

## **Representing Migrants' Identities in Museums.**

### **Transnational Knowledge and Memory Constructions at the Intersection of Institutional, Academic and Public Discourse.**

Curators and academics are increasingly discussing how to deal with phenomena of migration, collective memory and identity constructions in museums. How are national and European images of the “self” and the “other” produced in the “Global Culture Industry” (Lash/Lury 2007)? Using a transnational exhibition presented by museums of history and migration in Paris (Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration, Goethe Institute Paris) and in Berlin (Deutsches Historisches Museum, Kreuzberg Museum) as an example, this cross-cultural and multi-site case study examines the various discursive levels referred to in interactions constructing intercultural identities, e.g. institutional talk about the museums, an EU initiative for intercultural dialogue which constitutes the political context of the exhibition and scientific conferences that influence the choice of objects for the exhibition, which aims to transmit its concepts into debates among the public.

This microsociological study investigates how situated knowledge about the topic of the exhibition – i.e. identities of immigrants, and how they are represented today and in the past in France and in Germany – is constructed in the production and audience reception of the exhibition. How do written texts, films, posters and other objects of the exhibition as well as the surrounding programme are given meaning? Does the reception of the same exhibition vary between sites, in different spaces and in different kinds of interaction? The key-issues are how academic knowledge influences the construction of identities and memory and how the academic, political and institutional context makes possible certain enunciations and constrains others.

The pragmatic and poststructuralist interaction and discourse analysis focuses on contextualisation cues involved in talk and text. Based on ethnographic recordings and observations of the production process of the exhibition and of guided tours, focus group discussions with visitors and the organisers of the exhibition, as well as of interviews carried out by journalists and media broadcasts, the analysis examines the conceptual development of the project and the interaction between the museum and the general public. Considering methodological and power issues, the study aims to investigate how the global and the local intertwine when meaning, cultural knowledge and memory are constructed, translated and negotiated in intercultural and transnational contexts.