

The following notes set out the vision that has been guiding the Multilingual Manchester research unit in its work over the past decade, and builds on this vision as a foundation of a co-branded partnership with Manchester Museum.

1. Cities and language diversity

Language diversity has become the reality of major cities. Global mobility and increasing urbanisation combine to create a permanent flow of populations into cities. Global trade and a global labour market create a variety of opportunities for migrants to participate in the local economy and cultural and social fabric of their place of settlement. That creates the resources and community links to be able to maintain cultural identities. Mobility and communication technologies, growing acceptance of multi-layered identities, and varied patterns of cultural and material consumption all support the maintenance of heritage languages across generations. Language diversity is, in this way, becoming not just a frequent but also a permanent feature of cities.

Language diversity creates opportunities and challenges in three principal domains:

a) Access. Public services rely on an understanding of language diversity and language needs in order to ensure that language is not a barrier to accessing key services. This creates a need for provisions for access, in the form of translation, interpreting, or specialised advice and support services, as well as demand for instruction in the majority language and an understanding of cross-cultural communication patterns. This process creates opportunities for those who have language skills, for example second-generation migrants with heritage language skills who provide language services of various kinds. But it also requires awareness and expert knowledge as well as local experience in engaging with language communities.

b) Heritage. Language is the carrier of culture and traditions and a symbol of belonging. Maintaining heritage languages gives young people of immigrant background access to their family background and confidence in their identity. Raising awareness of heritage languages is a key to understanding the social tapestry of the city and a source of cultural creativity, as well as a way of building bridges among people of various backgrounds. Manchester's embracing of the motto 'City of 200 Languages' in the aftermath of the 2017 Arena bombing illustrates how language diversity can serve as a powerful symbol of unity and solidarity in the wake of uncertainties and anxieties.

c) Skills. Research is conclusive in confirming the contribution that language learning makes to general cognitive skills and flexibility in social and verbal

interaction, multi-tasking, and, it has been suggested, to some extent even a degree of resilience to cognitive impairment such as dementia. Much has been said about also the value of language skills to the local economy and the UK's outreach to the world. Employers complain about falling numbers of language students, while both practitioners and experts, and now increasingly also policy makers, recognise the immense value of the language skills that are acquired in the home and in non-statutory settings such as the many weekend and evening community-run supplementary schools.

Language diversity is thus a defining feature of urban life in social networking, commerce, education, culture, skills development and international links; it requires some adjustment in the structural configuration of service provision; and it is part of the reality of urban life which needs to be reflected and embedded into the practice of educational and cultural institutions and the way in which we document, explore and engage with the urban environment.

2. The role of the civic university

As universities continue to adjust to an environment in which research is increasingly monetised and teaching is regarded as a commodity, more attention and effort is being devoted to the impact of university work on the experience of student-clients and the surrounding community, including practitioners in a variety of sectors and policy makers. The prevailing model of measuring impact in the social sciences, arts and cultures is to approach it as a derivative or by-product of research, one that builds on research findings and their targeted dissemination to non-academic stakeholders with a view toward influencing future practice. Without negating that model, we follow an alternative pathway to impact that draws on an understanding of the civic university as tightly embedded into the community environment at the level of its very foundational orientation and outlook. In this model, outreach and public engagement are not merely derivatives of research activities but directly built into them, as is student engagement.

Our model involves external (non-academic) stakeholders in an iterative process of enquiry, seeking inspiration from the practical challenges that they face in areas such as heritage language maintenance and service provision to a multilingual population. It engages students, benefiting from the questions that they raise as well as from their experience of direct immersion with communities of practice in the local voluntary and public sectors. This latter experience is facilitated through a student volunteering and placement scheme that creates a setting for research where enquiry is reciprocal and researchers 'give back' knowledge and skills to local actors. From a methodological perspective, it adopts a holistic approach to language practices, one that incorporates a wide range of tools and types of data and data analysis. These range from active participation in the work of public and voluntary sector organisations, through observation drawn through targeted visits and interviews, and on to the experience of developing and applying digital tools to capture data, and work around performance and creative representation of experiences.

The process is responsive to needs articulated by non-academic partners, and draws on our engagement through such partnerships as an observation setting in its own right. In this way, we have developed a model of research where the university takes on shared responsibility for delivering particular specialised aspects of service to the community: from raising awareness and instigating discussion on practice, to supporting the drafting of policy and provisions, developing solutions for conceptual and data driven dilemmas, and playing an active role in documentation and performative celebration. We interpret the university's goal of social responsibility as necessarily aiming to empower actors outside the university. This also means that university staff are on occasion called upon to propose solutions and sometimes to advocate solutions, and therefore we must engage where appropriate and necessary in public debates in a way that is pro-active rather than remain content to offer expertise only when called upon.

3. The Multilingual Museum

Our point of departure for a co-branded initiative around the Multilingual Museum is the recognition that cultural institutions have a key role to play in offering a space for the local community to engage in processes of critical reflection and creative performance that serve multiple aims and modes – from enquiry to documentation and celebration. It is a space in which individuals can engage in reflection on their own everyday practices, which they can observe and assess from a critical distance, and where they have opportunities to immerse themselves in the experience of others. Multiple forms of mediality – from the display of artefacts through to narratives and sounds and other visual prompts – turn this space from the mere informative to the practical experiential, and beyond – to a space where practice can be performed and celebrated, and thereby in effect to a space through which practice itself can be transformed and created. Our vision for the Multilingual Museum draws on this configuration. It aims to bring together groups of participants around an exploration of the linguistic differences between them, the recognition and celebration of linguistic diversity as a distinctive feature of their shared locality, and an appreciation of language as a universal faculty that is at the core of social relations, interactive practices and cultural production.

The vision for a Multilingual Museum is anchored directly in the reality of cities and language diversity, as outlined above; it utilises the museum's role as a place that offers a depictive image, interpretation, emblem and creative hub that reflects the city's composition, historical journey and social and cultural identity; and it draws on the concept of the civic university and the museum's position as a two-way link between academic research and teaching, and engagement with public audiences. In this way, the Multilingual Museum will provide

- a mirror of the city's language diversity, through practice and content
- a space to reflect, perform and celebrate language diversity

- a platform for discussion and drafting of ideas and strategic concepts
- a hub for encounters among individuals, groups and communities
- an opportunity to test new approaches to documentation, display, interpretation and the delivery of outreach programmes.

Language, in this concept, figures in a variety of functions: It is firstly a cultural production in its own right, which can be explored, assessed, analysed, performed, and moulded and shaped in response to both aesthetic perceptions and practical-strategic needs. Language can also act as a facilitator of accessibility to and engagement with the museum's general content and activity portfolio, benefiting a variety of audiences, by offering a necessary communicative channel to participation and interpretation (through translation or language-specific activities), or by prompting interest among participants who do not necessarily rely on translation but for whom linguistic outreach is meaningful. In this way language also serves as a symbol of inclusivity and the branding of cultural diversity. In the more specialised context, language can serve as a pathway to interpret particular aspects of the museum's holdings and displays; here, activating participants' language skills can serve as a way of integrating audiences into the interpretation process itself.

This latter aspect draws again on the role of the museum as a link between academic research and everyday, public knowledge. The Multilingual Museum is an opportunity to introduce new concepts and a reciprocal element to the popularisation and publicity of research: While research usually seeks to draw on observations of everyday practice and to transpose those into theoretical concepts, we see the museum as an opportunity to engage in an inverse process that can help transpose key conceptual and methodological questions into reflections that address the everyday and practical experience of residents/participants. For instance, we see opportunities to re-enact the complementarity between the academic disciplines of Linguistics, on the one hand, and the study of particular Languages and Literatures (also known as Modern Languages, Classical Languages, Modern Foreign Languages, etc), on the other, through participants' engagement with languages and language material or content that is unfamiliar to them (where they take the position of an external observer or explorer, akin to the role of the Linguist), alongside reflection on languages that are meaningful through personal experience such as family heritage or residence abroad (akin to the role of the specialist Philologist). Similarly, the juxtaposition of ethnographic observation and introspection can be re-enacted in the opportunity to access a depiction, interpretation or performance of others' everyday practice, alongside engaging in interpretation of one's own experience.

In this way, the Multilingual Museum uses the prism of language and language diversity to prompt reflection on individuals' own place in the city, and to open a space for collective reflection on the same. It operates on the realisation that language diversity mirrors the composition of the city and the character of the

local community, and that celebration and exploration of language diversity is integral to the celebration and exploration of local urban culture and creativity, and identity challenges. As a hub for encounters, discussion and creative ventures, the Multilingual Museum will be a place where people of various backgrounds can come together to shape a joint local agenda and to shape an awareness of its global implications. In the particular Manchester context, with its rich tapestry of immigrant populations, mirroring that of many other global cities around the world, the theme of language provides perhaps the most obvious tool to link the present to the past, and to link segmented population groups (or 'communities') with one another. It is a method through which to attract interest and participation, valorise community heritage, optimise outreach, and set new standards for inclusivity and recognition of the invariably pluralistic character local heritage.

4. Practical deliverables and possible performance indicators

Language as exhibition. There is growing interest in exhibiting language in a systematic way in order to familiarise audiences with language diversity, the evolution of the human language faculty, the role of scripts and writing, as well as issues of language impairment and language transmission. A permanent exhibit has recently been added to the Musée de l'homme in Paris, and there are specialised 'language museums' in Maryland and Toronto, as well as museums and exhibitions devoted to particular languages and language communities, including a number of virtual initiatives. There are of course numerous language related exhibits that focus on the history and archaeology of ancient languages. We are aware in addition of exhibitions that targeted urban multilingualism in Oslo and in Graz, and we are collaborating with partners in Melbourne to set up an exhibit around our LinguaSnapp mobile app and web resource. MLM has already collected a number of artefacts relating to Manchester's multilingualism, and in 2017 we submitted a concept for a 'Multilingual Millennia' exhibition that would combine such artefacts and interactive exhibits with items from Manchester Museum's collections and those of the John Rylands Library. In an international environment that is showing growing interest in displaying and exploring language as a key element of the human faculty and human culture, we are in a position to pilot an original approach that links language to the city and its history of migration and present day international links, or language diversity as a feature of Global Manchester.

Language as cross-cutting theme. Language is necessarily a recurring theme that is present in the content of various galleries, essentially all those that deal in some way or other with human culture, from the archaeological exhibitions to those that deal with regions and heritage. We can consider ways of linking these various themes across galleries, allowing a theme-based exploration pathway as well as creating a synchronised standard for the interpretation of language-related items, as a platform to explore 'language in the Museum' across the various specialised galleries.

Engagement toolkit. As outlined above, part of the Multilingual Museum vision is to use language diversity as a theme to engage wider audiences both within and beyond the physical premises of the museum itself. We envisage the creation of a co-branded toolkit with an online repository that will explain through text, images and video the rationale, creative makeup and implementation mode of a variety of activities, for a variety of audiences, around the theme of language diversity. We will deploy the toolkit, or rather its individual elements, tailored to audiences and settings, in the Manchester area, with schools and community groups, and promote it as a model of best practice internationally to other cultural institutions, and as a model of a collaborative venture between the civic university and the museum, as outlined above. Among the target groups for the toolkit activities in the Manchester area are young people (through schools, supplementary schools, neighbourhood youth groups), the elderly (not least as an opportunity to bring together people of various backgrounds, but also as an activity that brings people out of their homes and into a collaborative environment), parent groups, new arrivals (in particular refugees, women, professionals with an interest in rapid integration into Manchester's social fabric in order to pursue career aspirations, and others), voluntary sector activists and teachers/instructors, and possibly also practitioners in front-line services. This project would draw directly on established practice such as the Museum's presence with interactive stalls at local libraries as part of UNESCO International Mother Language Day. MLM is in a similar position to be able to draw on previous activities including the interactive Multilingual Manchester exhibition pilot at Manchester Museum in 2012 as part of Manchester histories festival, and a portfolio of interactive exhibits created for the Levenshulme Language Days 2015 and 2017, and for UNESCO International Mother Language Day 2018 and 2019, as well as a portfolio of themed activities designed and piloted in our work with various schools from the Manchester area, some of them involving art and digital resources.

Digital signage. We are aware of many museums around the world that have bi- or multilingual signage, catering usually for international visitors (such as French-English signage at Musée de l'homme in Paris), two or more national languages (French-English signage at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau), or both (Hebrew-Arabic-English signage at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem). Aside from occasional service and emergency signage, we are not aware, however, of any comprehensive effort to introduce multilingual signage either for orientation or for interpretation of exhibits. MLM has secured funds (which need to be spent before the end of 2020) that will allow us to introduce a digital system of multilingual signage where translations can be accessed on demand. The system could integrate a feedback facility that would turn it into an important engagement tool where users could propose alternative translations. The system would serve multiple purposes: It would firstly allow access to exhibits and interpretation for those who may struggle with text in English. This has the potential of attracting new audiences, both local and international, both to the museum as a whole, or to specific galleries that rely more strongly on engagement with text based interpretation. For others, for whom other languages are part of their heritage but not necessarily the preferred mode of communication especially in reading, the system will send a signal by valorising

heritage languages. As a unique feature of the museum's landscape it would put Manchester Museum on the map in respect of inclusivity and innovation. The interactive, engagement aspect, finally, will help deliver on the ambition to serve as a hub for the active involvement of residents and visitors in the museum's programme and beyond, as a hub for discussion and innovation around key aspects of urban culture and urban facilities.

Workshops. MLM has a proud track record of facilitating dialogue among practitioners in different sectors such as health care, emergency services, education and legal practitioners around issues of language awareness and language provisions, bringing together international audiences as well as community groups and activists. It is these congregations of ordinary people, professionals and interest groups that have earned Manchester its emblematic reputation as a 'city of languages'. But they are also practical discussions, focusing on the challenges of engaging with a linguistically diverse population and on methods and strategies, not least for parents contemplating the responsible and effective ways of maintaining an enriching 'family language policy'. The Museum is the ideal permanent venue for such encounters, which can take on a variety of shapes and forms for a variety of audiences, by combining lectures or informal exchange with hands on activities. It can be a place where a community of practitioners and enthusiasts come together to form networks and support groups.

New modes, new audiences. All of the above activities already have the potential to enrich the circle of audiences and attract groups who may not have engaged with the museum and its content before. We see language and the partnership with MLM and its network of contacts and stakeholders as opportunities to explore new innovative modes to deliver the museum's mission statement, and to expand on some of the existing innovative practices. The Museum has already begun to run multilingual tours, and together we have been building on that initiative in recent months by training student volunteers to run tours. Alongside the outreach element of reaching new audiences, this offers an opportunity to engage students in the museum's work. The model can be replicated with supplementary school pupils and young people who are organised in various community initiatives, to further expand outreach and benefit from the feedback and input that new audiences will have to the content and modes of display and interpretation. The 'liberation' of artefacts can have a language diversity strand, targeting hubs of language diversity around the city-region, including schools, community centres, but also public services such as hospitals and job centres. MLM's digital tools and visualisation resources lend themselves as a basis for virtual exhibits, which can be combined with 'liberated' objects and also offer new forms of interactive engagement, reaching potentially far beyond the city-region's population, and thereby opening up exciting opportunities for the Multilingual Museum to be able to connect Manchester audiences with audiences around the world, either through the brokering participation of other cultural institutions, or via MLM's international partnerships, or even directly.

Internationalisation. The latter point speaks to the potential of the language diversity theme and the Multilingual Museum to act as in impetus for an international network of cultural institutions and cultural partnerships. In February 2019, MLM hosted an international conference on University Public Engagement with Urban Multilingualism. One of its products was the drafting of a manifesto for a 'Multilingual Cities Movement' that calls for a de-centralised networking effort that brings together academics, students, and practitioners around the promotion of awareness of multilingualism, in particular but not exclusively in urban centres. MLM is already working together with a group of international partners at universities, around initiatives such as the LinguaSnapp mobile app and web resource (bespoke versions of which have been installed for five cities, with more to follow). Manchester's UNESCO City of Literature status, and MLM's links with the UNESCO multilingual cities initiative (expected to launch in 2020), offer just some opportunities to share the Multilingual Museum vision with others and benefit from similar interest and experience in other settings. Such links can offer exciting training opportunities for staff, cultural exchange packages for museum visitors and affiliated students and local practitioners, and more.