Call for Papers

Title: “Displaying the social history of migrants: content, scenography, public engagement”
Date: October 20, 2020
Location: Paris, France
Subject fields: Migration History, Social History, Museum Studies, Public History

The Centre d’histoire sociale des mondes contemporains (CNRS/University of Paris I) invites proposals for papers to be presented at an international symposium which will be held at the Campus Condorcet, in Paris, on October 20, 2020. Confirmed speakers already include prominent specialists of social history of migration and museum studies, as well as museum curators from various countries. We now seek proposals from post-doctoral scholars, recent PhDs, as well as those in the final stages of their dissertations with a background in related fields, in particular migration studies and social history, especially as they intersect with museum studies and/or public history.

The symposium is organized as part as a research project funded in part by the Institut Convergences Migrations, called “Migrants in ordinary housing: access, appropriations of domestic spaces and heritagization” (2020-2022), which will result, among other things, in a temporary exhibition from September 2021 to June 2022. In the longer run, the project is meant as an exploration of the feasibility and challenges surrounding the potential creation of a museum of working-class housing in the Paris area.

We call for empirically rich and theoretically informed contributions that bring social history and migration studies into conversation with museum studies and scenography. The question of how to display, in an exhibition context, the daily experience of immigration in all its social dimensions is still puzzling curators and historians all over the world, calling for innovative solutions that can best touch a wide audience. From the many and varied overlaps of social history and museum studies, contributions could identify and discuss the approaches that work best to make visitors understand, feel and relate with the social life of past migrants. Alternatively, contributors might venture into the broader issue of designing, and getting across, public history content engaging with the social life of working-class populations. The symposium will examine the given theme from a trans-epochal, transregional, and interdisciplinary perspective. Proposals that will integrate a reflection about inclusivity and the participation of migrants themselves in the exhibition process are particularly sought for.

Indicative list of relevant topics:
- displaying social history in a museum context
- historical scenography
- public history and the daily life of migrants
- innovative museum strategies to display historical records of immigration
- presenting microhistorical narratives

The symposium’s languages will be English and French. On a case-by-case basis, basic expenses for travel and accommodation can be partially covered, provided applicants send a separate statement detailing the reasons for the financial request and a detailed lay-out of anticipated expenses. The symposium is hosted by Dr. Fabrice Langrognet (CHS) and Dr. Muriel Cohen (CHS). Please send a brief CV and a proposal of no more than 500 words (along with the detailed funding request for whom it may concern) by March 1, 2020 to Fabrice.Langrognet@univ-paris1.fr. Successful applicants will be notified in April 2020.