INTRODUCTION

Museum communities/community museums

Karen Brown

This book explores case studies of community museums, ecomuseums, grassroots heritage organisations and their networks from Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. It builds upon and complements the growing literature on the broad topic of 'museums and community' through its specific focus on museums that have been created from community action, respond to local challenges and are reliant upon local systems of governance. The volume is birthed out of the international conference *Itinerant Identities: museum communities/community museums* held at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, in November 2018. This was a major academic meeting for the European Commission Horizon 2020 research project European Union and Latin American and Caribbean (EU-LAC) Museums that brought together museum and university partners from the Caribbean, Chile, Costa Rica, Peru, Portugal, Scotland (project co-ordinator), Spain and International Council of Museums (ICOM) (http://www.eulacmuseums.net).[1] On this occasion, we partnered with the Museums Association of the Caribbean and launched the innovative exhibition of contemporary art entitled *Arrivants: Art and Migration in the Anglophone Caribbean World* at The Barbados Museum and Historical Society. These transatlantic events and the compilation of this volume are part of an ongoing process seeking to address imbalances in the discourses of museology and art curation that have to date occluded the Caribbean and Central American regions, and where possible we endeavour to give greater agency and voice to the communities represented. The conference title *Itinerant Identities* reflects Alissandra Cummins' point that the Caribbean is in essence a region where (virtually) everyone came from (virtually) everywhere else, whether voluntarily or by force, and the subtitle 'museum communities/community museums' seeks to reflect the problematics of terminology in the field while also reinstating the possibility of characterising a 'community museum' informed by transatlantic research.

In the past, scholars, including Hooper-Greenhill (2000), Weil (2002), Witcomb (2003), Watson (2007), Crooke (2007) and Davis (2011), have tended to refute the idea of a set definition for community in relation to museums. As Peter Davis concluded, the term 'museum community' is 'an almost meaningless expression' from a sociological perspective (Davis 2011, p. 36). Even so, in recent decades, a great many volumes on the topic have appeared by these authors and more including Karp, Lavine and Kreamer (1992), Golding and Modest (2013), Kadoyama (2018) and Allison (2020). The complexity of the field is largely owing to the multifaceted working relationships between museums as institutions and communities on the ground. For example, Sheila Watson notes the misunderstandings and assumptions that frequently arise between museums and their stakeholders when they attempt to work with and for communities (Watson 2007, pp. 8–12), while Elizabeth Crooke recognises the political side of museums, entwining her arguments with concepts of place, belonging and memory when she asserts that 'collectively we form a myriad of sometimes shifting communities […] Nevertheless, we need communities in order to build our experiences and forge our identities' (2007, pp. 71–2). Almost a decade later, she reflects,

> the sustained interest in the concept of community has had a major impact on museum practice […] it is not just a case of museums representing or symbolizing community; now it is museums forging community identity, altering community experiences, and improving community life.
>
> *(Crooke 2015, pp. 481, 486)*

At the same time, some recent scholarship has come to recognise that museums are not neutral spaces and is advocating for them to acknowledge the contestations surrounding their histories and current uses, calling on them to wake up from a state of 'sleep walking' to become more 'active', 'ethical' and 'mindful', especially in response to the climate crisis and its attendant issues for South-North relations (Sandell 2007; Newell and Wehner 2017; Janes and Sandell 2019).

This new volume will explore how community museums are gaining in recognition within this movement through the presentation of case studies from remote areas of Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. The local actions presented are all, in their own ways, speaking to major societal shifts and global issues, such as climate justice, in a manner often under-recognised by museum support organisations and governments. For example, Chapter 6 on archaeology museums in northern Peru and sustainable development focuses on community-level responses to the impact of the cyclical El Niño weather phenomenon, which prompted museums to build community cohesion alongside sustainability of cultural heritage assets. Despite their contemporary relevance, remote museums that engage meaningfully with communities are nevertheless often systemically under-resourced and under-represented on the national and international stages, often precisely because of their small scale, lack of visibility, clear definition, constitution, conformity,

museology research or inscription in national accreditation systems. This is one of the major gaps in knowledge that this book seeks to address. By seeking to *characterise* community museums in all their diversity, it brings to light their potentialities vis-à-vis global challenges, informing a new wave of what I shall refer to as 'ecological community museology' for the 21st century. This concept aligns with scholars such as Cameron (2014) and Wehner (2016) who have argued for the need to 'ecologise' museum work at large because of the ecological crisis facing the world (climate change, food and water crises, overpopulation, loss of biodiversity, species extinction and more), with profound impacts on humanity (Rockström et al. 2009; Jeffrey 2019). The potential for museums to be significant collaborators in local climate action is evident in several activities presented in this book, such as community-based exhibitions, education activities and citizen science in Jamaica (Chapter 7) and at the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands (Chapter 8).

What is a community museum, and why do they matter?

While this book advocates for the societal and environmental relevance of community museums, to define a 'community museum' in a universal way as part of this discussion is likely to prove an unhelpful endeavour. This is because discussions in this field can quickly become complicated – and contested – when scholars attempt to define 'museum' and 'community' and even more so when these words come together as 'community museum'. To begin by breaking down the term 'community museum' into 'community' and 'museum', one notes that the concept of 'community' itself is a vast topic of discussion in social science – at least 94 definitions have been identified, the only common characteristic being that they all involve people (Hillery 1955, cited in Barton and Goldsmith 2016, p. 25). When it comes to the term 'museum' itself, there are numerous definitions offered by dictionaries and museum support organisations, although in recent years, definition-making has proved a contentious and divisive task. From 2013, in ICOM debates on the revision of its Statutes, and through the formal process of the reimagining of the ICOM definition of a museum that has taken place since 2016, voices have clashed in a world structured and fractured by histories of inequality (ICOM 2019; ICOM Code of Ethics 2021). This friction is all too easily pitted as conservative versus inclusive museology, or Global North versus Global South. However, the process has also highlighted the fact that the world has firmly entered an age of museum activism, one in which a new generation is calling for a more diverse system involving community action and social participation to supplant what it sees as an outdated museum model inherited from the West (Cummins, Farmer and Russell 2013; Mairesse 2017; Brown, Brulon Soares and Nazor 2018; Brown and Mairesse 2018; Sandahl 2019; Brulon Soares 2020a). In Prague, on 24 August 2022, the Extraordinary General Assembly of ICOM finally approved the proposal for the new museum definition (ICOM, 2022). Calls for museums to become facilitators of community action and decolonisation are also gathering apace, led

by museum support organisations, such as the UK Museums Association, who define decolonisation for museums as 'a long-term process that seeks to recognise the integral role of empire in museums – from their creation to the present day' (UK Museums Association 2021), and ICOM's International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM), which is investigating ways in which museology has been predominantly shaped by Western thought. Drawing on the thinking of Anibal Quijano, Walter Mignolo and others concerning the coloniality of power, ICOFOM Chair, Bruno Brulon Soares, has propounded that 'decolonising museology' is an active process of reclamation by subaltern groups whose museums were previously defined by experts and 'the hegemonic discourse of nation states' (Brulon Soares 2020b, 51; see also Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Quijano 2020; Brown, Brulon Soares and González Rueda 2022).[2] This line of thought is aligned with Chapter 1 in this book, whose authors, Cuauhtémoc Camarena Ocampo and Teresa Morales, based in Oaxaca, Mexico, have led the Red de Museos Comunitarios de América and created and promoted *museos comunitarios* in Latin America at grassroots level for decades. These museums usually do not receive State support, and their personnel are often volunteers with limited access to professional training, making these institutions at once vulnerable in economic terms, but potentially strong in terms of community-led sustainable development. This is because at their best, community museums are created from community need, curated from traditional knowledge and managed using accepted forms of local governance.

Attempts have also been made to provide practical guidance on the creation of community-led museums, including the American Alliance of Museums' *Museums and Community Toolkit* (2002) aimed at planning successful museum–community dialogues, and the *Manual para la creación y desarrollo de museos comunitarios* (Camarena Ocampo and Morales Lersch 2014), discussed in more depth later. *On Community and Sustainable Museums* (Brown, Davis and Raposo 2019) – another key output from the EU-LAC Museums project – contains landmark instructive chapters by Hugues de Varine, Morales and Davis, and a selection of case studies of community museums from countries partnering in the project. An initiative to map community museums online also originated from the EU-LAC Museums project, with researchers uploading a suite of short videos on community museums to a YouTube channel called 'Museos Comunitarios' and proposing an Observatory of Community Museums to policy makers for future funding by the European Commission. A recent book and online resource researched by Csilla Ariese-Vandemeulebroucke (2018) has correspondingly broken new ground in mapping community museum organisations in the Caribbean with an emphasis on the grassroots, and a new project, Shared Island Stories Between Scotland and the Caribbean: Past, Present, Future, is augmenting these investigations into ecological community museology from the grassroots and continues to advocate for community museums around the world.[3] A number of the museums featured in the present volume likewise grew out of collective action at community level, often as a way of rescuing heritage at risk of disappearance. For example, the Museum of Neltume

in Chile discussed in Chapter 3, which began with one family making a collection concerning woodlands and subsequently engaging in collective memory work by narrating stories of dictatorship and its impact on their local population.

However, while community museums are gaining enhanced recognition in the 21st century, it is important to remember that they have been born from community need in different formats and in different parts of the world since the 19th and early 20th centuries. They include small local examples formed in the UK and USA, the Heimatmuseen in Germany, Open Air museums in Sweden and initiatives in Africa and Mexico (Chaumier, in Mairesse and Desvaillés 2011; Davis 2011, pp. 50–68). For example, in promoting sensitivity to local natural habitats and their value for people to study and enjoy, the English otologist and founder of Wimbledon Village Club, Joseph Toynbee's (1815–1866) thesis was that museums need not collect and display rare or remarkable objects, but rather 'the common objects of Nature' in the neighbourhood of the museum – in this case specimens found within a five-mile radius of a parish church of Wimbledon (Toynbee 1863). Arguing that what he called the 'New Museum' be first and foremost useful for society, the Director of Newark Public Library from 1902 to 1929, John Cotton Dana (1856–1929), created the Newark Museum in 1909 at a small, local scale because the 'museum of the old type […] has hardened into a cake of ancient and outgrown customs' (Dana 1917, in Peniston 1999, p. 35).[4] William Noland Berkeley (1867–1945) similarly explained why 'small-community museums' are both feasible and very desirable, for their 'helpful service to every class of citizens' in small cities, towns and villages (Berkeley 1932, pp. 7–8). Such community-based principles arguably paved the way for the better-known Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, opened in Washington, DC in 1967. Described as 'probably the first really communitarian museum in the world' by de Varine, Anacostia was created as an African-American museum commissioned by the Smithsonian Institution where the founder, the Methodist Episcopal Zion preacher John Kinard, worked alongside the local community to create a museum focused on education for future generations, producing displays on issues facing the local residents such as life in prison (Kinard and Nighbert 1972; de Varine 2017a, p. 20).

Other initiatives, cited by de Varine, and also by Serge Chaumier in the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie* (Mairesse and Desvaillés 2011), are first from Niger, where the Niamey 'modules of living culture' (de Varine 2017a, p. 19) saw seven principal ethnic and cultural groups living on five hectares of land, charged with the maintenance and interpretation (in the colonial language of French) of their own cultures, and second Mexico's Casa del Museo created in the 1970s. Overseen by the Director of the Mexican Museum of Anthropology, Mario Vázquez Ruvalcaba (1923–2000), the Casa del Museo was an experiment in decentralisation. Located in a peripheral area of the country, this museum sought to be more embedded in the community than traditional museums and to butt against the often elitist and rigid tropes of traditional museums. Museologist François Mairesse notes how it became a place of exchange and discussion of consciousness

raising (as was the case with Anacostia) by bringing together awareness of social issues with ancient Mexican culture (Mairesse 2000, pp. 43–4). The 1960s and 1970s then saw the growth of community museology and ecomuseums as a movement heavily influenced by political, cultural and social forces, including environmentalism (Davis 2008; 2011, pp. 50–68; de Varine 2017a, pp. 24–5, 34–9, 55; 2017b).[5] It is no accident that just as ideas of sustainability and decolonisation are assuming increased urgency today in the face of climate change and calls for global social justice, so community museums are – 50 years after Stockholm's UN Conference on the Human Environment and the 1972 Round Table of Santiago de Chile – due to come into their own in addressing major societal and environmental issues for the 21st century (ICOM Resolution No. 5, 2019).[6]

Museos comunitarios *in Latin America*

Museos comunitarios thrived from the 1980s, often as a form of resistance against dominant regimes. Mexico saw the Declaration of Oaxtepec promoted by International Movement for a New Museology (MINOM) (see Davis 2008), and the Union of Community Museums was created in the Mexican state of Oaxaca in 1991. In 1993, the National Program for Community Museums was created, defining a community museum as one that is born in, created, run and managed by the community. The network Red de Museos Comunitarios de América was founded in 2000, and at its first meeting, it resolved to strengthen the museums located around Latin America (Camarena Ocampo and Morales Lersch 2016). Directed by Camarena Ocampo and Morales, this network maintains a carefully crafted and fixed definition of the *museo comunitario*, referring specifically to ideas of collective self-determination and memory that are crucial for Indigenous and ethnic contexts:

> A community museum is created by the community itself: it is a museum "of" the community, not generated outside "for" the community.
>
> A community museum is a tool for the community to affirm the physical and symbolic possession of its heritage, through its own forms of organisation.
>
> A community museum is a space where community members build a collective self-knowledge, fostering reflection, criticism, and creativity. It strengthens identity because it legitimises history and their own values, protecting the community's way of life inwards and outwards. It strengthens the memory that feeds their aspirations for the future. (What is a community museum?) (www.museocomunitario.org)[7]

Their practical *Manual para la creación y desarrollo de museos comunitarios* (2014) calls for the whole community to be involved in the decision-making processes of museum creation, in the gathering of the museum's collections and in the selection of the topics that are to be told. Through such involvement, it is the

community's vision that is projected by the objects on display, and the authors argue in compelling ways, here and elsewhere, that the distinctiveness of *museos comunitarios* arises from their focus on 'telling a story, building a future' to bring about community self-determination (Camarena Ocampo and Morales Lersch 2019, pp. 38–53).

Museos comunitarios are important in Latin America for several reasons. Often these museums tell a different story from mainstream museums, being born from the grassroots and curated by local people using local systems of governance, especially in Indigenous territories. They are examples of Brulon Soares's reflections on the power of the subaltern in contemporary discussions about institutional power and control, and they offer a model for self-determination of Indigenous, ethnic and marginalised groups in the realm of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which speaks powerfully to contemporary debates in decolonisation. They are represented in Chapters 1 and 2 of this volume through examples of museums and community empowerment from Mexico, Colombia and Costa Rica.

Towards a transatlantic community museology

The primary aim of this volume is therefore to advocate for the contemporary relevance of a global community museology rooted in the past but mindful of global issues, such as social justice, decolonisation and climate change, when considered through a transatlantic lens. The secondary aim is to expand the museum studies corpus on community museums, ecomuseums, critical museology or sociomuseology, in English language. In his landmark monograph *L'Ecomusée singulier et plurial* (2017a), de Varine observes that 'ecomuseology' does not exist as a discipline in academic research or university teaching and adds that 'the New Museology as a world movement and as a discipline different to traditional museology has been little studied' (p. 67).[8] His observation could be challenged by citing the teaching of museology in institutions, such as the Sorbonne in Paris, the University of Lisbon, the Reinwardt Academy in Amsterdam, the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and the Institute for Experimental Museology in the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro.[9] However, it may be fair to state that although the New Museology – including ecomuseology, sociomuseology and community museology more generally – has been explained by a number of scholars, such as Van Mensch (1992) and Peter Davis, who summarises it as a 'radical reassessment of the roles of museums within society' (2011, p. 62), these topics have so far been under-represented in the UK and Anglophone museum studies programmes.[10] This gap is also prevalent in the Caribbean region; an issue addressed in our closing Chapter 15 where Alissandra Cummins and Anne Bancroft present the history of museum studies teaching in the Anglophone Caribbean and suggest innovative ways forward, including prioritising museum conservation training for tropical climates, thereby combating systemic histories of dependency between the region, North America and the UK, in particular.

Museum communities/community museums: case studies

The chapters that follow are organised into two thematic sections. In **PART 1, 'Community Museums: Nurturing identities and resilience'**, thematic strands include: the role of community museums in the struggle for self-determination; the question of the role of museums in defining community identities; the importance of young people's participation and intergenerational work for sustainability; the role of museums in local development, reconciliation and healing; and community-based museums and climate change.

The opening **Chapter 1**, 'Community museums and decolonisation: reflections from the Network of Community Museums of America' by Camarena Ocampo and Morales Lersch, highlights the colonial context for asserting self-determination in community museum contexts in their networked museums from eight countries in Latin America. Drawing on the key thinkers and writers of the Latin American network of modernity and coloniality, including Quijano and Michael (2000), Mignolo and Walsh (2018), Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel (2007), the authors frame the situation for how museum communities view themselves in the context of a colonial order imposed by a European cultural imaginary. Linking with the ideas of Linda Tuhiwai Smith of New Zealand (2012) in relation to Māori people, they also tackle the epistemic problem of incorporating subaltern knowledge into the processes of knowledge production to enhance self-determination, well-being and self-worth. Emphasising their own network's practices in creating community museums since 1985, the authors outline how they engage Indigenous communities in a collective methodology in the construction of knowledge through existing community assemblies' frameworks. The chapter is instructive in demonstrating methods used by different communities, including community workshops for shaping display narratives, intergenerational transmission of knowledge through oral history and research questions, as well as disentangling their stories from colonial narratives and enriching self-worth that resists a dominant imaginary and enables new ways of seeing self through their collective processes. In **Chapter 2**, 'International collaboration between ecomuseums and community museums: the experience of the EU-LAC Museums Bi-Regional Youth Exchange in fostering identity, building community sustainability and resilience', Jamie Brown and Karen Brown explore some of these ideas through a specific case study of a transnational youth exchange that involved community museums in the network discussed in Chapter 1, as well as the ecomuseum of the Isle of Skye in Scotland, and several others in the northern Porto region of Portugal. This case study draws attention to the essential value in investing in young people, with one of the core methodologies used being intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and another being community mapping, in which the young people recorded significant sites, resources and other places of importance for local identity and tradition. Through a detailed account of the process of running and disseminating this youth exchange, the authors suggest the value of such cultural exchange between youth not only to the local communities involved but also as a model for future projects.

   Chapter 3, 'Passion as a mobilising tool for community-based museums: case studies from Southern Chile' by Karin Weil, Bárbara Elmúdesi, Laura Fúquene and Javiera Errázuriz also takes a case study approach to community-based museums, this time in the context of the historic Round Table of Santiago de Chile of 1972, and focusing on the social role of museums. Somewhat like Camarena and Morales, their findings highlight the role of community-based museums in telling uncensored stories and communicating memories from within the community itself, ultimately creating a sense of belonging. The chapter draws significant attention to the setting for the Santiago Round Table, which took place over ten days, convened by the government of President Salvador Allende. For the authors of this chapter, the conditions for community-based museums go beyond the sharing of attributes, to be conditional on the strength of connection between members of the community, who are 'doing something' in an active way together. Case studies include the Museo Comunitario Despierta Hermano de Malalhue, founded to tackle discrimination against Mapuche children, the Museo Escolar de la Aguada, created in response to environmental conflict, and the Centro Cultural and Museo y Memoria de Neltume, developed in the context of human rights violations. These museums are presented for their roles as 'activist museums' in offering safe spaces for reflection against dominant powers and hegemonic institutions, for processes of overcoming trauma enacted at community level, to 'perfect the art of living, not that of progress'. Similar issues are at stake in **Chapter 4**, 'Museums and Community Engagement in Belize: case studies for protection and active participation of knowledge' by Sherilyne Jones. Focused on a country located culturally in the nexus between Central America and the Anglophone Caribbean, Jones explores the role of museums as an enabling tool for the exploration and expression of identity and collective histories in an independent nation (since 1981) that includes a variety of ethnic roots. She traces the development of the Belizian network of Houses of Culture – small, local museums that are cultural spaces in district towns aimed at empowering communities through shared authority to preserve, transmit and promote their culture, such as Garifuna drumming. This expansion of the definition of community museums is then developed in **Chapter 5**, 'The EU-LAC Museums project and community-based museums', by Karen Brown, Marie Claverie and Karin Weil. The chapter reflects on the terms of the EU-LAC Museums project and presents the results of the project's international survey entitled 'What is a community museum in your region?'. By 19 April 2021, this survey had gathered 528 responses from 70 countries written in English, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and French and yielded some fascinating insights about community museums, their governance and value for local communities within and beyond the EU-LAC regions. From these results, the emphasis is found to be on 'people', 'place', 'space', 'culture' and 'future' as holding the key characteristics of the community museum.

   Furthering the discussion around museums, community and sustainability is **Chapter 6**, 'Museums as tools for sustainable community development: a study of

four archaeological museums in northern Peru' by Luis Repetto Málaga and Karen Brown, which transitions the book towards an ecological community museology. This chapter communicates the processes and outcomes of the Peru case study of the EU-LAC Museums project, which worked with four community-centred archaeological museums on Peru's northern coast. The chapter also grounds itself in the 1972 Round Table and emphasises a principle of decentralising museum focus to the peripheries but moves on to discuss ways in which museums can become a resource for local cultural, educational and economic development, through territorial management and international tourism. The former was most significant for the north-coast populations, when the severe El Niño flooding that hit in February 2017 drew attention to the need for museums to get involved in territorial management, supported by the University of València in Spain. One of the ways to do this was by reviving popular traditions, such as *chicha de jora* making (a traditional alcoholic drink made from maize). Herein, sustainability is framed as necessitating involvement of community members and support for them, while also highlighting areas where there has been a disconnect between the museums and certain communities. A similar focus on engaging local populations with heritage organisations for tackling climate change issues is found in **Chapter 7**, 'Connecting museums through citizen science: Jamaica/US partnership in environmental preservation'. Herein, Tracy Commock and Dionne Newell present the case study of the project 'Citizen-Led Urban Environmental Restoration', which saw young citizen scientists (aged 14–18) in Jamaica and the USA work closely with scientists from the museums to restore two environmentally degraded urban sites. The chapter reflects on the benefits and effectiveness of education outreach outside of traditional museum walls. It also offers possible solutions and methods to improve the efforts of museum professionals in natural history and engage citizens in environmental restoration in urban spaces.

Another case study from the Caribbean closes this section on museums and climate action: **Chapter 8** by Natalie Urquhart, 'Evoking wonder to inspire action around climate change – a collaborative exhibition project in the Cayman Islands', transitions the volume towards a focus on participatory curatorial practice. Taking the stance that museums are among the most trusted institutions, the chapter presents a compelling case for their role in bringing about positive change in climate action, especially in the context of islands, which are among the most vulnerable places in the face of changing climate effects. An effective way in which this can be achieved, argues Urquhart, is by inspiring wonder through art installation, using waste as materials. By creating visitor experiences that trigger not despondency, but positive reinforcement and action, museums can make a difference. The example provided is the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands' multidisciplinary collaborative exhibition *Coral Encounters*, which drew on macro photography to consider the wonders of underwater nature and coral health in the reefs, together with science-fiction inspired colours and grids to create impact and engage a wide range of audiences, including schools and families.

The second section of this book, **PART 2 'Connecting Regions: Communities and museums co-curating heritage and memory'**, examines similar issues through the lens of contemporary museum partnerships and practices, as well as testing the continued relevance of the notion of the 'integral museum' and its relatives in the form of ecomuseums. Herein, a series of case studies present diverse opportunities and approaches that offer insights into communities partnering with museums through co-creation and co-curation strategies to enable bi-regional action. This section focuses largely on exhibition development, both from Caribbean and Latin American perspectives and for Caribbean and Diasporic audiences: studying the potential of exhibitions by examining the contribution of multi-vocal, co-curatorial methodologies to the development of a distinctively Caribbean approach to exhibition-making; or reflecting on the design and architecture of the Virtual Museum of Caribbean Migration and Memory (VMCMM).

Opening the section, Natalie McGuire's **Chapter 9**, 'The case for a rhizomatic research approach in Caribbean museology' focuses on community inclusiveness in museum theory and practice by putting community voice front and centre. Basing her position in the theories of Martiniquan writer and philosopher Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of relation* (1990), McGuire sees the simile of the rhizome as paradigmatic for processual community-focused museology in the Caribbean region, a region with multifaceted identities. The author advocates for knowledge-*sharing* (rather than knowledge-*collecting*) as a counteraction to top-down exhibition education practices perpetuating colonial legacies and occluding histories and voices of the local people, and particularly the Afro-Caribbean experience. Through a rhizomatic approach, she argues, multivocality can 'de-linearise' authority within meaning-making. The final section of the chapter then reflects on the value of regional networking, especially through digital tools for the contemporary era, while **Chapter 10**, 'Co-curating memory: deconstructing the silences around Caribbean migration to Britain' then illustrates some of these ideas through a case study authored by McGuire and Kaye Hall. Herein, they document how, as part of the EU-LAC Museums project, they collaborated to facilitate a community-led composite history of post-World War II Caribbean migratory experience to Britain, and its role in multi-regional exchanges. It traces the development of a VMCMM and panel exhibition titled 'The Enigma of Arrival: The Politics and Poetics of Caribbean Migration to Britain', both funded by the EU-LAC Museums project, as ways of mitigating silences or gaps in telling migration histories by Caribbean migrants to Britain. Participatory methodologies in exhibition-making are framed within recent discourse led by Nina Simon whose work influenced exhibition practice by encouraging a non-hierarchical approach to learning and exhibition-making in the curatorial framework. In addition to targeted exhibition research, an open call in the Caribbean region and its diaspora asked people to contribute their memories, stories and unique perspectives on the Windrush migration. This process of co-creation aimed to create meaning through engagement with relevant communities; a process enabled by the VMCMM and discussed in the next chapter. **Chapter 11**,

'A case study of community virtual museums in the age of crisis designing a virtual museum of Caribbean migration and memory' by Catherine Cassidy, Alan Miller and Alissandra Cummins, explains in more depth the technical development of the VMCMM discussed in Chapter 10. The framework developed, using Omeka open source software, brings together 3D models, 360-degree tours and migration stories relating to the Windrush story. The chapter argues for the value of telling stories, such as Windrush scandal and survivals in digital format, in response to the grow-ing global trend of Internet connectivity and usage. This resource was tailored to cater to a wide range of digital capacity and literacy within resource restrictions and includes an upload facility for users to share their stories. The efficacy of the tool is further underlined through the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on museums and heritage sites. Considered together, Chapters 7–9 contribute to this book's overall aim to inform the shift in museology towards cultural decolonisation by support-ing community participatory initiatives to reclaim their histories outside of narrow, national narratives, and their underlying colonialist, imperialist assumptions.

In **Chapter 12**, 'Ecomuseology in artistic practice: post-colonial strategies of collective return in Latin America and the Caribbean', Kate Keohane then creates bridges between ecomuseology and art curation by centring her theorising in the work of Glissant, and drawing synergies with recent discussions in ecomuseology notably by Pappalardo. In so doing, she interprets ecomuseums as embedded in a landscape in a way capable of re-activating memory and difficult narratives in the realm of contemporary visual arts. Her case studies are Fresh Milk residency (Barbados) and Semillero Caribe (Mexico and Cali, Colombia), and the BetaLocal collective (Puerto Rico). Keohane's chapter connects back to McGuire's, through its focus on imagined networks and alternative forms of community-making in the region. By focusing specifically on what she calls artistic ecomuseological practices, Keohane seeks to draw art history and museology closer together in the realm of participatory practices relating to landscapes 'damaged by the effects of colonisation'. For example, through Annalee Davis's art practice themed on pre-colonial seeds in Barbados, or the group experiences of the Semillero programming designed to avoid colonially implicated strategies of knowledge dissemination in the context of landscape and the diaspora, or BetaLocal's initiatives around 'un-learning' outside formal education spaces with a view to confronting difficult heritage. Expanding on this discussion around contemporary art and its display but looking specifically at the context of Mexico is **Chapter 13**, 'Exhibition-making as storytelling: the 14th Fomento Económico Mexicano S.A.B. de C.V. (FEMSA) Biennial in Michoacán Mexico' by Ana S. González Rueda and David A.J. Murrieta Flores. Investigating the roles of Mexico's modern and contemporary art in national history, and the stories that challenge and unsettle established narratives, it focuses on the ways in which *Inestimable azar* (Inestimable chance), the 14th FEMSA biennial (February 2020–February 2021), based in the Mexican state of Michoacán, decentralised established curatorial positions. The analysis is situated in relation to Mexican muralism of the 20th century, challenging official discourse

through storytelling in the context of the biennial as a space located outside Western modernities and the dominant neoliberal order. Identity and homogenising nation building had been propagated among the early 20th century muralists by myths and images illustrating key periods in the nation's history leading to the eventual liberation of Indigenous peoples. In the context of the biennale, the authors present close readings of selected artists' works to challenge and revise this system, by drawing attention to the agency of Indigenous groups in contemporary mural and art-making processes that craft counter-stories in response to their erasure.

Chapter 14, 'Centring the Caribbean in the Global: Exhibiting Caribbean Art from a Caribbean Perspective' by Allison Thompson then tackles the geopolitics of art curation, presenting the exhibition *Arrivants: Art and Migration in the Anglophone Caribbean World* (2018) as a case study that moves beyond the familiar trajectory of exhibiting Caribbean art in Europe or North America. Drawing attention to the role of curating for a Caribbean audience, this exhibition is highlighted as paradigmatic for curating regional art from within, and of appeal to both local and international displays and audiences, while also informing new discourse on contemporary Caribbean visual practice. Closing our edited volume is **Chapter 15**, 'The politics of change: new pedagogical approaches to Caribbean museology, conservation and curatorship' by Alissandra Cummins and Anne Bancroft, which maps a seminal history of museum studies in the Anglophone Caribbean region since the 1990s in the frame of the decolonisation of museum practice and theory, with particular focus on museum conservation and preservation as it relates to resource-limited collections housed in tropical climates. This fascinating trajectory is accounted for within the ecosystem of Caribbean heritage support organisations and periodic recommendations and actions, including the first Artifacts, Museums and Archives course initiated in Jamaica in 1992. However, the chapter makes the point that the courses provided to the present day do not include specialist conservation training to equip professional collections care management. This is a major shortcoming in addressing the specific professionalisation needs of the region that has only recently begun to be addressed, notably through the formation of The University of the West Indies's Caribbean Heritage Network, as well as online instructional training. This training, while useful and timely in the present day, is limited in its ability to train professionals for object intervention because it is not based on experiential learning alongside experts in the field. Moreover, in-situ intervention must be invested in for the region in order to dismantle dependencies on outside countries where the expertise and laboratories are located, and to enable linkages between the training and personal experiences in locations increasingly affected by seasonal hurricanes and growing climate crises/crisis events.

The aims and uses of this book

This book makes island and remote communities the focus of an international museological book for the first time. It focuses on partnership in co-creation as integral

to the development of museums as generative rather than recipient knowledge centres. Far from being exhaustive, it will have achieved these aims if it becomes a catalyst for further research and discussion within this interwoven field of investigation and informs museum studies pedagogy. It is anticipated that the contents will appeal to museologists and museum practitioners interested in a broad range of critical issues facing heritage, museums and galleries today, including migration, the role of new technologies, sustainability and social inclusion. With its focus on global societal challenges, this book will also appeal to scholars of heritage studies, cultural studies, memory studies, art history, gender studies and sustainable development among other disciplines, as well as museum studies students as the next critically engaged and potentially activist generation of museums professionals and academics. For those employees and volunteers, students and researchers associated with museums in remote and island communities, it draws on the knowledge and experiences of communities often marginalised from the mainstream by virtue of the realities of their geographies, climates and resources. The book will also have resonance through its focus on new research issuing from the Caribbean and Central America, in particular, which have been virtually ignored as regions in the current academic literature. It will also demonstrate ways in which research questions affecting these regions are applicable to other territories, notably other Small Island Developing States and remote communities, particularly those facing the perils of climate change and unsustainable forms of development, for example, by defining, developing and disseminating new museum ideas and models of co-curatorship/co-partnership to support disaster, health emergency and climate change resilient communities in the contingent conditions of the 21st century. This volume as a whole takes a people-centred approach to heritage interpretation, memory and conservation, away from the tradition of object-centred institutions. The book is evidence that no matter how academics may define their terms, it is the perceptions of the people on the ground that matter for characterising community museums for the 21st century.

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Notes

1 The EU-LAC Museums project (2016–2021) was funded by the European Commission Horizon 2020 Programme under Grant Agreement Number 693669. https:// eulacmuseums.net/index.php (Accessed 14 September 2022).
2 Brulon Soares (2021) has rightly noted that the role of community experiences is central to the ICOM Definition of a Museum process.
3 The Shared Island Stories project (2022–2027) was selected for funding by the ERC Consolidator Grant scheme and is now funded by the UKRI EPSRC under Grant Agreement Number EP/X023036/1. See: http://sharedislandstories.wp.st-andrews.ac.uk/ (Accessed 14 September 2022).
4 That said, some of Dana's recommendations are not so utopian or egalitarian; for example, 'Centralize authority. A museum cannot be well managed by a board of directors. No business can' (p. 42).
5 Definitions of ecomuseums and distinctions between them and 'community museums' have evolved since 1970 to the present day. While this discussion is beyond the scope of this introduction, Davis usefully defines ecomuseums as, 'community-driven museums or heritage projects that aid sustainable development' (Davis 2007, p. 199).
6 This Resolution was one of the major outcomes of the collaborative EC Horizon2020 project EU-LAC-Museums. The Resolution was submitted under the auspices of ICOM Europe and ICOM LAC who also supported the project Steering Committee. This introduction has also been informed by our project online survey 'What is a Community Museum in your Region?' found here: https://standrews.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/ SV_5oRFHE4ScQEOdNz.
7 The original Spanish reads: 'Un museo comunitario es creado por la misma comunidad: es un museo "de" la comunidad, no elaborado a su exterior "para"' la comunidad. Un museo comunitario es una herramienta para que la comunidad afirme la posesión física y simbólica de su patrimonio, a través de sus propias formas de organización. Un museo comunitario es un espacio donde los integrantes de la comunidad construyen un auto-conocimiento colectivo, propiciando la reflexión, la crítica y la creatividad. Fortalece la identidad, porque legitima la historia y los valores propios, proyectando la forma de vida de la comunidad hacia adentro y hacia afuera de ella. Fortalece la memoria que alimenta sus aspiraciones de futuro' ('Que es un museo comunitario?').
8 Translation the author's. De Varine later names André Desvallées (editor of the anthology of new museology, *Vagues*), as the best theoretician of ecomuseums in France. See A. Desvallées, 'Introduction, *Ecomusée: rêve ou réalité*', Special Issue, *Publics et musées* 17–18 (2000): 11–31.
9 The new museology is described in *Vagues* by André Desvallées (1992 and 1994). Established in 1985, the international Movement for the New Museology (MINOM) has also produced a series of edited volumes on 'Sociomuseology' in Portuguese, French, Spanish and English. In Spanish, key reference texts include de Carli (2006), and Camarena Ocampo and Morales Lersch (2016).
10 In addition to the work of Davis, see that of other Anglophone scholars, including Boylan (1992), Corsane, Davis and Murtas (2008), Crooke (2015) of the UK (and

Italy – Murtas) and Sutter et al. (2016) based in Canada. The shortcoming partly arises from barriers of language and access: de Varine's monograph is published in French and translated into Spanish, and most other literature in the field is published in Latin languages outside mainstream peer-reviewed journals, including early publications in French through ICOM (de Varine 2017a, 66–7).

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