

Meropi Ziogana – ITP Final Report

- What did being on the Programme mean to you personally?

Being on the Programme was a great opportunity for me. The experience of coming to Great Britain and taking part in the programme has been unique and exceeded my initial expectations. During it I had the opportunity to meet remarkable colleagues from different backgrounds and cultures. We had the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences, share knowledge, reflections and collaborate. The daily socializing and cooperation brought us closer and I believe that substantial professional and friendly relationships were built that will last over time.



At the British Museum we had the opportunity to visit the exhibitions and galleries, to better understand and discuss about the concept during the guided tours from the curators, to visit the storage rooms, to see how they are catalogued and organized and to admire objects that are not visible to the general public.



Particularly during the time in the department of Greece and Rome where I spent most of the time, due to my scientific interests, I met excellent scientists, we exchanged points of view, had fruitful discussions and I hope we laid the foundations for many possible future collaborations. The curators Ross Thomas, Alexandra Villing, Peter John Higgs, Thorsten Opper, Thomas Kiely and Elisabeth O'Connell hosted us in the best possible way in their department, showed us the collections and explained the methodology of their work. They were all excellent and I thank them warmly.



During our stay in London, although the time beyond the activities of the programme was relatively limited, we had the opportunity to visit many different types of museums, cultural spaces, we came in touch with the latest trends but also reflected about the new challenges in the field of museums.



The day trip to the Stonehenge was a valuable experience. Stonehenge, an emblematic monument, positioned in a magical landscape and included in the Unesco list of monuments, in combination with the small exhibition/information spot near the site, were excellent and useful



examples of exploitation of such an important archeological site but also an opportunity to get to know the British countryside, fortunately with sunshine.

During the visit to Oxford, we discussed interesting aspects with Professor Richard Bruce Parkinson and Dr Daniela Rosenow on organizing exhibitions from historical collections of educational institutions with such a long history. We also had the opportunity to visit The Bodleian Library, the Griffith Institute Archive, the Ashmolean Museum and the Queens College, valuable and unforgettable experiences. Finally, the picnic in the gardens of Queens College left memories that will surely not be easily forgotten.



Watching the musical The Phantom of the Opera was an amazing idea of the organizers to complement our overall British experience with an excellent theatrical performance that was really worth it!!!

The preparation of the Object in focus project was very challenging! The contribution of Dr Vesta Curtis and the other employees of the Department of Coins and Medals was crucial. Dr Curtis, with her knowledge, experience and innate kindness managed to guide us, to bridge differences and to organize us in a unique way. Her absence on the day of the presentation of the Object in focus for serious health reasons was especially felt by me and my colleagues Salah and Uktamali. However, by arranging support from her associates from the Department of Coins and Medals helped us to create the presentation without problems. Her warm hospitality for the Persian New Year at her home, with her family, I will never forget.



Our visit to Lincoln with The Collection & Usher Gallery curators Dawn Heywood and Andrea Martin and their collaborators gave us the opportunity to get in touch with the area's rich cultural heritage and learn about its management and promotion of cultural heritage in a provincial town of Britain. In just a few days, the people in charge managed to inform us about their work and collaborations, to guide us through the monuments and collections, to show us the



archival material, the maintenance techniques and the way to make it available to the public. We shared knowledge, experiences, prospects, plans for the future, worries and, finally, a special dinner, accompanied also by Clare Pickersgill from the Museum of the University of Nottingham, it was as if they were friends we had known for a long time.



Also the stay in Nottingham was full of interesting meetings with representatives of the university, which were taken care of by Clare Pickersgill, Keeper of the university's museum. We were informed about the activities of the Museum as well as about research projects concerning paleontological material, archeology, archival collections and new technologies from the professors of the various faculties and departments,

information that was extremely interesting, as well as the visit to the city's archaeological storage areas.

My participation in the programme would not have been possible without the support of the Pears Foundation to which I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to take part in such a useful programme for my professional development.



None of the above would have been possible without the diligence, coordination and continuous presence of Claire Messenger, Anna Cottle and George Peckham. From the day of arrival until the departure they were always by our side to resolve all the issues that arose. Their planning, their availability and their willingness to help made this programme a unique experience for each of us.

- How will you continue to play a part in the ITP 'global network'?

I am planning to continue to play a part in the ITP 'global network' by keeping in contact with all the people I shared my training time with in London. With each one of them I spent time, discussed, exchanged opinions and also had fun and all this common experience unites us. I also plan to spend time in the future visiting and/or offering hospitality in our/their hometowns. I am also thinking of applying to be Senior Fellow. I will continue to share my professional experiences and ideas in the future to ask or give expertise when needed. After all, being a part of the "ITP family" is the most important legacy of this great programme!

- Did the ITP affect your confidence and ambition for your organisation?

Being part of the ITP did affect my confidence and ambition for my organisation for different reasons. Attending the ITP gave me the opportunity to develop my current skills and to learn entirely new ones which are very useful to perform my role in the organisation. After the experience I gained during my participation in the ITP it became more clear to me which are the strengths and weaknesses of my organization. After that it is easier for me to set goals for the future.

- Did the ITP give you new skills? If so, how are you using them in your organisation?

The ITP did give me new skills that I am planning to implement in my future duties in the museum. Working in an international environment for a long period of time with people from different cultures, specializations and experiences did help me improve my communication skills. Especially the preparation of the Object in focus exhibition which was a challenging opportunity to work as a team for a common purpose, to try to collaborate effectively, bringing to the table the skills and experiences of each one of us and creating a small exhibition. Also international collaborations and networking have been cultivated during the ITP. I am very confident that I could easily approach colleagues that took part of the programme, fellows or partner museums in order to build projects and exchange expertise and knowledge on specific subjects.

- What are your priorities for changes in practice that you would like to make in your organisation, learning from the ITP?

Among my priorities for changes after the ITP experience the most important is to make the museum a more inclusive space for all the different communities that are part of our city. During the programme I realized the importance of engaging with the local communities who, at the moment, do not feel comfortable in museum spaces. The way the BM leads this time consuming work in order to create a stable relationship with different people has been very inspiring for me and for my future plans.

- Have any of these changes happened? How likely is it that these changes will happen?

Of course these changes do not happen quickly and we will have to wait until we have the first results. But I am already planning to involve in our next projects, individuals and groups who, although they live or have activities around the building of our museum, they still don't feel part of it.

- What are the barriers to you implementing these changes in practice, and how can you address the barriers?

The most difficult barrier implementing these changes in practice I think is mentality that is rooted and it is not easy to change. In order to address this barrier we need to persist and invest a long time in gaining trust and confidence and built up a stable relationship. But first of all we have to hear people and try to understand their needs and priorities.

- How are you adapting learning from the ITP to fit your organisation or context?

To adapt learning from the ITP to fit my organization, will take a lot of work and collaboration. Our institutions' structure and the legislation concerning museums in my country is quite different. I will spent time to discuss the direction of the museum with my colleagues and share my knowledge and what I found interesting in the ITP. Following our museum's priorities, strategy and goals together as a team, we will try to adjust and incorporate the new experiences in our own projects, whilst also keeping in mind the audience we are addressing.