" (Message 2018, 17), museums tend to function as "facilitators of cross-cultural exchange" or as "differencing machines" (Bennett 2005, 529). Initially used as instruments of government, museums have grown increasingly independent of political tendencies while still relying on funding from governments to enable their work. As government-funded institutions, political decisions and priorities support or limit museum work and the museum's potential to produce and assess long-term outcomes. In a chapter on measuring the social value of museum work, Carol Scott describes how museums have more recently begun to include outcomes as a component in their evaluation models: instead of only looking at input and output, there is an interest in assessing what this output leads to in practice. Scott argues that an assessment of long-term outcomes is difficult, as the work is "tied to the short-term inputs of the government of the day and, as such, is as much about government performance as institutional performance" (2007, 183).

Each of the cases studied in this book starts with funding, whether it is provided by a local or national government, distributed to the museums within a museum group, or contributed by another organisation. Funding bodies often work directly with the museums, but could also be providing funding to the person facilitating the project or series of projects. As such, their objectives or desired processes become integrated into the project via one of these routes. The extent to which these funding bodies exert an influence on the project varies broadly, and is highly dependent on longer-term relations between the funders and the institution receiving the support. These relations and roles are defined by power dynamics that are determined by institutional frameworks, as well as by the broader political and societal 'situatedness' of the museums. "In this process, the power of staff groups to manage how policies are to be interpreted and put into action, and how jobs are to be undertaken, provides them with a central role in managing the demands that are placed upon them" (McCall and Gray 2014, 29). This complex situation leads to a more individual practice within the institutions, in which practitioners push to meet the demands set by funding bodies and governing

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bodies of the museum. It is within this context that participatory projects take shape.

Bearing in mind specific aims or missions set out by funding institutions or by the institutions themselves, project organisers develop a project for a group they would like to engage or collaborate with. These 'groups' range from local community groups to groups deemed representative of social and political debates, or partner organisations with related goals or interests. The people they address form the 'community' whose heritage will be presented in the museum. Despite the key role of participants in the participatory process – after all, without participants, it would not be participatory – their experiences and goals are rarely actively taken into account by museums, especially since funding applications are usually expected to list the objectives at the outset. As such, the goals of the project are typically decided on before people are invited to take part. In these processes, however, the museum often claims a central role, communicating with funders, audiences, project facilitators (if external to the museum) and the project participants. Returning to Morse, these relations reflect the common critique of community engagement work, which states that the museum is "the centre and the community at its periphery" (Morse 2021, 41). This dynamic often informs the participatory work of museums and has also informed the demand for participation to be moved from the margins to the core of the institution, while simultaneously moving away from temporary projects with exclusively immediate outputs (Morse 2021, 46). These envisioned shifts – placing the community at the heart of museum work and considering participation an integral part of museum practices – are seen as necessary for achieving a more sustainable museum practice. The museum's role, in response, should focus on serving its visitors and local populations, adopting a more *care-full* approach.

The goals of the different stakeholders informed some of the outcomes of the projects, and to understand these roles and goals, they need be outlined for each of the case studies. Understanding the outcomes as well as the infrastructures that informed them will help me to enquire into the meaning of the processes and encounters developed by and within the different museums selected for this study. This section forms the basis for mapping out the case studies and the different stakeholders that made them up, which is central to the next chapter of this study.

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1.2.3 Museum ethics and practices of care

First, however, I outline the concept of ethics in museums and its application in practice, in order to review the potential for a more people-centred approach. I will outline recent theoretical discussions of museum ethics and build on these in later chapters to review the ethics of the participatory practices of the different case studies. This final section considers the structures of the museum that make the perpetuation of certain practices inevitable. It studies the ethics of museological practices to highlight the connection between ethics, ethical practices and colonial attitudes. The ethical framework provides the context in which to discuss larger issues mentioned by project participants, such as those of stereotyping and discrimination. These and other harmful practices take on a central position in this debate and in discussions of the role of museums.

"There is no part of the museum that is free of ethical implications" (Besterman 2007, 432). As Tristram Besterman points out, ethics in museum practices may refer to many different elements of the work done by museums. The term ethics refers to the moral guidelines that inform our activities and decisions, which, according to Bernice Murphy, include the acknowledgement that these morals are learned. She states: "it involves not only a commitment to good conduct itself, but also an accompanying recognition that good conduct is a learned activity, not naturally acquired through social training" (2016, 32). The ethical codes that have informed museological practices in the past were taught from a White perspective serving White priorities and values. They informed the colonial practices of museums and are still present in a range of ways, but sometimes form part of the invisible infrastructures of museums. The ethical guidelines and codes used or applied in practice today do, however, prescribe a shift away from predominantly considering and catering to the moral values of White people towards morals that apply to all people. Despite the increased awareness of discriminatory behaviours and of deeply embedded modes of exclusion, institutional change is only happening very slowly.

This change in perception and the emergence of a more global ethical understanding are not yet visible in the ethical codes written for museum practices by organisations such as ICOM and the American Association of Museums (AAM). The formal ethical considerations proposed by ICOM, for example, often address the use, display or disposal of collections, but can hardly serve as guidelines for the practical work that is done in and by

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museums. The current ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (last revised in 2017) only refers to collaborations with source communities or "communities served" in order to promote cooperation with museums in different countries and to enhance collections. Despite pointing to the role of museums as serving certain communities, the code overtly describes ways in which these 'communities' might serve the museum, such as by contributing objects or information about them to the museum collection (ICOM 2017). Domenico Sergi underlines the importance of considering the ethics of museum projects in 'community engagement' (2021). However, throughout his book, Sergi neither critically nor practically addresses what such considerations might entail, and where ethics come into play or should be (re-)assessed. Opening up 'traditional' museological processes means reconciling the competing claims of the different stakeholders involved, and questioning the accountability of the museum as one of these stakeholders. Besterman suggests that "the ethics of accountability does not mean, however, that the museum should be confined to a role that is merely responsive to stakeholder needs and aspirations. Museums are also places of creative interaction, in which traditional values and orthodoxies can and should be challenged" (2007, 435–436). In their public role, however, museums should be held accountable for systematically dismissing the needs and aspirations of so many (potential) stakeholders.

Museums fulfil a specific and prescribed role in society, which ties into expectations from their different stakeholders, such as global organisations, funding bodies, museum practitioners and museum visitors. Their (future) expectations are highlighted by the ICOM museum definition, both in its previous form and its newly articulated conception (ICOM 2019; ICOM 2022b), which describes museums as places of exhibiting, collecting and preserving heritage. These roles, of course, do not have to apply to all projects; quite often museums set up separate projects to fill a specific gap in their collection, or they develop exhibitions and other projects without the ambition of collecting their outputs. As such, it cannot be assumed that the projects that I have assessed as case studies were initiated to contribute to one of these or any of the museum's other goals. Participatory projects might just be participatory for the sake of inviting in people who are being marginalised in order to contribute to the representation of diverse communities, without the intention of developing an exhibition or adding objects to the collection. Using Morse's notion of a "logic of contribution" as a starting point, this chapter addressed the ethics of museum work and its relation to participatory

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practices and decision-making (2021). Morse omits the practice of ethics from her book, tying this concept to care without identifying the ethical frameworks in which museum work takes place. The museums that hosted or initiated the case studies discussed in this investigation all adhere to an unwritten or written code of ethics, which informs the way they work with people both inside and outside of the museum.

In her discussion of museum ethics, Janet Marstine refers to Hein's feminist perspective as a useful model for reimagining museum ethics, stating that "its focus on collaboration and inclusion leads to new understandings of the importance of social responsibility in the museum. Its emphasis on process over product points towards the centrality of transparency in museum policy and practice" (2011, 9). These considerations highlight elements that form the basis of participatory practices in museums, and as such should be central to these practices and their ethical considerations. Marstine describes this perspective as a break with the canonical work carried out by museums, allowing for "non-hierarchic approaches to staff organization, museum-community engagement and the sharing of heritage" (2011, 9). The intention to break with hierarchies, to enable a bottom-up approach, is central to participatory work and especially to projects with forced migrants (Lynch 2017a, 227). An ethical code generally includes practical guidelines on participatory or collaborative work, but these rarely address a specific group or context, such as people with experiences of migration. These ethical codes are therefore considered more or less 'universal' and are not necessarily questioned when they are reused in a different setting. This generalisation undermines the importance of ethical questions to inform good and moral practices, and at the same time, it emphasises the museums' lack of understanding of the privileges and prejudices at play.

Ethics "relates to the daily activities of every museum professional" (Edson 2016, 135). Departing from this understanding, it is only logical that the projects that are central to this study are ridden with ethical complexities. The complexity of ethics and the need for the revision of the ethical codes that inform museum practices was addressed by the American Association of Museums in 2000, and has since been revisited. The association stated that:

> ethical codes evolve in response to changing conditions, values, and ideas. A professional code of ethics must, therefore, be periodically updated. It must also rest upon widely shared values. Although the operating environment of

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> museums grows more complex each year, the root value for museums, the tie that connects all of us together despite our diversity, is the commitment to serving people, both present and future generations. (AAM 2000)

These guidelines must reflect their social context and will therefore be constantly changing. However, they are also (or should be) geared towards future contexts and considerations. The inclination towards envisioning the future requires the ongoing transformation of ethics, which is reflected by the shifts in White people's empathetic understanding and broader world view more generally. A future-proof ethical framework ought to encompass what is deemed ethical by everyone involved. This might change over time, but the biggest changes to the framework to date have been in response to an increased awareness rather than the actual changes in how people wanted to be treated. In considering a sustainable practice and enabling outcomes that will remain relevant within the museum's future understanding of what is ethical, museum practitioners and other stakeholders need to think beyond the temporal scale of the exhibition or project and recognise potential long-term consequences or outcomes. Only what is considered ethical by all parties can be deemed ethical practice.

1.3 Conclusion

This preliminary framework, which is connected to the context of the case studies in Chapter 2, supports the study of the outcomes of the projects and their lasting impacts on institutional perspectives, practices and discourse. A thorough study of the infrastructures that constitute museums – including the organisational structures, the stakeholders and their roles within these structures, financial resources, the museum's ties to local and national governments, and the colonial and ethical contexts of museum work – outlined the complexity of these memory institutions. I discussed how, within these frameworks, participatory projects with forced migrants have started to take shape and how they are defined by goals set by funding bodies and museums, rather than goals outlined by the participants themselves. This practice is central to this study, which will become clearer in the following chapter.

Building on the framework identified here, the next chapter outlines the case studies and their museological and political contexts. It identifies the

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institutions that hosted the participatory projects and describes the different stakeholders involved. I provide a detailed outline of the particular contexts and the projects themselves, in order to establish a foundation for the further discussion of the goals, processes and outcomes of the four case studies.

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