Cosmopolitan Ambassadors: International exhibitions, cultural diplomacy and the polycentral museum

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Preface

Cosmopolitan Ambassadors examines exhibitions that are developed through international partnerships and travel across geographical borders. It addresses a gap in our understanding of a type of museum activity which is growing in popularity, and attracting increasing investment and levels of professionalisation.

The book envisages international exhibitions as mobile contact zones that operate on the boundaries of museum practices, as well as within the realm of international cultural relations. While they are often considered synonymous with blockbusters, and their success equated with high visitation, we explore the extent to which the production and consumption of international exhibitions are influenced by a combination of drivers across diplomatic, museum mission-related, and market-oriented domains. In particular, we examine the proposition that international exhibitions are a means by which museums might represent and advance a cosmopolitan agenda on the world stage.

Grounded in practice through a long-term, multi-sited, "mobile" ethnography, the cosmopolitan and intercultural concerns of the book are reflected in both its content and method. Focusing on a case study of two exhibitions involved in an exchange between Aotearoa[1] New Zealand and Mexico, our research traverses both the local and global, exploring how forms of encounter and associated interpretations shift as exhibitions move between different cultural, political and institutional contexts. This approach illuminates the fluidity and contingency of cultural identities and meanings, and the way in which international exhibitions function as deeply intercultural spaces in terms of both the processes and practices through which they are produced, and their potential impact on those involved.

E Tū Ake: Standing Strong was a ground-breaking Indigenous exhibition featuring both traditional and contemporary *taonga* (Māori cultural treasures) and developed to tour internationally by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa). It was shown briefly in Aotearoa New Zealand before travelling to the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, followed by the Museo Nacional de las Culturas in Mexico, and finally the Musée de la Civilisation, Québec, Canada, between 2011 and 2013. The hosting of *E Tū Ake* in Mexico constituted the first phase of the inaugural exhibition exchange between the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) and Australasia.

[1] Aotearoa is the Māori name for New Zealand. Combining the Māori and European names recognises the fundamental bilingual and bicultural nature of the country.

The second phase involved the development of the exhibition *Aztecs* by Te Papa in collaboration with INAH, and as part of a partnership with two Australian museums. *Aztecs* opened at Te Papa in September 2013, and then toured to Melbourne Museum (MM) and the Australian Museum (AM) in Sydney, before closing and returning to Mexico in February 2015. *Aztecs* involved a high level of institutional collaboration during the exhibition development stage and engaged staff across the executive, administrative and operational levels of several museums in three countries with contrasting museological, institutional and political contexts. At its centre was an ongoing relationship: the closure of *Aztecs* and the return of the collection to Mexico marked the end of a cycle of approximately six years of collaborative work between Te Papa and INAH as part of the exhibition exchange.

Through an in-depth discussion of how this exchange worked in practice, our book demonstrates the importance of better understanding the advantages and disadvantages of various ways of organising international exhibitions, and how such insights may enhance decision-making, reduce potential conflicts and misunderstandings, and help institutions to develop and plan the most appropriate and effective partnerships for their needs.

Further to this, the two exhibitions were underpinned by specific purposes, museological approaches and collaborative practices which led to particular display strategies. These strategies – which mediated and translated cultural meanings in specific ways – impacted on how the exhibitions functioned as intercultural spaces. Extensive interviews with visitors show how audiences connect with the cultural other, negotiate differences and create cosmopolitan and counter-cosmopolitan meanings.

Finally, by examining the intersection between the exhibition exchange and the foreign policy context of the two exchange partners, we are able to highlight the various ways in which museums do cultural diplomacy. This contributes more nuance to a discussion of the value of international exhibitions, and how success might be defined and evaluated.

Building on the insights from our in-depth case study, considered through the lens of existing literature and theory, this book advances an argument for international exhibitions as *cosmopolitan ambassadors* that offer a kaleidoscopic vision that is *polycentral* in nature. It proposes a vision of intercultural museum practice based on the concept of polycentrality and the notion of creating new spaces in between old ways of *doing* and *being*, and offers suggestions to guide this work in practice.

Acknowledgements

Collectively,

We dedicate this book to the many committed museum professionals that worked on the exhibitions and gladly accepted to participate in the research project as interviewees, facilitators and advisors. Also to all the visitors across all venues, especially those who collaborated by sharing their museum experiences: we are delighted and surprised by the power of museums and the chance to see them through your eyes.

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Chapter 1

Thinking through international exhibitions

Since the nineteenth century, museums have been deeply implicated in both nation building and the global circulation of culture. In the twenty-first century, international exhibitions have become a regular fixture at major cultural institutions across the globe. They are, perhaps, the most complex, large-scale, expensive and specialised work in contemporary museums. This book examines exhibitions, developed through international partnerships, that travel across geographical borders and are usually, but not always, exhibited at more than one venue. The focus is cultural exhibitions, but the analysis is not without relevance for other types of exhibitions.

International exhibitions are one of the ways through which museums today work internationally. Other activities include conferences and workshops, professional exchanges, internship programmes, joint research projects, satellite museums (Goff 2017) and digital media. Bennett (2006, 48) warns against falsely regarding the internationalisation of museums as a recent phenomenon. Museums have, he reminds us, long been part of "global networks organizing flows of things, people, and expertise … [and] actively implicated in the organization of new international networks, promoting new transnational forms of cultural exchange and perception". What is new are the technologies that facilitate the international networks, the types of expertise that they connect and the "styles of cosmopolitanism" affected by these connections (Bennett 2006, 49).

With international exhibitions, it is not only objects that are mobile, but also people—the museum professionals who negotiate, develop and tour these exhibitions in collaboration with international colleagues—and travelling along with them is an assortment of cultural, professional and personal baggage. In doing this work, museum professionals must often negotiate complex political, institutional and museological differences. Likewise, the visitors arriving to experience the exhibitions that are the product of these intensive processes engage with them through the lenses of their own particular contexts. Furthermore, these exhibitions form part of the transnational work of museums which is implicated in systems of international cultural relations and politics. Their meaning and intentions relate, therefore, not only to mu-

seum missions, visitor attraction and enlightenment, but also to national and international diplomatic agendas. To properly understand international exhibitions we must consider all these facets.

A main premise of the book is that international exhibitions involve myriad forms of cultural encounter and therefore countless opportunities for misunderstanding and mis-representation but, at the same time, significant potential for developing intercultural skills, understanding and what is referred to as a cosmopolitan imagination or vision (Delanty 2006; Beck 2006)—deemed by many as essential for navigating the accelerating processes of globalisation within which we find ourselves in the twenty-first century. At the heart of *Cosmopolitan Ambassadors* is the tentative proposition that international exhibitions are a means by which museums might represent and advance a cosmopolitan agenda on the world stage. To achieve such an aspiration, we need to strive for more clarity around the purpose, practice and potential impact of international exhibitions.

To this end, we first set out the historical context of international exhibitions in terms of the issues and debates that have surrounded them. This is not intended as a comprehensive history, but rather as a series of examples that illustrate the mix of purposes that international exhibitions have served, against the background of changing historical conditions. On the basis of this, we propose a model to convey the varied drivers of international exhibitions. Next, we outline some of the most important current issues and research needs facing international exhibitions as a means of framing the aims and scope of the book. Key to this is proposing an analytical framework within which a theoretical understanding of international exhibitions may be developed. On this foundation, we proceed to explore the propositions presented in Chapter 1 through the empirical investigation of an international exhibition exchange between Mexico and Aotearoa New Zealand.

International exhibitions past and present: key issues and debates

In April 2016, *The Art Newspaper* reported that the top two exhibitions of 'antiquities' in the previous year, measured by daily visitation, were *Cleopatra and Queens of Egypt* at the Tokyo National Museum and *Pompeii: Culture of the Ancient Roman City* at the National Museum of Korea. Each attracted over 200,000 paying visitors in total. These figures pale somewhat next to the most successful art exhibitions noted, such as the National Palace Museum Taipei's touring exhibition *Hidden Talent: Cheng Cheng-po* which reached a visitation of 1,607,736 (a daily average of 13,860 visitors) at its home venue. However, special mention is also made of the fourth-placed *Palmyra*, which received over 300,000 visitors during its six months on display. A free exhibition at the Freer and Sackler Galleries in Washington, D.C., *Palmyra* featured Haliphat, a

1,800-year-old Palmyrene funerary bust and a selection of eighteenth-century engravings and nineteenth-century photographs of Palmyra, Syria. As the *Newspaper* points out, this ancient Roman city was in the international spotlight in 2015 when it fell under the control of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), who reportedly damaged a number of significant ancient monuments that had "inspired a legion of Western architects" (*The Art Newspaper* 2016, XIV).

International exhibitions are often considered synonymous with blockbuster exhibitions, and success is commonly equated with high visitation. Since the 1970s, European art, dinosaurs, Egyptian mummies and pop culture have formed the staple of touring exhibitions, breaking visitation records at museums around the world (Berryman 2013; Bradburne 2001). Such exhibitions have been the subject of intensive critique. They are, according to some, no more than blatant revenue generators driven by popular appeal (Basu and Macdonald 2007; Barker 1999; S. West 1995). Capitalising on the appeal of monumental, spectacular and priceless art and artefacts, blockbusters are seen as a strategy to boost visitor numbers by attracting less frequent museum visitors (Berryman 2013). While it is impossible to talk about international exhibitions and ignore the so-called "blockbuster effect", our focus is broader than this. Indeed, we would argue that the prominence of blockbuster exhibitions has led to the unfortunate perception that international exhibitions are primarily about revenue generation, while in reality their economic benefits are questionable (Boland 2010) and the drivers for their production far more diverse.

The relatively recent focus on blockbusters obscures the reality that museums develop and tour international exhibitions to fulfil an array of strategic goals, including a mix of political, institutional and commercial objectives, and have done so for quite some time. According to Barker (1999, 127), "large-scale, highly publicized art exhibitions drawing several thousand visitors took place as early as the mid-nineteenth century". The 1905–1906 tour of the British Empire by the Holman Hunt painting *The Light of the World,* for example, was a curious mix of imperialist motivations with nascent blockbuster strategies of publicity and merchandising. In Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia alone a staggering four million, out of a population of five million, culture-starved colonials flocked to view the painting, drawn to the free exhibition by the allure of the artwork's enormous value (Troughton 2006). The very popular world fairs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were exploited for a range of commercial and political ends, including imperialism, nationalism and tourism promotion (Greenhalgh 1988).

The 1930s have been identified as an era when artistic masterpieces went on tour in support of the colonial ambitions of fascist regimes in Europe (Amsellem 2013; Lira 2002). In the Americas, the 1930s and 1940s saw numerous

exhibitions of ancient and Latin American art organised by major US institutions as part of a policy called Pan-Americanism, including eight shows at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) between 1940 and 1945 (Braun 1993). One of these—*Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* (1940)—grew out of US diplomatic interventions that followed the Mexican nationalisation of oil companies in 1938. According to Mewburn (1998), the strategic objectives of the US and Mexican governments, as well as MoMA, coalesced in the staging of this collaborative exhibition and the particular narrative it sought to tell. For President Roosevelt, it was "an attempt to build popular support and confidence" for his policy of hemispheric solidarity, while for Mexico, the exhibition was an opportunity for the "normalization of restructured economic relations with the United States … while maintaining its newly asserted national dignity" (Mewburn 1998, 89):

> By virtue of its festive spirit, the conditions for a non-confrontational, even friendly, future of cultural exchange was established … Packaged as the product of a noble indigenous lineage, Mexico traded its accumulated capital—oil, raw materials, dependability as a war ally, and its culture—in return for financial recovery and national security … The Museum of Modern Art, in its turn, acquired an American archaic past with its living indigenous cultural counterpart. (Mewburn 1998, 129)

In the aftermath of World War Two, UNESCO established a programme to encourage member states to prepare exhibitions for "exchange" and "international circulation", with the intention of "encouraging understanding among nations" (McCann Morley 1953, 284). The first exhibition under the programme was *Australian Aboriginal Culture* which began a two-year tour of the US in 1953. International understanding was a common justification for international museum activity during this period, with a focus on cultural exhibitions that emphasised commonalities and sought to convey a message about the "universality of all people" (Tarasoff 1990, 31).

However, achieving these goals could be problematic in practice. MoMA's *Family of Man* photographic exhibition toured twenty-eight countries between 1955 and 1959 and was seen by over nine million people. It was supported by the US Information Agency which had been established in 1953 "to tell America's story to the world" (Kennedy 2003, 316). In 1994 the exhibition was permanently installed in Luxembourg's Clervaux Castle and it was added to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in 2003 (Padley 2013). While intending to promote peace and universality, the exhibition was criticised for "bland internationalism and its willful demeaning of photographic art by using it strictly for political purposes" (Sylvester 2009, 107). According to Kennedy (2003, 323) it "functioned as an advertisement for American values and freedoms" and "the

message of the exhibition was surrounded by Cold War rhetorics that blurred the boundaries between art, information and propaganda".

Part of the problem for the US, it seems, has been the uncertain status and patchy support for arts and culture existing within foreign policy throughout the latter part of the twentieth century (Kennedy 2003). As Cummings (2013, 12) notes, "active involvement in—and funding for—cultural diplomacy programs by the federal government has most often been stimulated by a perceived foreign threat or crisis". Another example is the photographic exhibition *After September 11: Images from Ground Zero* that targeted cities in the Middle East and North Africa. Like *Family of Man*, this exhibition was "intended to transmit a universal message that transcends the politics of difference" (Kennedy 2003, 323), but was similarly accused of being propagandistic. Kennedy reflects on the incongruity of the exhibition's imagery in many of the cities to which it toured, where "horrors compete for media coverage, and in which an act of memory for one community is deemed an act of forgetting by another"—an incongruity "exacerbated rather than concealed by the appeals to shared suffering and common human values". He predicted that "its diplomatic managers will have some difficulty in controlling its reception" (Kennedy 2003, 325).

US critic and curator Brian Wallis argues that international exhibitions and festivals that purport to foster mutual understanding by presenting a nation's culture in foreign locales are often little more than "politically-safe" forms of national branding that reinforce existing stereotypes. They are, he suggests, "intricate, multi-layered engines of global diplomacy, which, when staged properly, are almost indiscernible as self-promotions", characterised by "a seeming absence of politics" (Wallis 1994, 267 & 272). The central paradox of such exhibitions is that "in order to establish their status within the international community, individual nations are compelled to dramatize conventional versions of their national images, asserting past glories and amplifying stereotypes" (Wallis 1994, 271). In presenting "easily digestible vignettes of a foreign nation's culture", they avoid the complications, conflicts and contradictions of contemporary multicultural society and thereby narrow rather than expand our understanding of a country "to a benign, if exotic, fairy tale" (Wallis 1994, 279).

Counter examples, however, do exist. In 1958 the US State Department sent to the World's Fair in Brussels the exhibition *Unfinished Business*, which addressed contemporary US problems such as racial issues, housing problems and natural disasters, as well as highlighting "progress made" and future prospects. This strategy was intended to pre-empt potential propaganda attacks from the Soviet Union. While initial audience reception was positive, the exhibition was closed prematurely due to domestic political pressure (McDonald 2014). More recently, the National Gallery of Australia's exhibition *Culture Warriors: Australian Indigenous Art Triennial* (2009) travelled to the US to

boost bi-lateral understanding and improve relations between the two countries. Unusually for an exhibition fulfilling a diplomatic function, *Culture Warriors* deliberately showcased both cultural accomplishments and the social problems and political struggles of the Indigenous people of Australia.

While *Culture Warriors* was supported to tour by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, it was essentially organised as a partnership between cultural institutions, and therefore not framed as propaganda or national branding. Commentators hailed the exhibition as a diplomatic success because of its critical and political nature, not in spite of it (McDonald 2014; Sayers 2010). Unfortunately no visitor responses to the exhibition were recorded. Both *Unfinished Business* and *Culture Warriors* are possible example of Nye's (2002) notion of "meta-soft power", that is, "a nation's capacity and introspective ability to criticise itself that contributes to its international attractiveness, legitimacy and credibility" (Ang, Isar, and Mar 2015, 367).

In the post-war era, the Mexican Government presented a series of exhibitions in Europe. *Art Mexicain du Précolombien à Nos Jours* was showcased at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris, and a version called *Mexican Art from 1500 B.C. to the Present Day* was staged in Stockholm and London between 1952 and 1953, before travelling to eleven European countries under various names and finally returning to Paris a decade later. By then, *Master Artworks of Mexican Art* at the Petit Palais, a re-edition of the original exhibition, featured 1,850 objects and required 3,200 square metres of display space (Molina 2013; Revista Tiempo 1991). Arguably the first true "blockbuster", the exhibition was a phenomenal success in terms of visitation with the whole series attracting 8,900,000 people from all over Europe (Revista Tiempo 1991). It was also considered instrumental in achieving a number of foreign policy goals for the Mexican government (see Chapter 5).

The origins of the contemporary blockbuster exhibition, however, are generally traced to *The Treasures of Tutankhamun* at the British Museum in 1972, and the US version which was attended by over eight million visitors in a six-city tour from 1977 to 1979 (Skinner 2006). In 1973, China produced its first international blockbuster with an archaeological exhibition that travelled under various names to fifteen countries—including London, Paris, Washington, Vienna, Stockholm, Toronto and San Francisco—over the following four years, attracting over six and a half million people (Laishun 2015).

According to Wallis (1994, 267), while early blockbusters often had diplomatic intentions, "the good public relations they generated primarily benefitted their multinational corporate sponsors". Among the other interests they served was the "promotion of tourism, the populist expansion of the role of the museum, and the development of international business and political

connections" (Wallis 1994, 267). Barker (1999) links the rise in staging blockbusters to changes in funding models for museums and the trend towards populism and democratisation as they endeavoured to shed their elitist images, while West (1995, 89) claims that this approach to exhibitions "positively embraces the rhetoric of consumer culture".

By the 1970s, earlier idealistic notions and assumptions about international exhibitions were giving way to more criticism in the literature (Tarasoff 1990). Recognition was growing that not all international museum activity served the cause of enhancing mutual understanding simply by virtue of its being international. In her analysis of federally-supported international travelling exhibitions from Canadian museums during the period 1978 to 1988, Tarasoff (1990) notes a bias towards art and art-related exhibitions, with Europe and North America being the most frequently represented. Similar concerns persist today, including the dominance of art exhibits, the need to attract visitors with "masterpieces" and narrow subject matter and geographical representation, as well as limited educational impact and contribution to scholarship (S. West 1995; Barker 1999). Other concerns include the high financial risk and low environmental sustainability involved, and that the ever-increasing efforts and expenses required to secure loans may become prohibitive (Turner 2011; Jacobsen and West 2009; O'Reilly and Lawrenson 2015). Another fear is that these temporary, superstar, exhibitions divert resources from permanent exhibitions and other core museum functions (Berryman 2013; McLean 2004; Jury 2015). A need has been identified for more variation in the market, including more affordable exhibitions for small to medium institutions, more flexible formats, and "higher quality" exhibits (Jacobsen and West 2009).

By hosting international exhibitions, museums make globally significant cultural heritage available to local audiences and position themselves both locally and internationally as key cultural institutions (Carey, Davidson, and Sahli 2013; Davidson and Sibley 2011; Cai 2013). For audiences, large-scale international exhibitions have both a "concentration effect" and a "distribution effect": bringing together art and/or artefacts, often from more than one institution, in a focused exhibition and reaching a wider public through display at multiple venues (Skinner 2006). Audience development is a strong mission-related driver for museums to host touring exhibitions (Touring Exhibitions Group 2007), however, whether or not these exhibitions bring a more diverse audience to the museum has been questioned (Barker 1999). It has even been suggested that blockbusters may be detrimental to audience development if crowding diminishes experience and discourages repeat visitation (McLean 2004; Bradburne 2001). Interestingly, there is little published research on blockbuster audience profiles or reception. In the absence of evidence, assumptions are made about what a visitor might glean from such

an exhibition. West (1995, 77), for example, claims that attendance at art blockbusters offers a form of "cultural capital" for "a socially aspirant middle class". He concludes that visitors "worship at the shrine of great art … [while] the overwhelming spectacle of crowds, queues and commodities prevent them from engaging meaningfully with the works on display".

By contrast, a case study of blockbuster exhibitions at the Art Gallery of New South Wales by O'Reilly and Lawrenson (2015, 160) notes a "merging of diplomatic and economic goals alongside the development of relationships with local communities of interest". This was evident in innovations such as providing spaces for local communities to "engage with visitors sharing their own knowledge and experience", as well as community-led language tours and a Community Ambassadors programme designed to build relationships with non-English speaking audiences (O'Reilly and Lawrenson 2015, 162–63). Another engagement strategy was the delivery of diverse public programmes, including cultural, culinary, entertaining and educational activities. Offering these types of activities within a festive atmosphere can, they argue, make cultural institutions "more vibrant, social, fun and welcoming", thereby overcoming some of the barriers that lead to social exclusion (O'Reilly and Lawrenson 2015, 165).

International exhibitions can also help museums achieve mission-related goals through enhancing international reputations, reaching global audiences, sharing expertise and strengthening institutional relationships (National Museum of Australia 2014; Te Papa 2012a, 2013b; Touring Exhibitions Group 2007; Conaculta 2007). Amsellem (2013, 48) argues that the increasing frequency of such projects creates a "label effect" by which exhibition-producing museums become classified as major cultural institutions, prompting other institutions to aspire to the same level of internationalisation. Exhibitions from abroad may assist museums to connect with international scholarship and provide the impetus for further research on their own collections, and increasing professionalism through exchange (Turner 2011), as well as allowing staff to test new exhibition strategies and practices and see their own collections in a new light (McLean 2004; Touring Exhibitions Group 2007). Successful exhibitions have been used to argue for more public support, including the provision of new buildings and other facilities (Turner 2011).

A typical feature of blockbuster exhibitions is the use of marketing and display techniques to generate sufficient hype and intensity of experience for the visitor, thereby justifying higher-than-usual admission fees, as well as attracting tourists from out of town (Skinner 2006). In Australia, diplomatic value and scholarly exchange have been identified as strong motivators of early era blockbuster exhibitions (Turner 2011; Berryman 2013). More recently, however, the focus has shifted to cultural tourism, with international exhibitions

often subsidised by tourism promotion agencies and local or state government (Berryman 2013; Boland 2010). Arguments for public subsidies include the positive impact that an exhibition will have on the local economy, and yet there has been very little research into exhibitions' effects.

Skinner (2006, 113) analysed blockbuster art exhibits, organised by the Mississippi Commission for International Cultural Exchange, Inc.—a nonprofit "dedicated to fostering cultural and educational growth"—in Jackson Mississippi during the 1990s and early 2000s in order to determine if the forecasted economic impacts were accurate. Using economic modelling, Skinner found evidence indicating "a significant impact on community employment" from the exhibitions studied, and thus some support for the economic case for public subsidies. In a final note, however, Skinner argues that even without such support, subsidies for the arts would be justified because of other externalities, such as civic participation, community development, personal and group identity formation, social cohesion, collective understanding and the impetus for collective understanding. Curiously, all three exhibitions analysed were remarkably similar in theme; that is, European royal art collections (*The Palaces of St Petersburg*, *Splendors of Versailles*, and *The Majesty of Spain*). Together they attracted an audience of over one million and yet it is unclear to what extent they might have cultivated the externalities Skinner mentions.

A model of international exhibition drivers

From a survey of travelling exhibition stakeholders in the US, Jacobsen and West (2009, 5) found that "great differences are perceived between the commercially-produced blockbusters and the institutionally-produced mission/education-oriented exhibitions". Respondents were concerned, however, that museum boards were attracted by the revenue-generating potential of the commercial exhibitions without understanding their lack of relevance for local audiences and museum missions. This highlights an important issue that emerges from the preceding overview of the history and ongoing debates surrounding international exhibitions: their production and consumption are influenced by a combination of drivers across diplomatic, museum mission-related, and market-oriented domains. We argue that a deeper understanding of the range of drivers for international exhibitions would assist in promoting their value across a range of domains. To better appreciate and understand the interplay of these factors, we propose a simple model of intersecting domains representing each driver: diplomatic, mission and market (see Figure 1.1). While one domain may dominate in any given case, most exhibitions will be driven by two or more of these domains, to varying degrees.

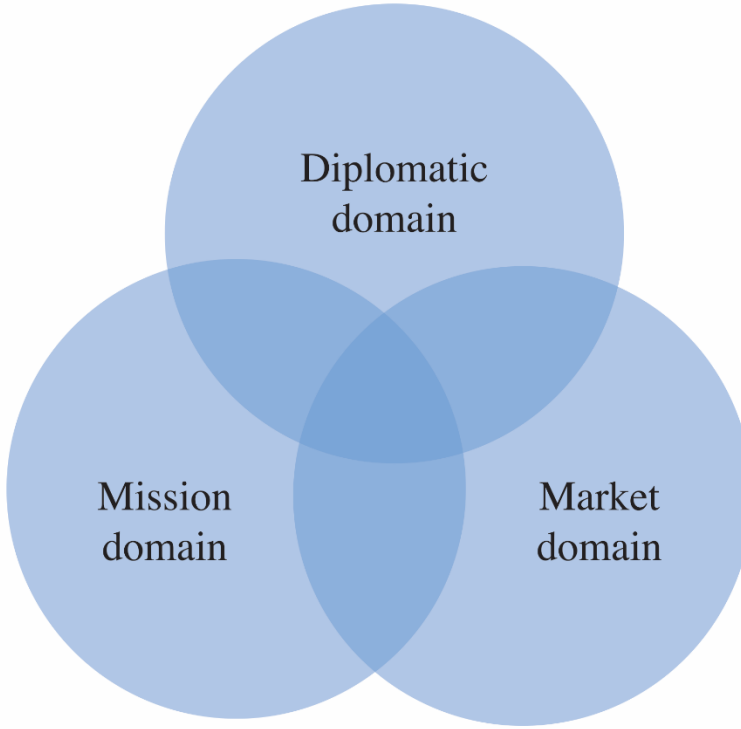

Figure 1.1 A model of international exhibition drivers.

As we have seen, diplomatic drivers have historically arisen as a response to specific foreign policy contexts. In the past, governments were often prepared to invest large sums in promoting their culture and heritage abroad. A quintessential example of this is participation in world fairs in the nineteenth century, continuing through to the universal expositions (Expos) still popular today. While commercial objectives are tied up with these diplomatic ventures, the presentation of a particular image on the world stage is a primary driver. The Mexican art exhibition that toured Europe in the 1950s, for example, was driven by diplomatic interests, with the Mexican Foreign Ministry as its main promoter and investor. These days, few governments are motivated to invest such significant sums in self-promotion. They do continue to support—financially or in kind—international exhibitions that contribute to policies of national branding or complement diplomatic missions. More often today, however, this is likely to be a partial contribution to exhibitions that are also fuelled by a mix of museum mission and market-related drivers.

As museums are predominately value-driven rather than profit-driven, their missions are highly important drivers of institutional activities (Fleming 2013). The mission-related drivers for international exhibitions include visitation, audience development, institutional reputation, strengthening international partnerships, scholarly exchange, museological innovation and professional development. Missions may also relate to various forms of social change, justice, human rights and intercultural understanding.

The market-related domain includes revenue generation through entrance fees, other "revenue centers" such as retail, food services, public and educational services, membership and corporate sponsorship (Silderberg and Lord 2013, 165), as well as contributions to local tourism. In this domain, museums are influenced by the forces of supply and demand, that is, the capacity they have to offer something that is sufficiently distinctive and appealing to generate a willingness by potential consumers—in this case visitors—to pay to attend an international exhibition.

In this regard, Frey and Meier (2006) attribute distinct features to special exhibitions in economic and market terms. Visitors are spending an increasing proportion of their growing incomes on these kinds of shows, and the exhibitions can help to attract media attention and sponsorship for the museum. International exhibitions may also contribute to the marketing and branding of a city as an attractive destination, bringing in high-spending tourists as well as creating a sense of pride and identity for residents, making it an attractive place to live and work (Gorchakova 2017). However, the cost of hosting a blockbuster exhibition capable of generating this kind of attention can run into the millions of dollars and is therefore only viable if public and/or private sponsorship is available (Gorchakova 2017).

Indeed, a 2004 survey by the Touring Exhibitions Group (TEG) of over 250 organisations involved in the production of touring exhibitions in the UK found that it was not a profit-making enterprise:

> Even large organisations with dedicated touring teams at best break even. Whilst hire fees may cover real costs such as transport, packaging, insurance, exhibition materials and so on, they rarely if ever cover staff time and organisational overheads. These costs tend to be subsidised by the originating venue or through fundraising. (Touring Exhibitions Group 2007, 9)

TEG concludes that the justification for creating touring exhibitions has, therefore, to be "broader than simply financial". For receiving venues, on the other hand, a touring show represents value for money, "given that the hire fee rarely represents the real cost of production" (Touring Exhibitions Group

2007, 9). Further research by TEG in 2015 backs up these conclusions, finding that museums currently engaged in touring exhibitions "recognise and value" their wider benefits, including profile raising, audience development, and maximising the reach of exhibitions, "above the generation of income or offsetting of costs" (Dew 2016c, 8). This "suggests that organisations are looking to touring to help deliver a range of key performance indicators. These may indirectly contribute to the organisation's economic health, but in many cases generating income is not a core motive" (Dew 2016c, 10).

Aims of the book

With a growing number of institutions investing in international exhibitions and considering them a high priority (Jacobsen and West 2009; Dew 2016c), more specialised professional roles have become associated with this work and several professional groups and networks have emerged. The International Committee for Exhibitions and Exchange was founded in 1980 and granted formal status by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1983. TEG is a professional group in the UK, founded in 1985, as a network of galleries, museums, libraries, art and science centres and other organisations involved in organising and touring exhibitions. TEG aims to "facilitate touring opportunities across all cultural organisations, to provide guidance on the practicalities of touring, and to promote good practice in touring" (Hesketh n.d.).

The International Group of Organisers of Large-Scale Exhibitions (Bizot Group), established in 1992, comprises a select group of major exhibition organisers (including the British Museum, MoMA, and the Louvre) who cooperate in the production and touring of international exhibitions. The Traveling Exhibitions Network is a professional network under the umbrella of the American Alliance of Museums. In the Southern Hemisphere, the Network of Australasian Museum Exhibitors (NAME) is a bi-annual gathering of Australian and New Zealand museum personnel who develop and tour exhibitions, to view exhibitions and negotiate collaboration on future ventures. There has also emerged a plethora of commercial companies and consultancies specialising in the development, management, and facilitation of touring exhibitions.[1]

Despite this growing popularity, investment and professionalisation, very little research has been undertaken to better understand why and how international exhibitions are organised, and what value they have. Almost three decades ago Tarasoff (1990) noted the existence of an active international museum network, maintained by a web of interconnecting lines of communication and collaborative activities. Disappointingly though, she found that the literature on interna-

[1] Examples include vastari.com, flyingfishexhibits.com, and exhibitsdevelopment.com.

tional exhibitions lacked critical appraisal and offered little guidance for practice, tending to be descriptive and focus on the exhibitions themselves, rather than their international dimensions. Little had been written outside of a North American and European context, and there had been no real effort to draw on the field of international relations, to bridge theory and practice, or to develop a coherent body of theory. Tarasoff (1990, 22) concluded that there was a "danger that museums will participate in international activity haphazardly, without guidance, and without basis for improvement".

The research needs identified by Tarasoff focus on two specific areas. First, the exhibition message, as exhibitions might be numerous and widely distributed, "but have superficial, ineffective or biased messages" (Tarasoff 1990, 78). Second, the need for evidence of lasting benefits for both museum professionals and audiences. Evaluation, she argues, requires the development of a methodology capable of assessing the success of an exhibition in terms of international understanding, including both the visitor experience and ongoing relationships between museums such as the exchange of personnel and exhibits.

In the almost thirty years since Tarasoff was writing there have been some developments. An increasing number of professional networks and commercial entities dedicated to international exhibitions, as mentioned above, have emerged, and some of these have developed guidelines for practice. TEG, for example, provides a members-only online *Handbook of Good Practice in Touring* providing practical information and advice on all aspects of organising and managing exhibitions. Another initiative has been CASTEX (Common Approach to Scientific Touring Exhibitions), an EU-funded project to create a network of five European natural history museums (Brussels, Paris, Leiden, London and Stockholm). This three-year project (2001–2004) included the coproduction of a touring exhibition and concluded with the production of a set of guidelines for touring collections-based exhibitions in Europe ("CASTEX: Guidelines for Touring Exhibitions in Europe" 2004).

More recently, the British Council, the UK's international organisation for cultural relations, as part of its Supporting International Engagement Project funded by Arts Council England, set out to deliver a programme of support to UK museums and galleries seeking to launch or to develop international touring exhibition programmes, and thereby enhance the UK's reputation as a global leader in this area. Recognition of a growing interest in international touring exhibitions as a potential source of revenue for British museums and galleries has led to concern that developments in this "increasingly crowded market" be undertaken in a manner that ensured organisational resilience and sustainable sources of income (Andrew 2016).

Effective evaluation is still a pressing need for international exhibitions, as well as cultural diplomacy more broadly (McDonald 2014; Flamini 2014; Hoogwaerts 2016; "CASTEX: Guidelines for Touring Exhibitions in Europe" 2004). The few studies of international exhibitions that have been published since 1990 continue to be largely descriptive, and while they provide useful case studies of practice,[2] they do not constitute a coherent body of literature on the topic. Some exceptions include Cai's (2013) analysis of a cross-cultural museum exchange between Singapore and France, with a focus on Singapore's motives and the outcomes of engaging in the cultural collaboration in relation to "soft power" and cultural diplomacy. Cai recommends further research that considers the perspectives of both host and lender museums, as well as tracking public opinions in a longitudinal way. McDonald (2014, 28) has assessed the success of *Culture Warriors* in terms of the intentions of both the donor and host sites, while noting that "we need effective ways of capturing how international audiences respond to such exhibitions and to make that data public".

Aside from these limited examples, international exhibitions continue to be an area of museum studies and practice that lacks a theoretical basis and a methodology for evaluation that encapsulates its full range of impacts. Our book addresses this gap by critically and systematically examining this type of museum activity, looking at both theoretical and practical implications. How are museums working internationally through exhibitions? What motivates this work? What are the benefits and challenges? What factors contribute to success? What value does this work have for audiences and other stakeholders? What contribution do international exhibitions make to cultural diplomacy, intercultural dialogue and understanding and how can this be assessed?

Museums, cultural diplomacy and intercultural understanding: an analytical framework

A critical examination of international exhibitions requires an appropriate analytical framework. In this book we propose an interdisciplinary approach involving a number of interconnected theoretical perspectives as a means of illuminating various aspects of international exhibitions, including their nature and function as a form of museum practice, their role in cultural diplomacy and international relations and their potential for enhancing interculturality and advancing a global cosmopolitan agenda.

Our approach is broadly informed by a cultural studies perspective in the sense that we are interested in "questions about the relationship between

[2] For examples see Stevenson Day (1994), McLeod O'Reilly (2005), Casaleiro (1996) and Rubenstein, Paradis, and Munro (1993).

individuals, culture and society, with a strong focus on the consumption of cultural products" (Clarke 2016, 150). In our study, the cultural product—an international exhibition—is viewed as a site in which meaning is negotiated. We also pay attention to the processes of producing and consuming international exhibitions as a "circuit of culture", whereby consumption, although "conditioned by the circumstances under which it takes place … can nevertheless have an effect on those circumstances by producing and circulating new meanings about existing cultural products" (Clarke 2016, 152).

At the centre of our analytical framework is museum studies, in particular ideas about how museums have functioned as complex cultural and political entities over time (Bennett 2006; Mason 2006; Macdonald 2003; Clifford 1997), the interface between museum practice and theory (McCarthy 2015; Hakamies 2017) and visitor studies (Davidson 2015). In order to better understand the global and political dimensions of international exhibitions we also draw on the field of international cultural relations, specifically cultural diplomacy (Mark 2010; Goff 2015a; Ang, Isar, and Mar 2015), while delving into theories of cosmopolitanism (Appiah 2006; Delanty 2006; Beck 2006) and intercultural studies (Alred, Byram, and Fleming 2002; Arasaratnam 2011) helps us to consider the role of international exhibitions from these perspectives.

Museum studies

Museum studies is a diverse field encompassing a broad range of approaches to theory and practice. Central to much of the scholarship in this field is an understanding that museums are "complex assemblages of meaning" (Message and Witcomb 2015, xxxv) that have been "written over by multiple scripts of power" (Bennett 2015, 8). Museums have been linked to functions of civilising and educating the working masses while simultaneously promoting connoisseurship and class distinction throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Prior 2002). At the same time they helped to construct new forms of power and identity associated with the emergence of the nation-state (Knell 2010; Boswell and Evans 1999). They continue to be linked to governmental strategies of "improvement" in relation to multiculturalism and tolerance by some theorists (Bennett 1998, 2015) while others advocate that through reform they can function as agents of social change and activism (Sandell and Nightingale 2012; Janes 2016).

Clifford's (1997) concept of museums as "contact zones", that is, as sites where contact takes places between different cultures and where relationships are negotiated, has been widely applied in the museum studies literature, particularly as a way of describing inclusionist and collaborative programmes between museums and source communities (Witcomb 2003; Peers and Brown 2003).

Critics of this perspective are sceptical of the positive light in which these relationships are often portrayed, claiming that this glosses over structural imbalances of power and instrumental government agendas (Boast 2011; Bennett 1998; Message 2009). However, it is a useful lens for considering museums as dialogic spaces, where conversations about identity and meaning take place across cultures, however asymmetrical and imperfect the process may be.

More recently, the relational nature of museums has been conceptualised with the help of assemblage theory, so as to illuminate the ways in which they are situated at an "intersection between a range of dispersed networks and relations which flow into and shape its practices" (Bennett 2015, 13). Museums, Bennett (2015, 15) argues, are "sites where texts, things, technologies, and bodies are brought together in complex relations with one another". The multiscalar nature of assemblages is also relevant in that museums themselves can be view as assemblages at one scale, while simultaneously forming parts of other assemblages. Bennett (2015, 18) proposes that the most crucial questions for museum scholars today are those concerned with "the respects in which museums exist and act only through their dispersal across the assemblages they are connected to".

Museums are sites in which the delineation of cultural difference has been hotly contested (Mason 2006). The means by which museums function as "differencing machines" is primarily, but not exclusively, through exhibition practices which have involved particular ways of ordering people and things through strategies of representation and display (Bennett 2015). Historically, they have encouraged people to construct identities based on difference and consider these as "bounded and coherent" (Macdonald 2003, 6). In terms of racialised divisions, Bennett (2006, 55) argues, archaeological and anthropological museums enacted these processes to produce "a Western or white self … defined in terms of a capacity for an inner dynamic of self-development that was identified as such only by being distinguished from the flat, fixed, or frozen personas that the primitive and 'Asiatic types' represented". Museums thereby functioned within modernity to show us how far we had come, and direct us towards the future (Bennett 2006).

Today, identities are much more fluid, flexible and contingent (Bauman 2001). The challenge now is "to reinvent the museum as an institution that can orchestrate new relations and perceptions of difference" (Bennett 2006, 59), and to find ways of articulating alternative forms of identity when the conventional culture of display "easily runs the risk of unwittingly 'freezing' identities" (Macdonald 2003, 9). Recent shifts towards multiculturalism in museums have been accused of displaying diversity as "a national possession" rather than "as an ongoing process of intercultural dialogue" (Bennett 2006, 61–62). Instead, Bennett (2006, 62–63) argues, we need a "perspective of

hybridity" and rather than "anchoring objects in fixed relation to specific cultures" should focus "on their role in mediating the relations between different cultures, belonging to none exclusively … paying attention to the multiaccentuality of meaning that arises out of the dialogic to-and-fro, the discursive give-and-take, that characterizes processes of cross-cultural exchange". Such "decentered displays" would promote "the virtues of speaking and hearing in relations of discursive reciprocity", positioning objects, texts and visitors in ways that suggest a range of possible inferences and stress "flux, fluidity, and indeterminacy" over a sense of objective neutrality (Bennett 2006, 63).

Until recently, critical, expert readings of museums and exhibitions as sites of cultural meaning have dominated the field, however, visitor studies is a growing and increasingly sophisticated sub-field within museum studies. Recent studies emphasise visitor experience as involving complex processes of meaning-making, identification and interpretation (Davidson 2015). This research has brought about a deeper appreciation that exhibitions do not have fixed meanings; that meaning is produced, performed and negotiated through the encounters between visitors and exhibitions (Schorch 2015). Also of growing interest are the roles of emotions and imagination in the meaning-making process (L. Smith and Campbell 2016), and the concept of museum visiting as an embodied experience involving architectural space, elements of exhibition design and the physical presence of objects in complex ways (Bjerregaard 2015; Schorch 2013b; Latham 2013).

While an understanding of theory is important, adequate attention must also be paid to the everyday world of museum practice. We are concerned that any critique of museums and their practices should be grounded, as Ames (1992, 4) argues, "in an understanding of the situations of the museums". As McCarthy (2015, 2016) points out, there is something of a "false split" between practice and theory in museum studies, and a lack of academic research on practice; the traditional focus has been on "the stuff" rather than what people *do* in museums. This is often a "messy" and contingent process: "of modeling, planning, failures, compromises, solutions, a back-and-forth 'dance' of agency between human and non-human actors"; it is also a "constantly evolving, lived phenomenon" (McCarthy 2015, xvi).

The museum profession can be conceptualised as a "community of practice"; that is, as "a community that can be defined through its practices" (Hakamies 2017, 143). These practices are produced over time through active processes of meaning-making, as Wenger (2010, 181) explains:

> No matter how much external effort is made to shape, dictate, or mandate practice, in the end [a practice] reflects the meanings arrived at by those engaged in it. Even when they comply with external mandates,

> they produce a practice that reflects their own engagement with their situation. A practice has a life of its own. It cannot be subsumed by a design, an institution, or another practice such as management or research. When these structuring elements are present, practice is never simply their output or implementation: it is a response to them – based on active negotiation of meaning.

This approach highlights the complex social nature of human learning, whereby "learning can be viewed as a process of realignment" between socially-defined competence and personal experience (Wenger 2010, 181). The social world "includes myriad practices; and we live and learn across a multiplicity of practices" (Wenger 2010, 182). They "are like mini-cultures" and the boundaries between them "are not necessarily visible or explicit"—boundaries are places of potential misunderstanding, but also sources of learning as "the meetings of new perspectives can be rich in new insights and radical innovations". Given the risks involved, "boundary processes require careful management of time and attention" (Wenger 2010, 183).

In sum, we consider it a useful starting point to envisage an international exhibition as a form of *mobile* "contact zone", thereby highlighting its nature as a dynamic site of encounter that undergoes processes of transformation and reconstruction as it traverses contested museological, cultural and political terrain. As international exhibitions cross borders, they are shaped by the new and challenging contexts they encounter and they, in turn, shape the cross-cultural encounters of the people, objects, practices, identities and meanings that intersect them. This book, therefore, examines how forms of encounter and associated interpretations shift as an exhibition moves between different cultural, political and institutional contexts. This perspective emphasises the fluidity and contingency of cultural identities and meanings, and the way in which international exhibitions function as deeply intercultural spaces in terms of both the processes and practices through which they are produced, and their potential impact on the subjectivities of those involved. In keeping with the concept of a "circuit of culture", we include museum professionals, visitors and other stakeholders within our analytical framework in order to produce a comprehensive understanding of international exhibitions.

Through our case study we are also responding to McCarthy's call for more in-depth empirical studies of professional practice in museums, and research that denaturalises practice and recognises its plurality. Informed by McCarthy's (2015) work, we understand museum practice as the actions performed by staff in their day-to-day work, including what they say and write, the people and "things" they interact with. By applying practice theory, we situate the processes surrounding international exhibitions in the grounded social relations of people

and institutions, and in the embodied actions, background knowledge, assumptions and meanings that underpin the performance of this work.

We also propose that international exhibitions involve substantial time on the boundaries of museum practices and that this underscores their potential value in terms of professional development and the development of a community of practice related to international museum work. As Wenger (2010, 184) explains, "the learning and innovation potential of the whole system lies in the coexistence of the depth within practices" and the work that goes on in the borderlands between them. In considering the relational nature of international exhibitions, it is also helpful to think of them as assemblages—a temporal and spatial coming together of diverse components—which in turn form part of other assemblages such as global networks of cultural institutions, as well as inter-governmental diplomacy and international cultural relations.

Cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations

While there is ample recognition within museum studies of the political nature of museums, there has traditionally been little interaction between this field and its counterparts of political studies and international relations (Sylvester 2009; Luke 2002). However, mounting concerns about how cultures are "meeting, mingling and morphing" and an increasing interest in cultural diplomacy as a tool in global affairs is prompting some change in this regard (Bound et al. 2007, 19; McDonald 2014). In this book we are concerned with helping to bridge this gap by considering within our analysis recent work in this intersecting space.

There is a growing body of theory on cultural diplomacy, although it remains an under-researched area, lacking in critical analysis and evading clear definition (Mark 2008; Goff 2015a; Ang, Isar, and Mar 2015). Within the arena of international relations it shares an overlapping and often ill-defined space with closely related terms such as public diplomacy, soft power, national branding, propaganda, international cultural relations, and heritage diplomacy (Winter 2015), creating what Mark (2008, 42) has referred to as a "semantic quagmire".

Debates circle around how cultural diplomacy is practised and by whom, what its purposes are and the extent of state involvement. Goff (2015a) describes cultural diplomacy as sitting "at the intersection of government and the cultural world" and notes that this is both a strength and a challenge. Its intended purposes are many:

> It helps advance national interests, contributes to a government's diplomacy, and enhances mutual understanding between countries and their peoples. Cultural diplomacy also raises a state's profile, helps counter negative impacts of contentious issues, 'puts the record

> straight', and is now more frequently implicated in contributing to governmental efforts to 'brand' a state. The practice supports efforts to protect a national culture in order to counter the impact of cultural 'invasion.' (Mark 2008, 4)

Mark (2008, 43) defines cultural diplomacy as "the deployment of a state's culture in support of its foreign policy goals or diplomacy". International cultural relations, on the other hand, is perceived as being more focused on understanding, cooperation, and the building of long-term relationships through two-way exchange, and has been largely the domain of non-state actors. However, this distinction is becoming increasingly blurred, and a decline in the state monopoly of cultural diplomacy and the increasing involvement of non-state actors has been noted (Goff 2015b; EUNIC 2016; Ang, Isar, and Mar 2015).

The rhetoric of cultural diplomacy tends to emphasise ideals such as mutual understanding and dialogue, while downplaying more instrumental objectives (EUNIC 2016; Isar 2010). This has led to a "mismatch between overblown rhetoric and on-the-ground reality" emerging from a "central contradiction" between the instrumentalism of cultural diplomacy in advancing national interests on the one hand, and the achievement of some of its more lofty goals (Ang, Isar, and Mar 2015, 370). Meanwhile, much cultural diplomacy remains deeply implicated in the advancement of a particular national image and promoting national economic interests (Mark 2008) and it is this instrumentalisation of culture that has been the target of criticism from both professionals and scholars (Nisbett 2013; Carter 2015).

Cultural diplomacy in practice generally occurs in an ad hoc and contingent way (Goff 2015a) and focuses on what Albro (2015) calls a "cultural policy of display"; that is, a preference for cultural spectacle as opposed to reciprocal engagement. This approach, Albro argues, takes for granted an uncomplicated, one-way transmission of values through display which is not conducive, and may even be inimical, to intercultural dialogue. A "central paradox" of national exhibitions, Wallis (1994, 271) explains, is that "in order to establish their status within the international community, individual nations are compelled to dramatize conventionalized version of their national images, asserting past glories and amplifying stereotypical differences". An alternative approach is offered by transnational networks, working collaboratively on the co-production of shared knowledge and often based on shared professional commitments (Albro 2015). Similarly, Isar (2010) observes that:

> The nexus of culture and nation no longer holds. There is a growing awareness of the porosity of boundaries and the fluidity and multiplicity of cultural identities … the purposes of mutual understanding are

being achieved far more effectively by direct cultural interactions at the civil society level.

Related to this, the emergence of a 'new' cultural diplomacy has been identified, alongside the 'new' public diplomacy which emphasises mutuality, exchange and reciprocity (Goff 2015b; Carter 2015; Grincheva 2013). Recent technologies, particularly social media, are seen as creating opportunities for new ways of connecting and communicating between cultures. In these emergent forms of diplomacy a model of many-to-many communication replaces the one-to-many model of cultural display (Bound et al. 2007; Grincheva 2013). This shift acknowledges that creating a more harmonious world requires more than simply learning about others or flooding global media with myriad projections of attractive national brands. Instead, it advocates enhancing our basic skills of listening, "cognitive flexibility, empathy, humility and hospitality" (UNESCO 2009, 10; Rösler 2015).

Indeed, skills such as cultural literacy, dialogic communication and cosmopolitan cultural attitudes are seen as being both key attributes of effective cultural diplomats, and what cultural diplomacy ideally enhances. Calls for cultural diplomacy to be both informed by, and undertaken in order to cultivate, cosmopolitan values are growing (Villanueva Rivas 2010; Rösler 2015). In the ongoing "dance between nationalism and internationalism" (Winter 2015, 997) it is hoped that the former will give way to the latter in the realisation that universal values and the promotion of global cultural citizenship are, in fact, in the national interest (Ang, Isar, and Mar 2015; Isar 2015; Carter 2015).

A remaining problem for cultural diplomacy is what Clarke (2016, 160) identifies as a "profound uncertainty" about its actual outcomes and an urgent need to develop a methodology to evaluate its effectiveness. Frequently adopted measures of success include levels of attendance at events, media coverage, positive reviews and favourable comments from influential people, however, these all fail to account for effectiveness in terms of impact on behaviour (Goff 2015a; Clarke 2016; Mark 2008). The "softer side of cultural diplomacy"—the mutuality and understanding it is thought to foster—is particularly elusive to evaluation (Cummings 2013). In addition, as Goff (2015a) points out, cultural diplomacy is "neither unambiguously effective nor necessarily a force for good"; it "requires a long term commitment", its benefits may take some time to materialise, and sometimes it may have no benefits at all.

The implementation of cultural diplomacy should, Clarke (2016, 158) argues, be "informed by an understanding of what audiences do with cultural products". We should recognise too that both producers and consumers are involved in processes of meaning making, and that these processes are "bound up with their own values and sense of institutional identity" (Clarke

2016, 155). Ang et al. (2015, 377) also propose "a more ethnographic perspective" to illuminate "on-the-ground processes" and the many contingencies that shape them, as well as paying attention "to the specifics of intercultural dialogue" in order to better understand outcomes.

Our book reflects these approaches by endeavouring to understand whether diplomacy is what museums (intentionally or unintentionally) *do* when they undertake transnational work. How do they understand this work and what is the role of personal and institutional values and practices? Are they motivated by cosmopolitan ideals or more pragmatic aspirations? Do they exercise diplomatic skills through their international activities? When and how does this work intersect with state-sponsored cultural diplomacy? In this sense, it is a case of determining, as Winter (2015, 998) puts it, "in which geographic spaces or institutional relations we should look if we are to find the diplomatic".

Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism has attracted the interest of scholars writing about both museums (Mason 2006; Schorch, Waterton, and Watson 2016) and cultural diplomacy (Villanueva Rivas 2010; Rösler 2015). While it has a long tradition in the history of ideas, and many strands, we find recent sociological approaches to cosmopolitanism, in particular, the work of Delanty (2006, 2011) and Beck (2006), as being the most appropriate to the themes of this book.

Delanty (2006, 27) is interested in what happens when one culture meets another, and in analysing "cultural modes of mediation". His concern with cultural encounters, mediation and translation makes his theory of critical cosmopolitanism particularly relevant to an analysis of international exhibitions. He argues for a conception of culture as being formed from social relations, and as "a sphere of contestation and interpretation" (Delanty 2006, 642), thereby emphasising its cognitive, fluid and sense-making nature.

Cosmopolitanism, according to Delanty (2011, 634–35), is "less a condition expressed in mobility, diversity, globalizing forces than in the logic of exchange, dialogue, encounters". The cosmopolitan moment occurs "when and wherever new relations between self, other and world develop in moments of openness" (Delanty 2006, 27). Delanty's cosmopolitan perspective, then, highlights the transformational, creative and critical outcomes of cultural encounters. Underlying cosmopolitanism "is a reflexive condition in which the perspective of others is incorporated into one's own identity, interests or orientation in the world" (Delanty 2011, 634–35); it involves a "critical self-understanding" as well as a sense of "incompleteness and the awareness that certainty can never be established once and for all" (Delanty 2006, 25 & 35). It is "essentially a way of imagining the world … [it] suggests a certain openness

and, too, potential fragility since it rests on the bonds of mutuality and dialogue" (Delanty 2011, 635).

Beck (2006, 3) sees cosmopolitanism in similar terms, as:

> a sense of boundarylessness. An everyday, historically alert, reflexive awareness of ambivalences in a milieu of blurring differentiations and cultural contradictions. It reveals not just the 'anguish' but also the possibility of shaping one's life and social relations under conditions of cultural mixture. It is simultaneously a sceptical, disillusioned, self-critical outlook.

Translation is "one of the central mechanisms of cosmopolitan transformation"; from the process of translation "something new is created … because every translation is at the same time an evaluation" (Delanty 2006, 43–44). "Possibilities for translation" exist in the "dynamic relation[s]" (Delanty 2006, 42) between local/global, self/other, particular/universal, past/present, core/periphery: rather than a logic of and/or, these pairs are mutually implicated in cosmopolitanism as a transformative process.

What does cosmopolitanism look like? Borrowing from Bryan Turner, Delanty suggests we may find it in "such virtues as irony (emotional distance from one's own history and culture), reflexivity (the recognition that all perspectives are culturally conditioned and contingent), scepticism towards the grand narratives of modern ideologies, care for other cultures and an acceptance of cultural hybridization, an ecumenical commitment to dialogue with other cultures, especially religious ones, and nomadism, as a condition of never being fully at home in cultural categories or geo-political boundaries" (Delanty 2006, 42–43). And rather than being either present or absent, it exists "in degrees" (Delanty 2011, 648).

Mason argues that museums can take a cosmopolitan approach through a "generally positive emphasis on the mutual influence of cultures" and an interpretivist stance that "explicitly encourages the relativization of one's own position" (Mason 2013, 56). Through polyvocal methods of display and interpretation, a cosmopolitan museology would "encourage people to consider the world through the 'other's' eyes and from an 'other's location' while encouraging visitors to connect this back to their own lives and experiences. It would try to capture what it means to be implicated simultaneously in both 'here' and 'there', local and global, past and present" (Mason 2013, 61).

Mason acknowledges that visitors must be willing to engage with such interpretivist strategies and that this may go against the self-confirmation that many seek from their museum visits. She suggests that attempts to get visitors to move outside their frame of reference should also "offer points of recogni-

tion and invite them to extend this into new territory" (Mason 2013, 58). Balancing representations of both commonality and difference is supported by Rings (2012). There is a danger, he suggests, not just of insufficient empathy, but also of over-identification and mistakenly feeling that we can speak for or as the other. When encountering others through their cultural productions, Rings argues, we must negotiate the tension between "*coming close* enough" and "keeping a proper *distance*" (Rings 2012, 186). The goal is a kind of "transcultural conversation"; one "that is open and responsive and seriously engaged with, but also mindful and respectful of difference and distance between oneself and one's 'interlocutor'" (Rings 2012, 186).

Appiah (2006) also uses conversation as a metaphor for engagement with the experience and ideas of others in his discussion of cosmopolitanism. These conversations begin, he says, with imaginative engagement and are valuable in themselves, regardless of whether or not any agreement is reached. Rather, "it's enough that it helps people get used to one another" (Appiah 2006, 85). We should not underestimate the difficulty of understanding one another and of achieving transformation: "when it comes to change, what moves people is often not an argument from a principle, not a long discussion about values, but just a gradually acquired new way of seeing things" (Appiah 2006, 73).

Intercultural studies

As Bound et al. (2007, 14) argue, "we are all diplomats now" and need skills for "navigating diversity, recognising signals and getting on with other cultures against an ever-changing backdrop". The problem is, as Metge & Kinloch (1978) observed almost four decades ago, we lack critical awareness of how culture shapes our communication. When we fail to recognise that our way of interpreting the world is not the same as those from other cultural backgrounds, we "talk past each other" (Metge and Kinloch 1978, 43). Instead we must "be continually alive to the possibility that other people may give something a different meaning or start from different assumptions" (Metge and Kinloch 1978, 47).

The emerging fields of intercultural communication and education can be seen as responses to this recognition of a need to cultivate new modes and greater skilfulness for communicating across cultural boundaries. Given this orientation, these fields have a strongly normative focus, as opposed to the type of analytical stance that has been advanced by the theories of cosmopolitanism discussed above. Nevertheless, a number of key themes and insights from this literature resonate strongly with these cosmopolitan views, and prove relevant for our analysis.

Arasaratnam (2012, 2011) defines *intercultural spaces* as those in which cultural differences add an extra measure of complexity to the meaning-

deciphering process. Like Metge & Kinloch, Arasaratnam (2011, 1) notes that the influence of our culturally learned cognitive traditions, that is, our "patterns of perception, recognition, and thought" on what we understand as familiar or alien is easily overlooked. In intercultural spaces we are confronted by situations which expose our own cultural assumptions, providing us with the opportunity to either dismiss the perspectives of others or re-evaluate our own. The greater our cognitive complexity—which can be developed over time through different experiences—the better our chances of deconstructing stereotypes. Motivation is also critical. The greater our investment in a particular stereotype, the less chance we will notice "disconfirming evidence" and adjust our perspective accordingly (Arasaratnam 2011, 12).

Thus, what Alred, Byram, and Fleming (2002) describe as becoming and/or being intercultural, may or may not arise out of cross-cultural contact. To be 'intercultural' in this sense implies a "qualitative judgement about the nature of such an encounter" (Alred, Byram, and Fleming 2002, 4), including awareness of one's own cultural assumptions and an openness to multiple perspectives: characterised by curiosity, empathy, respect and tolerance of ambiguity, and leading to reflection and an enhanced understanding of self (Gupta 2002; Perry and Southwell 2011; Ryan 2002). According to Bredella (2002, 237), being intercultural requires the ability "to reconstruct the others' frames of reference and see things through their eyes". Most importantly, intercultural interaction should not reinforce the identity of one group through comparison with another, but create instead "a new centre of interaction on the borders and frontiers which join rather than divide them … Frontiers become less barriers and prohibitions and more gateways and invitations" (Alred, Byram, and Fleming 2002, 4–5).

The call for museums to be intercultural spaces and promote intercultural dialogue has come from various quarters (ERICarts 2008; UNESCO 2009). In reviewing existing approaches in Europe, Bodo (2009, 49) found that strategies to date have focused on "showcasing differences", integrating new migrants through forms of "heritage literacy" and "culturally specific programming" for migrant communities. She concludes that they are "generally based on an understanding of 'intercultural dialogue' as a *goal* to be attained rather than as a *process*, ingrained in a museum's practice" and argues for an alternative conception of intercultural work in museums as "a bi-directional, dialogic process which is transformative of all parties" (Bodo 2012, 183–84).

Similarly, we are looking for the intercultural and the cosmopolitan at all levels of museum practice, and not just as a goal of international exhibitions. All museum work may be conceived as intercultural, involving complex processes of mediation, translation and representation. But with international exhibitions, perhaps more than any other museological practice, intercultural

connection and collaboration are at the forefront. We, therefore, envisage international exhibitions as assemblages that function as mobile contact zones and operate on the boundaries of museum practices, as well as within the realm of international cultural relations. In the borderlands there is undoubtedly greater potential for conflict and confusion, but also for transformation. Here, then, is fertile ground both to look for and foster the imagination, empathy and reflexivity of cosmopolitan moments, so that museums may better engage in the process of being/becoming intercultural.

International exhibitions in practice: a case study

Our exploration of the perspectives and questions discussed thus far takes place through an in-depth consideration of two international exhibitions. *E Tū Ake: Standing Strong* was a ground-breaking Indigenous exhibition featuring both traditional and contemporary *taonga* (Māori cultural treasures) and developed to tour internationally by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa). It was shown briefly in Aotearoa New Zealand before travelling to the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, followed by the Museo Nacional de las Culturas in Mexico, and finally the Musée de la Civilisation, Québec, Canada, between 2011 and 2013. The hosting of *E Tū Ake* in Mexico constituted the first phase of the inaugural exhibition exchange between the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) and Australasia.

The second phase involved the development of the exhibition *Aztecs* by Te Papa in collaboration with INAH, and as part of a partnership with two Australian museums. *Aztecs* opened at Te Papa in September 2013, and then toured to Melbourne Museum (MM) and the Australian Museum (AM) in Sydney, before closing and returning to Mexico in February 2015. *Aztecs* was distinct from *E Tū Ake* as it involved a high level of institutional collaboration during the exhibition development stage and therefore greater complexity, as staff across the executive, administrative and operational levels of several museums in three countries—with contrasting museological, institutional and political contexts—worked together. At the same time, it had at its centre an ongoing relationship: the closure of *Aztecs* and the return of the collection to Mexico marked the end of a cycle of approximately six years of collaborative work between Te Papa and INAH as part of the exhibition exchange. This relationship is a revealing example of interculturality as evolving and enduring conversations.

Figure 1.2 *E Tū Ake – Orgullo Māori* at the Museo Nacional de las Culturas, Mexico City. Reproduction authorised by the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

Figure 1.3 Symbol of collaboration: The Mexican and Aotearoa New Zealand flags fly side by side outside Te Papa during the *Aztecs* exhibition. Photograph courtesy of Alice Meads.

The research material that forms the basis of this book was collected as part of two long-term studies that have involved a team of researchers collecting qualitative, quantitative and documentary material from both staff and visitors, across multiple venues. Comparative studies of international exhibitions at

different institutions are very scarce due to the complexities involved. Our approach takes the form of a long-term, multi-sited, "mobile" ethnography, which:

> moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space. This mode defines for itself an object of study that cannot be accounted for ethnographically by remaining focused on a single site of intensive investigation … This mobile ethnography takes unexpected trajectories in tracing a cultural formation across and within multiple sites of activity (Marcus 1995, 96).

As Mason (2006, 29) argues, studies that combine analysis of textual representation with institutional conditions of production and audience reception are located "at the intersection of theory and practice, as opposed to a mode of critique which stands outside looking inward … [and this approach is] best suited to capture the complexity of museums as cultural phenomenon". We collected and analysed data from multiple sources across four exhibition sites, including: in-depth interviews with key museum professionals; post-visit, in-depth interviews with visitors and follow-up interviews with a subsample of these visitor interviewees; exit survey data from a large sample of visitors collected by each venue; and exhibition documentation and observations of major events.

We conducted fifty-one interviews with museum professionals, using an open-ended, semi-structured guide approach (Patton, 2002). The interviewees were museum staff from Mexico, Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia who were key actors in the production and touring of the exhibitions, including curators, concept developers, project managers, writers, interpreters, and educators. Our goal was to interview as many professionals involved with the exhibition as possible, to gain a comprehensive picture of their different experiences and perspectives. This included identifying the ways those from different countries worked together to develop and manage the exhibition, the main challenges they faced and how they perceived the exhibition's role and importance. We also interviewed the Mexican Ambassador in New Zealand.

The long-term time frame of both the exhibition and, by association, the research project, means that the research context was dynamic, rather than recording a "snapshot" in time. This raised issues regarding the timing of the professional interviews, which significantly influenced how the exhibition process was viewed at any particular time. Ideally, professionals might be re-interviewed at different time intervals to capture the ways in which their impressions of the project evolved. Three professionals were interviewed twice, at different stages of the project, but otherwise, this approach was not practi-

cal. There are also certain viewpoints missing because we were unable to schedule interviews with particular people, either because they had moved on from their positions, or were otherwise unavailable at the time we tried to contact them. We have endeavoured to account for these limitations wherever relevant in our interpretation of the findings.

The professional interviews were conducted by the authors, in most cases face-to-face, but occasionally using Skype. Wherever possible interviews were conducted in the native language of the interviewee, but if necessary an interpreter assisted. Table 1.1 provides a breakdown of interviewees by exhibition, including their institution, role, date of interview, language used and whether an interpreter was present.

Table 1.1 Museum professional interviews

INSTITUTION	NAME	POSITION	DATE/LANGUAGE
E TU AKE: STANDING STRONG			
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand			
	Huhana Smith	Senior Curator, Māori	28/06/12 English
	Sarah Morris	Interpreter	02/07/12 English
	Simon Garrett	Project Manager	02/07/12 English
	Liz Hay	Touring Manager	03/07/12 English
	Mark Kent	Touring Project Manager	03/07/12 English
	Roma Potiki	Concept Developer	03/07/12 English
	Megan Tamati-Quennell	Curator, Contemporary Māori and Indigenous Art	13/09/13 English
	Carolyn Roberts-Thompson	Manager, Iwi Relationship Team	18/09/13 English
	Haley Hakaraia	Strategic Advisor, Iwi Relationship Team	18/09/13 English
	Jette Sandahl	Director, Experience	13/12/12 English
Museo Nacional de las Culturas, México			
	Rodrigo Hernández	Educator	10/07/13 Spanish with interpreter

	Rosa Elba Camacho	Visitor Researcher	12/07/13 Spanish & English, with interpreter
	Monserrat Navarro	Educator	10/07/13 Spanish with interpreter
Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH)			
	Priscila Medina Tejadilla	Project Manager, Dirección de exposiciones, CNME	08/07/13 English
	Alberto Limón	Graphic Designer, Dirección técnica, CNME	11/07/13 Spanish with interpreter
	Ana Carolina Abad	Content Developer and Writer, Dirección técnica, CNME	11/07/13 English
AZTECS: CONQUEST AND GLORY			
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand			
	Ben Barrard	3D Designer	12/11/2014 English
	Frith Williams	Head Writer	10/7/2015 English
	Hutch Wilco	Exhibition Preparator	7/4/2015 English
	James Brown	Writer	7/4/2015 English
	Jeff Fox	Concept Developer	27/9/2013 English
	Lynette Townsend	Curator	21/2/2014 English
	Mark Kent	Touring Exhibitions Manager	14/3/2015 English
	Mark Sykes	Collection Manager Māori	25/8/2014 English
	Raewyn Smith-Kapa	Project Development and Delivery Manager	26/11/2014 English
	Rebecca Browne	Educator	4/7/2014 English
	Robert Clendon	Conservator	27/3/2015 English
	Rupert Alchin	Writer	7/7/2014 English
	Sarah Morris	Senior Audience Engagement Facilitator	11/9/2014 English

	Wen Powles	International Strategy Advisor	17/8/2015 English
Melbourne Museum, Melbourne, Australia			
	Emma Campbell	Brand, Marketing and Communications Manager	28/11/2014 English
	Eve Almond	Touring Exhibitions Manager	28/4/2014 English
	Georgie Meyer	Education	11/4/2014 English
	Helen Sartori	Project Manager	11/4/2014 English
	Naomi Fogel	Exhibition Designer	1/12/2014 English
	Patrick Greene	CEO	26/9/2014 English
	Robin Hirst	Director, Collections, Research, Exhibitions	15/12/2014 English
Australian Museum, Sydney, Australia			
	Aaron Maestri	3D Designer	9/12/2014 English
	Amanda Teer	2D Designer	9/12/2014 English
	Fran Dorey	Curator and Exhibition Project Coordinator	9/12/2014 English
	Glenn Ferguson	Exhibitions Manager	9/12/2014 English
	Heather Bleechmore	Conservator	9/12/2014 English
Museo Templo Mayor, Mexico City, Mexico			
	Carlos Javier González	Director	2/11/2015 Spanish
	Fernando Carrisoza Montfort	Collection Manager and Courier	9/10/2014 Spanish
	Lourdes Gallardo	Conservator and Courier	3/9/2014 Spanish
	María Barajas Rocha	Head of Restoration and Courier	30/9/2014 Spanish
Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, Mexico			
	Martha Carmona	Deputy Director, Archaeology Department and Courier	24/9/2014 Spanish

Instituto Mexiquense de Cultura, Estado de Mexico, Mexico			
	Martín Antonio Mondragón	Director, Museo Arqueológico Román Piña Chan and Courier	15/1/2015 Spanish
Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH)			
	Paola Albert	Deputy Director, Directorate of Exhibitions, DE- CNME	14/9/2014 Spanish
	Raúl Barrera	Urban Archaeology Project and Curator	15/1/2014 English with Spanish translation
	Raúl Barrera (second interview)		2/11/2015 Spanish
	Erika Gómez	Project Manager, DE-CNME	15/1/2014 English with Spanish translation

A total of eighty-six interviews were conducted with visitors (see Table 1.2). The majority of these related to *Aztecs* due to the timing of the data collection (see Chapter 4). The visitor interviews were conducted by Lee Davidson, along with two Master's students, Alice Meads (Wellington) and Rosa Elba Camacho (Mexico City), supervised by the authors at their respective institutions. Both students analysed the interviews in relation to specific research questions, in the completion of their Master's theses (Meads 2015; Rodríguez Camacho 2018). Chapter 4 is informed by their work, while expanding on it to address the wider concerns of this book.

Table 1.2 Total number of interviews

	Visitors	**Professionals**	**Total**
E Tū Ake	4	16	20
Aztecs	82	35	117
Total	86	51	137

The analysis of interview data involved a process of immersion (Marshall and Rossman 2011) followed by thematic coding (Saldaña 2009) using NVivo software. All researchers contributed to the development of the coding frames.

Interviews were first coded in the original language. Those in Spanish were then translated into English and re-coded to allow both authors to understand and interpret them.

In February 2016, a symposium titled *International museum exhibitions and intercultural dialogue* was held at Victoria University of Wellington (VUW) with major funding from the New Zealand Commission for UNESCO.[3] It was attended by key New Zealand stakeholders of the project, a number of whom were also interviewees. Attendees included former and current Te Papa staff, representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Ministry for Culture and Heritage, former New Zealand diplomats and museum professionals from throughout the country. Davidson, Pérez and Meads presented preliminary findings from the project, which were discussed with attendees. In addition, two expert panels (see Table 1.3) specifically addressed "International exhibitions and cultural diplomacy" and "International museum exhibitions – what constitutes success?" The panel on cultural diplomacy was chaired by local expert Simon Mark from Massey University, Wellington. The contributions of Mark, along with the panel members and symposium attendees were invaluable for refining our interpretation of the project findings.

Table 1.3 Symposium panel members

International exhibitions and cultural diplomacy: Simon Mark (Chair)	
Michael Houlihan	Former Chief Executive, Te Papa (by video link from the UK)
Wen Powles	Director of the Confucius Institute, Victoria University of Wellington and former New Zealand Consul-General in Shanghai and International Strategy Advisor, Te Papa
Vivien Meek	Senior Policy Adviser at New Zealand's Ministry for Culture and Heritage
International museum exhibitions – what constitutes success? Lee Davidson (Chair)	
Anna Lawrenson and Chiara O'Reilly	Museum and Heritage Studies program, University of Sydney, Australia (by video link)
Huhana Smith	Former Senior Curator Māori, Te Papa; currently Head of School of Art | Whiti o Rehua at Toi Rauwhārangi | College of Creative Arts, Massey University, Wellington.
Liz Hay	Touring Manager, Te Papa
Mark Kent	Touring Project Manager, Te Papa
Jeff Fox	Former Concept Developer, Te Papa; currently Manager Collections and Knowledge Assets at Te Manawa Museum, Palmerston North

[3] Funding was also received from Victoria University of Wellington, ENCRyM and Córdova Plaza, México.

In June 2016, Davidson and Pérez presented their findings in a session at the Association for Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS) conference in Montreal, Canada, along with Gaëlle Crenn (Université de Lorraine, France) and Mélanie Roustan (National Museum of Natural History, France) who, in conjunction with Natacha Gagné (Université Laval, Canada), have been working on an inter-related study of the professional and public reception of *E Tū Ake* in Paris and Québec City, with which Davidson has also been involved (Davidson and Crenn 2014; Gagné and Roustan 2014).[4] Cultural diplomacy specialist Patricia Goff (Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada) also attended the ACHS session and discussions with these colleagues provided further valuable insights for our work.

Beyond the contributions of our many participants and colleagues, the authors have worked collaboratively on all aspects of the project and the book, drawing on our respective skills and knowledge at different times and in different ways. In doing so we are conscious that the very nature of the phenomenon we studied was present in our own intercultural research process. We worked continuously over four years, at times face-to-face, but mostly via email and Skype meetings, experiencing similar challenges to those described by many of our interviewees in the chapters that follow: pursuing mutual understanding and a cosmopolitan perspective as both a process and a product of our work.

Reflexivity played a constant role in the research. This involved maintaining an awareness of our respective cultural backgrounds and experiences, and critically examining their influence on all aspects of the research process (Elliott 2005). This context included professional and academic experiences and interests, institutional relationships and language skills. Lee Davidson is an English speaking, fourth generation Pākehā (New Zealander of European descent). She teaches on the Museum and Heritage Studies programme at VUW where her work has led to a close relationship with Te Papa staff, including collaborative research, teaching and supervision. During the course of the project she visited Mexico several times, for a total duration of around five months, enabling her to gain a reasonable understanding of Mexican society, cultural heritage and related institutional systems.

Leticia Pérez is a Spanish and English-speaking Mexican. She teaches on the Museology Master Degree Programme at Escuela Nacional de Conservación Restauración y Museografía (ENCRyM) in Mexico City. She has an intimate knowledge of INAH, having worked as the Deputy Director of International Exhibitions at the Coordinación Nacional de Museos y Exposiciones (CNME) for five years. During this time she wrote a master's thesis on international

[4] This earlier study informed the initial conceptualisation of the study of *Aztecs*.

exhibitions at INAH (Pérez Castellanos 2013). She visited Aotearoa New Zealand twice during the project, once in her role at CNME and the second time to participate in the symposium at VUW.

Structure of the book

Chapter 2 takes the reader on a journey through the complexity involved in producing an international exhibition, using as our case study the first exhibition exchange between Aotearoa New Zealand and Mexico. This involves the political and cultural contexts of each country, how the partnership was formed, the production model adopted, and how these worked in practice. We then consider the processes of collaboration that flowed from these contexts, exploring how museum professionals worked together across institutional, museological and cultural differences to produce the exhibitions: the challenges they met, the skills they used to face them and their moments of success.

Chapter 3 speaks about how the mobile contact zone is created. Both *E Tū Ake* and *Aztecs* were cultural exhibitions underpinned by specific purposes, museological approaches and collaborative practices. *E Tū Ake* was intended as an innovative example of self-representation by a "living culture". With *Aztecs*, exhibition developers at Te Papa applied the museological approaches with which they were familiar, endeavouring to produce a sensitive portrayal of a "past" culture while accommodating feedback from partner institutions. We show how different display strategies were used to mediate and translate cultural meanings, thereby creating an *intercultural* exhibition space, while exploring the challenges that arose in terms of engaging audiences and maintaining cultural sensitivity.

Chapter 4 assesses the next stage in the "circuit of culture", when visitors enter the borderlands of an intercultural exhibition. We examine how visitors connect with the cultural other, negotiate differences and create cosmopolitan and counter-cosmopolitan meanings. We also explore the resonances and ripples of meaning through visitors' recollections many months after their initial visits, and their articulations of the value of international exhibitions.

Chapter 5 considers the role of international exhibitions within cultural diplomacy. By examining the intersection between the exhibition exchange and the foreign policy context of the two exchange partners, we demonstrate the various ways in which museums *do* diplomacy. On the basis of this, we explore further the value of international exhibitions, and how success might be defined and evaluated.

Finally, Chapter 6 connects the threads of the preceding chapters to conclude our argument for international exhibitions as *cosmopolitan ambassa-*

dors that offer a kaleidoscopic vision that is *polycentral* in nature. We also put forward a vision of intercultural museum practice based on the concept of polycentrality and the notion of creating new spaces in between old ways of *doing* and *being*. We finish by offering suggestions to guide this work in practice, and consider future agendas for research.

Chapter 2

Collaboration and complexity: producing international exhibitions

From a public perspective international exhibitions are momentary events and yet, paradoxically, they can be one of the most time-consuming and complex of museum activities. While initial negotiations may take many years as relationships are built, partnerships established and contracts signed, once the dates are fixed time can be unforgiving, and large numbers of specialists must coordinate their efforts to meet a rapidly approaching and often feared deadline: the opening. Then, the doors open, visitors come in and magic happens: beautiful objects arranged with care; meticulous conservation and security systems; messages communicated through specially designed strategies; spectacular graphics and memorable experiences. All in a limited timeframe. Then, in what can feel like the blink of an eye, the exhibition is over. It is taken apart, objects returned, technical sheets are closed and reports filled in. The number of visitors is registered and—in the best case scenario—an evaluation is carried out; maybe through an analysis of audiences' perceptions or the self-reflections of work teams.

In the year 2015, *The Art Newspaper* listed 664 large-scale exhibitions around the world, in five hundred museums (*The Art Newspaper* 2016). A significant number of these were touring exhibitions, while many others would have involved international collaborations and partnerships of various kinds. The content, venues and visitor attendances for these exhibitions are recorded, but how they were organized is not and, therefore, remains somewhat of a mystery. What is also not fully evident in the reported data is the complicated political, cultural and institutional backdrop against which an international exhibition takes place.

More than seventy staff worked directly on the exhibitions that are the focus of this book, but many others were indirectly involved. Over almost six years, staff from Te Papa and CNME were directly involved in putting together the *Aztecs* exhibition concept, object list and paperwork needed to transport the selected objects from several locations in Mexico to Aotearoa New Zealand. The CNME coordinated twenty-one lenders in Mexico, including two of the main archaeological museums in Mexico City—Museo Nacional de Antropología (MNA) and Museo del Templo Mayor (MTM)—as well as other regional and small museums

around the country. At the same time, Te Papa consulted with the Australian museums on the exhibition development. During this period another team at Te Papa undertook the development and touring of *E Tū Ake,* including working with staff at INAH and the Museo Nacional de las Culturas (MNC) to coordinate its hosting in Mexico City. A number of staff from Mexico and Aotearoa New Zealand were involved with both exhibitions.

In this chapter we explore the organisation of international exhibitions through the example of this long-term partnership. We begin by considering the wider socio-political contexts in Mexico and Aotearoa New Zealand, as the two lead partners in the exchange. We then examine how the partnership came about and what form it took, comparing this with existing research on the economic and production models used for international exhibitions. By examining how our case study model worked in practice, we reflect on the importance of better understanding the advantages and disadvantages of various ways of organising international exhibitions, and how such insights may enhance decision-making, reduce potential conflicts and misunderstandings, and help institutions to develop and plan the most appropriate and effective partnerships for their needs.

The final part of the chapter elaborates on what it means to work together when collaboration takes place between professionals from different political, institutional and personal contexts, framed by distinct cultural environments. We look at both the challenges and satisfactions of this work through the eyes of our interviewees, and consider their perspectives and experiences with the aid of theories introduced in Chapter 1—specifically practice theory, and insights on cosmopolitanism and interculturality.

Contexts of collaboration

The existing political, cultural and institutional contexts in both Mexico and Aotearoa New Zealand shaped the production of the mobile contact zones of our case study, and manifested themselves in complex ways through the interactions and encounters of different actors in the exhibition exchange. Here we provide some brief historical background and explanation of these contexts in terms of relevant cultural policy, institutional structures and museological approaches.

New Zealand

Twenty-five years after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi between Māori and the British Crown in 1840—still considered to be the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand—the Colonial Museum was opened in the capital of Wellington. This institution later became the Dominion Museum,

which moved to a new building shared with the National Art Gallery in 1936. By the 1980s, with visitation declining, political interest grew in building a new national museum. Planning got underway in the early 1990s and on 14 February 1998 the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa was opened in a new waterfront location.

Te Papa is identified as a leading example of a "new" national museum, influenced heavily by a reforming wave of museological thinking in the 1980s and 1990s (Message and Witcomb 2015). This includes striving to be "relevant and appealing", using interactivity and multimedia displays to provide visitors with an "experience" (Message, 2006). It also involves efforts to be more democratic and give voice to minority groups, and a commitment to "articulating relations of similarity and difference in new ways" (Bennett 2006, 59–60).

Te Papa is an independent Crown entity. Its mission, enshrined in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Act (s4), is to be "a forum for the nation to present, explore, and preserve the heritage of its cultures and knowledge of the natural environment in order to better understand and treasure the past, enrich the present, and meet the challenges of the future". While Te Papa has achieved some success in attracting a more substantial and diverse audience than its predecessors, significant challenges remain particularly in reflecting the ethnic diversity of New Zealand's population which is predicted to grow over the coming decades (Davidson and Sibley 2011).

The planning for Te Papa prior to opening in 1998 was strongly influenced by an evolving Māori museology brought about by Māori engagement with museums throughout Aotearoa New Zealand over the previous thirty years (McCarthy 2011). As a result, the museum adopted a bicultural model that recognises the principle of partnership with Māori, and many aspects of professional practice in the institution have come to incorporate Māori perspectives and values. In a broad sense, Te Papa endeavours to recognise connections between communities and their material culture, to breakdown ethnographic constructs and represent "living cultures" and their contemporary relevance.

Central to its bicultural model is the principle of *mana taonga*, which literally means "the power and authority arising from and pertaining to taonga [Māori cultural treasures]" (McCarthy 2011, 114). In the context of museum practice, *mana taonga* has various applications. *Taonga* are understood and treated as living ancestors, rather than artefacts. The handling, storage, packing and transportation of *taonga* reflect a Māori world view and ritual practices or *tikanga taonga* are observed, including the use of *karakia* (prayers) and restrictions relating to water, food and blood. *Tikanga taonga* can "be seen as Māori museum practice, a Māori way of caring for *taonga* that is complementary to Western museology" (McCarthy 2011, 128). *Mana taonga* also recognises "the spiritual

and cultural connections of *taonga* with their people"[1] and Te Papa's interpretive authority comes from nurturing this connectivity. Te Papa has a high number of Māori staff and a "strong Māori ethos exists in the organisational culture" (McCarthy 2011, 120). This includes frequent *pōwhiri* (welcoming ceremonies) on the *marae* (communal meeting place) to welcome visitors; and the training of non-Māori staff in Māori values, language and practices.

Te Papa generates 25 per cent of its revenue through commercial operations such as corporate functions, food and retail outlets, car parking, museum tours, as well as national and international touring exhibitions. One year after opening, the museum began hosting international exhibitions. Among the most popular have been European art exhibitions and 'ancient history' shows. Te Papa produced its first international blockbuster *The Lord of the Rings Motion Picture Trilogy—The Exhibition* in 2003 (see Chapter 5). The year 2012 was a standout year for Te Papa's touring exhibition programme, with over one million overseas visitors attending its five exhibitions at nine international venues in the US, Canada, Mexico, Europe and China.

Mexico

The Mexican museum system has a long and complex history, dating back to the time of the country's independence from Spain in the nineteenth century. Since that period, Mexico's creole elite have shaped the nation's identity and formed the institutions that support it, among them a National Museum (Morales Moreno 1994). Museum collections dominated by pre-Hispanic heritage have been formative in Mexican museological thinking and cultural identity, with the Mexica[2]—also known as Aztecs—becoming one of the main referents of Mexico. During the nineteenth century, regulations for heritage conservation and protection began to be put in place. But it was not until the twentieth century when, in the aftermath of the Revolution, the Mexican cultural administration system took shape through the creation of two institutions which largely controlled the Mexican museum system.

INAH was founded in 1939 to research, protect and promote archaeological, paleontological and historical heritage (http://www.inah.gob.mx/en/about-us), the first being identified with all cultural assets from pre-Hispanic times, and the third referring to material culture produced between the Conquest and the

[1] Te Papa's Mana Taonga Policy 2005, cited by McCarthy (2011, 114).

[2] Alexander von Humboldt coined the word Aztecs in the early nineteenth century, and this is the name by which they have become most widely known. However, the Aztecs called themselves "Mexica" (Keen 1971). We use Mexica to refer to the culture, and Aztecs when talking about their representation in exhibitions.

beginning of the twentieth century. In 1947, the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA) was created to care for artistic heritage produced since the beginning of the twentieth century. Both organisations reported directly to the Ministry of Education and worked in coordination with the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (Conaculta) from its creation in 1988 until 2016 when it was replaced by the Secretaría de Cultura (Cultural Ministry) (Secult). These institutes work under a highly protective national law that looks after Mexico's diverse heritage and regulates its temporary and permanent export.

INAH's first experience as an exhibition organiser took place just one year after its establishment. In 1940, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* was presented at MoMA in New York (see Chapter 1). Since that time, INAH has participated intensively in cultural exchange, either through sending exhibitions abroad or by receiving them. The internal organisation required to perform this work has changed over the years, and recently the Coordinación Nacional de Museos y Exposiciones (CNME) has taken charge of all formalities related to international exhibitions, exchanges, and loans, at times working closely with the former Conaculta and with Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (Foreign Affairs Ministry) (SRE).

The CNME is responsible for around 120 museums located throughout Mexico. It works in a technical and supervisory role, setting museum policies and providing services to its museum network in regards to exhibition design, installation, maintenance, education and visitor studies. Through its Dirección de Exposiciones (Directorate of Exhibitions) (DE), the CNME takes care of temporary national and international exhibitions, both incoming and outgoing, and manages the paperwork and formalities for all loans in third party exhibitions involving archaeological and historical heritage.

Conaculta acknowledged that culture could act "as an undisputed and distinguished ambassador" and its broad aim for international exhibitions was to be "a means of cultural exchange: to present Mexico and its national values abroad and in Mexico, to bring other people's cultures for Mexicans"[3] (Conaculta 2007, 73–74). However, the number, type and characteristics of all international exhibitions organised by INAH in its seventy-eight year history are not known because accessible administrative records of this activity over a long period do not exist. Indeed, there has been no systematisation of INAH's work with international exhibitions, which has prevented it and other authorities in charge of cultural policies from making informed decisions for an integrated and strategic programme of international exhibitions (Pérez Castellanos 2013). Recently, some Mexican scholars have examined this kind of

[3] Translated by authors.

cultural circulation within museum studies (Galindo Monteagudo 2012; Pérez Castellanos 2013) and art studies (Macías Rodríguez 2015). But the topic is under researched, despite the intense involvement and investment of the Mexican government in international festivals, fairs, and exhibitions as part of its diplomatic endeavours (see Chapter 5).

International exhibition models and forms of partnership

Partnerships are a common strategy across a range of museum functions. Chesebrough (1998, 51) identifies a continuum of intensity for museum partnerships from cooperation (the least intensive, informal relationship); to coordination (a more formal, defined and consistent relationship); and finally collaboration which is "a more durable and pervasive relationship". A pioneer of international collaboration and cost-sharing to facilitate "circulating exhibitions" in the 1940s and 1950s was Grace L. McCann Morley, founder of the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco (SFMoMA) (Amsellem 2013). In a review of early practices, she identifies the key ways in which these exhibitions were organised at the time: either "by a group of museums in cooperation, which then exhibit them in turn" or "prepared and circulated by a single museum to others interested, most often as a by-product or as the result of an exhibition held in its own galleries" (McCann Morley 1950, 265).

While partnership and collaboration are common in the organisation of international exhibitions, and are predicted to become even more common in the future (Jacobsen and West 2009), examples of full collaboration, such as the integrated co-development of an exhibition, are far less common than other types of museum partnership (McLeod O'Reilly 2005). The advantages of partnerships with regards to touring exhibitions include opportunities to share capital investment and financial risk, sharing expertise, workload and attracting funding, as well as professional development and building networks ("CASTEX: Guidelines for Touring Exhibitions in Europe" 2004; Touring Exhibitions Group 2007). A TEG (2007, 11) research report found that while collaborative planning and decision-making may take longer, "strategic aims are more likely to be achieved with a bespoke touring package" and partnerships allow venues to create exhibitions that would not be possible for one institution alone. Jacobsen and West (2009, 4) identify key criteria for choosing partners for travelling exhibitions in the US:

> [The] potential to lend heavily to the show that is being organized; geographic synergy; venues that institutions have worked with before successfully; venues that can offer curatorial/intellectual support to the exhibition; ability to share the workload evenly; venues that are strong and can help secure financial support for the exhibition.

With the growing popularity of international exhibitions and a proliferation in types of partnership and collaboration, efforts have been made to better understand the different models by which they are organised. We present a synthesis of existing classifications from research by Amsellem (2013), and by Andrew (2016) and Dew (2016b, 2016c, 2016a) on behalf of TEG, alongside our model of drivers from Chapter 1, to propose a more holistic understanding of this aspect of international exhibitions (see Table 2.1). As Pérez (2013) argues, more systematic classification and recording of different types of exhibition organisation is likely to aid strategic decision-making in this area.

Table 2.1 Exhibition models – existing and proposed

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">MACRO CONTEXT LEVEL (Exhibition Drivers) (Davidson & Pérez; see Chapters 1 and 5)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Diplomatic driven
Involves a direct intervention from government with “culture as a resource” (Yúdice and Ventureira 2002) for national branding and/or foreign policy goals
Often from countries where heritage is highly state-controlled
Other interests embedded: trade and/or cooperation agreements (Mark 2010)
Idealistic goals may also be implied
No fee or cost-recovery only</td><td colspan="2">Mission driven
Reaching global audiences/enriching local audiences
Visitation (first time and repeat)
Audience development
Institutional reputation/brand
Strengthening international partnerships
Scholarly exchange and professional development
Innovations in practice
Social change, human rights, intercultural understanding, biculturalism (TP)
Assisting state-sponsored cultural diplomacy</td><td>Market driven
Internal revenue from corporate sponsorship, ticket sales, merchandising, parking, food services, memberships, special events, public programmes and educational services
Supports other museum activities
Wider economic impact, including employment and local tourism
Attracts other partners or alternative funding sources
Loan fees involved and revenues highly important
Visitor and market research is a key issue</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">ECONOMIC MODELS (TEG) (Dew 2016)
Economic model defined as: the management of costs and income connected to a touring project</td></tr>
<tr><td>Fully subsidized
External funders</td><td>Partial cost recovery
Income against the project covers a percentage of the total exhibition and tour costs</td><td>Full cost recovery
Income against the project covers all of the exhibition and tour costs</td><td>For profit
Income against the project exceeds the cost of producing and touring the exhibition</td></tr>
</table>

PRODUCTION MODEL (TEG) (Dew 2016)					
Single venue An organisation produces a touring exhibition, and manages a tour to other venues	**Reactive Partnership** An organisation develops an exhibition on their own, another venue expresses an interest in hiring it and the exhibition is adapted to be shown at the other venue	**Lead venue Partnership** A lead venue manages a partnership between a number of organisations, sharing workload and costs in agreement, to develop an exhibition	**Equal Partnership** A group of venues form a partnership and share costs and workload equally, to develop an exhibition	**Strategic Partnership** A national or regional organisation works with a venue, or brings together a group of venues through invitation, application or competition, to develop an exhibition, providing funding or/and project management, that realises their strategic objectives e.g. access or audience development	**Commercial Partnership** A venue or group of venues works with a commercial exhibition touring company to develop and/or promote and manage an exhibition to tour

INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGIES (Amsellem, 2013)		
Partnership		Direct export
Coproduction • Cooperation in the processes of creation, implementation and realisation • The exhibition travels between the different partner institutions • Creates international networks • Multiplies the number of visitors • Sharing of production costs	Coorganized • Collaboration between several museums • One technical producer and financially-responsible institution • Two types of fees: loan fees and exhibition fees	• An exhibition is produced by an institution and is subsequently sold or sent to other institutions • The producer institution chooses the exhibition to produce and sells it to other international institutions • Often called “pocket filling” exhibitions by professionals • There are little or no production costs, only revenue for the host venue

Research commissioned by TEG in 2015 involving 222 UK institutions identified a range of economic and production models used to organise touring exhibitions (Dew 2016c, 5). A follow-up study surveyed twenty-one of these institutions specifically about international exhibitions (Andrew 2016). The studies concluded that the selection of both an appropriate economic and exhibition production model was vital to an effective touring strategy (Dew, 2016, p. 2).

As shown in Table 2.1 the economic models identified were: partial cost recovery (income covers a percentage of all costs for producing and touring the exhibition); full cost recovery (income covers all costs) and profit (income exceeds costs) (Dew 2016a, 2). The partial cost recovery model is the most common in the UK. TEG identified six exhibition production models: Single venue, Reactive partnership, Lead venue partnership, Equal partnership, Strategic partnership and Commercial partnership; each with its own features. Divisions between these models may not always be clear. With regard to international exhibitions specifically, Andrew (2016, 4) found that most institutions develop exhibitions in-house and then tour these to other venues (95 per cent), while 57 per cent develop exhibitions with international partners and then tour the exhibition to each partner's venue. A third develop exhibitions with UK partners and then tour the exhibitions internationally. Only 5 percent develop and tour their exhibitions using the services of an external tour management company, and the same percentage loan large groups of objects from their collections to touring exhibitions organised by other international museums and galleries. In terms of funding, the majority use a mix of different sources. For 80 per cent this included income from exhibition hire fees, while 55 per cent drew on core funding. Other sources included trusts or foundations (20 per cent) and exhibition sponsorship (20 per cent) (Andrew 2016, 4).

By comparison, Amsellem (2013) classifies strategies for international exhibitions as two forms of partnership, either coproduction or coorganisation; and direct export. In the coproduction strategy several institutions collaborate to produce an exhibition that travels between venues. Production costs are shared. This model fosters international networks for the loan of artworks, such as the Bizot Group (see Chapter 1). A limitation of this model is the difficulty of securing artworks for the extended periods required by multi-venue tours. The coorganisation model is also a collaboration, but only one institution is the technical producer and financially responsible for the costs of production. Receiving museums will pay a loan fee as compensation for administrative costs, as well as an exhibition fee to the initiating museum (Amsellem 2013).

In the export model an exhibition is created by an institution or a commercial company for the purpose of selling it on to international venues. For host institutions, these 'off-the-shelf' exhibitions have the advantage of involving minimal, if any, production costs, while their audience appeal has been tested

at previous venues. However, McLean (2004, 207) warns that the disadvantage of "prepackaged" exhibitions is "the risk of losing the distinct institutional voice essential in maintaining a clear public identity". Using economic modelling, Amsellem (2013) has analysed the cost structure and profitability of the internationalisation of exhibitions by major institutions. She has found evidence that the coproduction model adopted by the Bizot Group and the export of exhibitions by the Musée National Picasso resulted in economies of scale. In the export model this was "very closely linked to the number of hosting institutions" (Amsellem 2013, 48).

Building a partnership

Our case study provides insights into the kinds of drivers that lead to international partnerships, the intersection of intentions and opportunity that enable the production of international exhibitions, and some of the different ways in which collaboration might be understood and realised in practical terms. We begin with the story of how the partnership came about, told by our interviewees. We then consider the nature of the partnership and the organisation model according to the classifications discussed, and the advantages and disadvantages it presented in this specific case.

The international partnership that led to the exhibition exchange between Aotearoa New Zealand and Mexico, and the production and touring of *Aztecs* began with a "courtship" (McLeod O'Reilly 2005) between institutions as they approached each other with expressions of interest, explored possibilities and established common ground through face-to-face discussions and phone conversations, primarily between the senior leadership of the institutions involved. There was a long gestation period before a 'window of opportunity' arrived: their relationships were sufficiently advanced and a specific project around which their mutual interests could coalesce was identified, such that a formal partnership arrangement might be established.

During the early years of the new millennium, three major museums in the South Pacific—Te Papa, Melbourne Museum[4] and the Australian Museum—began discussing the possibility of a collaborative venture to bring an international exhibition to Australasia. The three directors— Seddon Bennington (Te Papa), Frank Howarth (AM) and Patrick Greene (MM)—were connected through the Council of Australasian Museum Directors (CAMD).

[4] Melbourne Museum is one of three venues operated by Museums Victoria. While our interviewees are technically employed by Museums Victoria, we refer only to Melbourne Museum in order to save confusion, as this was the venue for *Aztecs*.

These museums had worked together before on smaller projects, including touring exhibitions, and felt they had good relationships.

It was common for museums in the two countries to connect through the Network of Australasian Museum Exhibitors (NAME) and seek partnerships aimed at securing touring shows. A particular challenge for them, given their geographical isolation, is the transportation cost for major exhibitions. Therefore, one of the most popular existing forms of partnership in the region is a low-intensity form of coorganisation. Colloquially referred to as "freight mates", this model involves institutions grouping together to share the freight costs of an exhibition purchased from another provider. Among the problems encountered with this model, according to Eve Almond (Touring Exhibitions Manager, MM),[5] has been the "paucity of product that suited our audiences". Te Papa, for example, had experienced difficulties adapting outside exhibitions to the specific cultural needs of its audience and institutional protocols. Hosting *Beyond the Tomb* (December 2006 to April 2007), a touring show developed by the Australian Museum and the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden, The Netherlands, had been particularly challenging for them. It included a mummy and therefore required an involved process of cultural consultation and adaptation to accommodate Māori protocols relating to the display of human remains. From this, Jeff Fox (Concept Developer, TP) explains, they concluded that it was "much more ethically sound" to take cultural exhibitions "from the source rather than second hand, rather than looking at say Treasures of Maya or Aztec, Mexica or whomever from the British Museum or wherever, just go to Mexico".

Also common is for one institution to develop an exhibition and then offer it to tour for a fee. The lead museum takes the financial risk of exhibition development, with the prospect of recouping some of these costs from subsequent venues. This equates to a direct export strategy, using either a single venue or reactive partnership production model (see Table 2.1). The intention of the proposed new consortium was, as Glenn Ferguson (Exhibitions Manager, AM) puts it, to "go after some important shows and collaborate in doing something that a one-off organisation couldn't do". For Fox, it was a case of "trying to push the boundaries". The perceived advantage was that the three museums working together could secure and develop larger shows that were not possible for one institution alone.

[5] The first time we refer to an interviewee we give their role and institution, but thereafter refer to them primarily by their surnames, with the institution initials in brackets. Table 1.1 (p.30) provides a reference with all interviewee details.

In finding a suitable project for the proposed partnership timing was crucial, as each museum manages their exhibition programmes several years in advance. Australian Museum first proposed a show on Egypt, but this became unfeasible when Melbourne secured *Tutankhamun & the Golden Age of Pharaohs* as the sole Australian venue at the tail end of a five-year international tour. Another possibility was the *Alexander the Great* exhibition that Australian Museum sourced from Russia, but the loan period was too short to allow for a three-venue tour.

In 2006 Bennington, who was Te Papa's Chief Executive from 2003 to 2009, visited Mexico and initiated discussions with INAH. Te Papa was interested in bringing exhibitions from places they had rarely received them from in the past, including the wider Pacific and Central and South America. Similarly, INAH had mostly received exhibitions from Europe and the US and was, according to Fox, also "looking quite widely themselves for different kinds of exhibitions", including from China, India and the Pacific. Under development was the exhibition *Moana: Culturas de las islas del Pacífico*, which would travel from the Field Museum in Chicago to the MNA in 2010. It was proposed that objects from Te Papa's collections be included in this exhibition and a researcher from the MNC in Mexico City spent time at Te Papa working on this part of the project.

In 2009 Bennington died tragically and Michelle Hippolite, the *Kaihautū* (Māori leader of Te Papa) took over as Acting Chief Executive. Fox was tasked with resuming contact with Mexico after a period of inactivity. The, then, New Zealand Ambassador in Mexico, he notes, "was very proactive for an ambassador in terms of cultural stuff … [and was] actively working with us to make sure connections were made". Also pivotal was Hippolite's strong support, as well as the good relationship she established with Diana Magaloni, Director of the MNA (2009–2013), and Gabriela Lopez, Director of the MNC (2009–2011), with whom she shared "forward-thinking views" about cultural representation. Te Papa requested either a Mayan or Aztec exhibition. Due to scheduling, an agreement was reached on an Aztec show.

Figure 2.1 Leticia Pérez, Ileana Peña and Miguel Báez from INAH with Mark Donovan, Michelle Hippolite, and Jeff Fox from Te Papa and Frank Howarth from the Australian Museum during the Australasian museum staff visit to Mexico in May 2010. Photograph courtesy of Jeff Fox.

The *Aztecs* project seemed a good opportunity to trial a new partnership model for the three Australasian museums aimed at bringing larger touring shows to the region. A show coming from Mexico with large, heavy objects would be costly, so sharing the financial risk was appealing for Te Papa. For the Australian museums another advantage of this offer was that they did not have existing relationships with Mexico. The partnership arrangement, according to Fox, also made a more attractive proposition for Mexico, as it involved three of the largest museums in the South Pacific thus promising a sizable audience. However, as the first exhibition from Mexico to tour in Australasia, the 'blockbuster' potential of *Aztecs* was unknown. "European-based ancient history shows", Fox explains, "always get good audiences" but "no one really knew how financially an exhibition from Central America or South America was going to perform". Ferguson (AM) felt the show had potential, having seen an Aztec blockbuster at the Royal Academy exhibition in London. Aztecs had also ranked highly in audience testing of potential exhibition topics.

At the time Te Papa was negotiating to secure *Aztecs*, the Mexican government was very supportive of international cultural exchanges and the CNME

had a busy schedule managing a number of different projects. As the Mexica is one of the most popular exhibition topics requested by international museums (Pérez Castellanos 2013), it is not easy to secure a slot, particularly for a period of time sufficient to tour three venues. Many factors came into play, including other commitments at the lender museums, for example, the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the MNA in 2014. Martha Carmona (Deputy Director of Archaeology and Courier, MNA) explains: "we had to negotiate because we cannot arrive at the fiftieth without collections for visitors; we needed key objects to be there".

Due to national legislation, INAH does not charge fees to a borrower. The Mexican government's approach is, instead, to send and receive international exhibitions as part of a reciprocal exchange. Under this model, Mexico has hosted many high quality shows, mostly in the International Hall at the MNA, assuming only the organisational and production costs from their side, rather than having to pay an exhibition fee. The notion of reciprocity was "a big question" for Fox, who felt it should involve exchanging exhibitions comprising "objects of a similar kind of cultural value to the people back home". At the time, *E Tū Ake* was in development as a touring exhibition, and Te Papa decided this offered the best option for an exchange exhibition. The first confirmed international venue for *E Tū Ake* was the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris from October 2011 to January 2012. As no further European venues had been secured, the show was scheduled to travel on to Mexico from Paris.

With the decision to exchange *E Tū Ake* for an Aztec exhibition, the foundation of the cultural exchange based on a partnership between INAH and a consortium of Australasian museums led by Te Papa, was set in place. An agreement of intent between Te Papa and INAH was signed in March 2010, setting out the arrangement in broad terms. In February 2012 Fox visited Mexico for discussions. During this trip he met with Miriam Kaiser (Director of Exhibitions. CNME), Leticia Pérez (Deputy Director of International Exhibitions, CNME) and Priscila Medina (CNME-INAH Project Manager for *E Tū Ake*). From April to July of that year, *E Tū Ake* was presented in Mexico City at the MNC. During that time, the Director-General of INAH authorised the signing of an *Acuerdo Secretarial*, a permit to allow the temporary exportation of archaeological heritage from Mexico. However, a full contract with INAH could not be signed until after the Mexican general elections in mid-2012. The new government took office on 1 December and began appointing new staff to key positions in cultural institutions in late 2012 and early 2013. The contract needed to be scrutinised and approved by the new administrators.

Howarth (Director, AM) had also visited Mexico in early 2010 and met with key people from INAH. As of November 2012, Melbourne Museum and the Australian Museum had approval at the board level to schedule the exhibition

and had agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding with Te Papa. Exhibition loan agreements for the Australian museums were drafted alongside the INAH contract with the view to having them signed immediately after the INAH contract was signed (June 2013). Raewyn Smith-Kapa (Project Development and Delivery Manager, TP) described the negotiations as "a very taxing time", "enormously demanding", protracted and expensive. Reaching an agreement on the insurance was particularly time consuming and complex, and required assistance from the Mexican Embassy in New Zealand to facilitate communication. At the same time as they were working out the details of the contract with Mexico, Te Papa was also having "complex discussions" with the Australian museums, with each party concerned to negotiate favourable terms and conditions, as well as ensuring the safety of the artefacts.

From the Mexican perspective, Medina explains, "the contract from Te Papa was very specific. Very, very specific. There are many terms, many [requirements], many requests. And here in INAH it's more simple". For Smith-Kapa however, getting it right is crucial as "it's the contracts that you revert to, when something goes wrong".

Partnership in practice

E Tū Ake was a relatively straightforward single-venue production model, with a low intensity, cooperative level of partnership between the originating and host venues. It travelled as a complete exhibition, including objects, text, multi-media, object mounts, and a comprehensive technical manual that included instructions for installation, 3D drawings, case elevations, full text, cleared images for marketing and ideas around events and programmes.

Some adaptation was required to meet venue-specific requirements in terms of gallery space and audience needs, and Te Papa collaborated with host museums in this process, for example, in translating text, developing appropriate public programmes and events. Te Papa either charged hosts a fee or, in the case of Mexico, took a reciprocal exhibition. Te Papa coordinated and managed the transportation, and costs were shared between the three venues (France, Mexico and Canada). Host venues covered any additional costs of design, production, translation, insurance and courier services.

Aztecs, in turn, was based on a more complex economic and production model, falling somewhere between the lead venue and equal partnership categories (see Table 2.1), involving a limited amount of coproduction. It was a new way of working for all three Australasian museums and, according to Almond (MM), "much more complex" than anything they had tried before. Helen Sartori (Project Manager, MM) saw it as "a very different beast and model to simply signing an agreement to take a touring exhibition". While the

museums had shared exhibitions before, they had never worked together on the development process.

Te Papa took the lead in developing and touring the exhibition, and in centralising the communication with Mexico. However, the costs were shared equally between the Australasian partners. Originally it was envisaged that Te Papa would develop a complete exhibition and the Australian museums would take it as a "package"—therefore sharing the costs equally seemed fair. However, there was a degree of confusion as to exactly how it was intended to work "on the ground", particularly over the extent of collaboration on the exhibition development.

Sharing development costs led to the expectation by some staff in the two Australian museums that they would have more input into the process. While Almond (MM) was "very mindful that Te Papa was going to take the lead in negotiations" she thought the exhibition process would be one of co-development. As Fran Dorey (Curator and Exhibition Project Coordinator, AM) explains: "you want to make sure that it's an exhibition that you would put on in your museum". She had envisaged "a three-way exhibition development" with each museum "on equal footing" and "part of an international team".

In addition, as things progressed it became evident that each institution had different needs and approaches in terms of design, interpretation, programmes and marketing, and the Australian museums became concerned that the exhibition Te Papa was developing would need additional adaptation to suit their venue's audience, and that this would involve additional expenses that they had not initially budgeted for. "There were a lot of risks," Robin Hirst (Director of Collections, Research, Exhibitions, MM) explains, "because we were a partner but we weren't primarily responsible for the exhibition tour or the design". Almond (MM) reflects that "As it played out, we realised that there are greater differences between our audiences than we first imagined".

Scott (2012, 71) describes exhibition collaborations as "a double-edged sword": there are potential benefits, but also the possibility that "competing agendas and different perspectives on the purpose of an exhibition … can lead to misunderstandings". All collaborations and exchanges are likely to involve power imbalances, and resulting tensions between mutual gain and self-interest (Cai 2013; Pegoraro and Zan 2017; Winter 2015). The Australasian partnership came about because all parties saw mutual benefits; in particular, overcoming the challenges of single institutions securing and delivering major international touring exhibitions. They saw themselves, as Almond (MM) puts it, as "three flourishing mature museums coming together". The capacity to collaborate, she argues, comes "from a position of maturity … you know your own audience, you

know what you can offer, what you can bring to the table in negotiations with what your strengths are, what you're looking for in a partner".

From Dorey's (AM) perspective, how the partnership would work in practice was "not really properly defined". She highlights the importance of having a clear mutual understanding of the form of partnership structure, an awareness of its advantages and disadvantages, and making sure "you're on the same wavelength". In Dorey's opinion, not having the direct relationship with Mexico was a disadvantage for the Australian Museum. She describes it as the difference between being in the driving seat—where "you can see there's nothing between you and what you can see in front of you"—and being "in the back seat" or "in the car following", "it's a different way of operating when you're right in the middle of it, you know, in control of that, it's another matter when it's dissipated through a three-way partnership". Greene (CEO, MM) also feels that if the Australian museums had had "closer involvement" in early discussions between Aotearoa New Zealand and Mexico, "we would have known more about what was coming" and they could have been "stronger partners in the relations which were essentially between Te Papa and INAH".

Dorey feels that when the initial agreement between the museums was being negotiated by the leadership teams, other staff at the museum were not sufficiently consulted about how the model might work and that more time should have been spent at the beginning working out processes and responsibilities. Lynette Townsend (Curator, TP) agrees that more face-to-face meetings in the early stages would have helped to clarify the nature of the partnership, and what each museum was expecting in terms of collaboration. The fact that certain details were not discussed in the early stages suggests that the focus may have been on the higher level agreements, and that there was perhaps an under-appreciation of the complexity of the project, particularly the implications of working across cultural and institutional borders. As Ferguson (AM) comments: "it's always more challenging to do a project with a partner, it's infinitely more challenging to do it with two other partners":

> I think you've got to step back a little and go through and add up and look at all the risks, the what-ifs, that happen at the back end … I don't think we did that on that one because you know it had that enthusiasm of the leaders of the three organisations along with the desire to create a model that would work on future projects, and along with a subject that we all, we'd all admitted that at some stage we wanted an Aztec show and they were so hard to get.

Expectations around what Mexico would deliver in terms of an exhibition, the level of additional work that would be required by Te Papa, and what Te

Papa would then be delivering to the Australian museums, were matters that were uncertain for various people at various times. Hirst (MM) reflects on the process:

> I think what we have learned is that it's important to have really quite detailed agreements and have imagined all various scenarios so that we can methodically work through issues. I mean we have a great deal of trust with our partners but in the end it is better if we have all that down and work through all of the risk associated with these types of agreements, even down to thinking about what happens when key people or organizations change in the middle of a major project. So I think it is about spending more time with the partners working out what the possible outcomes could be and how we would react to those, when we do interact, because things never go smoothly, I mean we are humans beings, it doesn't always go smoothly.

Working together: collaboration in practice

Aztecs was an ambitious project. The exhibition was large by normal standards for Te Papa, and its realisation was complicated by developing it in partnership with three other institutions. Te Papa's Risk Strategy recognises that:

> This is a complex and high cost project which needs vigilant attention to relationship management with the Mexican and two different Australian partners, and strong governance and project management. Working with Mexican partners is new for Te Papa and there are some legal differences and cultural ways of working that need close communication and attention. … The exhibition is being developed with Australian partners and audiences in mind at all times to mitigate the risk of an Australian partner pulling out. (Te Papa 2012b)

The various advantages and disadvantages of the partnership strategy had flow-on effects for collaboration throughout the project, although the implications differed according to institution and role. These effects were exacerbated by political factors and institutional contexts, including processes, timeframes and styles of communication. In general, relations between Mexico and Aotearoa New Zealand were considered to be very positive despite a number of challenges, while Australasian staff working on the touring and logistics side of *Aztecs* tended to be happier with the collaboration than those involved predominantly in the exhibition development.

It is not uncommon for exhibition teams to experience miscommunication, lack of information and disagreement (Office of Policy and Analysis 2002). If

this happens for teams working in the same institution, then a multi-venue, international-level collaboration might expect significant challenges exacerbated by "the hurdles of distance, language, and cultural differences" (McLeod O'Reilly 2005, 252), as well as different time zones and institutional timeframes, political contexts, ideas about audiences and ways of working. As Dorey (AM) explains, "you never actually see how someone works until you work as partners". She and her colleagues were surprised "once you get down to the nitty gritty, how differently all three [Australasian museums] worked".

The first phase of the project involved negotiating object loans from INAH and then developing an exhibition concept and interpretive framework that met with their approval. While the contractual agreements were in progress, Fox made three trips to Mexico to discuss object lists and exhibition concepts. Raúl Barrera, Director of the Urban Archaeology Project in Mexico City and an archaeologist with more than fifteen years of experience in Mexica archaeology, was appointed by the CNME as Lead Curator to work with the exhibition development team at Te Papa. He was assisted by archaeologist and researcher Miguel Báez, who acted as a facilitator, traveling with Fox and providing translation in meetings between Fox and Barrera. In July 2010, Barrera provided a first outline to inform the exhibition development, and then a final text was delivered in August 2012. During his final trip to Mexico in September 2012 Fox laid out the proposed storyline and design approach for the exhibition, to which INAH agreed.

In late 2012, Te Papa began market research aimed at informing the exhibition design and marketing. A series of focus groups were held in Auckland and Wellington to test the concept, themes, learning objectives, interpretive approaches, cross-generational audience appeal, and possible exhibition titles. Findings showed low levels of prior knowledge but a strong interest in learning more about Aztec culture (Owen and Svendsen 2012). Between November 2012 and January 2013 a web-based survey collected further data on prior knowledge, reported interest, title/tagline preferences, 'attraction potential' of various objects and potential promotional 'posters' (Te Papa Visitor & Market Research Unit 2013).

Around this time, Fox left his position at Te Papa and Townsend took over as curator on the project. She began work on finalising the object list and refining the storylines they would tell with particular objects. In November she travelled to Sydney with designer Ben Barraud to present their working concept design to staff from Melbourne and Australian Museums. This included the main segments and themes, interactives, models, events, text strategy, a business strategy, commercial brand, proposed layout, and the findings of the focus groups (Te Papa 2012b).

In April 2013 Erika Gómez, *Aztecs* Project Manager at CNME, and Pérez (CNME) travelled to Wellington to discuss logistical arrangements for the exhibition and clarify a number of issues. A later logistical meeting was held in Melbourne and attended by representatives from the three venues. After *Aztecs* opened in September 2013, staff from Melbourne Museum travelled to Te Papa to document the exhibition. Staff from the Australian Museum made a similar visit to Melbourne after it opened there.

It is impossible to fully understand the processes of collaboration involved in the exhibition exchange without appreciating the general political and cultural contexts of each country, as well as the specific cultural policy and institutional issues discussed earlier. For example, the tight control of cultural heritage by the Mexican government had a direct impact on the process of organising the exhibition. In Mexico, all organisational matters depend on staff appointed by the government administration, which usually changes every six years, as was the case following the 2012 general elections. While it is assumed that each new government will honour previous agreements for loans and exhibitions, these are still reviewed by the new administrators. This process delayed the signing of the full contract between Aotearoa New Zealand and Mexico, and caused uncertainty for partners. As Fox (TP) reflected in 2013: "it seemed to me that the last government was very supportive of cultural exchange between Mexico and anywhere else in the world pretty much and there's concern that the new government is maybe not going to be so, but I guess time will tell".

The centralised administration in Mexico was another complicating factor as Te Papa was not dealing directly with the lender museums. Instead all arrangements and correspondence were coordinated by CNME. This was particularly challenging when Te Papa was trying to get precise information about objects required for design and installation planning. Ultimately, they decided to send a staff member to Mexico to ascertain accurate weights of objects before they were shipped. Aspects of the political environment in Mexico were understood only in retrospect, such as the sometimes sensitive relationships between INAH and some of the smaller, regional lender museums, as well as the challenge of getting agreement to lend the objects for the eighteen months required for a three-venue tour. Townsend describes the situation regarding a sculpture of the god Xipe Totec:

> It was an amazing piece that we really desperately wanted, and the museum that it belonged to was a very small museum and I think Erika said something to me like "It's very complicated. If we take this piece the people will protest and it'll be violent and" she might not have said *violent* but it sounded like it was a very fraught and difficult situation. And my response to that is "I don't want to take an object away from a muse-

> um that doesn't want to lend it". So once I knew that you just go with it but I think that's one of the tricky things about being on the other side of the world is that you don't know the politics going on in some of the small places. … Again some of that is that face-to-face relationship building too like who—they don't know who I am or who we are. Why should they trust us? And are we going to treat those objects with respect? We know where we're coming from but how would they know?

Political processes also had a last-minute impact on whether or not the exhibition could travel at all. All procedures to lend archaeological heritage must go through INAH organisational and legal offices. Agreements must be approved by high-ranking administrators and, at that time, an *Acuerdo Secretarial* permit needed to be signed by the Minister of Education before objects could leave the country. Just as the exhibition was about to leave Mexico in September 2013, a national teachers' protest broke out. Smith-Kapa (TP) recalls the tension of the situation with humour:

> When [the exhibition] was just about to depart, there was this rioting going on, the teachers were rioting. And it was massive, it was on the news, here! And the Minister for Education, who was dealing with the rioting teachers, was the person that signed the Acuerdo. And he didn't sign it [laughs].

An urgent exchange of letters between Michael Houlihan, Te Papa's Chief Executive, and José Enrique Ortiz Lanz, National Coordinator at CNME, led to an agreement that the collections could depart one week later with a commitment from the Mexican side to do everything they could, while working with Te Papa staff on site, to ensure that the installation was completed in time for the scheduled exhibition opening.

While some dramatic episodes play out in a short space in time, overall international exhibitions need a long 'lead in' time to develop, which creates some specific challenges for museums. Staff stressed that it was important to understand and make allowances for the extended timeframes needed to develop such an exhibition. Early on in the process of working on *Aztecs*, Fox found that the exhibition was "very low on people's agenda":

> Nobody actually thought it would ever come off really … Everyone's telling you "it's kind of hard and you're a long way away" and "are you really going to get the Aussies to buy into this?"

While he was determined to see the project realised, even Fox had his doubts at times. A major challenge was finding dates that worked for everyone. The

second half of 2011 was initially proposed, but this was extended because six months prior Te Papa had not received sufficient information from Mexico to be confident that it would proceed. It was not until his final trip to Mexico in September 2012 that Fox felt the exhibition was "definitely on the radar". It also became evident that Te Papa's initial expectation that they would be sent a "ready-made" show was incorrect and that they needed to allow more time for the development process.

Figure 2.2 Collections movement in Mexico. Photograph courtesy of Córdova Plaza.

An extended timeframe also means a high chance of institutional change. During the project period, Te Papa went through a major restructuring with significant role and staff changes. As already mentioned, Mexico had an election which meant a change-over in key administrative staff. These changes significantly affected continuity in the development phase. As Te Papa disestablished the role of project managers in the midst of the project, Sartori (MM) found it difficult to know who to contact about specific issues. Robert Clendon (Conservator, TP) had a similar experience with INAH:

> finding out who is the person or the people or the group that can make the final decision … was at times an issue because I know that there was a new or a change of staffing there, so sort of going "who's this person, who's that person, what do they do?"

Inevitably, relationships and knowledge built up by individuals were lost when they left and staff who joined the project later in the process, such as Emma Campbell, who took up her position as Melbourne Museum's Brand Marketing and Communications Manager in December 2013, often felt they did not have a "holistic view".

Difficulties also arose because workflow processes varied between institutions, with differences in how the project was prioritised. The CNME manages several projects simultaneously with a small staff, each of whom may be coordinating two or three exhibitions at the same time. Medina (CNME) notes that Te Papa starts planning for exhibitions far in advance and are "meticulous" in their organisation, while in Mexico "we can do the organisation in a little less time". Varying institutional timeframes became particularly problematic when one museum was looking for feedback, information or approval from another, and slow response times interfered with their progress. As Townsend (TP) explains, early in the process Mexico "seemed to be busy with other things, and it would take quite a long time to get feedback on stuff, whereas we were needing to try and refine things or make changes and get feedback really quickly so that we could move forward with the design and other elements of the exhibition".

Te Papa staff also found INAH's organisational structure more hierarchical and formal than their own and many aspects of the project required high level approvals which were time-consuming to obtain. This contributed to long gaps between updates from Mexico, leading to uncertainty as to whether or not work was progressing. As Smith-Kapa (TP) explains, it was difficult for Te Papa when their Australian partners were asking for information, and "we weren't getting it fast enough … so dealing with INAH and two Australian venues and internal needs, was a massive challenge for all of us … there was not much certainty for long stretches of time".

Adding to this complexity, Te Papa did not have a subject expert, therefore, the writing team needed to fact check all their text with Mexico. Text drafts would then have to be sent to the Australian museums for their approval. Te Papa writer Rupert Alchin describes the process:

> Trying to get a final text that all three institutions would agree on. Wow, hard ask … to come to agreement over the text *within* Te Papa was hard enough … that involved a lot of discussion and a lot of meetings and a lot of redrafting and back and forth, and that was just so the exhibition team within Te Papa could agree. And that took a *heap* of work, now imagine multiplying that by actually having to do that with *two* other museums.

"You can't expect a short lead time for anything as complex as this, it does need the years," Smith-Kapa (TP) explains, and the approvals process "just double[d] the communication times". The effect was particularly pronounced for later phases of exhibition development where the extra time required had not been factored in. As Amanda Teer (Senior Graphic Designer, AM) notes, the requirement for sign off internally as well as externally by the other institutions resulted in "a compressed timeframe" for processes such as audience testing marketing images. Campbell (MM) also comments that there were "some very tight feedback deadlines" during the final design stages and into the build phase, during which it "reache[d] crunch time" in terms of Te Papa being able to receive and incorporate feedback from the other museums. Frith Williams (Head Writer, TP) reflected on the effect of time pressure on the collaboration:

> it's hard because you're like I want to have more time to develop a relationship with these people I'm collaborating with and learn from them and create the best show that I can but yeah it, I mean and it still is, regardless of all those difficulties it's still a rewarding process but there's a level of pressure that would be really nice if it wasn't there [laughs].

Teer (AM) speculates that the time pressure led the museums to give up on codeveloping certain aspects of the exhibition because "it was easier to just think 'Oh well we'll just do that ourselves because this is how we want to do it'".

Implicated in the different institutional timeframes and processes were preferences for the frequency of communication. Dorey (AM), for example, feels in retrospect that a communications strategy should have been established from the beginning, stipulating weekly meetings for updates and opportunities for feedback. As project manager for *E Tū Ake* in Mexico, however, Medina was surprised by the intensity of the communication from Te Papa: "all the time Mark [Kent] and Michelle [Hippolite] wanted to talk with me, [on] conference calls and they want to know that everything is ok. Every week, many, many emails [laughs]".

Working across geographical and time zones means email is the most frequent form of communication today, replacing courier, telex and faxes used in the past. This has implications for intercultural communication, as written communication often fails to convey nuances of meaning and non-verbal cues found in face-to-face communication (Arasaratnam 2012). For real time communication, conference calls were mostly used, as a low-tech option. However, as Townsend (TP) explained, teleconferences "fall short of developing those personal relationships", while face-to-face allows you to "pick up on subtle things that you might not get over the phone" such as facial expressions. Teleconferences don't show "that whole face-to-face, the body language … It was how we communi-

cated over a telephone with everybody talking over the top and then stopping … It's better to get around a table and you know, [and] nail something" says Sarah Morris (Senior Audience Engagement Facilitator, TP).

Decisions about communication media are vital, as "the medium in which a message is sent is at least as important as its contents" (Littau 2016, 87). Communication experts distinguish between low and high context styles of communication. In the low context style, communication is direct, explicit and relatively unambiguous, with meaning "almost entirely contained in the verbal component of the message" (Arasaratnam 2011, 33). This style is prevalent in Westernised, highly industrialised and individualistic cultures, and often functions in professional settings. High context style, on the other hand, "is implicit, often indirect, and the meaning of the message is largely contained in non-verbal and contextual cues while the verbal component is only part of the message … [it] is subtle, and has great potential for ambiguity". This style is common "where there is a shared history between the communicators and the assumption that the other person is aware of the relevant cultural cues necessary to decipher the message … often practiced in collectivist cultures" (Arasaratnam 2011, 34). Both styles use non-verbal cues, but high context communicators are more reliant on them. Cultures that mainly use a high context style of communication prefer face-to-face communication as it allows for nuances of meaning to be conveyed via non-verbal cues (Arasaratnam 2011).

In the Māori context, *kanohi ki te kanohi*—literally face-to-face—is a traditional principle that establishes integrity in communication and helps to avoid misunderstandings:

> While kanohi ki te kanohi is about physical presence, it also relates to mana tangata (status, power) and a person's credibility in words, actions, or intentions. This idea of fronting up provides people with a sense of honesty and trust. Kanohi ki te kanohi gives mana to one's kōrero [speech]. (O'Carroll 2013, 231)

Te Papa staff, in particular, expressed a preference for face-to-face communication. Becoming "a wee bit more technically savvy", as Liz Hay (Touring Manager, TP) puts it, and using video-conferencing rather than teleconferencing is one option, but still misses opportunities for building personal relationships, establishing trust and learning about wider contexts that visiting in-person allows. In the relations between Mexico and Aotearoa New Zealand, interviewees found that face-to-face communication was the most productive, as Fox explains:

> Those times that I was [in Mexico], the total might have been a month or five weeks, was more valuable than the rest of the three years put together pretty much. In terms of making progress.

Paola Albert (Deputy Director, Dirección de Exposiciones, CNME) agrees:

> I think the negotiations were good, I've never seen a team make so many visits to a venue before they install it [refers to Te Papa visits to Mexico] … people from here [CNME] don't always go to see the venue, to oversee and to make the negotiations. In this particular case, Lety [Pérez] and Erika [Gómez] went to New Zealand previously, so it improved the discussion process, and the communication was good between INAH and Te Papa.

Smith-Kapa (TP) found the same when working with the Australian museums: "we did a visit to Australia; our team went over there to meet with their two teams and as always you just get through so much more when you're face to face". While organising in-person meetings is costly, a number of staff felt the investment would have been worth it in terms of increased productivity, as well as opportunities for social interaction that helps to build closer relationships. As Morris (TP) puts it: "we would have been so much more cost effective I think in terms of our productivity, if we'd have spent a little bit more money going over there and getting work done rather than fretting over things for weeks and weeks and not really getting anywhere".

While Te Papa staff communicated with English-speaking staff at the CNME, there were concerns that some things were "lost in translation", particularly in email correspondence. Sartori (MM) felt that even in emails between the English-speaking museums checking for meaning was important as "every institution might use a different word for something so … sometimes you would have to say the same thing in a few different ways in the email to make sure that they really understand what you're trying to get across and ask for permission-wise".

Mark Kent (Touring Exhibitions Manager, TP) believes that Te Papa, rather than assuming a certain level of English language competence from Mexican staff, should have had a Spanish-speaking person in-house for the duration of the project:

> We do at Te Papa tend to rely on English being the international language of getting things done and I think sometimes that's a little unfair for other organizations … [a translator] can sometimes streamline and speed things up … it's like "ah, so that's what you mean!"

As Arasaratnam (2011) points out, when we learn a second language we tend to learn the denotative or formally assigned meaning of words, as opposed to the connotative or negotiated meaning, which varies depending on context. Therefore, in intercultural communication it is important to recognise this disadvantage for non-native speakers and understand the need to clarify the meaning of words at times. This also helps to explain why face-to-face communication can help to bridge the "language barrier" as context and non-verbal cues help to establish meaning. Clendon (TP), who travelled to Mexico to return the *Aztecs* collection, did not speak Spanish. Nevertheless, he found that "working with the staff in INAH and in other museums in Mexico, communication was relatively straightforward on a person-to-person level … we do all relate on a personal level, in a face-to-face, and handshake, and 'yes this will work so therefore we will make it work'".

Townsend (TP), however, did not travel to Mexico and, because she did not speak Spanish, could not have direct conversations with her co-curator, Barrera. Instead she had to go through Gómez who was often busy with organising other aspects of the project, such as logistics. Williams (TP) does speak Spanish, but only had direct contact with Mexican staff when they came to Wellington for the installation:

> It would have been nice to perhaps have been involved a bit earlier on because I could have communicated with them, you communicate in a different way if you're working in their language … and it was great to feel that kind of closeness but it was very late in the piece … but in terms of the exhibition content all conversations were in English.

Cosmopolitan moments: foundations of an intercultural museum practice

A deeper appreciation early in the project of differences in institutional timeframes, processes and communication needs may have allowed for better collaboration across the museums, and reduced frustration and delays. At the same time, in our interviewees' commentaries on what did work well, we find qualities, feelings and moments that reflect a cosmopolitan or intercultural approach to museum practice. These emerged most strongly when they spoke about shared practices, working across difference, and building relationships.

Shared practices and working across difference

Participating in a shared practice gives us a sense of belonging and of understanding other members of that community, as Hakamies (2017, p. 143) explains:

> when we act in a community of practice where we are full members we feel like moving on familiar ground: we know how to act and can interpret the actions of others, we feel competent and others recognise us as such, and our ability to influence the shared practices also shapes our experience of participation.

Installing international exhibitions is a highly stressful process involving tight timeframes, language barriers, anxiety about the care of objects, and the overall complexity of managing a multi-faceted project. Nonetheless, staff from different institutions working together to install *Aztecs* described positive experiences when they saw themselves as members of a community of practice with shared expertise and a common goal.

The installation of *Aztecs* at Te Papa was scheduled for three weeks, but this had to be reduced to six days due to the late arrival of the objects from Mexico. This made the installation "pretty nightmarish" as Hutch Wilco (Exhibition Preparator, TP) who planned and coordinated the installation, puts it. Nevertheless, Wilco describes working with Gómez, his Mexican counterpart, as "actually probably one of the more enjoyable aspects of it … because her and I, I think, of everybody in that room, her and I were the two that [had the] most in common, in a way, in that we both were fully aware and fully understood the situation we were in and what needed to be done to get it open".

Prior to the installation of *Aztecs* in Sydney, Heather Bleechmore (Conservator, AM) asked her colleagues in Melbourne "to share their experiences with the install … from a conservation perspective. [This] provided invaluable information for me as the project conservator. I was able to pass this on to my team and discuss them with our exhibition production team so that we were fully prepared". During the installation she had the impression that "we're all talking about the same things … we're all working towards the same thing of how to best protect those objects … [and] getting them from A to B". Lourdes Gallardo (Conservator/Courier, MTM) has a similar feeling:

> We're museum conservators working with museum conservators. We had the same mindset. They had already done this sort of work before and so had we, so nobody was inexperienced, it made it easier.

Gallardo (MTM) found the Australian Museum installers "very skilful, respectful and receptive because they didn't reject our observations, they always took them into account … [There was] trust between us and things worked out". The sense of working together as equals and being respectful and receptive to each other's needs was important. Bleechmore has experienced other installations with international couriers where "you feel like you're being

scrutinised … that you're being watched, rather than someone's working with you". This created an atmosphere that was "sombre and intense, and that starts to wear you down after a while, [it] makes the days very long, very long".

Having a common understanding of practice also helped staff communicate across language barriers. Medina explains that during the installation of *E Tū Ake* in Mexico, Kent (TP) established a good relationship with the team from INAH, and even though they didn't speak much English, nor he Spanish, they understood each other. During the installation of *Aztecs*, not all the Mexican couriers spoke English fluently and no installers from the three Australasian museums spoke Spanish. While translators were present during the Te Papa installation, they were only needed from time to time for clarification. From his experience installing international exhibitions, Mark Sykes (Collection Manager Māori, TP) feels that language barriers could be overcome by paying attention to certain embodied practices: "you only have to watch their body language and their actions to know what they [are] really telling you [laughs] … not putting their back to you but sort of keeping their *taonga* safe all the time".

Within communities of practice, expertise is developed through the alignment of experience and competence (see Chapter 1). On the boundaries between practices, however, we meet different ways of doing and knowing, and competence and experience diverge. In this often "disquieting, humbling" space, lies the opportunity for "innovative learning" (Wenger 2000, 233–34). This learning, according to Wenger (2000, 233), is facilitated by "open engagement with real differences as well as common ground"; a "commitment to suspend judgment in order to see the competence of a community in its terms"; and finding "ways to translate between repertoires so that experience and competence actually interact".

Many interviewees recognised differences in practice as being an opportunity for learning. For some, there was a stronger sense of curiosity about difference and a feeling that learning about difference, and having to find ways of working together across difference, was a highlight of collaborating on international exhibitions. For Clendon (TP):

> [International exhibitions should be] a doorway for better understandings … working with different people and getting to know people, that to me is a highlight. Being available to use what I know are my skills sets to, not overcome but go through issues and problems and work through things with people so therefore it's safe, making sure that the collection is safe, making sure that it's culturally safe, to me that is pretty significant.

Carlos González (Director, MTM) finds collaborating with different museums "the most motivating part of this job", while Fernando Carrizosa (Collection Manager/Courier, MTM) considers it a "privilege" because "it expands our experience". He believes it is important to have a dialogue beforehand "to reach agreements in relation to approaches". Beyond that, "we also have to immerse ourselves in what other museums have to offer, other cultures. I think these projects are an exchange and give mutual feedback … If we're only interested in our culture, we'll hardly understand and connect with other societies … new and different things are always fulfilling … it leaves a mark on you, on a personal and professional level".

Flexibility and a willingness to adapt are key strategies for working across difference. Smith-Kapa (TP) notes that "we had to learn about their processes and not expect them to follow our processes" to avoid "trip[ping] ourselves up". Rebecca Browne (Educator, TP) feels that because "different institutions value different things", the ideal process would be to "come together and say 'oh this is what we do' and they say 'oh this is what we do', right let's come to some sort of compromise or some sort of agreement about what we're going to do". While this would take more time, she believes it would be valuable because it's good to "look outside of what we do already and see what other places, institutions are doing … adapt what we're doing and just try new things, and if they don't work out that's ok, but if they do then that's great and you learn both ways".

Creating "new centre[s] of interaction" (Alred, Byram, and Fleming 2002, 5) on the frontiers of the mobile contact zone, then, requires museum professionals to be open to re-evaluating existing practices and the assumptions that underpin them, and to considering the benefits of adaptation and compromise. Kent (TP), who managed the tour of *E Tū Ake* and was also involved with *Aztecs*, reflects on the overall experience:

> It has been a long process, and to be honest … it was a big learning curve for me. I remember coming here many years ago to meet with [Leticia Pérez] and Miriam [Kaiser] and Priscila [Medina] to discuss *E Tū Ake*, I walked into the meeting thinking that: "right, we'll all sit around the table and we've got to work out the entire exhibition process in a couple of hours" … My approach was initially to apply my particular way of project management style to the project. It was clear from the meeting that projects are managed in a slightly different way in Mexico, I had to step back and say: "well hang on a minute, you guys do things differently".

Kent stresses the need for open-mindedness, along with a calm and diplomatic approach:

> So if you're working on these projects often you do have to come with an open mind and you have to think about how other people do things and understand how that is done … Otherwise you'll just come to loggerheads and nothing will happen, so it's a very diplomatic process in the way that you work through problems. It's important the staff that you put on these exhibitions have a certain level and degree of diplomacy and calmness, that's something I learnt very quickly in this role … so it's really important that you brief staff well before they engage working offshore in other institutions and making sure that they do keep that open mind and understand the local culture and way of working.

Like Kent, Sartori (MM) highlights the importance of staying "calm" and having "perspective". When dealing with other institutions under stressful conditions it helps, she says, "to take a step back and just put yourself in their shoes". Teer (AM) also feels that empathy was important in her work, and something she developed through the experience:

> I think I became more empathic when I began working with the material myself because I think it's quite easy to see what is proposed [by] say Melbourne or Te Papa and think why have they done that? Or why did they choose that image? Or why have they got so much information or whatever it might be ... [without] seeing all the stuff that goes on behind and I think that when I began working on the material I really began to understand even more of the layers and constraints that were there. [It's] one thing knowing it and [another] thing trying to actually resolve it.

Bleechmore (AM) speaks about being sensitive to how installers from other institutions were feeling and ensuring that they were "treated respectfully". Aware that couriers "can be very anxious", she has found that humour and relating to them on a personal level helps to relieve tension:

> You want them to be reassured that we're here to help them, because that's what you want when you're going somewhere, as we don't want to feel like you're being excluded from any process to do with the objects that you're responsible for.

Like Kent (TP), Bleechmore (AM) sees her work on international exhibitions as "an exercise in diplomacy" that involves being alert to "subtleties of tone and how translations occur". She is concerned that visiting staff should have a good experience and leave with a positive impression. She reflects that being able to manage people in this way and resolve issues was "not something that you get taught in conservation".

Intercultural relationships: practising *manaakitanga* and *mana taonga*

The "intercultural" practices and qualities discussed above are resonant of a cosmopolitan sensibility, as described by Delanty (2006, 2011) and others (see Chapter 1). What is also clear from our interviews is how important these were for fostering and maintaining strong relationships through cultural encounters. As Hay (TP) puts it, "relationships are *so* important … Usually a lot of our international touring venues evolved from relationships and collegial friendship … you do tend to have to go and visit people and make face-to-face connections".

In spite of the many challenges, staff from both Te Papa and INAH spoke of warm, friendly and respectful relationships between them. These were built over time, through on-going contact, with particular value placed on face-to-face interaction in both professional and social contexts. Medina (CNME) explains that after communicating for some time with Kent and others by email in the lead up to opening *E Tū Ake* in Mexico, when they arrived in the country the relationship was "very different … We are friends now … Moana, Rhonda[6], everybody in Te Papa are very friendly and professional … I think that with the people from Te Papa we had a link, we relat[ed] very well".

Staff on both sides felt that these *professional friendships* would be enduring. The relationships that were established when *E Tū Ake* travelled to Mexico were pivotal. Gómez, INAH project manager for *Aztecs*, helped in the installation of *E Tū Ake* in Mexico and got to know Kent and other key Te Papa staff. Smith-Kapa (TP) explains:

> it was hugely beneficial to us, that we sent an exhibition ahead, rather than latterly, because we, it really solidified the relationships, and I think there was an immense, goodwill was established, and *E Tū Ake* was recognised as that, we were sending national treasures, and so … it really did provide a foundation of friendship and trust that we went in ahead.

When the Mexican delegation arrived in Wellington with *Aztecs*, Kent had the sense that "we were all familiar faces … so we had that element of trust and understanding". That trust was critical "because once you gain the trust of another organisation it makes it very, very easy to work with those colleagues again. So that's a key learning that I've got out of bringing a lot of these international exhibitions into New Zealand and also taking them overseas".

[6] Moana Parata (collection manager) and Rhonda Paku (curator) were part of the Māori delegation from Te Papa who travelled to Mexico with *E Tū Ake*.

Figure 2.3 *E Tū Ake – Orgullo Māori.* Installation at the Museo Nacional de las Culturas. Reproduction authorised by the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

The Māori concept of *manaakitanga,* often translated as "hospitality", also conveys respect, kindness, generosity and care for others. It involves acknowledging the *mana* (personal power or prestige) and qualities of others as "having equal or greater importance as one's own". The process of "mutual mana" enhancement also encapsulates the idea of reciprocal action (S. Smith 2006). In Mexico, the Indigenous concept known in the Nahuatl language as *tequitl*, meaning reciprocity or "love" and "respect" (Good Eshelman 2005), has similarities with *manaakitanga*. For many Mexican professionals a highlight of their experience was their encounters with *manaakitanga*, along with Māori *tikanga* (protocols, practice), and Indigenous museological principles and practices that have become institutionalised at Te Papa. This included *pōwhiri*, blessings of *taonga*, and other encounters with *mana taonga* and *tikanga taonga;* all of which they had not encountered previously at other museums. These were key factors in enhancing and acknowledging the importance of relationships among people, and also between people and *taonga*. By creating an "atmosphere" of respect and goodwill, and fostering connections on an emotional and embodied level, these practices facilitated intercultural understanding and helped to transcend barriers such as language.

Medina commented that she and many of the other staff working on *E Tū Ake* in Mexico experienced a feeling of closeness that was stronger for this exhibition than for others INAH had received. Some of this feeling related to the themes of the exhibition (see Chapter 3), however face-to-face encounters with Te Papa staff and the *taonga* played a crucial role in engendering this special feeling. A Māori delegation was sent by Te Papa to conduct a blessing at the exhibition opening. Hay (TP) believes these ceremonies have "a huge impact … Because it's part of a package: it's not just the exhibition". Kent (TP), who arrived with colleagues to install *E Tū Ake,* describes the reaction of Mexican museum staff when they encountered the *taonga*:

> They really connected with the *taonga*, because the interesting thing is, between the Māori culture and the Aztec culture, their *atua*, their gods, are very very similar. So some of the stories crossed over which was good, and they really got that. And we really got a strong sense that they had a really good connection with these *taonga*. They really genuinely felt for them and they were just in awe every time we opened a crate. They were like, "Wow this is amazing," you know and they were just so appreciative to have the *taonga* there.

Figure 2.4 The *pōwhiri*. Te Papa staff sing a *waiata* as part of Māori protocol for the exhibition opening ceremony of *E Tū Ake* in Mexico City. Reproduction authorised by the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

Through his contact with Te Papa staff who came to Mexico Rodrigo Hernández (MNC), who worked as a tour guide for *E Tū Ake* and later joined the Education team, came to feel a deep connection and appreciation for *mana taonga*, which he then applied to his work with visitors:

> Usually an object being exhibited is kind of, it's a dead thing … But having the contact with people from Te Papa … I feel very connected with all the objects, but more than the objects with the people that made the objects. So I felt that connection so strong that I didn't feel Māori but I felt that I was connected with them. So I felt that I could explain how they are, to the people that I was guiding.

When the Te Papa delegation returned to Mexico to close the exhibition, Hernández was chosen by the Māori representatives as translator for the ceremony and gifted a whale bone pendant. He felt honoured by this gesture and it cemented his feeling of connection with Māori culture.

Both *mana taonga* and *tikanga taonga* were also applied to the Mexican collection during its stay at Te Papa. After an "odyssey" of almost two days travel by air and road, Carrisoza (MTM) arrived at Te Papa in the middle of the night with the trucks transporting the objects for *Aztecs*. Te Papa's resident

kaumātua (Māori elder) was waiting to welcome them and bless the collection. "The reception," Carrisoza says, "was one of the nicest experiences in my career … despite being tired … the blessing was something new to me, but it was very nice. You realise the respect they have for us, for the collection, it was brief and then we started working".

The rest of the installation team arrived in Wellington a few days later by plane after a thirty-hour trip. Carmona (MNA) describes the events that followed:

> A Chilean translator picked us up … he said he was taking us to the museum. We told him we were exhausted and we wanted to go to the hotel but he said he had to take us to the museum, we even had our luggage with us. We told him we had been travelling for thirty hours but he said: "Yes, but there's a ceremony, the ambassador, the museum director and the Māoris[7] are attending", we said we wanted to shower or at least change our clothes but he said no, that they were waiting for us … I looked at myself in the mirror and I looked like a panda, I had huge bags under my eyes, I thought I looked awful. He said: "It's a tradition … the museum has a room with all the Māori gods". When we arrived they explained to us how we were going to enter, in a sort of procession. I was in the front with Moana, one of the installers, we were behind a chief, a patriarch, a priest; whatever you want to call him and we took part in the ceremony, it was very emotional, very emotive. They sang, danced and welcomed us in two languages, in Māori and in English. The ceremony was long but we weren't tired any more … We sang the Huasteca song in Spanish, but it didn't matter, they cheered anyway. They asked if we could dance, I was wearing sweatpants so I opened my jacket and pretended it was a skirt and I danced the *jarabe tapatío* [Mexican Hat Dance]. They were fascinated. We said: "Thank you, can we go to bed?" but we couldn't, the Māori ceremonies always finish with food. We were invited to lunch. We arrived around 7 a.m., we went to bed at 3 p.m. because they took us to lunch. They made a reservation, they reserved a private room in a restaurant. Once again there were speeches, kisses, hugs, dancing. I danced again. They danced the *haka*. It was amazing. By the time we went to bed we were very tired. They thanked us for going over to lunch because they knew we hadn't

[7] In the Māori language, plurals are not made by adding the suffix -s. When Māori words are used in New Zealand English this grammatical rule is maintained. Where our interviewees, unaware of this rule, have added an -s, this has been retained.

slept and we were tired. We started working the next day, it was Sunday … Everything was installed within six days.

Figure 2.5 Staff from INAH are escorted by Te Papa staff onto Te Papa's *marae* for the *pōwhiri* to mark their arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

For Sykes (TP), taking the Mexican couriers to lunch the day they arrived "started our relationship really. That laid a good *kaupapa* [foundation] for us, or *whakapapa* [connection] actually for us to have … For Māori it's just about *manaaki* [hospitality]. Really it was, seeing these people in this new place. And knowing the dynamics of that, we made sure each day that they were looked after". The couriers commented on the "welcoming" and "friendly atmosphere" at Te Papa and how this contributed to the two teams working well together and successfully installing the exhibition in a drastically reduced timeframe. Carmona (MNA) explains:

> They invited us to lunch or dinner because we worked until late, both teams came together, it wasn't like that in Melbourne or Sydney. Both teams worked so well because of the atmosphere, it was very friendly … It wasn't like that in the other venues …. That's why I think the atmosphere was important. They brought us food, coffee, tea, soda, they took us to the cafeteria.

Wilco (TP) also emphasises the importance of building relationships between the two teams by showing them this kind of "day-to-day" hospitality.

While the institution focused on relationships at a formal, "first face" level, Wilco believes the value of this type of "on-the-ground" interaction should not be underestimated.

Figure 2.6 Mark Sykes greets Martha Carmona with a *hongi* during the *pōwhiri* for Mexican couriers at Te Papa in 2013. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

Applying *mana taonga* to the *Aztecs* collection extended throughout the installation process. As Sykes explains, "these are *taonga* … they're not objects to us, these are living, they've got their *mauri* [life essence], they're still alive, they've got history. We always started with a prayer every morning … before we went in". For him, *mana taonga* in practice also meant respecting the couriers' relationship with their *taonga* and allowing them to dictate how things should be done: "that's kind of how I felt … 'whatever you want, if you want us to turn over backwards', 'or turn this upside down on its head', that's how it is—it's their *taonga*".

This principle at times came into conflict with other Te Papa policies. Conscious of its location in an earthquake-prone region, Te Papa has strict protocols around object mounting. Wilco believes it also has something to do with Te Papa being a "new" organisation in a relatively young country that is highly protective of its cultural heritage— "it's like we're constantly trying to have this platinum standard of capability and delivery". Working with "older" cultures, Wilco has noticed a more "laissez faire attitude … with the earthquake mitigation thing for *Aztecs*, their attitude was very kind of 'uh, if it falls over it

falls over. It's been standing for a thousand years, it's pretty heavy at the base, I'm sure it will be fine' … I think there is something about being part of an older culture that informs that attitude". Since that time, Wilco has seen an "institutional attitudinal shift" at Te Papa when handling international collections, "to recognising that these were their objects and ultimately the safety was their responsibility and that we could provide advice and feedback but you know we weren't dictating anymore".

Wilco would like to see this new approach formalised as a "set of principles of how one deals with an incoming touring exhibition", that sets out "what the expectations are … whose rules we're playing by … we're very clear when we travel, what our expectations are, what we expect to find when we arrive, what the conditions should be … So we should have a similar set of principles for how we deal with incoming touring couriers as well".

The Mexican couriers feel that Māori connected with the *Aztecs* collection and saw similarities with their own cultural heritage. Carmona's (MNA) impression is that whereas Australians related to the objects on an "aesthetic" level, Māori "had a more intimate perception of the objects" and "understood the marrow of the culture":

> Every time we opened a box they gathered around it and exclaimed: "Oh!" … they identified with the pieces really quickly, they felt close to the ancestral objects, they felt part of them … I talked to many of them and they understood the objects perfectly when I told them about their history. They said: "Us too, our ancestors …", etc. So they were very sensitive … They're very open to cross-cultural understanding and I think they enjoy it … They were very inquisitive: "Why this objects?", "where did they put it?", "how did they do it?", "how wonderful!", "This was a goddess?", "What was their function?", "What was the ritual?" etc. … We all had to tell them the stories of the objects, what they meant, what were they used for … They understood the sacredness of these objects, that they came from tombs and temples and they were incredibly respectful when they handled them.

The couriers spoke of their delight at being able to interact and connect with "a living ethnic group" and learn about their cultural perspective. Some were taken into the Māori collection store to learn more about the *taonga*, as Albert (CNME) explains:

> [The collection manager is] showing you [things that] belonged to her aunt, her grandma, her neighbours, her tribe or her husband's tribe, or to

> someone who married into her family … these collections are alive and can be used, their discourse is contemporary so all that was great for me.

In Kent's opinion, "Aztec and Māori cultural objects require the same respect and protocols". To respect this, the Te Papa team that helped to deinstall *Aztecs* in Sydney and prepare it for the journey home to Mexico, continued to apply *mana taonga* as an intercultural practice in the mobile contact zone. Kent explains:

> My colleague who used to work at Te Papa now works at the Australian Museum and I asked him to do a *karakia*, a Māori blessing, for the safe transit of the Aztec objects home and we involved the INAH couriers and staff from the Australian Museum. They were really moved by that, so we felt connected to those objects just as when *E Tū Ake* came [to Mexico] we felt that connection of the staff of the National Museum of Cultures, they really had a physical connection to those objects and you felt that.

Kent reflects again on these relationships while returning objects to the lender museums in Mexico:

> it was quite touching seeing those objects go back to where they came from and some of those smaller institutions they gave up a lot, you can see where that object had sat in their exhibition space and realise "wow, this has left a huge hole in their exhibition hall". The staff are so glad to have their objects returned after a long journey, I think it was at Virreinato where the conservator was touching the objects, welcoming them home very similar to what we do when we welcome our *taonga* home. So they've got that connection and I was quite moved by that.

Most of the Mexican interviewees remarked that their experiences at Te Papa were special in comparison to other venues on the tour, and to other international museums they have worked with. This was due largely to the "warmth" of the welcome, the respect shown to their collections and the sense that connection to their heritage is something that they shared. This shared understanding contributed to a sense of receptiveness and cooperation between the teams. Speaking of the blessing ceremonies, Gómez (CNME) notes that it was the first time in her work with international exhibitions that she had "received this kind of present … the respect that they [show for] our collections were amazing, amazing for us … it was magic!"

Figure 2.7 Mexican curator Raúl Barrera during his visit to Te Papa, September 2013. Photograph courtesy of Lee Davidson.

Carmona (MNA) describes her experiences at Te Papa as "one of the best experiences through all these years … I felt that we had a very special connection with the team there and with our own team. We would go back to Wellington because it's a place where they valued our work. I've worked in many national and international exhibitions, and even after all these years working in INAH, I've never had an experience like this … They understood the importance of the collections, without a doubt. The venues in Australia were more urban, similar to places we've been to before: London, Madrid, Barcelona, etc. New Zealand was a great experience".

María Barajas (Head of Restoration/Courier, MTM) took part in the installation but did not attend the ceremonies at Te Papa, although she heard about them from her colleagues. Even she "felt this sensibility, a sense of 'we share this knowledge because of our culture'. That's the first time I've felt like this, maybe it's because of the type of culture but it was special in the case of New Zealand".

Kent (TP) observed the reciprocity of "Te Papa staff feeling connection with Aztec objects; as the staff of Museo Nacional de las Culturas felt connection to *taonga*". In all his experience touring exhibitions for Te Papa, he has found that "there is not always that immediate connection to the objects from host venue staff". They might be keen to learn more about their cultural and spiritual side, but "professionally they saw them as museum objects in the first instance".

While we were unable to interview many Australian staff directly involved with the installation of the Aztec objects, Bleechmore (AM) did reflect on the connection between the Mexican couriers and their *taonga*, and spoke herself of feeling a connection mediated by her experience of handling certain objects:

> The way the couriers respond to the objects also influences how you do, so obviously their love for their objects was pretty clear and how they responded to us as well also made, it makes an impact on how you view the objects that you're working with too, yeah … I also remember handling some of the small terracotta ware, sort of everyday drinking vessels, and I love the way that some of that material feels when you pick it up because you can actually imagine someone else holding it there and it feeling the same way, just kind of nestled into your hand … it's got that almost warmth about it where it's been held before, it's been designed to be held, I just think it's yeah, yeah I respond to those sorts of things … that's what's great about this job, are those little moments.

Kent (TP) speculates that while "there's awareness and understanding of Indigenous culture in Australia" the distinction was that in Aotearoa New Zealand "we tend to be a more bicultural nation". A number of Mexican staff

commented on the relationship between Māori and Pākehā, as they encountered it at Te Papa. Barrera reflected on the blessing ceremony and noted that in Mexico you would not encounter an ethnic group in a museum in this way:

> The interesting thing was that it was inside Te Papa museum … I think this is very important because in the end, museums display sacred pieces from ancient groups and they deserve respect.

Barrera's experiences in Aotearoa New Zealand also led him to reflect on wider cross-cultural issues. His impressions of the position of Māori within New Zealand society during his visit are that "In the case of the Māoris, I felt their hospitality but something that I liked very much was how the Māoris have a lot of respect in the New Zealand society… that's something I value, something I perceived. They coexist, this cultural group and society in general. It was a great experience". Both Gómez and Barrera compare their impressions from their time at Te Papa to Indigenous relations in Mexico: "it's something remarkable because in Mexico our ethnic groups do not take part [in] society as Māoris do … And so for us, to see that it is a great example and … it's something that produces [in] us admiration for your society, to see how an ethnic group lives with the rest of society as a whole, and inclusive". Barrera reflected that in Mexico Indigenous peoples are excluded, treated as "other" and exhibited in the anthropology museum: "we haven't found our identity as a nation that includes them".

Carmona (MNA) notes the "close interaction" between Māori and Pākehā in New Zealand and feels that this helped to explain the openness to other cultures at Te Papa. For Albert (CNME) too, New Zealanders "were a pleasant surprise because they are very understanding of other cultures, to the history of others, very open to other systems." She believes "we could learn a lot on an anthropological level, [from] the relationship they have with the Māoris and learn how to relate to the Indigenous people and also how to represent them … We have a break with the past, with the foreign or the other, with the unknown and they don't".

For a number of staff, working on the exhibition sparked their interest in learning more about each other's country and a wish to visit. Smith-Kapa (TP) enjoyed meeting the Mexican staff and her experiences "gave a focus to a culture and possibly a country, that I hadn't really given that much thought to, and to the point where I thought 'gee I really want to go there' … I became more and more interested in Mexico, to the extent that I started to do Spanish

lessons and so things like that so it did—talk about changing hearts, minds and lives![8] [laughs]".

The desire for ongoing relationships and continued learning was also expressed as an interest in future exhibition collaborations. As Greene (MM) says, "there is a lot we can do with each other, and learn from each other". As the first Mexican exhibition in Australasia, Gómez sees *Aztecs* as a highly important event and hopes that it will "open the door to other work" in the region.

[8] "Changing hearts, minds and lives" is Te Papa's "vision for the future".

Chapter 3

Developing intercultural exhibitions: creating the mobile contact zone

Exhibitions involve strategies of display that are not neutral. They have a culture, produced by the social and historical contexts within which they evolve (McCarthy 2007), and are products of an "exhibitionary apparatus"; that is, the "material and discursive framework that supports [their] production, distribution, and reception" (K. West 2017, 19). These shape the kinds of meanings that are constructed by exhibitions, playing a critical role in cultural representation and the potential for intercultural understanding or misunderstanding.

Displays of both Mexica and Māori culture have a particular social and historical context which impacted on the production of the exhibitions in our case study. At the same time, the exhibition development processes were very different: *E Tū Ake* was an example of cultural self-representation, a story about Māori, presented by Māori; *Aztecs* was a co-development that required extensive 'translation' between the Mexican, New Zealand and Australian professionals involved, and endeavoured to tell a story "on behalf of" the Aztecs.

In both exhibitions we find examples of contemporary exhibition practices that Witcomb (2015, 322) associates with a "pedagogy of feeling", referring to various aesthetic strategies deployed to evoke "affective encounters between viewer and viewed". These strategies are driven by the political aims of the exhibition, but rather than presenting a direct argument they attempt to provoke empathetic feelings through the juxtaposition of various exhibition components—objects, colours, soundscapes, lighting, video, models, texts, interactive media—in order to prompt critical reflection. This strategy, Witcomb (2015) argues, represents a shift from earlier pedagogies of "walking" and "listening" which were more didactic and aimed at cognitive processes rather than embodied and emotive experiences.

In this chapter we examine both the "poetics" and the "politics" of display (Lidchi 1997) adopted for *E Tū Ake* and *Aztecs*. Using the voices of the museum professionals who created these exhibitions, we show how they were intended to convey certain cultural ideas, and then how the display strategies adopted were designed to transmit these ideas to a "foreign" public. What emerges from our findings are the particular challenges of developing intercultural exhibitions that must translate one culture for another and in the

process create something "new", as well as the kinds of skills and approaches required to achieve cosmopolitan outcomes in this practice.

E Tū Ake: contemporary Indigenous voices

To fully understand *E Tū Ake: Standing Strong*, we need to trace its *whakapapa* (genealogy) with respect to the representation of Māori in museums. Early exhibits of Māori culture in Aotearoa New Zealand followed a European ethnographic tradition that portrayed Indigenous cultures "as distant in time and place" (McCarthy 2007, 12). The difficulty for colonial museums was, of course, that however marginalised and powerless they may have been, Māori were, unavoidably, present in the here and now. Since the nineteenth century Māori have endeavoured to assert themselves with regards to how they have been represented by museums, such that McCarthy (2007, 12) describes the journey from then till now as a "story of Māori resistance to, involvement in, and eventual capture of, the culture of display" culminating in the "indigenization of the museum."

The 1980s were a watershed moment in this journey. *Te Maori,* an exhibition of Māori artefacts, travelled to four cities in the US from 1984 to 1986 before returning home and touring the main centres of New Zealand. The exhibition—the first of its kind—was a phenomenal success, breaking attendance records at US venues and achieving unprecedented visitation at home as well. Through the development of *Te Maori*, led by a group of Māori intellectuals, public servants and arts administrators, *taonga* emerged as a new category of display, linked to cultural assertion and self-determination (McCarthy 2007). As *taonga*, Māori artefacts moved out of ethnographic categories and closer to conventional concepts of fine art, while retaining their cultural role as mediators of relationships between ancestors and living descendants (McCarthy 2007).

Opening ceremonies, performed at dawn by Māori elders and cultural performers, helped to convey the sense of Māori as a living culture and were a key factor in drawing attention at international venues and distinguishing *Te Maori* from other concurrent exhibitions (Mark 2008; Hanham 2000). The use of Māori protocol to open and close exhibitions, which has become standard Te Papa practice (see Chapter 2), is attributed to *Te Maori* (Mark 2008; McCarthy 2011). The exhibition helped to accelerate processes of decolonisation and brought about profound changes relating to the display of Māori culture and the role of Māori in relation to the country's cultural institutions (McCarthy 2011). Although ground-breaking in many respects, *Te Maori* had its limitations. Organised chronologically, with 1860 as an end point, the exhibition was critiqued for adopting a politics of display that lacked a contemporary dimension (McCarthy 2011; Hanham 2000). Consequently, while many

acknowledged its importance, there remained a desire to keep pushing the boundaries of cultural representation for Māori.

Soon after Te Papa opened in 1998 there were discussions about the possibility of doing another major Māori touring exhibition. In the early 2000s, then Chief Executive, Cheryll Sotheran, began developing a relationship with the Tokyo National Museum, and the outcome was an exhibition exchange with Japan involving the display of *Splendours of Japan* at Te Papa in 2006—showcasing five thousand years of Japanese history, artistic achievement and cultural heritage—and *Mauri Ora: Treasures from the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa* at the Tokyo National Museum in 2007.

Mauri Ora was "a more traditional or conservative" exhibition of Māori t*aonga*—not unlike *Te Maori*—as this was deemed suitable for the audience at the host venue. While it may not have been particularly innovative in terms of its concept, it was considered very successful in fostering a strong relationship with Japan and building Te Papa's experience in touring cultural exhibitions, particularly around the practical aspects of crating and mounting *taonga*, logistics and the appropriate cultural protocols. Carolyn Roberts-Thompson (Manager, Iwi Relationship Team) and Haley Hakaraia (Strategic Advisor, Iwi Relationship Team) were responsible for the ceremonial aspects of the exhibition's tour, such as opening and closing events and public programmes or events. Roberts-Thompson explains:

> We actually learned I think as an institution a lot about our systems and our processes … It was opened with King Tuheitia[1] and a small delegation of his people. We took them and travelled with them. You know, it was like this major logistical operation not only just to get the exhibition there and the *taonga* and get them all installed, but also our ability to be able to ensure that the cultural requirements and *tikanga* also accompanied that process.

Using *Te Māori* as a starting point, guidelines on *tikanga* were prepared for the host venue, including "real basic stuff, like don't sit on the crates … no *kai* [food] and those sort of things", Hakaraia says. It was a question of working out "how to explain it to someone that had no idea about *tikanga*." While this "took quite a bit of work", in the end, they kept the guidelines to one page and

[1] Tuheitia Paki is the current Māori King in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Māori King Movement or *Kīngitanga* emerged in the nineteenth century among certain *iwi* in the central North Island. The Māori monarch has a mainly ceremonial rather than constitutional role, and is not recognised by all Māori.

encouraged host staff to seek the expertise of Te Papa staff present during the installation and de-installation.

Mauri Ora had been "built to tour," but Te Papa was unable to secure any further venues. The return of the exhibition prompted discussions around how to take advantage of the investment that had already been made in preparing the objects to tour. According to Simon Garrett (Project Manager, TP), this happened at a time when there was some "soul searching" at the museum about cultural representation:

> when *Mauri Ora* came back from Tokyo, it started a conversation about whether such an exhibition positions Māori in some sense—as not a contemporary culture … as implicitly an ethnicity that was of historical interest only. And that conversation collided with a general conversation in Te Papa about what it is to be a living museum, to take care of a culture or cultures in a way that allows people to see how things work in practice and how things work in a contemporary way and how things can change over time, and how the past intersects with the present and indeed the present intersects with the past, I suppose. So all of this conversation occurred after what was indeed a very successful outing for *Mauri Ora*, and if we think of the *whakapapa* of this, we can fairly readily I think see the connection back to *Te Māori*, twenty-five or whatever number of years ago, which was not a dissimilar exhibition in some ways.

Jette Sandahl (Director, Experience, TP) felt at the time that there was an opportunity to "repurpose" the exhibition for a European audience. Sandahl, who has a background in European ethnographic museums, wanted the exhibition to show "how a whole different metaphysics translates in everyday life terms … you live this life, totally same everyday life that everyone else leads, within a context of a different world view". Te Papa's Senior Curator Māori (2003-2009), Huhana Smith, was adamant that the new exhibition would not be "the next *Te Maori*". She wanted it to have "a much stronger Māori voice, with a contemporary focus: This is what's happening for Māori today" (see Table 3.1). For Smith, an explicit aim of the exhibition was to change the image of a culture abroad, and to challenge international museum practice relating to the display and care of Indigenous collections. With a European audience in mind, she was concerned with:

> overturning colonialism or any kind of sense of European superiority … just letting people know that Māori have a very sophisticated knowledge system and they have a very holistic world view … Māori are a global people. They're an Indigenous culture but they're a global

> people … We wanted to show the European world view that Māori remain very resilient, an innovative culture, still going strong albeit changed and adapted, that happens—life is dynamic, cultures are dynamic … this wasn't going to be an exhibition that they would expect. It had to be something that's going to change their world view a little bit. That was always my thought about the exhibition; that we had to help shift their perception.

Table 3.1 Exhibition overview – *E Tū Ake: Standing strong* [2]

Exhibition title (Mexico)	*E Tū Ake: Orgullo Māori*
Venue **Exhibition period**	Museo Nacional de las Culturas, Mexico City 31 March – 22 July, 2012
Organised by	Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (TP)
Curators	Huhana Smith, Smith, Senior Curator Māori (2003-2009) and Rhonda Paku, Senior Curator Māori (2010-2015), Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
Abstract	
E Tū Ake: Orgullo Māori tells the proud and challenging story of Māori–the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand–from a contemporary Māori perspective. The exhibition portrays the lively and dynamic Māori culture. It speaks about the concepts of *whakapapa* (genealogy), *mana* (prestige and authority), and *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship), within an overall narrative of the quest for self-determination (*tino rangatiratanga*): the affirmation of Māori status, rights and authority as an Indigenous people, their 170-year struggle for recognition and their aspirations for ensuring total participation and association within their nation. *E Tū Ake* displays important *taonga* –cultural treasures– not seen before in the Mexican context, some traditional and others with great contemporary meaning, such as the fighting staff (*pouwhenua*) taken from the northern part of Aotearoa New Zealand to Wellington, the capital, in 1975 during a protest in the fight for lost Māori lands. Māori refer to their tangible and intangible expressions as *taonga*, a word whose meaning has earned particular interest. In the past, individuals as well as groups called their most valuable possessions *taonga*. But the word also encompasses every day objects, those which individuals took as unquestionably and inalienably theirs. Today, as so much has changed in the Māori culture and its environment the meaning of *taonga* as something valuable has become predominant. *Taonga* is something appreciated as an authentic expression of accumulated identity, ties and associations. It may even have a sense of preciousness, something worth fighting for and retaining.	

[2] Adapted from INAH's Exhibition Technical Sheet.

Aotearoa New Zealand recognises the bicultural character of the nation. Māori are *tangata whenua*, the first people of this land. They have been joined by the *tangata tiriti*, the people that settled there since the Māori chiefs and the British crown signed the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840.

Main themes

1. Introduction – *Tino Rangatiratanga*: the road to self-determination
2. *Whakapapa* – Identity and interconnectedness

In the Māori world, everything is related. This connection between people, environment and inanimate objects is *whakapapa*.

W*hakapapa* finds expression through genealogy, rituals and stories. Together they shape the foundation of the knowledge that allows peoples to define who they are and how they relate to others and to the world around them. The tribal experts are responsible for preserving and using this knowledge rightfully.

Within Māori society, *whakapapa* describes the interlinking of *whānau* (family) with its *hapū* (subtribe) and its *iwi* (tribes). *Whakapapa* also links an individual with his/her *waka* (ancient canoes) and *whare tūpuna* (ancestral house). These connections are sometimes represented in traditional and contemporary Māori art, as well as *tā moko* (tattoos).

3. *Mana* – Empowerment and Leadership

Mana is a spiritual force or quality that lies within individuals, animals and unanimated objects. It is inherited through *whakapapa* (lineage) and by accumulated merit. By reassuring *tino rangatiratanga* (self-determination), those who possess *mana,* are capable of empowering others.

Personal treasures, feather cloaks and musical instruments may serve as external symbols of identity and *mana*. These objects acquire their own *mana* from their creator, their tribal links, their symbolic significance and the memorable events they have taken part in.

E Tū Ake explores the influence of *mana* in the tangible and intangible nature of the *taonga;* in the relations of individuals with these *taonga* and in the relations between them, with their *tūpuna* (ancestors) and future generations.

4. *Kaitiakitanga* – Protection and sustainability

In the Māori cosmovision, everything –live or unanimated- is interconnected and comes from Papatūānuku (mother earth) and Ranginui (father sky). Humans are part of this natural order, and its guardians. This relationship is expressed through care and stewardship (*kaitiakitanga*).

Care and stewardship (*kaitiakitanga*) forces Māori to protect and manage resources in the area the tribe lives in. As long as these resources are used wisely and sustainably, it will be possible to offer respect and hospitality (*manaakitanga*) to the members of the tribe and its visitors.

In the Twenty-first Century, Māori have intensified the care and protection of their natural resources. In 2004 however, a law was promulgated that gave the British Crown possession of the shoreline and bottom of the ocean of New Zealand Aotearoa. Suddenly, the aspirations of the Māori were threatened by the absence of self-determination (*tino rangatiratanga*) or authority over tribal spaces.

Kaitiakitanga also compounds the care and protection of intangible treasures (*taonga*) like the Māori language (*te reo Māori*), its culture and values. The roll of *kaitiaki* is essential to ensure that everything preserved by Māori keep contributing to the wellbeing of the tribes.

Loan institutions	Artworks
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa	169
TOTAL	169

Project manager	Priscila Medina – CNME México
Opening date **Important attendees**	March 31, 2012 New Zealand Embassy Michelle Hippolite, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Gabriela López, Museo Nacional de las Culturas Director The ceremony was open for general visitors
Visitors and number of days in exhibition	39,066 visitors 98 days over 16 weeks
Relevance	It was the first exhibition of Māori culture presented in Mexico as a reciprocity for *Aztecs: Conquest and Glory*. It opened the first cultural exchange between Mexico and New Zealand
Catalogue	Paku, Rhonda. 2012. *E Tū Ake.Orgullo Māori*. Museo Te Papa Tongarewa de Nueva Zelanda, Conaculta INAH, México, Spanish edition, 61 pages.
Marketing	Brochures available at the venue, advertisement in public transportation and some specialised magazines.
Educational program	Between April 20 and 24, 2012 the museum hosted a series of educational programs and workshops run by staff from Te Papa, with help from the MNC educational department. Guided tours and drama visits, film screenings about New Zealand and Māori. Lecture by Raffaela Cedraschi, curator at MNC for the South Pacific collections. Educational kiosk (mediatek) with portable labels, books, Māori glossary, temporary tattoos, and other interpretative materials. Special issue of *Whispers of History Magazine*, and a brochure about *tā moko*.

Sandahl, former Founding Director of the Museum of World Culture in Sweden, was a strong advocate of museums tackling controversial issues. Smith also felt that the exhibition should be "looking at a more recent past where there'd been difficulties and other concerns." Roma Potiki (Concept Developer, TP) explains that conflicts and protests, particularly over the last forty to fifty years, were "points of activism and assertion … things that had very wide ramifications" in terms of the revitalisation of Māori culture and "justice issues for Māori people, so they were important to have in there."

Potiki remembers the initial exhibition brief as reconceptualising around two thirds of the *taonga* from *Mauri Ora* "and to look perhaps for one third new, contemporary objects and their associated stories … to totally rethink it in the way that it was presented so it would be fresh and also have the contemporary element":

> originally my sense was that some people might have thought, oh this is quite an easy thing because a lot of the objects are already there and they just have to pick a few things and tweak it up and we're away. But, that was never the case.

Garrett agrees that "the whole concept was really very ambitious":

> It was the most intellectually demanding exhibition, development process, that I've been involved with, because people did have to do some hard thinking about exactly what it was they meant, and once you move into a conceptual way of describing things rather than a physical or object based way of describing things, and especially if … you don't have much to look back on or other examples to look at or whatever—then you do have to think really hard about how you're going to realise what you're trying to achieve.

An additional challenge arose from the principle of *mana taonga*, whereby the spiritual or cultural owners of the *taonga* had to be consulted, as Garrett explains:

> even though legally Te Papa might own something. We still have the responsibility back to the original *iwi* [tribal group]. And it's not just the objects that they own, it's the stories that they own. So for us to tell their stories, we've got to, as it were, have the permission I suppose of the people about whom the stories are told … and some stories, some objects are more fraught than others … So a huge amount of work goes into just establishing relationships, building on those relationships. It's a living culture [laughs]—going on in front of your very eyes.

Potiki found another challenge in developing a "broadly faceted" exhibition without a clear knowledge of the audience. While they began with European venues in mind, there was "no confirmed pick-up" for much of the development period. It would have been preferable, Potiki believes, to have more certainty about the audience, and also to be able to work with someone from the host culture, so as to have more guidance about how to translate cultural concepts for that particular audience:

> I think that probably some of the concepts might have been at too high a level of knowledge for overseas [audiences] … [but] that's always difficult to kind of second guess ... You also don't want to dumb down your own culture, but it has to be accessible for others.

The question of how to portray cultural complexity for an overseas audience arose for other staff. Reflecting on this issue, Megan Tamati-Quennell (Curator Contemporary Māori and Indigenous Art, TP) described *Mauri Ora* as:

> kind of an ABC of Māori culture … I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with catering to your audience or curating shows for a particular audience and taking into account their understanding or non-understanding of Māori people … but I don't think you should reduce it so much … I think people want depth, complexity and to gain a real insight into art and culture, what it was and what it is. I also think it is important to shift people's perceptions, change the assumptions they might have.

Smith also wanted to convey the "fabulous complexity" of and "the best thinking" about Māori culture to overseas audiences; that "such an audience can be privileged by actually hearing someone who can articulate a post-colonial voice—even post post—let's keep pushing. We're going to give you an Indigenous voice and this is what it looks like."

One challenge with adding the contemporary dimension was finding objects to tell these stories. Some of the objects selected were not typical for international exhibitions, such as t-shirts and badges of protest movements. Another example is a table setting from a Māori community that provided *manaakitanga* to participants in a protest march which included "chipped cups and this funny plastic table-cloth". According to Garrett, "it looks like junk I suppose, in a certain sort of sense. And it's only imbued with value when you can grasp the concept that it's attempting to represent".

Interpretive media were used to give the exhibition the feeling of a living culture and to show the connectivity between living people, their stories and their *taonga*, such as first-person quotes, photographs and audio-visuals featuring contemporary Māori voices and practices. Smith explains:

> We wrapped the living around the cultural item. That was one of the key things we wanted to show people, that there's this constant spiritual living dynamic happening with *taonga* and contemporary descendants. They are as valid as the ancestral.

Potiki sees the intention as creating "a multi-layered series of stories or encounters, ways for visitors to understand some key concepts that are so deeply embedded and important for Māori people":

> I think the show very much makes the point that Māori is a living culture, so I'm hoping that overseas audiences get that—that it's not just old things that people made one hundred years ago. And gets the idea too that the objects still resonate and still have a life force and are still powerfully speaking into the present and to people nowadays and that they're still valued. So I hope that those kind of messages come out.

Garrett thinks that some people within the museum found the themes of Indigenous politics and successful resistance "a bit troubling" and wondered "how people abroad [would] react to a story of activism". Senior management were concerned that the exhibition should not finish "on a slightly belligerent, provocative note", he says, but rather on a positive, "upbeat sort of note". Smith remembers being told:

> "We're going to be hammering people. It's going to be really negative". And I'm like, "Well, this is the reality." I'm not saying we've got a negative reality. I'm saying, we should be able to talk about the controversial and the difficult without going, "Oh, no, we must be able to make it palatable for the audience," or "People won't quite get that. They want to see the *haka* [war dance] and they want to see the *hei tiki* [carved pendants] and all that kind of thing".

As well as being an important part of the story, for Smith it was about feeling confident enough to address both "positive and negative" aspects of New Zealand history. Potiki feels that "the primary modus operandi, if you like, of the exhibition was not about beating people over the head or trying to make people feel guilty, but was actually to do with informing and connecting people and actually opening out opportunities for understanding" and that "the exhibition overall posited a hopeful future".

Exhibition Interpreter and the only non-Māori on the development team, Sarah Morris, welcomed the decision to deal with more difficult episodes in New Zealand's colonial history and sees it as a sign of maturity at the national institution, in moving away from a "celebratory" tone of presenting Aotearoa New Zealand as a "happy, shiny nation of one people". She explains that the team wanted to balance the protest segments by showing that Māori and Pākehā relations have come a long way and there have been successes, such as the revival of language and settlement of land claims:

> We hope that there are some pauses and some quite confrontational moments as well. So there's some space for reflection and contemplation and some quite in your face images as well of people that have got

> a right to be angry being angry. But also showing that things are progressing, it's not just a really divided nation any more. Well there's pockets of that but … that these things are slowly being resolved.

Sensitivity to political contexts and concern about the overall visitor experience did influence curatorial decisions, as well as discussions about potential venues. It was thought, for example, that the political themes would not be appropriate for some countries. Another political issue that accompanied the wider context of the exhibition in Europe and Canada was the issue of the repatriation of Māori human remains from overseas museum collections. However, it was decided not to deal with this explicitly within the exhibition. Tamati-Quennell, who was tasked with selecting contemporary Māori art to be included in the exhibition, discusses an artwork by artist Shane Cotton called 'Vee':

> I thought it should go at the beginning of the exhibition as one of the first works to give it the *mana* it deserved but also because it is a work that conceptually goes to the heart of the historic relationship between Māori and museums … nationally and internationally, that they have collections of *mokomokai* [preserved tattooed heads] and Māori human remains that live in their museums … but Rhonda Paku [Senior Curator Māori, TP] who picked up the show after Huhana [Smith] left, thought the work too arresting, too confronting to have at the beginning of the show.

Tamati-Quennell thinks "it was important the contemporary [art] was there to represent us and that cultural dynamism", but that the exhibition failed to establish a "real relationship between the contemporary and the taonga". She feels that it did not go far enough in terms of innovative Indigenous museum practice: "I actually think the time of shows like that—generalist, about pan-tribal Māori culture but without expressing the depth and the complexity of the culture—is over, that's my view". Others within the New Zealand art world agreed that a more focused exhibition would have been more successful (Ireland 2011).

For others, like Garrett, developing the exhibition had been a rewarding experience because it was challenging and "a bit edgy … taking the whole museological experience forward". Potiki feels that while the political themes were not new in terms of exhibitions at Te Papa that *E Tū Ake* was probably a "more *overtly* assertive story" in that sense and "probably a good marker for Te Papa of how far it was prepared to go at that point in time". For instance, the issue of constitutional change was not discussed in the exhibition as "that would be a challenge, to actually make that visitor experience friendly".

Sandahl, by now Director of the Copenhagen City Museum, saw the show in Paris. She feels the exhibition succeeded in not exoticising Māori for a French audience:

> I think it's one of the best exhibitions that I've seen for a long time. I thought it was *really* good. [pause] And I think [pause] some really really brave Māori positions in there to take some of these [pause] most sacred treasures and expose them to this, you know, totally current, different and quite alien point of view.

In an email to Hippolite (TP), Sandahl expresses her view on the success of *E Tū Ake* in moving beyond the conventional portrayal of Indigenous cultures in European ethnographic museums as "living in some sort of timeless, ahistorical past":

> *E Tū Ake* represents another set of world views, another concept of knowledge, or another epistemology. The integration between the spiritual and the everyday, or the ways in which the spiritual is continuously present in the everyday is one of the most interesting, most important—and very successfully conveyed—messages of the exhibition. This basic position permeates the whole exhibition … My own favorite point of view might have been the spot where one sees at the same time the humble table and crockery of the *marae*, the contemporary Nemesis piece[3] and the *pātaka* [storage houses]. I felt this was one of the places where the integration of time, traditions and contemporary everyday life spoke with full authority.[4]

Mana taonga in Mexico: reception and adaptation

Once the exhibition moved out of its home context, Te Papa's approach to cultural self-representation provoked diverse reactions, suggesting that it did indeed challenge some traditional museological assumptions (see for example Rothstein (2011) and Jean (2013)). In Mexico, museum professionals viewed it as a positive example of Indigenous museum practice and progressive post-colonial relations. Priscila Medina, (Project Manager, CNME) felt its importance stemmed not only from being the first exhibition from Aotearoa New Zealand in Mexico, but because it was rare for INAH to present an exhi-

[3] Nemesis (2005) by Reuben Paterson uses glitter dust on black canvas in an exploration of the optical qualities of pattern-making, derived from his earlier studies of Māori *kōwhaiwhai* patterns (Anna-Marie White, personal communication with Davidson).

[4] Personal email communication, Jette Sandahl, 13 November 2012.

bition that addresses "how Indigenous people live now". She felt this was "a magnificent example for us" and hoped it would encourage INAH to do more exhibitions with a contemporary focus.

Rosa Elba Camacho (MNC) was also impressed by the over-riding theme of continuity, commenting that *E Tū Ake* was:

> one of the only exhibitions I have seen where you have a continuum between the historical peoples and the narration of the past and …what's happening today. Because here in Mexico we still have these archaeology exhibitions and they tell us about the Indigenous culture from the past, from before the sixteenth century and then it stops.

Ana Carolina Abad, who worked on the Spanish translation of text panels, found her contact with the exhibition to be an "emotive" and memorable experience. She admired what Māori had been able to achieve through the resistance and political struggles featured in the exhibition. The exhibition felt "more human" to her and "more close" than previous international exhibitions she had worked on. The sense of encountering a living culture was a point of difference:

> because these people exist. On the other side of the world, but they exist and they still have these traditions, habits and it was a little bit close. You were not working with objects, archaeological objects or artistic objects. It was part of another way of life. I think that was different.

E Tū Ake toured as a complete exhibition, including all objects and interpretive materials (see Chapter 2). However, it did require a small degree of adaptation for the host venues, principally in terms of translation, design and educational resources. Te Papa provided all the text in English and Māori. INAH had this translated into Spanish by professional translators and then checked by Abad for fluency and accuracy. A key challenge was translating Māori words and concepts for a Mexican audience because the literal translations of English explanations did not always work well in Spanish. The title in particular, Medina explains, sounded "strange" in Spanish. They sent a number of alternatives to Te Papa for consideration before it was decided that *E Tū Ake – Orgullo Māori* [Māori Proud] was the best option.

The final Spanish version of the text was sent to Te Papa, where it was checked by a native Spanish speaker who had worked at the museum as a writer and therefore "understood a level of Māori culture and could be the bridge for us to a really successful response to that translation, and with their work with the curator", Hay explains. Te Papa returned the text with a few minor corrections, most of which related to Māori words and concepts. Hay

feels that INAH "did a really good job" on the translation, due to their commitment and having done "a lot of prior reading and research".

Alberto Limón (Graphic Designer, CNME) worked on the text panels and colour scheme for the show at the MNC. He was concerned with creating an engaging design, given that Aotearoa New Zealand is a place most Mexicans know little about. To achieve this, he incorporated Māori designs into the text panels and labels and selected colours that would appeal to the local audience. While Te Papa had opted for a white and gray design, and the previous venue, Quai Branly, had used white, Medina explained that these colours felt "cold" and "sad" for a Mexican audience:

> Because Mexican people use the colours [a lot]. [laughs] ... [so] many colours, is better for the Mexican people, and for the attention, that we hold the attention of the people.

While INAH consulted Te Papa about some design elements, when the installation staff arrived in Mexico, they were somewhat shocked to find the exhibition space painted in bright colours that were not at all consistent with a Māori aesthetic. Kent (2016) recalls his reaction:

> the gallery in Mexico was guacamole green, fantastic colour, not something we would necessarily do at Te Papa, but we had to trust that our colleagues knew their audience, and knew what they would be receptive to.

The original intention was to have all interpretive text in Spanish, English and Māori. In the end, this was reduced because of space constraints and concerns that Mexican audiences do not read a lot of text. With Te Papa's agreement, it was decided to have Spanish text with Māori included on the main text panels, and for important terms and concepts. A separate "mediatek" room provided all the text, with translations, for visitors who were interested in learning more.

Figure 3.1 *E Tū Ake – Orgullo Māori* at the Museo Nacional de las Culturas, Mexico City. Reproduction authorised by the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

The target audience for *E Tū Ake* in Mexico was young people, which was another surprise for Te Papa, who considered the exhibition as "fairly adult", but the visitor profile of the MNC includes a high proportion of school students. Te Papa staff worked closely with Mexican colleagues to support them in organising appropriate educational resources and programmes. Hippolite arranged for two young Māori people who were fluent Spanish speakers and had spent time in Latin America as part of a Māori Television exchange to visit Mexico with a Te Papa Discovery Centre Manager.[5] They brought with them Māori costumes and other props for children, ran a series of educational activities and programmes, and provided ideas for the MNC educators. This included, according to Hay, "sometimes sitting outside the front door [of the museum] playing the guitar, singing *waiata* [Māori songs], and they just dragged all sorts of people through the door".

Te Papa also sent resources from their Discovery Centres, such as children's storybooks on Māori mythology, *tā moko* (traditional tattooing) stencil kits, and educational pamphlets prepared by Te Papa staff. MNC education staff

[5] Discovery Centres are interactive spaces for children and families within Te Papa. Māori Television was launched in 2004 as a publicly-funded broadcaster to promote the revitalisation of the Māori language and to connect all New Zealanders to the Māori culture.

were receptive to this assistance and also came up with their own ideas for engaging a Mexican public. They designed a dictionary of Māori terms—for which they coined the term 'taonganary'—that visitors could take with them around the exhibition. They created a "gossip magazine" full of "curious facts, funny facts, attractive facts" that could provide visitors with some context for Māori culture and create points of connection, such as actor Russell Crowe, who was born in Aotearoa New Zealand, the film series *Lord of the Rings*, rugby and the *haka*, a fashion section about *hei tiki* and *poi* (performance art), and travel tips for would-be tourists, including useful words and phrases. This interpretive material was available at a "mobile station" which could be moved around the exhibition.

Educator Monserrat Navarro (MNC) wanted "to avoid people [seeing] the Indigenous as uncivilised … to show people that there are cultural differences, but that they have some similarities to us and they also use technology, they use things that we also use and just see them as they are and not judging". The team designed "museography books" that visitors could consult for extra information about the objects and their emotional connection with descendants, and a genealogy chart comparing Mexica and Māori gods to show the close similarity.

Figure 3.2 *E Tū Ake – Orgullo Māori* educational activities. Monserrat Navarro with one of the 'museography books'. Photograph courtesy of Lee Davidson.

All educational materials were approved by Te Papa and Navarro appreciated the way in which Te Papa staff "were actually getting them involved and they were taking them hand-by-hand through the whole process". For her, this was a point of difference from other international exhibitions they had hosted; the collaboration with Te Papa being "personal" and "much deeper". This degree of "communication and the connection", she says, had "touched their souls":

> I don't know how [to] explain [to] you but it's so special. Really, really we're connecting with the people, with the *taonga*, with the objects, with Māoris. I don't know how explain … from the museum but from the visitors too. I never feel like this with another exhibition. It's so, so special. I am working [in] museums ten years and never feel like that—never. Because we have a different process and we can explain this process to the visitors because we love Māoris and I feel that we can show this [to] the people.

Making *Aztecs*: a history of ambivalence

As with Māori, the Mexica culture is implicated in a complex history of display. The area Mexico occupies today has witnessed a complicated cultural development over thousands of years, which saw the rise and decline of several cultures. Mexica was one of the two most important empires encountered by the Spanish when they arrived in Mesoamerica, but by that time myriad cultures had shaped what the Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil calls "the deep Mexico". Years of colonialism displaced these cultures without completely destroying them, and their intermingling has shaped the ethnic diversity of present-day Mexico (Bonfil Batalla 1994).

Despite this cultural complexity, Mexica art and culture have been appropriated since at least the nineteenth century to construct a Mexican nationalism based on notions of a glorious pre-Hispanic past (Braun, 1993; Vackimes, 2001). The central image of the Mexican flag—an eagle on top of a cactus—derives from the pilgrimage myth of Mexica settlement in the Texcoco Lake, which became modern Mexico City. The Mexica Hall occupies the central and front area in the MNA. Aztecs—as they are more commonly known in museums around the world—have been one of the most popular subjects of international exhibitions on Mexican history. Between 1992 and 2010, sixteen venues—from London to Berlin, Rome, New York, Chicago, Madrid, Bilbao, Tokyo, Vienna and Denver—have hosted Aztecs exhibitions (see Table 3.2). Aztecs have also been included in more general exhibitions on Mexican and Pre-Columbian topics (Wilson 1991; Mewburn 1998; Bilby 1993). Bilby (1993) questions the tendency of international exhibitions to focus on cultures such

as Aztecs, often with the intention of conveying the "size, complexity, and power" of the Indigenous society, while ignoring the many other small-scale, non-centralised societies in the region. He suggests that narratives of empire and economic power are ones that Western audiences "understand" and respect. Indeed, the Western world has had a long fascination with Mexica culture. In his book *The Aztec image in Western thought* US historian Benjamin Keen discusses the seeming contradiction between its "ferocious cult of war and human sacrifice, on the one hand, and the celebration of the qualities of benevolence, humility, and mercy" on the other. This "cleavage in the Aztec soul", he argues, has attracted intense Western interest from the earliest encounters in the sixteenth century (Keen 1971, 41).

Table 3.2 Previous exhibitions of Mexica culture

YEAR	EXHIBITION	VENUE	CITY	COUNTRY
1992	Azteca - Mexica	Museo Arqueológico	Madrid	Spain
1992	Aztecas: El mundo de Moctezuma	Denver Museum of Natural History	Denver	US
1994	El Quinto Sol: Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco Recent Findings	Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum	Chicago	US
2002	Aztecs	Royal Academy of Arts	London	UK
2003	The Aztecs	Martin-Gropius-Bar	Berlin	Germany
2004	The Aztecs	Art and Exhibition Hall of the Federal Republic of Germany	Bonn	Germany
2004	The Aztec Empire	Guggenheim Museum	New York	US
2004	I Tesori degli Aztechi	Palazzo Ruspoli	Rome	Italy
2005	El imperio azteca	Guggenheim Museum	Bilbao	Spain
2007	The three great civilizations of Mesoamerica and the Central Andes: The World of Maya, Aztec and Inca	Kobe City Museum	Kobe	Japan
2007	The three great civilizations of Mesoamerica and the Central Andes: The World of Maya, Aztec and Inca	National Museum of Nature and Science	Tokyo	Japan
2008	The Aztec World	The Field Museum	Chicago	US

2008	The three great civilizations of Mesoamerica and the Central Andes: The World of Maya, Aztec and Inca	Digital City Museum of Okayama	Okayama	Japan
2008	The three great civilizations of Mesoamerica and the Central Andes The World of Maya, Aztec and Inca	City Museum of Fukuoka	Fukuoka	Japan
2009	Moctezuma. Aztec ruler	British Museum	London	UK
2010	The Aztec Pantheon and the Art of Empire	Getty Villa	Los Angeles	US

The first systematic exhibition of Mexica artefacts anywhere in the world was William Bullock's *Ancient Mexico*, opened in 1824 at his Egyptian Hall in London (Medina Gonzalez 2011). A companion exhibition entitled *Modern Mexico* opened at the same time in the same building. The two exhibitions were combined into one the following year to create *Ancient and Modern Mexico*. Bullock, a private British collector and museum entrepreneur, acquired his collection the previous year during a six-month visit to Mexico. It included plaster casts of four giant pre-Columbian sculptures, a range of maps and pictures he had either collected or copied, as well as about fifty carvings, vessels and tools (Pearce 2008).

Bullock's exhibition foreshadowed twentieth-century blockbuster strategies. He promoted it with a "comprehensive publicity package", including wide media coverage, while his guidebooks "adopted a colloquial tone" to enhance the accessibility of his display (Medina Gonzalez 2011, 105). In combining education and entertaining spectacle, Bullock distinguished his show from other amusements of the day, while simultaneously offering a point of difference from the contemporary museum (Medina Gonzalez 2011). In another innovation for its time, Bullock reconstructed a Mexican hut and garden, from which a young Mexican man provided some interpretation for visitors (Pearce 2008). Pearce (2008, 30–31) argues that by introducing new techniques of display, including the "reconstruction of local culture brought alive by local people", Bullock "helped to foster in the public consciousness the sense that people unlike themselves existed not only as spectacle to be viewed but also as culture to be experienced … he showed collected material not as alien or outlandish, but as a field for empathy and understanding".

Mexica culture featured prominently in the design of Mexican pavilions in the nineteenth-century world fairs including the 1889 recreation of an Aztec palace in Paris (Tenorio-Trillo 1996). More recent debates on the representation of Mexica culture have centred around an art historical versus anthropo-

logical treatment of 'ancient' cultures, depending on the type of institutions in which they were displayed. *Aztec: The World of Moctezuma* (1992–93) was a collaboration between the Denver Museum of Natural History (DMNH), the MTM in Mexico City and the University of Colorado. Co-developed by museum staff and university scholars from both countries, Mexican archaeologists advocated a contextual exhibition, with both major artistic pieces and everyday objects telling a "full story" (Stevenson Day 1994, 31). The exhibition featured a wide range of media, including dioramas, murals, models of various sizes, videos and an audio tour, as well as illustrations from Mexica codices, original artwork, quotations of Mexica poetry and literature, eye-witness accounts from Spanish conquistadors, and objects acquired from present-day Nahuatl-speaking people[6] (Nein 1993; Berdan 1993).

DMNH staff sought to address issues of cultural representation in their exhibition through strong community involvement, not only with the local Hispanic community who made up almost 20 per cent of the city's population, but also with Native Americans who they found felt closely related to the Mexica (Stevenson Day 1994). A community council, representing a range of community voices, was consulted on various issues and trained a team of almost five hundred volunteer interpreters, approximately 40 per cent of whom had Latino heritage and many of whom were bilingual (Nein 1993). More than 720,000 people visited the exhibition during the five months it was on display, with layered interpretation and programming designed to promote a high degree of repeat visitation (Stevenson Day 1994). A reviewer generally praised the way in which the exhibition presented the complexities of the culture, including everyday life, to a broad audience, while noting that the exhibition failed to address more controversial issues, such as contemporary ethnic identity (Berdan 1993, 73).

London's celebrated *Aztecs* (2002–2003) was a very different exhibition. A collaboration between INAH and the Royal Academy of Arts, this show featured nearly four hundred objects and was a success in terms of visitor numbers. Attracting more than 430,000 visitors, it was the most popular exhibition in London in 2003, and went on to tour Germany, Spain and New York where it also attracted large crowds.

The exhibition, which had an art historical focus, was criticised for its failure to cover residential life and the lack of commentary to contextualise aspects of Mexica religion. Anthropologist George F. Lau was impressed by the "stunning array" of objects but concerned that "the stereotypes of a savage culture and of

[6] Nahuatl is an Indigenous language of Mesoamerica, spoken by around 1,376,000 people in Mexico today.

dark, grisly ceremonies linger" (Lau 2003). The exhibition brochure lured visitors with the macabre promise of encountering "a civilisation carved in blood and stone". Lau (2003, 625) concluded that "Sacrificial ritual, not surprisingly, emerges as a prominent theme in Aztecs and no doubt is a major part of the exhibit's draw". The wider public response echoed the sensationalism evoked by the exhibition and its marketing texts, describing it as "chilling", "barbaric", "a theatre of blood", and "the most alien of all art" (Gorji 2004, 48).

This mix of fascination and horror reflects Keen's (1971, 567) conclusion that the root of Western culture's long-held ambivalence towards Mexica civilisation has been the fact that it "mirrors our own contradictions and dilemmas, for the Aztec mixture of humanism and barbarism, and the introspective Aztec personality, haunted by doubts and fears, are not unfamiliar to us". This raises difficult questions for museums, particularly in relation to the representation of human sacrifice as a cultural practice of the Mexica.

The DMNH had approached this issue through discussion with both Hispanic and Indian groups, offering advance tours of *Aztec* to show that, rather than being a focus, it was only one component within the overall context of the culture (Stevenson Day 1994). Chief Curator Stevenson Day considers it a success that there were few complaints about "controversial aspects of the exhibition", and notes that most concerns were not related to cultural representation, but rather that "it might frighten children or that it went against tenets of fundamental Christian morality" (Stevenson Day 1994, 29). Berdan (1993, 73) felt that the "glimpses" of human sacrifice within the exhibition were dealt with "sensitivity and care" through explanations that were "native in viewpoint", concluding that "its treatment here allows for a balanced view of this many-faceted and enigmatic culture".

The representation of Mexica culture through artistic masterpieces with an art historical focus on aesthetic qualities rather than cultural context, while brimming with blockbuster appeal, remains deeply problematic. The artefacts featured inevitably "reflect the privileged experiences and concerns of their mostly male elite patrons", leading to a "narrow, stereotyped view of Aztec society and culture" (Brumfiel and Millhauser 2014, 6–7). *Aztec World*, presented at the Field Museum of Chicago in 2008–9, sought to address this issue, as well as avoid the sensationalism associated with some previous exhibitions, by presenting "a sympathetic understanding of Aztec culture" and, like Denver beforehand, being sensitive to the exhibition's relevance to the sizable local population with Mexican ancestry (Brumfiel and Millhauser 2014, 7).

While Mexica culture has been both glorified and demonised, at home and abroad, contemporary Indigenous groups in Mexican society have remained marginalised and stigmatised (Acosta-García and Martínez-Ortiz 2015; Alonso

2004). This "postcolonial ambivalence" has been controversial in terms of the representation of Indigenous peoples in Mexican museums, where they have typically been displayed either as part of pre-Conquest archaeology, or in ethnographic displays that locate them "on the rural fringes of the nation" (Alonso 2004, 478; Liffman 2007; Morales Moreno 2011). International exhibitions of Mexica objects have, similarly, tended to omit narratives of "colonial subjugation and exploitation of the indigenous populations that are the rightful heirs to them" (Braun 1993, 46).

Aztecs in Australasia: engagement and sensitivity

The preceding review of Aztec exhibitions demonstrates the ways in which cultures of display and object selection can play a critical role in the representation of a culture, with varying implications for intercultural understanding or misunderstanding. Throughout the development of the Australasian iteration negotiations over the concept, objects, design, text and marketing images all drew out complex relations and contested meanings.

The selection of the objects for Te Papa's *Aztecs* involved a lengthy process of negotiation that lasted about two years. Fox (TP) started with previous exhibition catalogues, such as the Royal Academy's, to see what had been done before and to familiarise himself with Mexican collections. He then travelled to Mexico, visiting the most important museums to survey collections and begin conversations about what objects could be included and "what they wanted [the exhibition] to achieve". When Barrera was appointed as co-curator, Fox submitted a preliminary list of artworks. The list was then reviewed and some practical considerations were taken into account including conservation, transportation and other political and administrative issues, as well as budgetary implications. This was mainly a four-way negotiation between Barrera, the CNME, the lender museums and Te Papa staff, each of them trying to represent their interests in the best way.

Rather than an art show featuring "masterpieces", like many previous Aztec exhibitions, INAH wanted the exhibition to show objects representing a range of aspects of Mexica culture, including religion, human sacrifice, and everyday life. It was also important to INAH that the exhibition present recently discovered pieces and objects from storage that had never travelled before. Barrera explains his approach:

> Mexica society as a whole had never been shown before, it was a perfectly well-structured society, so I think the importance is that it's been seen from its origins, how the city of Tenochtitlán was born and how it developed, how it conquered different parts of Mesoamerica and how it collapsed with the arrival of the Spanish.

Fox appreciated Barrera's wish to focus on the new archaeology and daily life, but also wanted to ensure that the exhibition included some "spectacular hits" from the "fascinating" monumental sculpture that could tell the story of the religious life of the Mexica and the conquest of their empire. As Smith-Kapa (TP) recalls:

> Jeff was utterly passionate about it and very ambitious, and he wasn't going to settle for a couple of little brown round things [both laugh] he wanted the sort of monumental, most important objects that Mexico held in their collections … So he did a trip and identified the objects that he hoped to be able to borrow … and there were some remarkable objects that he hoped to borrow and didn't secure and others that he didn't expect to secure and did, so he was very ambitious from the get-go.

According to Smith-Kapa, Fox and Barrera worked together on the concept "over quite a long period of time":

> I think it was complex because we weren't taking a package, already prescribed … they didn't say "this is what you're getting". It was an exchange of "this is the narrative and what fits the narrative".

Te Papa's initial proposal of four hundred objects was eventually reduced to 267, with the MTM being the main lender. Some museum staff who acted as couriers subsequently expressed concern about the selection of objects. Gallardo (MTM) feels that lending the majority of the objects from the principal sacred Mexica precinct meant a predominance of ritual objects. Others commented on the selection of pieces relating to human sacrifice.

According to Barajas (MTM), the size and the nature of objects selected to travel was a challenge for the MTM staff. In particular, recently discovered objects required "specific treatments and also working hand-in-hand with the staff from Te Papa in order to organise very specific packings for some pieces because it was the first time they were leaving the museum, as well as mount making for some of the items".

Greene (MM) felt that the final object list "was an absolute first class selection." Kent (TP) agreed:

> The calibre of objects that INAH sent for the tour were A category objects, so we weren't getting an exhibition of reproductions, it is the original historical objects. I think that plays a really important role in people walking away going "wow, I've seen something that's really old and has an amazing story". Which is hard to do with an exhibition of replicas.

Te Papa took the lead on developing the exhibition, with the two Australian museums providing input (see Chapter 2). It was an unusual situation for Te Papa, with its emphasis on people "telling their own stories", to be representing another culture. Furthermore, none of the Australasian museums had a Mesoamerican specialist on staff to assist with the development of the exhibition content. Attempts were made to gain assistance from a university-based scholar in Australia, but this ultimately proved unsuccessful.

In terms of storyline, Fox explains that Te Papa stuck with "more or less a chronology" in which a number of themes were highlighted (see Table 3.3). In line with Te Papa's approach of trying to challenge ethnographic constructs and presenting "living cultures" so as to "make history relevant to people now", Fox wanted to bring a contemporary angle to the Te Papa exhibition, extending the story of the Mexica people through to present day. *E Tū Ake* had clearly made an impression in this regard, and through the relationships established by Hippolite (TP), he felt there was some support for this approach from within INAH. However, after consultation with the Australian museums, this idea was considered impractical because it made the scope of the exhibition too large. It was decided therefore to limit the storyline to the Aztec empire up until the Spanish conquest, with just a small final section addressing the 'Aztec legacy'.

Table 3.3 Exhibition overview – *Aztecs: Conquest and Glory*

Exhibition title	Aztecs: Conquest and glory
Venues / Exhibition period	Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa 29 September 2013–9 February 2014 Melbourne Museum, Melbourne, Australia 9 April 2014–10 August 2014 Australian Museum, Sydney, Australia 13 September 2014–1 February 2015
Organised by	Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in collaboration with Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) and in partnership with the Melbourne and Australian Museums
Curators	Raúl Barrera (INAH) Lynette Townsend (TP)
ABSTRACT	
"This exhibition is about the Aztec empire and the Mexica people; a people who five hundred years ago dominated Mesoamerica. They were a complicated, creative, fierce and loving people. They were an empire of warriors, poets and ingenious architects. This exhibition will take you on a journey through the history of the Aztec empire. It will explore the origins and mythology, the people and their everyday lives, the rulers, religion and beliefs. Although the exhibition ends with the fall of the Aztec empire it also celebrates the resilience of the Mexica	

people and their ongoing influence in Mexico today."

The exhibition is designed according to the Mexica world, with the Templo Mayor as the centre of the universe and the alignment of objects and themes according to their association with two of the Mexica's most influential Gods – Tlaloc and Huitzilopochtli – whose temples are recreated on the top of the Templo Mayor itself.

It features six themes:

1. Origins and Migration
2. Government and Society
3. Economy and Everyday Life
4. Gods and Rituals
5. Conquest and Military Expansion
6. Fall of the Empire

ORIGINS AND MIGRATION

This section explores the origins and migration of the Mexica with a particular focus on the period prior to 1325 and an exploration of the history and myths associated with the beginning of the empire. A pictorial timeline highlights past civilisations in Mesoamerica and the development of the Aztec empire alongside other historic events in other parts of the world. A short film is also located on the timeline. This introduces the ongoing archaeology at the Templo Mayor and demonstrates how past excavations have uncovered the history of the Mexica.

GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY

This section explores the structure of Mexica society, government and political system and how these affect the daily life of the nobles and common people. Contrasting objects from the ruling elite with domestic household earthenware, visitors are able to compare the life of the governors with the everyday lives of common people. Musical instruments such as whistles, drums, and rasps give a view of the activities undertaken by children and adults during festivals and ritual ceremonies. Both the formal and informal education of children are touched on in this section.

Another key theme explored in this section is the Mexica's highly organised tribute system. The Mexica demanded that conquered towns send them large quantities of maize, cocoa beans, bundles of clothing, warrior uniforms, gold, jade and feathers.

ECONOMY AND EVERYDAY LIFE

This section of the exhibition explores the feeding and resourcing of the empire and includes farming and food production, markets and trade as well as a look at the Mexica philosophy on animals and the environment around them. In order to gain land for habitation and farming within Lake Texcoco the Mexica's built *chinampas*, an amazing example of people adapting their environment to their own needs.

Markets were another important feature of Mexica daily life that survives to this day. Visitors see a reproduction of Diego Rivera's magnificent mural, "The Great City of Tenochtitlan," which illustrates a huge bustling marketplace where people of all classes met to trade goods and to socialise. The theme is enhanced by a three dimensional marketplace scene that includes models of people, produce and livestock.

GODS AND RITUALS

Here, the visitor encounters the Templo Mayor, the centre of the Mexica universe. Positioned in the heart of Tenochtitlan, the Mexica captial, and according to Mexica cosmology the centre of time and space, a large theatrical set of this pyramid-temple also dominates the exhibition space. Through the temple and the objects positioned on and within it, the visitor learns about the gods, rituals and cosmology.

On the temple and in the surrounding area are sculptured stone and ceramic representations of the gods and instruments essential to Aztec religious practices; braziers, flint knifes

and receptacles that received the food of the gods - sacrificial hearts. Visitors learn of the powerful role that priests, working hand in hand with rulers, played in every aspect of society.

The visitor can choose to enter the inner Templo Mayor. At the entrance to the temple they are confronted by Mictlantecuhtli (god of the Underworld) manically grinning despite the fact that his liver is falling out of his body. His imposing presence stands guard at the entrance of the inner temple where they can cross the threshold on a journey to Mictlan – the Underworld. Within the inner temple the visitor experiences a change in tone and a sense of the challenges and mystery encountered in the Mexica underworld.

CONQUERING FOR THE GODS

Military might was essential for dominating surrounding lands, to gain prisoners for sacrifice and goods for tribute. Visitors are able to explore the stories behind the rapid rise of the Aztec empire and the formation of the triple alliance. Central to this was a conquering strategy and the force and strength of the army. There were two elite warrior classes – the Eagle warriors and the Jaguar warriors. Eagles represented the forces of daytime, light and sky, while jaguars represented the forces of night, darkness and the underworld. The elaborate regalia they wore into battle evoked their animal alter-egos and imbued the warriors with the supernatural powers of their spiritual guides. Here visitors can see a life-sized ceramic figure of an Eagle warrior and explore other incredible emblems and stories of warfare and conquest. Also featured is a facsimile of the Codex Borgia, featuring brightly coloured pictographs that provided guidance for rituals, sacrifice and war.

At play the Mexica could be fierce and conquering as well. A ball game, played by the ruling classes, had profound ritual significance. This ancient Mesoamerican game – the first to use a rubber ball – was employed by the Mexica to play out the eternal battle between day and night. The ball court was perceived as an entrance to the underworld. Two ball rings on poles are displayed on either side of an 'I' shaped court graphically recreated on the floor, and visitors are able to feel the weight of a replica ball.

FALL OF THE EMPIRE

Set in opposition to the sun rising above the temple set is a space devoted to the arrival of the conquistadors and the downfall of the Mexica. Acting as a backdrop, it is a spectacular projected image of the sun setting behind the Catholic Cathedral that stands today where the Templo Mayor once did. As the sun goes down behind the projected cathedral, visitors witness a meteor shooting across the night sky as foretold by ancient prophecy.

Visitors are able to recognise that Mexica history, culture, and language continue to inspire cultural and social revivals today. These two opposing traditions find a synthesis in contemporary Mexico, where Spanish Catholicism is practised alongside the Day of the Dead – a celebration that dates back to a Mexica festival dedicated to the queen of the underworld, Mictecacihuatl. One and a half million people speak the Nahuatl language of the Mexicas today. And, as can be seen in the symbolism of the Mexican flag, pride in the Mexica legacy lives on.

Lender institutions	Artworks
Museo del Templo Mayor, INAH	149
Dirección de Salvamento Arqueológico, INAH	33
Fundación Televisa	20
Museo Nacional de Antropología, INAH	9
Museo de las Culturas de Oaxaca, INAH	8

Museo Arqueológico del Estado de México "Román Piña Chan"	8
Museo Nacional de Historia, INAH	7
Museo Regional de Puebla, INAH	4
Museo Baluarte de Santiago, INAH	4
Biblioteca Nacional de Antropología e Historia, INAH	4
Zona Arqueológica de Teotihuacán, INAH	3
Museo Regional de Guadalajara, INAH	3
Museo Regional Michoacano, INAH	3
Museo Nacional del Virreinato, INAH	3
Patrimonio Artístico, BANAMEX	2
Museo Regional de Chiapas, INAH	1
Museo de la Escultura Mexica "Eusebio Dávalos Hurtado", INAH	1
Museo de Antropología del Estado de México	1
Museo Arqueológico de Tula, INAH	1
Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte, UNAM	1
Centro Regional Cultural Apaxco	1
TOTAL	266 artworks
Opening date **Important attendees**	28 September 2013 Mexican Ambassador Leonora Rueda Paola Albert, Deputy Director of National Exhibitions, INAH Carlos Javier González, Museo del Templo Mayor Museum Director Australian High Commissioner Robin Hirst – Museum Victoria – Director, Collections, Research and Exhibitions
Visitation	Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa – 39,861 Melbourne Museum – 88,000 Australian Museum – 65,970
Catalogue	Jimson, Kerry. 2013. Aztecs: Conquest and Glory. Wellington, NZ: Te Papa Press.

When Townsend took over curation of the exhibition on Fox's departure in late 2012, she began the task of finalising the design and developing the text panels and labelling, working from the thematic narrative provided by Barrera, as well as consulting other well-established sources. Exhibition content and designs were sent to Mexico for checking and approval, and also to the two Australian museums in "a three-way feedback system". Throughout this

work, Townsend adopted an approach that drew on her previous experience developing collaborative exhibitions with different ethnic groups for Te Papa's Community Gallery. Her intention was to develop an exhibition that "was speaking [for] or representing the Mexica people" in a way that would be "a celebration of who they were and how they lived their everyday lives" and an exhibition that "the Mexica would be proud of".

Figure 3.3 Te Papa curator Lynette Townsend gives a tour of *Aztecs* at Te Papa. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

While it was never going to be the story the Mexica would have told about themselves, nor the story that might be told by a Mexican museum or scholars, the Te Papa team endeavoured to tell a story "on behalf of" the Mexica by meeting INAH's objectives of presenting the "complete" culture and by adopting a perspective that presented, as far as possible, their distinctive world view. This process involved extensive discussions on representation, particularly sensitivities around the portrayal of human sacrifice and the Conquest. Although sacrifice was identified as the kind of emotive and intense narrative that exhibition developers might highlight to draw visitors in and hold their attention, the Te Papa team felt it was important to resist the temptation to sensationalise this theme for dramatic effect. Discussions also centred around its appropriateness for the target audience of cross-generational groups.

Te Papa staff strove to apply the cultural sensitivity that they saw as being a core institutional practice at the museum. They spoke of being as "non-

judgemental", "respectful" and "balanced" as possible; of avoiding emotive words like bloodthirsty, cruel or brutal; and of negotiating the complex historiography which is full of contradictory interpretations and using only what they considered well-established facts. In relation to human sacrifice, Townsend described it as "bringing out that absolutely fascinating side of their culture, but not making it all about that", and instead balancing it with aspects of their everyday life and the fact that the Mexica were also poets, orators and artists.

In their encounters with Mexica material while working on the exhibition, museum staff in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia responded with the ambivalence Keen (1971) identifies as typical of Western responses to Mexica culture. Demonstrating their respect and curiosity, staff referred to Mexica culture using descriptive words such as "beautiful"; "civilised"; "elegant"; "highly developed/evolved"; "sophisticated"; "ecstatic"; "advanced"; and "magnificent". At the same time, some also described aspects of the culture as "blood-chilling"; "brutal" and "heart-breaking" and gave examples where gallows humour was used as a means of dealing with some of the most difficult aspects.

The ability to tolerate ambivalence or contradiction has been linked with a cosmopolitan outlook (see Chapter 1). Alchin (TP) describes in detail his sense of ambivalence about these paradoxes of Mexica culture and demonstrates how a cosmopolitan outlook might apply to this aspect of museum practice. While he was fascinated by many aspects of the culture, Alchin experienced "*strong* negative responses" to other elements:

> when you read about that culture in detail and I suppose when you read about … any dominant militaristic culture, you are going to be appalled with them and you may be even quite angry with them.

At the same time Alchin sought closeness and empathy through efforts to understand the complex motivations of both the Mexica and the Spanish conquistadors, including economic and political ambition as well as deep religious conviction. He drew parallels between the kind of intercultural work required on *Aztecs* and the work he's done on New Zealand content—acknowledging the complexity and multiple viewpoints by trying to "reconstruct the others' frame of reference" (Bredella 2002, 237):

> it was just the most incredible experience to work on a project like that and to really immerse yourself in it, and to see the world through Aztec eyes, to see the world through the eyes of the conquistadors and the Spanish king, but also to see the world through the eyes of modern-day Mexicans, because you can certainly understand that … in modern-day Mexico there's—as we have in New Zealand, I mean when we talk

> about our colonial history, you know there's … delicacy and denial and they're very complicated stories … And we do a lot of that at Te Papa because our own history is pretty rock and roll really [laughs] in terms of you know like militarism and violence, but also religious passion and all sorts of things.

When asked how exhibitions like *Aztecs* might promote understanding between cultures, Alchin replied:

> it's a really interesting tightrope, I mean you want to be honest and … you want every visitor to feel the same way that you do about that culture, which is "wow" and "that's fantastic" and it's an interesting culture and it's completely and utterly worthy of deep respect, and yet at the same time, I mean, write about any major world culture, write about the Romans, and you're going to get beautiful art, beautiful architecture, poetry, literature and you're also going to get the circus, you're going to get dominion and you're going to get crucifixion and you're going to get the colosseum you know? … But you've just got to find a way … to be able to honestly explore and reflect a culture, with all its beauty and glories and magnificence, but also to be able to say life wasn't perfect then either. But to be able to say that respectfully and within a really balanced context, that's the trick … And for me personally, that was hard with Aztec culture.

Engaging audiences

A series of focus groups and two web-based surveys conducted in late 2012 and early 2013 showed that local audiences had very little prior knowledge of Mexica culture (Te Papa Visitor & Market Research Unit 2013; Owen and Svendsen 2012). Often what people thought they knew about the Mexica was inaccurate, as they were confused with the Mayas and/or Incas, located "somewhere in South America" and thought to have lived around 1,000 BC. At the same time, research participants expressed a strong interest in knowing more about the Mexica (Owen and Svendsen 2012, 6).

If people have no prior knowledge of a culture, Dorey (AM) explains, they have "nothing contextual" on which to build an understanding. With this appreciation of their audience, the developers of *Aztecs* sought to engage visitors through various exhibition components (design and layout, texts, models, interactives and audio visual media), as well as marketing, programmes, and education, so as to help visitors connect with the exhibition through contemporary relevance, immersion and interactivity.

When Morris (TP) was told that the exhibition would target a family audience, her initial reaction was "how do we put this square peg into this round hole? This content is not for families". Working alongside Fox, she looked for ways to spark the visitors' interest and help them relate to the content, without being overwhelmed by the complexity. In particular, she highlighted content that families could engage with, such as the fact that everyone had some form of education in Mexica society. At the same time, she was aware that families would relate differently and that by trying to "find the middle ground you're not satisfying anyone". While the front-end evaluation found that some people would not want to expose their children to human sacrifice, Morris felt that other children would be fascinated by "the gore".

There was much discussion at the Australian museums about how visitors would respond to content about human sacrifice—that some would find it fascinating and a reason for visiting, while for others it would be confronting and scary. There was particular concern about whether human sacrifice was appropriate for a "family audience". While staff were, on the whole, very happy with the final exhibition, there was frustration over the extent to which it was possible to make contemporary connections and engage visitors. Some staff commented that the topic of human sacrifice was perhaps "underplayed" in the final exhibition, and while there was a general feeling that it was dealt with in a "tasteful" and "appropriate" way, a number of staff thought it had been in some respects a missed opportunity to create a more emotionally engaging exhibition, particularly in terms of using sacrifice to enhance the drama and theatricality of the exhibition design, as well as having it feature more in the marketing to "get people in the door". Aaron Maestri (3D Designer, AM) commented that he would usually "work hard to play on people's emotions" around topics such as human sacrifice in order to "create a much more engaging exhibition … but yeah I can understand why that's maybe not the right thing to go for all the time".

Design and layout

Exhibition design has been likened to stagecraft (Roppola 2012), and it is increasingly common for designers to strive to create immersive environments where visitors' senses are engaged by a "pedagogy of feeling" (Witcomb 2015), rather than relying solely on texts to tell stories. Fox (TP) wanted to develop the exhibition around the Mexica's view of themselves as living at the centre of the universe. Key to realising this was the construction of a 1:10 scale model of the Templo Mayor which would dominate the exhibition space to create an immersive experience. The Templo Mayor, the main building from the Tenochtitlan sacred precinct, was a massive pyramidal structure, built in several stages by successive Mexica rulers. Fox hoped that, in conjunction with the monumentali-

ty of the larger objects, the model would make for a more memorable visit and give the exhibition a different feel from other touring shows.

Figure 3.4 The scale model of the Templo Mayor in *Aztecs* at Te Papa. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

The layout of the exhibition was inspired by renowned Mexican architect Pedro Ramírez Vázquez's design of the MTM with its two wings—one each to reflect aspects of the Mexica's pre-eminent gods: Huitzilopochtli, god of war, and Tlaloc, god of rain. However, the concept had some difficulties in practice. As Maestri (AM) puts it, the idea was "easy to grasp on a floor plan, but a lot less easy to understand when you were standing in the exhibition". Townsend (TP) found it "a nice way of organising [the exhibition] and it was good to be able to talk about that in floor talks and explain that to people but I still don't think a lot of the general public would've picked up on that unless it was specifically pointed out".

Limited space was an issue that the designers grappled with. Te Papa had about 750 square metres, in which they had to include a ticket desk and exhibition shop. The layout was very open plan because of the shape of the space, which had one curved wall and only one entry/exit point. This posed some way-finding challenges in order to follow the chronology of the exhibition. Te Papa designer Ben Barraud had to use "every square inch" of the space because of the size of the objects and the model temple.

To save space and deal with cultural sensitivites around the display of human remains, the inside of the temple was used to create an experience of the Aztec underworld, even though "the real temple had no interior, so that was some stretch anyway" Barraud explains, "but you know if we were going to take up half the gallery with the temple, we needed to utilise the inside, and we needed a private space that you could choose to go into or not".

Creating the temple model was "definitely the most challenging part of that exhibition" for Barraud, due to its size, the fact that it would be seen from both the inside and out, and "also making it modular so that it could break down and be shipped off to Melbourne and Sydney". He drew on his previous experience working in the film industry to create a multi-sensory immersive environment using lighting effects, projections and soundscapes. The challenge with exhibitions, he explains is that:

> You have to completely break the illusion all the time. But you've got to rely on people to suspend disbelief and just get past a lot of stuff, whereas in the film you know you don't have to put handrails in the middle of your set.

At Melbourne Museum Te Papa's design was reshaped to suit their larger space and, as Greene (MM) explains, to give it "a very different look". With a "black box Touring Hall" of around one thousand square metres, not including a ticket desk and shop which were all outside the gallery space, they were able to structure the exhibition in a way that gave visitors access to the content "in a much more controlled way" Sartori (MM) notes. Their gallery was also higher, enabling Naomi Fogel (3D Designer, MM) to create "a bit more drama" by using dark colours and exploiting the extra height in their exhibition space, adding a projection for above the temple structure:

> just to work with our narrative where everyone is going to go through the space and see that projection at the back … that was kind of the main view that we were working towards and then … we framed it with a jaguar and the eagle warrior [to] make that a very dramatic, memorable moment.

Responses to the design were mixed, particularly with regard to the temple model. Fogel admits that "there were those who weren't very enthusiastic about it. I kind of see why we had it there and if that wouldn't have been there I'm not sure would have replaced it with … and I think it worked it context … that you first got a glimpse of it from quite far away and that you weren't too drawn into the detail".

For a number of the Mexican professionals, it was not a style of exhibition design that appealed to them. González (MTM) felt that the temple model was "controversial" and "gave the exhibition a Hollywood-like touch, in that sense, that's something we wouldn't have done in Mexico". Albert (CNME) found it "disproportioned, excessive, vulgar", but after looking around Te Papa, she realised "that's how they do things, it's what visitors expect". Barrera, with whom Fox had consulted about the exhibition concept and design from its early stages, is more flexible—and perhaps more diplomatic—in his approach to museographic differences between Mexico and Australasia. He understood that "it was necessary to adjust to other places, to other people and to maintain the academic aspects of an exhibition and the discourse of the pieces, but also making it accessible to a foreign public".

The space limitations and contextualisation of objects was also commented on by some of the Mexican couriers. Carmona (MNA) felt that many of the monumental pieces, such as Mictlantecuhtli, were not given the space they deserved—that they should be isolated from the public and out of touching distance. Carrizosa (MTM) shared her concerns, commenting that the eagle warrior required a "special place" without the other pieces nearby that "minimised" its impact.

Similarly, Carmona (MNA) was very upset to discover during the installation that a piece she considered one of the most important in the exhibition—a jade heart—was "mixed with other artworks, as if it were just another stone". In her opinion, CNME should have involved institutional curators more in the development of the exhibition: "There should've been a close collaboration with the ones who are familiar with the collection, being able to say: 'This should be on its own', 'This could go here or there' or 'this one doesn't matter, it can be in a display', and these directions should be followed". After her positive experiences with Te Papa staff in Wellington, Carmona feels "if we had discussed the lack of space issue in advance, they would have understood and reduced the number of objects or come up with a solution because they were very attentive, very friendly".

Graphic design was another component through which designers sought to create an engaging exhibition. Australian Museum's 2D Designer, Amanda Teer, aimed to "help further communicate" the ideas of the exhibition and create "different entry points" to engage visitors, so that they "wouldn't walk into a space and feel completely lost", but would take away an "overall understanding". Quotations from Mexica poetry on the walls were intended to allow visitors "to just hear this I guess continuous voice" while enlarged images from codices provided an "overall context" in which to understand the objects and help "if you're trying to transport yourself in time".

Figure 3.5 Voice of the Mexica. Wall text in the Australian Museum. Photograph courtesy of Australian Museum.

While she would have preferred to work more closely with the other designers to create more "immersive graphics", Teer recognises "that because I'm the last person [laughs] in the chain of production really, that there is only so much I can do". She was particularly concerned to spark interest with a graphic design that would capture people's attention by having "something that's old and something that's new and you're not sure what's happening and why". Teer particularly enjoyed working on the legacy section and introduced the idea of a pop-up gallery as part of the shop at the exit of the exhibition. Through her involvement on social media she came up with the idea of the skull as "a really interesting motif that you see across fashion and in a lot of different areas". While she notes a lot of pop culture fascination with Mexican icons, Teer believes people don't understand the historical background and "where there's a connection":

> we tried not to say that it was an Aztecs focused pop-up gallery. It's about the art of the skull and the skull being a motif that you could find in the artefacts in the exhibition in the Aztecs, that you can see through the Day of the Dead, … and then in today's fashion and art, you're seeing it here with these locals who create this in their own work.

The pop-up gallery was also about involving local artists and bringing their audiences to the museum, "if they haven't thought about the museum in this way before".

Figure 3.6 Legacy section, Australian Museum. Photograph courtesy of Australian Museum.

Texts

In contrast to an art historical approach where text may be minimal, Te Papa's approach to creating an exhibition about "the lives of the Aztec people", as Townsend explains, was to "do a lot more storytelling around the objects" by connecting thematic panels with object labelling. Te Papa employs a team of writers to work with the curator, and a great deal of effort was spent in refining the content and achieving the desired style and tone.

Like the exhibition designers, Williams (Head Writer, TP) wanted to immerse visitors in another world through the exhibition text, to "take people on a journey" by putting them "very early on into a mindset" and encouraging their curiosity by making the culture "as interesting as possible". In addition to talking about the objects, she wanted to give visitors "a sense of the people of the time", but without romanticising. "So we were trying to walk that fine line of being

respectful but also dynamic and engaging", she explains. Demonstrating a cosmopolitan sensibility, she describes her approach as trying to:

> connect to you emotionally as well because that feeling that you can empathise or that you can look through the world even momentarily from a different perspective is the kind of precursor to learning really, I think.

In the "Afterlife" text label, for example, as a way of overcoming the "conceptual flaw" of having a temple that you could enter: "we shifted into present tense and made it sort of a journey into the underworld" (see Table 3.4). Another label, "Replica Weapons" (see Table 3.5), which was acknowledged in a label writing competition by the American Association of Museums, invited the visitor to put themselves "in the shoes" of an Aztec warrior faced with the invading Spanish.

Table 3.4 "Welcome to the afterlife" text label

WELCOME TO THE AFTERLIFE
You have died and are about to enter one of the afterlives. But which one? If you died of natural causes, you'll journey to Mictlan, the underworld. There, your soul will descend through nine levels, facing terrifying trials along the way. Awaiting you, in the final level is peace with Mictlantecuhtli, god of death. Perhaps you've been more fortunate. If you were sacrificed, or died in battle or childbirth, you will ascend to the heavens to journey with the sun. Death by drowning takes you to yet another realm – a paradise overflowing with flowers and ruled by Tlaloc. The Aztecs never actually set foot inside the Great Temple since all ceremonies and offerings occurred outside. You, however, can enter our model temple – a doorway to the afterlife. Step inside to discover your fate.

Table 3.5 "Replica weapons" text label

REPLICA WEAPONS
Based on Aztec originals from 1250-1521 Wood, obsidian, fibre Aztecs used weapons with obsidian blades, spears, clubs, and bows and arrows – all highly effective when used by skilled warriors trained from youth and against those similarly armed. But Spanish armour and swords, backed up by cannons, changed everything. Place yourself on the battlefield. You're holding one of those wooden weapons while a Spanish soldier hurtles at you on horseback, waving his steel sword. You're also stunned by this new style of fighting which involves killing rather than capturing. Now that your local enemies have joined forces with the invaders, you stand little chance.

Alchin (TP) found it challenging to give a "well balanced view of history" within a very stringent word limit: "you have to tell them quite a lot … even to explain

the motivation behind one act of a key player in history". Another challenge was making the text interesting and "easy to absorb at the same time". Although the main storyline finished with the Conquest, in the final legacy section Te Papa staff wanted to show how the Mexica *taonga* connected to living people: "as we do here in Te Papa" (Smith-Kapa). Townsend wanted to show that "Indigenous people live on in Mexico today and it's part of who Mexicans are now, this combination of Aztec and Spanish and all those things".

James Brown (Writer, TP) worked on the text for this section and remembers INAH's reaction to Te Papa's intention of applying *mana taonga* to Mexica heritage:

> [the label] was trying to sum up the continued Aztec presence in Mexico today … that the Aztec legacy lives on, that there is still a portion of people descended from the Aztecs who speak Nahuatl and you know, they know who their ancestors are … but when we tried to put that slant on Aztecs … we couldn't do it in the way that we might have done it if we were talking about *iwi* and how they would still have a very strong link to their past and their particular customs and how their ancestors are still very present for them today … that was not what INAH wanted and that's not how they saw [it], the Aztecs aren't there today.

For INAH, this approach oversimplified the complex ethnic diversity in Mexico, both in the contemporary context and in terms of tracing a direct lineage to pre-Hispanic times (Good Eshelman 2005; Bonfil Batalla 1994)—a complexity that could not be easily explained in a small exhibition segment or a single label.

As Te Papa worked on the text, feedback on factual accuracy, tone of voice, word length and the layering of content for visitor comprehension was provided by the staff at the Australian museums. Each of the three museums had different approaches to text style, according to their institutional approach and perceptions of their audiences. Australian Museum, according to Dorey, favours "a more informal, conversational … narrative style" while Melbourne Museum prefers an "academic" style. Townsend describes trying to balance the Australian museums' preference for a "more upbeat" style of text with INAH's "more conservative" approach. In the end the three host venues were able to agree on a final text, with Melbourne and Australian Museums making only minor adaptations.

Figure 3.7 Mexican flag in the legacy section at the Australian Museum. Photograph courtesy of Australian Museum.

Models and interactives

In addition to the more than two hundred cultural artefacts, including impressive stone sculpture, the exhibition featured a model of the Tlatelolco market, *chinampas* (floating gardens), a ball court with a replica rubber ball that visitors could touch, and an eagle warrior manikin with replica weapons. These were intended to supplement the storytelling around the original objects by portraying the "lived experience" and the "human face" of Aztec culture, along with murals and quotes from Aztec poetry on the walls which conveyed their "voice". These models were not as controversial for the Mexican couriers as the Templo Mayor replica, and Carrizosa (MTM) notes that the reproduction of the Tlatelolco market was "very similar to what we show in our museums".

Interactives were another component used for interpretation. These included computer-based interactives, audio visuals, an audio guide and an activity called the Character Trail. Fox sourced the computer-based interactives from the MTM, as well as a film that "explains things quite nicely in terms of what the Mexica culture was … concepts that can be quite hard to convey". The Character Trail was developed by Te Papa to appeal to children aged eight to

twelve years, and thereby satisfy the "family" audience they were targeting. This playful activity also encouraged an imaginative immersion in another world, based on discovering who you might have been, and what might have become of you, if you had lived in this time and place. Alchin wanted to be "quirky and funny" and help children "to enter that world" and see the objects "through eyes that are slightly differently tuned than if they'd just been randomly wandering around after Mum". Morris, who led its development, explains: "we worked really hard on the humour in it and the layering so that adults could enjoy it as well as kids … it was quite the thing to do on a date".

Figure 3.8 Character trail. Australian Museum. Photographs courtesy of Australian Museum.

Education & public programmes

Each of the three venues designed and ran their own education and public programmes. Te Papa worked closely with the Mexican Embassy and focused on family-based events that were festive and inclusive. A Day of the Dead festival included a street procession, sugar skull decorating workshops with a Mexican artist, Tape Art installations, a collective *ofrenda* and face-painting. Another Family-Fun Day during the school holidays offered craft-making and interactive tours. Tours in Spanish and sign language were also run. Browne (TP) helped develop two education programmes, one for primary school

children (Years three to eight) and an Early Years programme for four to seven-year-olds. Kent, whose own children participated in the Early Years programme with Te Papa's onsite kindergarten, thought it was "fantastic":

> the kids visited many times, they came back to the classroom and would reproduce Aztec designs which were put on the ceiling of the kindergarten so they started to turn the kindergarten into this kind of temple … they were all making all sorts of really interesting observations, and they thoroughly enjoyed it.

Browne feels this programme was about "making the Aztecs relevant" and a great example of "what young children can do with a big cultural exhibition like that, they did some really amazing stuff". They handled contemporary objects and then looked for similar objects in the exhibition and compared them. She also designed an Aztec student trail aimed at exploring the similarities and differences between Aztec, Māori and Pacific cultures. The primary school programme was skills-based rather than content-based, focused on "thinking through archaeology" with active engagement. Pictures of objects in the exhibition were cut into pieces and hidden in containers of sand. The children pegged out quadrants in the sand and dug with spoons. When they found part of an object they hypothesised about what it might be:

> Then we went to the exhibition and we found the object that we were looking for all put together and … [made] observational drawings, it's called getting your eye in … I wanted them to think for themselves and not just read the labels and be like "oh that's a basket" but be like "oh right so what could it be, looks like it's hollow or it's … got holes in it or it's got spikes on it or it's next to all these things that look like things related to war so maybe it's something to do with that" so getting them to use their brains.

At Melbourne Museum, Georgie Meyer (Education & Public Programs) also worked to create a substantial and diverse programme, including school holiday programmes. Latin American scholars from a local university gave formal lectures, as did Greene (CEO, MM) who went on to do a lecture tour of regional museums. The Mexican Embassy supported a visit by Carlos González (MTM) and two Mexican chefs for a cooking event. The museum commissioned a group of musicians to compose Aztec-inspired music to be performed during the opening weekend. A locally based "Aztec dance band" also played on opening weekend. As Meyer explains, they were aware that "Mexican culture is very popular at the moment", but at the same time didn't want to revert to cultural clichés such as Mariachi bands, where there's no obvious

link to Mexica culture. They did, however, partner with the Immigration Museum—also part of Museums Victoria—for a community festival that would showcase contemporary Mexican culture in Melbourne.

Melbourne Museum did not use the Character Trail because they preferred to run children's activities outside of the exhibition itself. For *Aztecs* they tried an "experiment" to make some of the "hard-hitting" content accessible for children by creating a twenty-minute animated presentation shown in a separate activity room:

> it's a beautiful presentation on the beauty and the civilised nature of the Aztec city, but we've also talked about how blood and sacrifice were a big part of daily culture and fear of the gods were a big part of daily culture and we do, we have made that presentation now a PG, a parental guidance recommended-kind of show and we do a disclaimer at the start saying there is a scene in this animation where a woman cuts herself and there are some scenes of sacrifice, we don't show sacrifice but we show cartoon people going up the temple and blood coming out so we've tried to be honest about the culture and honest about the exhibition but in a way that kids could relate to it but we're also doing a bit of a warning that it could be seen as … a bit confronting for some people. But more for adults than for kids has been the experience … [and] they are so far responding quite well (Meyer, MM).

Mexican staff had limited knowledge of the public programmes and events offered at host venues, beyond what they experienced on opening weekends. While the host venues focused on festive activities and contemporary interpretations and performances of Mexican heritage for their events, some Mexican professionals criticised aspects of the public programmes as misrepresentations of Mexica culture. Albert (CNME), for example, was sent photographs of the Day of the Dead festival in Wellington. While noting that "people seemed to be very excited to attend and do these things like getting their faces painted, getting their picture taken", her reaction to the decorating of sugar skulls was that it was "distorting Aztec culture, it looked more Huichol or Tarahumara, or from the restaurant Arroyo[7]".

Carmona (MNA) was concerned about posters she saw advertising a street parade in Sydney: "In the poster there was a girl wearing a loincloth and a huge *penacho* [feathered headdress]. She looked like a cabaret dancer … And I was like: 'Oh my god, Aztec women would never dress like that.' Never". She

[7] A popular traditional restaurant with a mainly touristic style in Mexico City.

feels that INAH should exert more influence over these representations to ensure their authenticity:

> INAH should be aware of this, right? They should tell them they can't do those things. Aztec women did dance, but a particular kind of woman and they weren't naked. They wore *huipiles* [tunics]. In the codices they are depicted dancing in weddings. They wore *penachos* but they had clothes on. What the girl in Sydney was wearing was a warrior costume.

Marketing

> There's no field of dreams where you build these shows and they come.
>
> Glenn Ferguson (AM)

Key to attracting high numbers of visitors to an international exhibition is having a brand that is well-known and immediately recognisable. The "magnitude" of the brand—whether it is associated with a person, theme, period, movie, institution or collection—in conjunction with a diverse programme of events, helps to ensure wide audience appeal (Gorchakova 2017, 189). As Meyer (MM) notes, there was "a lot of pressure on Aztecs" to attract a sizable audience.

Staff at all three Australasian museums felt *Aztecs* was a difficult exhibition to market to local audiences, primarily because of their limited background knowledge of the culture. The subject "doesn't paint a picture in people's minds", as Fogel (MM) puts it, and was therefore not an "easy sell" like dinosaurs, Pompeii or Tutankhamen where "you just say the name and they will come". Images of pots, Ferguson (AM) jokes, were not going to "make people get out of bed on a Sunday morning and come in to see the show, so we needed to actually convey some of the excitement we felt for the exhibition". The challenge, as he sees it, was to create a sense of relevance for the public by "giving them a slightly different take" that sparks an interest in the topic. For him, finding the "pitch" for an international exhibition is "the real creative end of, or the book-end to the formation of the exhibition". He explains how the marketing campaign for their previous exhibition *Alexander* had succeeded in creating contemporary connections:

> Justin Bieber had so many what was it? Facebook fans, Alexander had conquered the known world and ruled so many millions of people and that was just to find that twitch in there … a subject that people thought was ancient history and slightly irrelevant, and brought it into a contemporary context and said think about looking at this subject and this person in this particular way.

One idea for *Aztecs* discussed at Australia Museum was to catch the attention of a younger audience through reference to *The Hunger Games* book and movie series, linking this to "the idea of tributes that are sent from the provinces to the city for sacrifice", as Dorey explains. Meyer (MM) saw the possibility of capitalising on the current popularity of contemporary Mexican culture—such as Frida Kahlo and the Day of the Dead—to grab people's attention, but was concerned about remaining "true to who the Aztecs were", rather than falling back on cultural stereotypes. Some advocated a more sensational approach. Dorey (AM), for example, felt that sacrifice was an association that would be recognised and "draw people in". However, others felt that it would deter a family audience. There was also a perception among staff at the two Australian museums that INAH was very sensitive about the human sacrifice angle. According to Sartori (MM), INAH did not favour a "blood culture" angle in the marketing and public relations material, where it was not surrounded by more contextual information.

One initial proposal by Te Papa was to use an image of a Mexican man, standing in front of a large sun stone, covered in body paint that replicated the sun stone's patterns. The aim was to represent, as Townsend puts it, "the ongoing legacy of the Mexica people and that it's a living culture in terms of living through the people who are there today in Mexico". The Australian museums were enthusiastic about the concept, as Ferguson explains:

> it was a very strong resonance with that Apocalypto kind of imaging of the warrior and the face paint and I thought "this works, it works on so many levels", it works on the kind of a warrior image that sits within Māori culture and we even in Australia know so much about the history, it has a strong resonance across, you know, as an image that would be arresting, even if you didn't have a particular interest you'd sit up and if it was a billboard and you were going past in a car or a bus you'd be going "hang on, what was that?" and it would capture you.

The response from INAH, Townsend remembers, "was that 'No, the Aztecs aren't alive today' and that the image was too literal":

> we were quite shocked because we honestly thought it was a really good image and that it was quite compelling. We felt that it showed the human side of Aztec culture and the human side of the exhibition.

Along with the problems associated with the suggestion that the Aztecs are still a living culture, a key concern for INAH was the inaccuracy of the mock-up image they were sent in terms of costume, body painting and physical features. It was also explained to Te Papa staff that the image resembled a

tattooed Mexican gangster, perhaps reflecting a wider sensitivity amongst Mexicans about their image abroad (see Chapter 5). Roberts-Thompson (TP) and Hakaraia (TP) describe the interaction with Mexico over the image in a humorous way, as an example of the kind of cross-cultural misunderstanding that can arise with international exhibitions:

> We sent it to Mexico and they were like "Oh!! That is what gang members wear" [laughter].
>
> Yeah, and they were like "no".
>
> "You can't do that."
>
> And we were like, "oh gosh."
>
> And so something that we thought looked amazing and …
>
> "But it's beautiful, look you've got that beautiful Aztec pattern in the back, you've got this masked figure here", and they were like "Whoaaahoohhhh"!

Te Papa faced similar issues with marketing images first developed by Tokyo National Museum for *Mauri Ora*, as well as initial proposals for *E Tū Ake* by Quai Branly. Hay (TP) points out that "Quite often with your marketing, for instance, you'll get a poster that comes back and we're going, "What the heck?" [laughs]". Avoiding these problems, Hakaraia suggests, requires good communication and the confidence to convey "key messages" very early in the negotiations, so that you can "take the host institution with you" and that later in the process "they're not going, 'oh my gosh I wish I had have known about this'". It also requires sufficient time in the process to reach a negotiated agreement, as Roberts-Thompson explains:

> So just being able to have those conversations with the right people often meant that the processes took a lot longer and so you actually need to think about these things well in advance so you know potentially there might be an issue over there, so we need to allow time for it. Because that's the other thing too, is that if you have a two-day turnaround for a marketing campaign or marketing production line to start, there's no way that you can meet the deadlines because you're trying to actually explain to them how inappropriate something might be. So if you don't factor that time in, then actually you're unable to have that conversation.

Finding the right marketing images—ones that are compelling and resonant for host country audiences, while simultaneously being sensitive to the culture and politics of the country of origin—means understanding that institutions in other countries engage very differently with their visitors. "At the end of the day, they understand their audience", Hay reflects, "and this is what we're learning".

Without the opportunity for lengthy, face-to-face discussions to resolve the misunderstanding over the "warrior" image and find an intercultural solution, Te Papa eventually adopted object-based images for its marketing campaign, which was INAH's preferred approach—echoing comments from couriers who preferred a more aesthetic, object-focused display in the exhibition itself, as opposed to Te Papa's narrative-based layout and design.

Campbell (MM) felt this disconnect created a misconception that INAH was conservative about marketing, which then discouraged staff at the host venues from being more creative in making links between the Aztecs and modern Mexico in order to engage visitors:

> I think that decision raised a bit of a myth that we never really busted, and I think there was this, "the Mexicans are a bit precious". When I heard that story and you know followed that thought process I could see where they were coming from, you know tattooed men, gangs or drug cartels in Mexico, I get it, I get it. And I don't think it meant that they were precious but I think what that did to our overall mentality was that it stopped us really creating that link with modern-day Mexico. It was a real barrier and actually I think that was the way of telling the Aztecs' story and bringing it back to something important that's interesting.

These examples highlight the way in which international exhibitions can be a balancing act between remaining 'true to the culture' and respectful of contemporary sensitivities, while at the same time engaging visitors, both emotionally and through links to contemporary/popular culture. What emerges is the importance of having discussions about cultural representation early in the process, and expanding these conversations to include not only exhibition content, concept and design, but also marketing and programmes. To create a mobile contact zone, culture goes through a process of translation and mediation in order to be understood by an audience that will connect differently and find different meanings. Barrera (INAH) appreciated that finding intercultural solutions requires an exchange of ideas from both perspectives and an openness to different ways of engaging audiences, and he felt this was what Te Papa staff did. "What's important about the exhibition", he stresses, is that it "can reach that audience".

Developing intercultural exhibitions involves ways of working together that equate with Bohm's (1996, 2–3) concept of dialogue as participatory thinking, or "thinking together":

> when one person says something, the other person does not in general respond with exactly the same meaning as that seen by the first person. Rather, the meanings are only *similar* and not identical. Thus, when the second person replies, the first person sees a *difference* between what he meant to say and what the other person understood. On considering this difference, he may then be able to see something new, which is relevant both to his own views and to those of the other person. And so it can go back and forth, with the continual emergence of a new content that is common to both participants. Thus, in a dialogue, each person does not attempt to *make common* certain ideas or items of information that are already known to him. Rather, it may be said that the two people are making something *in common*, i.e., creating something new together.

Dialogue, here, is "a stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us … out of which may emerge some new understanding. … It's something creative. And this shared meaning is the 'glue' or 'cement' that holds people and societies together" (Bohm 1996, 6).

Chapter 4

Visiting the borderlands: intercultural meaning-making and cosmopolitan imaginings

International exhibitions are promoted for their potential to advance intercultural understanding, but they have also been critiqued as politically safe forms of national self-promotion that narrow our view of a nation or culture—rather than expanding it—creating cross-cultural misunderstanding (Wallis 1994; Gorji 2004). If meaningful, constructive audience engagement is the goal of international exhibitions, what facilitates and what inhibits it? Can they lead to intercultural understanding and dialogue, or are they confined to the stereotypical and the superficial, reaffirming narratives of difference and otherness?

There are few published studies on visitors' experience of international exhibitions (see Chapter 1). Research suggests a lack of evaluation and/or systematic visitor studies; when it does take place it is often by host venues, for in-house purposes, with no feedback to the lending institution (Pérez Castellanos 2013). Most of these studies are quantitative in nature, conducted for the purposes of audience projections, marketing and reporting. Likely contributing to the problem is the general marginalisation of visitors studies in cultural institutions, and a failure to plan and budget for this research within partnership agreements (Davidson 2015). As McDonald (2014, 28) notes, "we need effective ways of capturing how international audiences respond to [international] exhibitions and to make that data public".

The MNC in Mexico City does not have in-house visitor research capacity, but services are received sporadically from a central area at CNME. In the case of *E Tū Ake* they did not conduct a formal visitor study. The general audience at the MNC is over 90 per cent Mexican nationals, predominently students on school visits, followed by retirees. Entry to the exhibition—and the museum—was free. Total attendance for *E Tū Ake* was 39,066, which Medina described as a "fantastic" number, especially considering the lack of prior knowledge of New Zealand among Mexicans, and the lower profile of the MNC compared to larger museums. For example, the MNA exhibition *Moana*, from the Field Museum, had fewer visitors. She also pointed out that due to its proximity to the Palacio Nacional, where the Mexican federal executive is located, the

MNC is often closed for security purposes during political rallies. This affected visitation to *E Tū Ake*, the hosting of which coincided with the lead up to federal elections and included a closure on its final weekend.

The staff who worked on *E Tū Ake* in Mexico reported a very high level of engagement and satisfaction with the exhibition. Navarro (MNC) recalls many repeat visitors who participated in all the workshops and conferences they offered, which were "crowded". She believes there was a high level of word-of-mouth promotion as visitors were "enthusiastic and inspiring the others", and thinks the exhibition was "definitely a major success".

The venues for *Aztecs* undertook standard visitor research, including summative evaluations. Each venue conducted exit surveys using a questionnaire format and sampling methods consistent with in-house practice, primarily designed for reporting purposes and to provide comparative data for other touring exhibitions they had hosted. All venues made their findings available to us for our project, however, the design differences make direct comparison between venues difficult. Nevertheless, they are revealing in terms of what they chose to collect; that is, standard quantitative data to identify visitor profiles, satisfaction, average time in the gallery, self-reported changes in knowledge, awareness of the exhibition and motivation to visit, as well as answers to some open-ended questions. Te Papa and Melbourne Museum compared *Aztecs* visitors and non-visitors; Australian Museum was the only museum to do a tracking and timing study of visitors in the gallery.

At all the museums, *Aztecs* was rated very highly in terms of visitor satisfaction. Te Papa, with an overall rating of 96 per cent, reported particularly high satisfaction with the quality (99 per cent) and range (98 per cent) of objects. Data from Te Papa visitors who did not visit the exhibition suggested that the price of entry—at an otherwise free museum—discouraged visitation. At Melbourne Museum, satisfaction was also high at 99 per cent, the highest ever rating for a touring exhibition—including highly successful blockbusters *Bond*, *Tutankhamen*, *Titanic* and *Dinosaurs*—and well above both the touring exhibition and general visitation average of 92 per cent. Data from visitors to the museum who did not see *Aztecs* suggested that many perceived it as not suitable for children.

Overall satisfaction with *Aztecs* at Australian Museum was 97 per cent, with particularly high ratings for the "quality of artefacts and objects on display" and the "level of information provided". At this venue almost a third of visitors were accompanied by children aged under eighteen years, higher than Melbourne Museum at 13 per cent, but the average age of children at both venues was older than for other touring exhibitions (such as *Tyrannosaurs*).

While useful for painting a general picture of visitor behaviour and perceptions of international exhibitions, quantitative studies are limited in what

they can tell us about meaning-making and impact, including intercultural understanding. For this reason, our study involved qualitative interviews with visitors for deeper insight into their cultural encounters with international exhibitions. This aspect of the research was informed by a rapidly expanding theoretical literature on visitor experience that is increasingly drawing on qualitative methods to explore the ways in which visitors engage in complex acts of interpretation and meaning-making when visiting museums and other heritage sites (see Chapter 1).

A recent focus of this literature has been on imagination and emotion, or affect, in heritage experiences (Bagnall 2003), how these facilitate empathy (Gokcigdem 2016), "deep engagement", "transformative moments" (L. Smith 2016; Dudley 2017), or "numinous experiences" (Latham 2007; Cameron and Gatewood 2012) and whether or not this leads to critical reflection and the creation of new understandings and moral relationships with others. The relative success of these interpretive acts is seen as being affected by various skills and competencies on the part of the visitor, including: cultural literacy (Bagnall 2003); emotional intelligence (L. Smith and Campbell 2016); and cosmopolitan affect or perspective (Schorch, Waterton, and Watson 2016). These theories have not previously informed studies of international exhibitions and cultural diplomacy, despite their obvious relevance.

Our analysis draws on in-depth interviews with visitors. In the case of *E Tū Ake* we interviewed four, one of whom subsequently took guided tours through the exhibition and therefore also comments on his observations of other visitors. Due to the timing of the research project in relation to the exhibition tour, these interviewees were recruited one year after *E Tū Ake* left Mexico City, through the contacts of museum staff. Therefore, they should be considered as key informants, rather than as typical museum visitors. Their long-term impressions help to illuminate many of the most affecting and memorable aspects of the exhibition and the ways in which these led to critical reflection in specific cases. They also complement the views of *Aztecs* visitors in revealing ways, but cannot be considered as a comprehensive overview of visitor impressions in *E Tū Ake* in Mexico.

The timing of our project allowed us to conduct a much more systematic study of visitors to *Aztecs*. Fifty-seven post-visit qualitative interviews were conducted across the three venues and twenty-five follow-up interviews several months after the visit. Interviewees were recruited as they exited the exhibition—or by word of mouth in some cases—and interviews took place at a later time and place convenient to them, face-to-face if possible, or using Skype and phone if necessary. In most cases, this was a few days after the visit, but sometimes it was several weeks.

Interviews followed a biographical narrative structure (Wengraf 2001). We first invited visitors to tell us about themselves, before asking them to talk in as much detail as possible about what they could remember of their visit—the intention being to identify, without prompting, aspects of the exhibition that were the most memorable and interesting for visitors themselves. These initial visitor narratives were followed by a series of open-ended questions and prompts, referring to specific aspects of the visit, their feelings and interpretations, and what prompted these. The richness of the data that can be achieved by this means, along with the potential to also attend to and learn from contradictions and inconsistencies which may be contained within a story, are highly valued by the biographical interviewer (Hollway and Jefferson 1997). In addition to lived experience, what biographical narrative interviews can provide is an insight into "cultures in motion" (Gergen and Gergen 1993, 2000); that is, the ways in which people contribute to the cultural narratives that in turn shape them.

While we cannot claim that our interviewees are representative of overall visitation to *Aztecs*, we endeavoured to talk to a diverse range of people in terms of demographics and background (see Table 4.1 and 4.2), with the hope that this would ensure as wide a range of perspectives as possible.

Table 4.1 *Aztecs* visitor interviews by institution, gender and origin (percentages rounded to the nearest whole number)

	Total participants	**Number of follow-up interviews**	**Male**	**Female**	**Local**	**National**	**Overseas**
TP	23	11	12	11	15	7	1
MM	23	9	10	13	17	4	2
AM	11	5	2	9	7	4	0
Total	57	25	24	33	39	15	3
% of total	100%	44%	42%	58%	68%	26%	5%

Table 4.2 *Aztecs* visitor interviews by institution and age group (percentages rounded to the nearest whole number)

Museum	**Age Group**						
	20s	**30s**	**40s**	**50s**	**60s**	**70s**	**Total**
TP	7	3	4	2	6	1	23
MM	2	5	5	2	3	2	19
AM	2	4	2	2	1	0	11
Total	11	12	11	6	10	3	53
% of total	21%	23%	21%	11%	19%	6%	100%

Studies have shown that visitor meaning-making may be rehearsed days, months, and even years after a visit and that a long term approach is necessary to capture these impacts (Falk and Dierking 2012; Anderson 2003). Participants for follow-up interviews were selected after an initial analysis of the first interviews. The intention was to select interviewees that represented a range of experiences and perceptions of the exhibition.

While attempting to provide as much detail as possible about who our interviewees were and what they told us, we are, unfortunately, only able to offer a snapshot of the richness of the data we gathered. We use pseudonyms and offer the occasional glimpse of visitors' wider interests and life circumstances in order to convey some of the context relevant to the meanings they found in the exhibitions. We begin by exploring the ways visitors were able to connect with the cultural 'other', before looking at what strategies were used to negotiate difference and the extent to which these suggested cosmopolitan perspectives. The penultimate section considers how meanings persisted and evolved after the visit. Finally, we discuss visitors' insights into the value of international exhibitions.

Connecting with the cultural other

A cosmopolitan outlook encourages us to connect with another cultural perspective and incorporate it into our own. This requires empathy, openness and "imaginative engagement" (Appiah 2006), such that we can start—or continue—a conversation about sameness and difference. In the dynamic relationship between self and other, new layers of intercultural meaning are created.

In exhibitions, the 'other' we connect with is not, for the most part, physically present. Instead, this encounter is facilitated by the aesthetic strategies and interpretive practices of museum professionals, the material culture on display and the visitors' own biographically and culturally informed subjectivities. Together these produce a complex bodily experience and trigger the interpretive processes by which visitors "think" and "feel" their relationship with the other.

Objects, senses, atmosphere and emotion

Schorch (2012, 1) argues that visitor engagement starts on a "sensory, emotive and embodied level" which is interwoven with intellectual and interpretive processes. A sensory experience in an exhibition can be highly evocative, helping to "translate" a cultural idea and promote a sense of connection. A very popular element of *E Tū Ake* for Mexican visitors was a large "mauri stone" positioned at the entrance to the exhibition. Made from precious *pounamu* (greenstone or jade), the stone is the spiritual anchor of the exhibition and visitors are invited to touch it. Tamati-Quennell explains the intention:

> That's a very simple thing but it's attached to a cultural idea. It is a touchstone conceptually, not just literally, to something much deeper, much older, much more fundamental. … People will maybe understand that, on an intuitive level or another level, that idea of *mauri* or life force. Maybe they won't be able say it in those terms, [but] that's been translated maybe.

Figure 4.1 *E Tū Ake – Orgullo Māori* entrance with the mauri stone. Museo Nacional de las Culturas. Reproduction authorised by the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

Jorge at first felt "a shock" when he saw the mauri stone. He was surprised that he could touch it because in museums in Mexico "you're not allowed to touch". It, therefore, made "quite an impression" on him and from this moment, at the very beginning of the exhibition, it was very clear to him that a Māori voice was speaking in the exhibition; that the exhibition was made by people with a real, direct experience and deep understanding of the objects—a perspective he feels is lacking in many museum exhibitions. It gave him a strong sense of Māori pride in their culture:

> From what he[1] has experienced in his life, seeing exhibitions and what he knows about other ethnic groups etc.—he feels that there is no other ethnic group in the world who could be so proud of themselves as the Māoris are.

The stone is the first thing that comes to Javier's mind when asked what he remembers about the exhibition. He visited three times, and each time he touched the stone he remembers "a different feeling". The first time it was exciting "because we're not used to touching the objects". He understood that "supposedly you're connecting with the spirit of the Māoris through this touching of the stone", and the connection felt stronger with each subsequent visit. He thinks it was because he "was probably more open" to "the feeling of the Māoris and their connection to nature", an experience he found "attractive and interesting".

Ricardo describes another kind of embodied experience in *E Tū Ake* that helped people reach a cultural understanding. Many Mexican visitors found the Māori meeting houses or *wharenui* (big house) interesting because of their size and the "meticulous" carving, and Ricardo explains how he conveyed its meaning on his guided tours:

> The meeting house with the ancestor in this position [with arms stretched out] I made the people [take] the position of the ancestor and I saw their faces changing about the object, it was like 'oh my God it's a person' and you are inside of the stomach of that ancestor. So I almost could see the changing in his mind about what they were seeing.

The "faces" he saw in *E Tū Ake*—of both the taonga and "real people"—were surprising and impressive:

> The size of the objects, the look in the eyes of the objects, of the faces, carved. Seeing the pictures and videos of real people, of the actual Māoris … It's something that you don't expect to see in a museum … this is a reality. Something living.

[1] These interviews were conducted by Davidson, in English, with the help of an interpreter. The quotations are the interpreter's translation of the interviewee's responses, and therefore use third person pronouns.

Figure 4.2 Tour guide with visitors in *E Tū Ake – Orgullo Māori*. Museo Nacional de las Culturas. Reproduction authorised by the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

Figure 4.3 Visitors in *E Tū Ake – Orgullo Māori*. Museo Nacional de las Culturas. Reproduction authorised by the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

On his tours, Ricardo had the impression that the "modern objects" made a deep impression on people because they are used to seeing "objects from the past" in an exhibition and "they were very amazed by seeing how things are still being used or how they still exist":

> For example, seeing the Prince of England wearing a Māori cape, the new canoeing … this was really impressive and gave a good impression. And seeing a song by Michael Jackson sung in Māori.

Schorch (2013a) argues that the feeling of being face-to-face with the cultural 'other' is important for helping visitors move from abstract concepts of culture to real contact and interpersonal dialogue between 'cultural' human beings. This, he claims, opens up the possibility of understanding by bringing together the self and the other and moving towards an integration of perspectives. *E Tū Ake* provided visitors with this opportunity through self-representation, *mana taonga* and telling the story of a living culture.

In *Aztecs*, there was not the same possibility of connecting with a living people. Many visitors nonetheless found various ways of humanising cultural difference, using skills of playfulness and imagination, facilitated by objects, models, design and interpretive media that created an atmosphere that helped to communicate ideas, emotions and sensations to visitors and enabled them to make an empathic link with people in the past. Objects were not only something to be marvelled at because of their antiquity, but were a window to the perceived suffering of others. Visitors spoke about feelings of discomfort, sadness, anguish or uncertainty that sometimes manifested in bodily ways such as "shaking chills" or feeling "a bit gross". For some visitors, the exhibition worked as if time were an emotional landscape, in that evocative processes were triggered as they moved between the objects, their aura of times past causing them to reflect on the lives and historical processes to which they were linked.

Materiality played a key role in this process, as the exhibition's emotional landscape worked as a mediator between the past and the present, putting bodies from different historical periods in contact. For some visitors the "realness" of objects facilitated their association with past lives, triggering a special kind of displaced empathy as they imagined the absent "other". Grace, an artist, remembered the feeling of "almost entering or seeing how the artist would have been able to create in some cases the fineness of the—bowls and the eating tools that were there". She imagined "that feeling of delight and a degree of playfulness on the part of the artist".

Dave was "blown away" by the opportunity to get "within touching distance" of so many "real" objects:

> It suddenly gives it that extra feel about it when you're walking around and you're looking at the stuff that people have created … it's right in front of you, you've got a big rock sculpture just almost just touching it, feeling it, thinking someone's carved this, hundreds and hundreds of years ago, it's really quite amazing.

Knowing that "everything here was real" gave the exhibition "so much more meaning" as he thought about the people who made the objects:

> For a moment you just feel quite humbled knowing that potentially someone's life was committed to just that sculpture and making it so I guess the energy of the exhibit was heightened so much more.

Although these objects have an inert materiality, when visitors viewed them as an eyewitness to the past, this added an extra aura and a touch of fascination that "I'm actually looking at something that's seen that kind of stuff". This was particularly the case for objects related to emotionally charged topics like sacrificial practices, making them more "memorable". For Mark "seeing some of the things used to carry out the human sacrifice … resonated more in a way". He remembers seeing "almost like a giant spoon or ladle that had holes in it so blood could drain out of it and I think it was used for holding organs like the heart or something". He found this "more confronting" than having previously read about sacrifice.

Replicas and models also connected visitors with *Aztecs* by helping them to imagine the lives and feelings of others, and embodying certain cultural concepts. On encountering the life-sized model of an eagle warrior, one of the most commonly mentioned objects in *Aztecs*, Isaac imagined "it could be pretty intimidating seeing it in real life if you're in a battle or something and there's this guy like half eagle or something …". When Marcus saw "the guy with his feathers" he remembers feeling "like 'this is incredible' it's such like an awe-inspiring moment, kind of thinking 'wow', the level of sophistication of that, absolutely incredible". For Kelly, "that tangibility was fantastic with the feathered man, you know the whole armour, at the start, in life-sized form, it was very dramatic." Morgan found the eagle warrior interesting because "it seemed to symbolise the idea of trying to scare off the enemy or trying to intimidate the enemy rather than trying to fight them, which of course tapped into their inter-tribal wars that they would have to capture people for human sacrifice".

Figure 4.4 Aztec eagle warrior. Te Papa. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

Figure 4.5 Aztec market model. Te Papa. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

Less dramatic perhaps, but also memorable and meaningful, was the model marketplace, complete with a soundscape recorded in a market in Mexico with contemporary Nahuatl speakers, which helped visitors grasp, as Gemma puts it,

"the exact way they would've lived". Hana found that "it's so visual … it makes it easier to sense what it was like". A replica rubber ball, part of a segment on the *tlachtli* or ball game, was often commented on as well. Visitors could pick the ball up and feel its weight. One of Gemma's strongest memories of the exhibition was holding the "massive heavy ball … trying to imagine what it would be like to play that game, and thinking it would be next to impossible".

Often what affected visitors most profoundly—and was therefore most memorable—was not particular objects as much as groupings or combinations of them that, along with lighting and soundscapes, created a general atmosphere or feeling that took visitors "on a bit of a journey" or made "tangible" something that was previously "conceptual". In *E Tū Ake*, Jorge enjoyed the combination of *pātaka* [storehouses], *waka* [canoes], pictures and videos, feeling he had been "transported to a different place". After visiting *Aztecs*, Kelly was unable to remember "every piece", but rather had a "general impression of seeing the very old concrete articles at the start":

> and that immediately throws you back to … I suppose the history of what you're about to encounter and just how far back it goes, and just how tangible it is. I think it's always really remarkable when you think—well I think of the Aztecs on a conceptual level, and I always think of it as something quite intangible.

Kelly described this impression as "probably the greatest take-away, or take-out of the whole exhibition".

It had been Te Papa's particular intention that the scale model of the Templo Mayor would create an immersive experience for visitors (see Chapter 3). The large replica dominated the space and, therefore, was highly relevant for the sensory landscape of the exhibition. For some visitors, however, this was not a success. They found the temple "a little crass" or unimpressive; it "just looked plastic". For others it was: "impressive", "striking", "spectacular" or "spooky but in an interesting way". For those who responded positively the temple had a particular aura even if it was a reproduction. These visitors used their imaginations, connecting on an emotional level and allowing themselves to be transported. Alex felt that the lighting and special effects created an "other-worldly sort of a vibe". It took Kim "on a bit of a journey", like travelling "to Machu Picchu or somewhere". Natalie remembered being in front of the temple and feeling what that might have been like for an Aztec commoner. She moves from feelings, to reflection and speculation:

> I think it's supposed to make you feel the enormity of it all and I think it actually does do that for you, kind of standing in front of it and reading a

> little bit about, you know, how the people were never actually allowed into the temple and I kind of felt this association as an outsider of not ever being able to be a part of that, and it made me wonder if not only the sacrifice that the people did was for religious belief but also just being able to experience this level that they're not ever able to be a part of.

The "inner" temple was particularly evocative for many visitors. Designed to convey Aztec beliefs about death and the afterlife, it included a projection covering the nine levels of the Aztec underworld, with an accompanying soundscape and shadowy images of owls and spiders moving across the walls. Within the space were funerary objects, statues and a mask made from a human skull. Lyndal loved the fact that you could walk inside. She thought it might have resonated with her because "it's so different from my own reality" and because "it takes me back to all the temples I visited in South America, I loved that".

Andrés found the experience very affecting and evocative. In his first interview, he described his impression that "they respect the dead … you can feel that in the temple, you see the whole thing and understand they are always living beyond the reality". In his follow-up interview, seven months after his visit, he recalled in detail the sensory experience, how it made him feel part of a "ceremony" and deepened his embodied understanding of Aztec society:

> There's some music in the background, some percussion music, and that affects you visually, because you kinda feel that sound, that vibration, that music… and you realise that everything that's happening around you was part of a social system that existed, and that social system worked with elements such as music and that kind of guttural chanting, noises … you kind of understand that there's a ceremony, and the surrounding sound includes you in the ceremony.

Others described the atmosphere as "eerie" and "creepy". For some it was a very uncomfortable feeling, as it resonated with things they personally found "confronting", "tragic" or "gloomy". Dylan felt "uneasy" and the image of the crawling spider "made me jumpy". Marcus also found it "freaky" and wanted to leave quickly, but was delayed by the friends he was visiting with. He had an "unsettling kind of stomach-churning feeling". His grandmother had recently died, and he was uncomfortable with "confronting death, which is something we're totally not used to". He experienced "trying to just get in the head of [the Aztecs], which I can't understand … I'm so unused to it, it was a bit of a shock". Sally found the temple space "very gloomy, very sad" because "I see a lot of it in my work".

Figure 4.6 The inner temple. Te Papa. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

By comparison Harry found his emotions in the temple "really evocative" and helpful in conveying a "different perspective" on death:

> Going into the underworld and having a sense of dread and just chills up your spine … was actually really good … that was a positive experience even though it was kind of like, I guess you would say they were dark emotions but I guess in that moment it was like serene and kind of eerie but it was good, I enjoyed that.

The variations in these emotional responses and their interpretations demonstrate that exhibition strategies can resonate very differently with individual visitors, depending on their particular preferences, preoccupations, existing states of mind and, as Smith and Campbell (2016) suggest, a kind of emotional intelligence in terms of visitors' ability to manage imaginary identifications and their resulting emotions.

Harry, a young sociology student, seems to have a particularly well developed ability and inclination to take on the identities and feelings of others in a playful way. Having a long-standing interest in "warrior nature" and how it was "manifested in different cultures", when Harry saw the eagle warrior model he felt "it was reinforcing all of those things that I was already thinking about". He was also drawn to it through his experience of eagle warriors as "a unit that you can fight with" in the popular video game *Age of Empires*. He thought they were "so

awe-inspiring", with "their whole belief that by wearing the feathers they actually have like the spirit of the animal with them". In his follow-up interview, eleven months after his visit, Harry vividly recalled this encounter:

> it was just so big … that I could seriously have a sense of like hundreds of these guys coming at you … and the terror that would have induced. Or even being one yourself and the honour of putting that—of like embodying that spirit.

What Harry engages in—like others who cross temporal and cultural boundaries to imagine themselves as an Aztec—is a form of play categorised by Caillois (1961) as mimicry; that is, the temporary acceptance of an illusion and/or imaginary universe, in which our intention is to make believe that we are someone other than ourselves; we forget, disguise or otherwise shed our personality to feign another. This form of play is present in many cultural practices, including child's play, but equally so in adult play such as fancy dress, theatre and reading fiction. Mimicry involves "incessant invention" through imagination, identification and interpretation (Caillois 1961, 23). This highlights the creative, skilful and intrinsically pleasurable nature of this interpretive performance, which "lies in being or passing for another" (Caillois 1961, 21). It also highlights the extent to which it is a transaction between the exhibition developers and the visitor. In mimicry the "actor"—in our case the designer/interpreter/curator—must "fascinate" the spectator/visitor and avoid mistakes that would break the illusion (see Chapter 3); the "spectator must lend himself [sic] to the illusion without challenging the decor, mask, or artifice which for a given time he is asked to believe in as more real than reality itself" (Caillois 1961, 23).

While our research affirms the importance of imagination identified by previous authors, by applying the analytical lens of play we can identify a more nuanced understanding of how a successful empathetic connection relies on a combination of the skills of the players and the creation of an illusion by exhibition developers.

Common ground? In search of sameness

According to Schorch (2013a), we usually embark on a "cross-cultural journey" by using our own interpretive environment or "contact history" to make connections and comparisons, looking for similarities and differences. Visitors' backgrounds, interests and prior experiences clearly drew visitors to objects they could relate to and influenced the ways in which they responded to them in both exhibitions. Geologist Geoff, for example, took note of the "obsidian-type stuff" in *Aztecs*, particularly the weaponry,

which he compared with "traditional European-type arms or even Māori and Pasifika weaponry", finding it very different and "quite striking".

As Mason (2013) suggests, visitors need "points of recognition" from which they can then explore territories of cultural difference. Reflecting on what is shared between cultures, and what makes them distinctive, is another means of exploring the dynamic relations between self/other, here/there and past/present. Medina felt that Mexicans found an "entrance" into Māori culture through their Aztec heritage, such as their similar deities, their love of music and that "jade was very important for our ancestors". Commenting on the *marae* table setting (see Chapter 3), Sofia had the impression that hospitality was something that Māori and Mexican culture shared.[2] Ricardo was impressed by the extent to which he "could associate his own life" to *E Tū Ake*, and it is something he found visitors did on his tours: "People would actually say, 'oh this is like in Mexico'".

Common experiences gave visitors the sense that they knew how others felt and thereby connected them with the cultural other through empathy. The themes of protest and cultural assertion were particularly affecting for Mexican visitors. Ricardo said Mexicans identified with Māori as a people who had been colonised:

> They actually had this immediate association by seeing the English people coming and colonising. They immediately thought about, oh, the Spanish people. So they felt empathy and they took the role of the Māoris immediately … as people who were colonised and suffered from the war and killings and all this.

Jorge felt that Māori "have suffered exactly the same as Mexicans" through colonisation.

These understandings of another culture, filtered through biographical and cultural lenses, are then used to reflect on the visitor's own heritage, identity and politics, sometimes leading to critical evaluations. Sofia also observed a "common feeling" of "oppression"; that because of "our colonial past … we can identify with all the tales of domination … all the sets of injustices of colonial power in New Zealand". As an anthropologist, familiar with "many people who are Indigenous here in Mexico", she is, however, critical of this identification:

> [The] Mexican population talks about how the colonisation brought to an end this indigenous peoples' cultures and how it broke our patri-

[2] See the discussion on *manaakitanga* and *tequitl* in Chapter 2.

> mony, our legacy, you know? It's very funny because people here always talk about the Conquest in first person: they came and conquered us. And we suffered so much, like … "you're white!" Like a victimisation. But the funny part is, in the middle of this victimisation some people don't notice there's also the Indigenous groups persisting, you know? They're still there. They managed to stay alive, maybe not in the best conditions. They suffered through the colonial process but also they suffered through the national process from the nineteenth century when we were finally independent and a nation and away from those evil Spaniards. Actually the worst part for the Indigenous peoples began [then] and that's not something you talk about very often, you know? You tend to think of history as a tale of evil people—which means Spaniards—versus good people. And good people has two representations: in the past, Indigenous people. In the present, the Mexicans. So you kind of forget the Indigenous peoples are still there. Like minimising their efforts and their fights and their vindication.

When asked how Aztec culture compared to their own or other cultures that they were familiar with, most visitors' initial reaction was that it was "completely different". However, including aspects of everyday life in *Aztecs* helped visitors to imagine what their lives might have been like and connect with them as "normal" people. For Louisa, a student from the UK, the "daily life bit of it was my favourite":

> I just found it fascinating to imagine how they went about their lives … I think I really like it because it sort of makes them less removed, because they just, they had normal lives, like we do [laughs]. And children go to school, and then they eat their food, and go to the markets and that's something that, it makes them seem a lot closer than when you just see them as warriors.

Models, such as the busy marketplace scene already discussed, aided these imaginative leaps. They helped Aaron see past the "dramatic aspects" and "to appreciate that life goes on for the other many, tens of thousands of people, they have to eat and sleep and trade … and all that sort of stuff".

A number of *Aztecs* visitors had "hybrid" cultural identities, which allowed them to see the themes of the exhibition reflected off multiple cultural surfaces. Sasha is a social worker and university professor, originally from the Ukraine but now living in Winnipeg, Canada. He saw the exhibition in Melbourne while attending a congress. He compared Aztec culture with Ukrainian traditional cultures, as well as with the Canadian First Nations. Dina is a cultural anthropologist in her thirties, currently living in Darwin and working on Indigenous

land rights. Visiting Melbourne for the weekend with her mother, who was originally from the Philippines, Dina was able to find parallels with another former Spanish colony, as well as contemplating issues for Indigenous people.

Andrés is a Colombian, living in New Zealand with his "Kiwi" wife and their two young children. Seeing an exhibition on "Mexican culture in *Aztecs*", "shown from the New Zealanders' point of view" had "a good impact on me." He felt that the exhibition "pulled me back in time to get close to stuff about our Latin American cultures" and it helped his family understand "why we like the colours, why we're like, a little bit noisy sometimes".

These visitors' perspectives highlight the polycentral nature of identity in our globalised societies and the effect this may have on visitor responses in international exhibitions. Our "liquid" identities need to be "continuously negotiated, adjusted, constructed without interruption and with no prospect of finality" (Bauman, 1988, 41; 2001, 87). To successfully negotiate this terrain, we must accept a certain level of ambivalence and fluidity in the relations between self and other, between cultural proximity and distance. What we see here are visitors who are able, by virtue of their personal circumstances, to make multiple cultural comparisons by moving between the different "centres" of their identities in the way in which they view the exhibition. This requires imagination, sensitivity, self-reflexivity and a willingness to explore flexible borders, similar to the visitors who explored different centres of identity through intercultural mimicry.

Negotiating difference: making cosmopolitan and counter-cosmopolitan meanings

> Coexistence cannot be built on illusions of sameness, homogeneity, or easy harmony. (Could it ever be?) Cohesion has to be rooted in and able to absorb disagreement, conflicts, and different world views.
>
> (Sandahl 2012, 471)

In encounters with different ways of making sense of the world there are two options: a process of learning or a regression (Delanty 2006). Both *Aztecs* and *E Tū Ake* sought to challenge people's perceptions of the cultural other to some extent. Research suggests that transformative moments are rare for museum visitors, who mostly look to reinforce narratives of self and other (L. Smith 2016; Dudley 2017).[3] L. Smith (2016) argues that few visitors, when

[3] It is worth noting that Smith and Dudley's studies are based on interviews conducted with visitors exiting exhibitions and therefore captures their initial responses, rather than processes of reflection and meaning-making that take place over time.

confronted with difficult emotions, will use empathy and imagination to transform their understanding of the past. Instead, uncomfortable feelings lead visitors to disengage emotionally using platitudes (L. Smith 2016), "basic, unelaborated statements" (Dudley 2017) or "ethnocentric misreadings and indifferent tolerance" (Schorch, Waterton, and Watson 2016).

In both exhibitions there were aspects of cultural difference that came as a shock or surprise for visitors, challenging their cultural perspectives. So what happened when visitors encountered cultural practices and concepts they found confronting and uncomfortable? Were they still able to connect across difference and if so, how? Or is the transformation of perceptions of self and other too much to ask of an exhibition visit?

E Tū Ake included a section on *tā moko* (Māori tattoos) as a customary practice. According to Medina, this was a cultural difference that captivated Mexican visitors. They were surprised and amazed "to see the people with tattoos on the face, on the arms. … The tattoos here don't have a culture, don't have a past or, I mean with the ancestors".

Figure 4.7 Tā moko display in *E Tū Ake – Orgullo Māori* with Te Papa curator Rhonda Paku. Museo Nacional de las Culturas. Reproduction authorised by the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

Jorge explained that many Mexicans have "wrong ideas about what the tattoo is and what it is for" and "thinks that people judge things without knowing them". Ricardo estimated that "80 per cent of the people who visited, had this, conven-

tional, traditionalist idea of a tattoo as something for low class people". Mexican visitors were shocked to see the actual instruments used for *tā moko* and the sensitive parts of the body, such as the lips, being tattooed: "they were going like 'oh', they were feeling the pain". However, he felt that the exhibition "changed people's minds" and "they were really understanding a different perspective". The MNC education team had developed various resources to help explain the designs and symbolism of *tā moko*, and also offered people the chance to 'wear' *tā moko* with a roller pad and ink. This was hugely popular with visitors and Navarro remembers long lines of both children and adults waiting for the opportunity to playfully take on a Māori identity.

Figure 4.8 A visitor using the *tā moko* activity. Reproduction authorised by the National Institute of Anthropology and History.

Javier was struck by the life mask of chief Wiremu Te Manewha, made by European artist Gottfried Lindauer in the 1880s. This *taonga*, which perfectly reproduces Te Manawha's full facial *moko*, was placed alongside photos of his living descendants, for whom it is highly valuable, illustrating the importance of family relationships and identity, and the interconnectedness of generations (H. Smith 2011; Te Papa 2009). It was striking for Javier to see "an older man having tattooed all the face and the expression in his face". However, after reading about the meaning of *tā moko*, he understood that it conveyed *mana* and "this is something that caught his attention very much—the way of respecting and honouring the dead chiefs or important characters for a tribe".

He relates this to the "veneration for the older people" of various ethnic groups in Mexico, as well as the Day of the Dead ritual that is "one of the few traditions that we keep".

Figure 4.9 Life mask of Wiremu Te Manewha (Ngāti Koroki, Ngāti Raukawa), made by Gottfried Lindauer and Sir Walter Buller about 1885. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

Figure 4.10 Exhibition graphic from *E Tū Ake*. Descendents of Wiremu Te Manewha. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

The themes of protest and assertion in *E Tū Ake* also caused a "cultural shock" for some visitors, leading to critical self-understanding—one of the markers of a cosmopolitan vision (see Chapter 1). As Jorge explained it, when comparing "the pride of the Māoris" to "Mexican culture and our tradition and our history" he felt that "we don't feel that way, and we should":

> We don't really feel as proud and we don't really preserve it as the Māoris do … It's sad that we don't really fight and we don't really feel as proud of our roots as they do.

He was "moved and touched" by the way Māori "respect each other" and reflected that Mexicans "don't see ourselves as a group of people who belong to the same culture" but that "we need that type of spirit—more that feeling of as a group, as a community, of growing, learning, developing together as a

group and as one". Javier was also moved and inspired by the way Māori "have been fighting peacefully" and how they have managed "to remain and persist and resist in this modern society". He thought that Mexicans "were so repressed at some point—we should fight more". And this was an example for how to do it "in a peaceful way".

Ricardo also noticed that people in the exhibition were moved by the Māori "struggling and fighting for the right to live" and felt "sad" that in Mexico "we don't really have that spirit of keeping our culture and traditions alive". Seeing the difference between Māori and themselves highlighted their own ambiguous cultural identity in that "we don't feel identified with Indigenous and we don't feel identified with the Spanish either ... we have lost identity".

Medina believed that the exhibition prompted Mexicans to think about "our culture" and reminded them that many people in Mexican society are disadvantaged and "don't have many chances". In this respect she felt that "New Zealand is a magnificent example for us" and what people learnt from *E Tū Ake* was "not only history dates", but how "the Indigenous Māori follow and try to conserve their roots" and "that's very important for us".

The exhibition prompted Javier to reflect that indigenous groups could "survive" colonisation "without losing their identity—like it happened here … Even though [Māori] have adopted some modernity, they haven't lost their tradition, their origins", and he pondered why ethnic groups in Mexico are not "part of modern life". According to Ricardo, others who viewed the exhibition "were actually changing their perspective of Indigenous people":

> because they were impressed again by seeing the Māoris or Indigenous New Zealanders having some modernity within their culture like having a TV channel or using some modern objects. And he feels that people want to have indigenous people here in Mexico exhibited in a showcase without being touched by any modernity. So they were reflecting that maybe, by seeing the Māoris having this mixing with modernity without losing their roots, maybe Mexican Indigenous can do that too. They can actually evolve without losing their traditions and mix with modernity, and the modern societies.

The significant cultural differences that Australasian visitors encountered in *Aztecs* were, perhaps, harder to bridge as, without a contemporary dimension, they needed to connect not just between self/other, but also past/present. Lawrence, a retired Anglican priest, expressed his frustration that "the problem with exhibitions, they only open a can for you … ideally I'd like to get an Aztec priest of that era and sit him down and talk to him".

Aztec[4] culture felt "strange" and "very different" to Louisa, but she tried to imagine how it would feel if she could go back in time and live there. "What if I went there, what if I could experience it, I mean it would be different, but … they were normal people … And I mean I'm sure they'd be shocked if they came here now and it would be different". "It might not be stranger," she continues, "than going to live in Tudor England or sixteenth-century Spain … they'd both be equally different to us, but then also … they'll be interesting points of, where you can relate". Either way, adaptation would be required: "you couldn't just go back and be yourself".

The developers of *Aztecs* wanted to provide a "balanced" and "complete" view of Aztec culture through topics such as music, education, agriculture and art so as to elicit a broader, more sympathetic understanding, rather than a negative perception centred on human sacrifice (see Chapter 3). Impressions of Mexica culture varied widely. While words like "savage", "barbaric", "morbid", "macabre", "brutal", "bloodthirsty", "primitive", "gruesome" and "alien" were used to describe the Aztecs, so were "advanced" and "sophisticated". Many visitors held both impressions in relation to different aspects of the culture, suggesting that they were able to tolerate a level of ambivalence and contradiction, or they exhibited uncertainty about forming firm opinions, settling on a both/and rather than an either/or approach. Cora, for example, thought Aztec lives were "gruesome" and "brutal" compared to other cultures, but conceded that "there's two sides to it really they sort of had their society and their, you know, the things that they had seemed to be quite … a lot advanced not advanced-advanced but advanced compared to their beliefs, their beliefs were quite basic yeah and yeah, that's about as much as I can say".

Kelly describes her experience as "very vivid":

> because initially I just thought of the Aztecs as a bunch of marauders, bloodthirsty marauders to be honest [laughs] and I think they were, really, but it was wonderful to have those layers of cultural insight and stories and gods and as I said you know having that greater understanding of their day-to-day life and what was important to them, and why they were decimated as quickly as they were.

Certain parts of Aztec society particularly impressed visitors—such as the education system and their agriculture—and some felt we could learn from

[4] We have been distinguishing Mexica as the proper name for the cultural pre-Hispanic group and Aztecs for its cultural representation through international exhibitions. However, in this section we maintain Aztec/s for all references as this came from visitors' accounts of the exhibition.

them. Isaac remembered being "awed" by the "ingenuity" of the *chinampas* which were represented in the exhibition by a popular scale model. Basil described them as "amazing" and "tremendous" and felt the Aztecs were "quite an advanced civilisation". Others described them as "very clever" and "quite sophisticated". Although reading about the flayed god Xipe Totec gave Marcus the impression that "these people are gross", he was amazed at "how they came up with this perfect little thing [*chinampas*], oh and the fact that they were like rooted with willow trees, like anchored down, well these guys are genius, we could learn a lot".

Figure 4.11 Aztec *chinampas* [floating gardens] model. Te Papa. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

The artistry of Aztec culture helped to shift some visitors' perceptions and engender respect. The stone sculptures gave Jill, an artist who was struck by the Aztecs' "violent society", the impression that they were "technologically advanced". Gemma, who trained as a jeweller, was impressed by how "anatomically correct a lot of their sculptures were" which conflicted with her prior "perception of that time period" as "all very kind of primitive". Grace, also an artist, was "amazed at the depth of the technical development in so much of the material culture" given that it "was done with very basic equipment".

Jenny felt that the main cultural difference with Aztecs was that they "revered death". While most visitors felt uncomfortable with this aspect of Aztec culture, for some visitors, far from being morbid, the themes of death—

and even sacrifice—provided an opportunity to contemplate the "ultimate concerns" of the human condition; opportunities which are rare in contemporary society (Cameron and Gatewood 2012). Harry, who was fascinated by different cultural perspectives on death, thought Mictlantecuhtli, the god of death, was "something I don't think I'll ever forget". "[W]ith his massive hands kind of looming", Harry found him "slightly disturbing, but … in a way beautiful", "an embodiment of all that ideology of all the sacrifice".

Speaking ten months after his visit, Harry's memory of the experience remained intense:

> It was kind of … like a feeling like you get when you're going to visit a grave of a loved one years after the fact, so it's kind of like that, it's not misery or grief, but it's that whole sombre kind of quiet sadness that kind of envelops death. And it kind of just had that aura, it had that effect … it was terrifying but there was a certain beauty to it … it was kind of like this stripped back of what we will all become in a sense and it's, it was very … evocative … it was very moving … And to think that that was actually worshipped … is even more powerful, it just reinforced that whole, because it was actually that physical, totem in a sense that was like people actually had worshipped that as a symbol of death and so there was even more power to it because of that, and a sense of connection to those people who are gone now, so yeah it was, that was very powerful for me.

Harry's is a cosmopolitan moment: driven by a fascination with different cultural perspectives, he encounters Mictlantecuhtli as the embodiment of Aztec attitudes to life and death. The result is not merely an acceptance of difference, but a level of admiration and respect that was not common among visitors:

> [the Aztec] focus was a spiritual one … [the practice/acceptance of sacrifice] completely goes against … the ideology that we have towards death, as being finality, as being something to be feared. As opposed to being something that is just to be accepted.

Myles, a philosophy student, found Mictlantecuhtli with his "liver coming out of him" and the human skull "pretty interesting" as "illustrating the Aztec attitude towards death". He compares them to "the attitudes of our society where death is kind of like marginalised" and "people who are dying are shunted off to rest homes or hospitals or whatever … and we don't really talk about death and it's just kind of, it's not a big part of life … we sort of try and ignore it". He thought "it was really interesting how death was just kind of like quite strongly incorporated into like their world view … 'cause it demonstrates an aspect of their culture which is like very different from our own".

Figure 4.12 Mictlantecuhtli Aztec god, Melbourne Museum. Photograph courtesy of Lee Davidson.

For Dave, Aztec attitudes towards death are a source of inspiration: "their respect for death was just as much as life. So if anything, it encourages you to live your life with purpose … and how that relates to me is, are you living a life that's worth living, and worth sacrificing for?" He sees their cosmology as having a social purpose, in helping to give people meaning in their lives as dying in battle or childbirth meant "you'll go straight to heaven" whereas "if you live a normal life … you'll have a harder time when you leave your body". He reflected that the focus on "life after death" and that "everything was so sacred" was "something that we've lost … maybe in the modern world people maybe are scared of it or they don't want to talk about it because it's a morbid subject".

Sacrifice and conquest: moral reflections and cosmopolitan insight

Although not asked directly, nearly every *Aztecs* visitor interviewed commented on the practice of human sacrifice. For some it was not shocking—or not as shocking as they were expecting; they found it interesting, fascinating and sensitively portrayed. Morgan, an Anglican priest and avid traveller, described himself as having "a huge interest in different cultures … the different ways people live their lives, the values they have". He was fascinated by the exhibition, and particularly interested in Aztec religion and attitudes to life and death. Keenly aware of different cultural perspectives and how they impact on people's behaviour, he found "the sacrifices and the games that they would play … horrifying in my culture, my understanding of the value of life, but interesting that they would do it in that fashion".

But for the majority it was "confronting", "stood out", or "made an impression". Adjectives such as "bloodthirsty", "primitive", "gruesome" and "alien" were used to describe the practice and visitors experienced a range of affective responses: "my stomach started churning"; it was "abhorrent"; and "disturbing". Grace, who is Māori, had known that sacrifice was practised, but found to "have it in your face" was a "culture shock". She found it "difficult" from "a cultural viewpoint" and decided not to enter the inner temple because she felt "there was a definite spiritual component to being in that space … That had such old pieces in there that that were part of a very tragic story".

Like Grace, many visitors did not talk in much detail about sacrifice other than to express their disapproval and/or discomfort with the practice, suggesting the kind of disengagement that theorists have identified in different contexts (Dudley 2017; L. Smith 2016). However, others reflected at greater length, often using their imaginations to think and feel what it would be like to have been a sacrificial victim, managing some uncomfortable emotions and making a range of moral reflections.

A more nuanced understanding of empathy is helpful for interpreting visitor responses here. Empathy is often mentioned as a key component of an intercultural or cosmopolitan vision, and it has been attracting increasing attention in relation to museum exhibitions (Gokcigdem 2016; Arnold-de Simine 2013). Armstrong (2011) describes empathy as "the ability to use your imagination and put yourself in others' shoes, opening yourself to their concerns and to their sufferings". Rather than dismissing the other as barbaric "simply because they seem alien to us", we can apply the "principle of charity": that is, the assumption that they share "the same human nature as yourself and that, even though your belief systems may differ, you both have the same idea of what constitutes truth" (Armstrong 2011, 37–38). While this does not mean condoning violence or injustice, it might allow us to broaden our understanding such that we can have compassion for what underlies it:

> The 'principle of charity' and the 'science of compassion' are both crucial to any attempt to understand discourse and ideas that initially seem baffling, distressing and alien; we have to recreate the context in which such words are spoken—historical, cultural, political, intellectual—question them deeply and … drive our understanding to the point where we have 'an immediate human grasp of what a given position meant'. With this new empathetic understanding of the context, we can imagine ourselves, in similar circumstances, 'feeling the same'. In other words, we have to see where people are coming from. In this way, we can broaden our perspective and 'make place for the other'. We can ignore this compassionate imperative only if we do not wish to understand other people—an ethically problematic position. (Armstrong 2011, 37)

Humility is important as it requires being open to change and sensing the limitations of our own knowledge. Empathy researchers distinguish between different levels of empathy—from "empty" to "transformative" —and between empathy that is "self-oriented ('what would I feel in that situation?') or other-oriented ('what would it be like to be this person in that situation?')" (Coplan in Arnold-de Simine 2013, 46). Others differentiate empathy as "shared emotion" or "affective identification" —imagining what others might be feeling—from "perspective taking" or theorising about what another person might be thinking and feeling, which may or may not lead to empathy (Nilsen and Bader 2016, 116):

> In short, empathy can be the result of an affective or cognitive engagement. These two can enhance each other but they do not necessarily go in tandem. (Arnold-de Simine 2013, 111)

Nilsen and Bader (2016, 118–19) argue that providing visitors with sufficient context and encouraging them to reflect on their own positionality supports "sophisticated perspective taking" by helping them to avoid *egocentric bias* (assuming others think the same as we do), *fundamental attribution error* (assuming others act the way they do because of something inherent to their personalities rather than external circumstances) and *presentism* (judging people by contemporary norms).

Jill described her encounter with sacrifice as "bone chilling":

> that feeling of thinking "gosh I'm glad I didn't—I don't live in a society like that" and actually thinking and feeling what it would be like to be a human sacrifice for almost you know, doing nothing wrong.

In this example of "self-oriented" empathy, Jill maintains her own moral code, that is, rather than viewing sacrifice from within an Aztec cosmology, she feels the unfairness of being killed when one has done "nothing wrong". As a result, she reaches an "uncharitable" moral evaluation:

> the Aztecs were one of the sort of bloodiest cultures that have ever existed, given their human sacrifice … as I said you didn't have to do very much to be sacrificed.

Rachel also tried to imagine what it would be like to be a human sacrifice:

> I don't know… the feeling 'cause it's not like fear or disgust … it's more like I don't really understand how people could've sort of been in that situation must've, I don't understand [laughs] how they must've felt like whether it would've been understandable for them or whether it was still very scary, I don't know.

Rachel shows curiosity and open-mindedness in her "other-oriented" approach. She wants to see sacrifice through Aztec eyes, recognising that it might be different from how she would feel, but she remains uncertain. Similarly, Dina said "I don't know, how would I feel about being a sacrifice if I thought I was going to do the people lots of good by being sacrificed?" But she can understand that it was what "they had been taught" and "they didn't know any other way". Others followed similar strategies of "perspective taking". Dana reflected that it may appear to us that the Aztecs "actually didn't have feelings towards other people", but their practices were "just a learned thing". This cosmopolitan attitude of recognising that our perspectives are culturally conditioned, and that cultural practices have a social role, leads to more charitable evaluations of Aztec culture. Georgia thought that "some of

their beliefs were a little bit … backwards in, in [relation to] Western beliefs … but, you know, they really believed it and I think that maybe, believing in something that strongly is always beneficial to society". Maggie speculates that "it's how they keep law and order, and what they felt was right for the day." Morgan sees their cosmology as encouraging "a culture of brave acts, almost recklessness, for the greater community's good".

Dina found it "just a bit confronting" and remembers "feeling a little bit shocked to be reminded of, you know, just how common human sacrifice was". She recognises it was "the way that they interpreted, you know, their place in the universe", while at the same time she appreciates "how lucky we are to be part of a society where we don't really practise those things commonly [laughs]".

A number of visitors tried to make sense of sacrifice by comparing it with other cultural practices, both past and present. Gemma noted that Aztec beliefs don't "quite compute" because "this kind of overall firm belief is something that's lacking in modern societies. And today it's kind of considered unhealthy to have such a strong belief in something that would lead you to … you know killing people for the sake of making sure the sun rises tomorrow".

Valerie felt that "you've got to see it in its time", and if you compare Aztec society to Medieval Europe, "there'd be a lot of things about Medieval Europe that would be pretty awful as well". Dina compared sacrifice to the Inquisition and Maggie concluded that it was "very common" in the past to believe in "very cruel things", therefore "it is a significant part of our history in a lot of cultures". Whereas Caroline commented that sacrifice was "really strange because we've never had that".

Therefore, some saw sacrifice as something completely alien and "strange", while others felt that it should be viewed "in context" and as another form of cruelty or violence, related to strong belief and, for some, a failure to value human life, comparable to practices in other past cultures. For a few, it was comparable to violence and cruelty in contemporary society. As Dina said, "there are countries still to this day where humans don't really count for much", while Basil observed that "more war's going on in the world today actually than they had then, and there are thousands of people dying, I mean it's a horror scene". Russell felt "we should not really be surprised" at sacrifice "given what's happening currently around the world and the Second World War etc."

As a mother of two young boys, Hana felt sadness reading about the sacrifice of children. Nonetheless, she reflects that:

> you've got to understand where that fits in the context of their culture and terrible things happen today too. We probably have more deaths now through religion and the different things that happen in our world

> than what occurred at that time so it's easy to be shocked by it but you need to place it in context.

In her follow-up interview she went on to question notions of "civilised" progress and assumptions of cultural superiority through her memories of the exhibition:

> you look at something like that and you think "gosh, the culture was so violent, and it's not like that now" but actually we still live in an incredibly violent society … it makes you stop and think "actually have we changed that much?" Because you go to an exhibition like that and you think "thank God we don't have child sacrifice anymore" but actually there are children dying round the world all the time from things that they shouldn't be dying of, so you know, it's interesting to think about your response and how actually it relates to the current world situation …Yeah because it's easy to think "what violent people! We're so much more civilised than that", and actually we're not (laughs).

In her use of "we", Hana suggests a common humanity. Similarly, Geoff reflects on degrees of cultural distance and proximity. While sacrifice "is extremely removed from where we are today", he reflects that "it's not like people don't kill each other in large numbers today, so how different are we?' For Geoff it was his encounter with an obsidian sacrificial knife and his realisation that it was "a real tangible object of a culture that would happily kill thousands of people" that led to the observation that "the cultural distance between where we're at and what they did is literally that, it's simply a cultural practice and [laughs] we're not necessarily very far away from that".

Gordon also takes a stance of cultural relativity, while acknowledging that "initially, on the face of it, they actually seemed quite a bloodthirsty race":

> But then, that's from our perspective and having done lots of travelling and seeing lots of different cultures I try to put myself in the others' situation … you've got to distance yourself from that kind of thing. That would be normal to them. So sacrificing babies, humans, to them that was just a way of life and if they were brought up in that culture, you wouldn't know any different … it's not something that we would obviously condone in this day and age. But not knowing any different, you can't really judge them on today's values and morals and our own personal values and morals, compared to what they were used to.

Myles reflected on the contingency of our cultural perspectives:

> I'm kind of conscious of how our way of life, it's quite sort of contingent, as it were. We kind of think of features of our own society and our own way of life as being kind of like the norm. But I guess we kind of forget that a lot of people live and have lived like, very differently, so our own cultural perspectives and stuff are just kind of, I'm not gonna say like historical accidents or anything, but they, they're such that they could so easily have been different. Or our own attitudes could easily have been different if we lived in a different time and place …

Blake considered that even though "it's a completely different cultural context", "it's hard not to place your twenty-first-century, Western humanistic you know, sort of thoughts on it all" and feel sympathy for "the sacrificial victims" and "the poverty that they lived in" and the fact that "the Spanish turned up, and so quickly dispatched them [laughs], that made me feel sorry for them as well".

These critical reflections echo Gorji's (2004) wish that museums might be spaces in which our understanding of civility is tested. Encountering objects and stories of ritualised violence from a distant culture led those who were willing to come *close enough* to reflect on violence that is closer to home—to see a common humanity—rather than maintaining a distance in time and space and insulating feelings with a sense of cultural superiority.[5]

The degree of empathy and compassion visitors felt for the Aztecs was reflected in their feelings and moral evaluations when they entered the penultimate segment of the exhibition. "Fall of the Empire" told the story of the encounter between Aztec society and the Spanish conquistadors through objects such as a Spanish suit of armour, a portrait of Hernán Cortés, and a painted screen depicting scenes from the Conquest. The armour was particularly memorable for many visitors. More than two months after his visit Gavin recalls his encounter:

> I remember looking at it and thinking "boy whoever wore that was actually not a physically very big person" … Yeah I thought "ohhh ok!" … But the actual contrast with everything else that was in there was quite striking like that suit kind of embodies the end of this whole Aztec Empire and there it is in one object, you know the end of the Aztecs, so that was quite striking.

[5] Present-day Mexicans also express a range of reactions towards sacrificial practices. Exploratory interviews conducted at the Templo Mayor museum and archaeological site found visitors there undertook similar meaning-making processes to their Australasian counterparts as they attempted to connect across difference with the Aztec "other" (Aguilera Ríos, Maldonado Méndez, and Pascual Cáceres 2017).

Ellinor noted the contrast also:

> it was just so bizarre … you'd been immersed in this culture which was, you know, about the seasons and harvests and sacrifice and so on and then suddenly you come across this massive piece of armour with all that engraving in it and you go "woah! That's just so foreign!" … It's completely foreign and it's kind of weird because you think well culturally, I'm sort of closer to that, because having been emerged in—immersed in the exhibition you really felt the sense of that being completely alien, and so it was good that it was there because it gave you that feeling of understanding that it would have been quite shocking, to see someone wearing something like that … and the horse's helmet as well, that was quite weird, just seeing—with the little eyes, uh! That was actually quite awful, it was quite spooky seeing that horse's armour … Yeah!

Ellinor starts with a sense of shock, jolted from her immersion in Aztec culture, to "that feeling of understanding" what it would have been like for an Aztec to see that, and a further interpretation in the juxtaposition of Aztec and Spanish weaponry—another illustration of how the coexistence of objects in space can create an atmosphere that makes ideas more tangible for visitors:

> And then to look in the same room to see that the armour and you know the feathers and the clubs that the Aztecs had and how that was just completely, mm yeah, so that was not going to work, was it?

Figure 4.13 Conquest section. Te Papa. Photograph courtesy of Te Papa.

This atmosphere gave visitors the impression that the Aztecs "didn't stand a chance"; they were "entirely outclassed" and suffered "absolute slaughter". They felt sad or angry at the Aztecs' demise—even many who had described the Aztecs as "bloodthirsty" or "violent"—judging the behaviour of the Spanish as "absolutely appalling", "sneaky", "devious"; "scumbags" who had "their own brand of brutality" and "a lot to answer for".

Basil, who talked about the Aztecs being "gruesome" and the "horror" of sacrifice, thought the Conquest was "jolly sad":

> To me it's a tragedy actually … that it was conquered in such a way, it's a blight on history … the destruction of a civilisation … and it's very revealing in one way I suppose of us as human species actually what we do to each other … because the history of the Aztecs is to be quite treasured.

Gemma was "irritated" and "angry" at how the Spanish destroyed the culture. She saw a "really weird contradiction" in the Aztecs being "quite a bloody kind of society" and yet "so trusting and welcoming of the white man" that "this 'savage' people, quote unquote, were completely decimated". Maggie also noted the "irony of it", "seeing that the Spanish had done to them what they'd done to quite a few others." Ellinor reflected that although Aztec culture "obviously wasn't pleasant" for its victims, at least they "understood what the rules were … whereas when the Spanish came it was complete sort of chaos".

While most saw the Conquest from the perspective of the Aztecs, a few visitors reflected on what the Spanish might have been seeing and thinking. Ellinor speculated that the Spanish acted as they did because they "didn't really see the Aztecs as people". Morgan tried to imagine both points of view and then what "we" might do if we were in Spanish shoes:

> The Spaniards must have found them so … entirely different, and the horrifying thing for an Aztec to have seen the Spaniards arrive in shiny silver and steel warrior outfits, armour and so forth, must … it really, the Aztecs didn't stand a chance … I can imagine them being quite horrified and overwhelmed by the human sacrifice component of the culture, and I can well imagine them going "Oh we've got to do something here!" So while—you know—we may not, we may, simplistically say the Spanish shouldn't have killed so many of the Aztecs, in reality, we probably would have … if we stumbled across a culture like that today with our United Nations' perception of the value of life and the way governments should treat their citizens and so forth, we may well do the same thing.

Reflecting back five months later, Morgan felt he "better understood how confronting the Aztec culture must have been to Christian Spaniards and they really would have believed that this is just totally an offensive culture that needed to be cleaned up, as much as the financial reward". Jo would have liked the exhibition to provide more information about "the Spanish version of events" as she thought it would have been interesting to know "what they thought they were doing at the time".

Like visitors to *E Tū Ake* in Mexico, *Aztecs* visitors were prompted by the exhibition themes to reach general moral evaluations about colonialism and its impacts. There was a sense of sadness and loss that a culture had been "wiped out" and Aztecs "don't exist anymore". To Natalie it was a familiar story of "Western dominance and [laughs] taking over of natives".

While Paula admired Aztec art, she thought the society was "pretty imperialist and stroppy" and "a bit like the British Empire". She felt "irritated" at "that sort of behaviour which seems to be inevitable with humankind". Despite her irritation, Paula did feel pity for the Aztecs "when their turn came". Rowan, a legal officer in his thirties living in Sydney, remembers feeling disgust and anger when reading about the Conquest and seeing parallels with the European settlement of Australia its impact on indigenous populations, particularly the "imposition of what's perceived to be a superior belief system … that's just, difficult to sort of stomach … if something like that were to occur today it'd be tantamount to a genocide".

For Andrés, as with the Mexicans looking at *E Tū Ake*, the story of the Conquest felt very personal and he related it to a loss of a "beautiful" culture, replaced by Spanish language and religion, and a resulting "confusion" about "where you are from" across South America. Marcus also felt the loss of cultural diversity and Indigenous knowledge. He and his friend imagined how different things could have been "if Europeans hadn't explored, if we'd just kind of left all the society groups we're thinking like Māori and Aztec as they were and we came across them now or something, how fascinating it would be, how rich and diverse it would be".

One visitor did not feel at all engaged with the exhibition. Lorraine, an antique dealer and avid museum goer in her sixties, was unimpressed by the temple and thought that compared to a previous touring exhibition at Te Papa, *A Day in Pompeii, Aztecs* was "very *removed*, you were looking at it as an observer, you weren't actually being part of it". She felt it lacked a "personalised perspective" whereby "you can actually start looking at the era through the eyes of the person once you understand this is their comb, this is their perfume bottle, this is their make-up, this is their pot, this is the chair they sat in". For her there was not

enough "about how people *lived* … things that actually start to engage you because then you can relate it to yourself and compare it to now".

Without the "imaginative engagement" (Appiah 2006) necessary to start a conversation, Lorraine felt no empathetic connection to the Aztecs, as either shared emotion or "perspective taking". She concluded that the Aztecs were "alien" and "very, very primitive". While others had compared them to contemporaneous societies and found parallels, Lorraine was struck by "the disparity with the development of the civilisations". In comparison to Europe in the 1500s which was "a lot more sophisticated", Aztec sculpture was "crude", "they sacrificed, all the jolly time" and:

> there didn't seem to be an understanding of sciences, there didn't seem to be an understanding of agriculture, their artwork was fairly rudimentary, so basically it was a pretty primitive society existing in isolation from other areas of the world that were highly developed, so that's my observation.

Beyond the museum: resonances and ripples of meaning

> I always feel that [Aztec culture is] quite lost, to Mexico, so it was actually really cool to see it is still there … the great temple might have been destroyed but the foundations are still there type of thing. I thought that had a bit of a poetic air to it.
>
> (Lisa)

What remains after the museum visit? By interviewing visitors days, weeks and in some cases, months after their visit, we gained insight into their lasting impressions and the ways in which ideas prompted by the exhibitions had created ripples that dispersed through, and resonated with, other aspects of their lives. This gives a deeper insight into the transformative potential of exhibitions in the context of people's lives, rather than their immediate reactions after a visit. Impressions of a country or culture come from many different sources—travel, movies, books, friends, video games, news media and conversations. In this way, exhibition themes and the "lessons" people take away are integrated into their existing narratives about their lives and the world they live in. In Chapter 5 we explore how the exhibitions influenced their impressions of the country of origin. Here we focus on exhibition-specific impressions.

A year after his visit Jorge felt that *E Tū Ake* "made him reflect on the importance of not discriminating the others": "He got this idea from seeing the Māoris, the way they respect each other … we should learn from the Māoris". *E Tū Ake* left Javier thinking about Indigenous groups in Mexico and "how

segregated they are". What made an impression on Sofia was the sense of "continuity" and that you could "tell a story" of an ethnic group without "cutting periods of time out". She also found it a "hopeful tale" rather than a tale of "victimisation". She had the strong sense that "these were not the objects … of a people subjected to injustice and then gone into decay", but that "something was alive and still".

While *E Tū Ake* left an impression of continuity, respect and survival, *Aztecs* left many visitors with the feeling of destruction and loss. *Aztecs* visitors often expressed a wish to know more about what happened post-colonisation, "how they mixed afterwards" and "if all that's been lost or or you know people still practise some of it". Russell thought he would "read up a bit more" on how Aztec culture has "been incorporated into Spanish-style culture in Mexico" as "the exhibition only just touched on that, right at the end". It was "not clear" to Caroline either whether Mexicans today are "majority descendants from the Aztecs or are the majority descendants from the Spanish … if they are still practising some of their customs".

Basil whose "interest comes in fact from being a farmer" had been reading a book about the collapse of civilisations and, more than eight months on from his visit, he connected this theme to *Aztecs* concluding that "there was a jolly lesson for mankind in this … looking at these civilisations, how they well the tribe survived, thrived, how they started and then how they perished". Kelly, on the other hand, had just finished reading an "apocalyptic" novel and her experience of the exhibition was "a continuation of a trend in my mind":

> that the more things change, the more things stay the same, so sacrifice aside, I would say that it's just bringing home—it's just in my mind anyway that whole, how fragile civilisations are … civilisations have literally just disappeared, extraordinary, so why are we any different?

She also thinks she would find out more about Cortés who she found "nasty" but "intriguing", his behaviour having a "correlation to all the politics we're seeing on a daily basis".

Laurence was very explicit about his strategy of visiting exhibitions in order to compare cultures to each other, particularly "how they function and why they failed" as well as "the religious connections". This gives him a "general impression of where the world was and how it worked". This makes him question perceptions of progress:

> the world has moved from cultures of extreme brutality in our eyes, to what it is today, but of course, have we improved much? And that's the question I ask, and probably not. Now brutality is higher today, it's

> more sophisticated … Yeah, to me that's always interesting, to see where the world was, and what it was about, where we've come from, what roots are there that still affect cultures today.

He speculates that:

> others would feel repelled by what they saw, but it's still going on today in modern forms through all sorts of other abuse. They don't rip the heart out, they rip the emotional heart out of people today. It's a different thing, but it's just as damaging.

Malcolm approaches exhibitions with "this mindset that at the heart of all humanity is certain fundamentals or cores that define who we are as people". This prompts him to look for "commonalities" between cultures, such as music:

> I guess I have that bias already in mind that the core of humanity essentially is the same … and then the differences might be, I guess, in some ways trivial, in some ways, not so much, I guess the human sacrifice is not so much similar, or rather trivial, I should say, I guess I would consider that to be a little bit more fundamental in terms of value of human life.

In this second interview, six months on, Malcolm elaborates on how his "bias" towards "a common theme for humanity" was reinforced by comparing Aztec with Egyptian civilisations: "you've got two yeah two civilisations completely separated, isolated from each other and yet they had come up with similar ideas on beliefs, their religion, society, death, life. I find that fascinating and interesting".

Blake, like a number of other visitors, feels the exhibition had a "good message" about "the impact of colonialism and imperialism on certain countries and cultures". He believes that "everyone needs to be conscious of that" and therefore the "wider that exhibit goes around the world, the better".

After his visit, Morgan spoke with others about "a lot of the key things" such as "the importance of life and death, the different categories of reward in death, so the way that you live and die". This led to a discussion on the influence of this on contemporary society:

> Apparently in Mexico there's still that latent, mythic culture from the Aztecs in Mexican people's lives today. It probably explains the … the way they treat life and treat other people's lives you know the gang wars that go on in Central America are probably explained again by a bit of that warrior culture and a willingness to die as a warrior, meaning that you'll get to a better place in the afterlife, and be more reckless

> with the value of your own life and the value of other people's lives in this life. Which we in the Western cultures … we don't understand. Why would you be so silly as to throw your life away like that? … but they're actually focused in a different way, again it's a different culture.

Other strong memories were associated with particular objects. Items purchased at the exhibitions shop, including catalogues, also provided poignant reminders for visitors. Some spoke of conversations with friends and family. All these examples reinforce existing evidence of the lasting and evolving character of visitor experience (Falk and Dierking 2012). Louisa even reflected on how the interview "makes me remember it more … I'm going to remember this exhibition very well when I think about it in ten years [laughs]".

Cosmopolitan visions: valuing international exhibitions

Knowing how visitors find relevance and relate exhibition themes to their everyday lives is informative not only for exhibition design, but also for wider questions addressed in this book, including the value of international exhibitions, how they might be promoted and their role in cultural diplomacy. Visitors to both exhibitions shared a number of insights relating to what they valued about visiting international exhibitions, many of which resonate with a cosmopolitan vision.

Ricardo noticed visitors were prompted by the themes of *E Tū Ake* to talk about aspects of their own culture "that probably they never had if they didn't come to see it":

> People were making comments like "would you do a tattoo on your lips or …?", "I don't know, maybe, it depends". They having this type of discussion or for example once there were two people talking about this losing your lands, or people taking away your lands, "would you give away your lands?" they were asking and the other person would say "well it depends on why or what for". But no, they had discussions and perspectives or points of view on that. Or … the part of the *wakas* … people were discussing "what do you think is our national representative sport? Now I think maybe the bullfighting", "but no, but bullfighting is killing an animal".

As well as learning about themselves, visitors, Ricardo felt, were "realising that there are people that are different from us … there's diversity and it's ok". He thinks museums have a crucial role in Mexico to change people's perceptions "about Indigenous people, about history" because the formal education system is "so bad".

A number of *Aztecs* interviewees talked about what could be learned from cultural comparisons. As Blake puts it, there is "a lesson for us all, that all cultures have those elements of similarity and differences and you've got to embrace them both".

Caroline, whose experience of *Aztecs* was of "going into another world", thinks we "should have more exhibitions like this … so that people can have a really good understanding of ancient civilisations and what you can learn from them". The exhibition encouraged Dina "to go to similar kinds of exhibitions in the future, because it's always valuable just to compare the way we live now and the way that people lived then":

> we really, really need more exhibits like this visiting … the more that Australia can be connected to the rest of the world the better … the more that we can see this kind of thing the better it is for our society … it would be nice to prompt Australians to think a little bit more about how they view their Indigenous culture here.

Sasha has a very similar opinion. He believes that more exhibitions like *Aztecs* would encourage people to change the way they view Indigenous cultures and realise that "there's so much to learn from them". Alex appreciates that the exhibition didn't "sanitise" or "romanticise" Aztec culture, "it was just quite plain and it was quite confronting". Javier was similarly impressed that *E Tū Ake* showed "not only the romantic aspect of the Māoris, but also this reality about New Zealand where there is a struggle and a social fight". He appreciated the opportunity to "get to know" that "as part of a reality".

Javier finds international exhibitions "very attractive and interesting" and feels that they are usually about "exhibiting objects" and visitors go because they want to see well-known objects in real life, such as *Tutankhamun*. But Javier finds that once you have seen the object, "the rest of the exhibition loses the purpose … and you start losing the excitement." *E Tū Ake*, however, "had a purpose. It had a message and a lesson to be learned at the end. … He really was involved in it. And he doesn't believe that any other similar international exhibition of ethnic groups, or anything that could be similar, he doesn't think that anything he has seen has left him with this feeling of 'I discover' or … a deep, deep message and deep understanding of what he was seeing beyond seeing just an object".

For Sofia:

> most exhibitions tend to talk about the objects. Or maybe try to tell a story but tell it in terms that are so complicated, so academic, maybe, that the story gets lost … you go and see the objects and say, "Oh that's a nice

> object", "oh that's a very old object" … but you don't sense there's an ending or a message or a … it doesn't really get you at all. So you get out of the exhibition and you're like, okay let's go eat [laughter] … What I felt with *E Tū Ake* was like a desire to share something, to say something.

She found encountering "this world where everything was moving and was alive" to be an affirming experience, providing evidence that "you can do things differently and there are Indigenous people who can have a different means of expression, a different means of surviving one generation after another, [rather] than just being [static]":

> I have been to many exhibitions during my life, but I remember a few that really impressed me … So one of them was this one … at the end you get this more vivid notion of you know the people they were trying to tell you about. You go out and you feel like—oh man, it's not I learned something, but I got in touch with something. More like that.

This chapter has explored how visitors experience the mobile contact zone, in particular how imagination is used to connect with the feelings and perspectives of others, across cultural distance. By acknowledging and imaginatively exploring difference, visitors make critical reflections and comparisons that identify the interconnectivity of different worlds. These processes may involve the ability to navigate strong and uncomfortable emotions, and to overcome initial, negative responses.

Various aspects of exhibition design facilitate this imaginative engagement in different ways. It seems important that exhibition developers recognise the range of strategies visitors use to connect with the cultural other, in particular, the way in which the cosmopolitan imagination might be exercised by *intercultural mimicry* through which visitors enter into the "imagined" universe of the cultural/historical other. This may be aided by first person or humanised narratives; the aura of "real" objects (allowing connection to people who made/used them); props and other design features that help to create a multi-sensory atmosphere that conveys cultural meanings through embodied experiences.

Asked if he thought anything, in particular, helped him to imagine being an Aztec, Harry puts it down to a combination of personal abilities or qualities and "the whole atmosphere of the place":

> It was really well done … the background sounds that they had on of the people, and just the way that they had like had set it up that you are kind of taken kind of through this journey of its creation in a sense too, as you leave, its destruction and then different parts like if you

> navigated it differently, you kind of see different aspects of it … whether or not it was specific to that exhibition or to me—I think I am quite empathetical [sic]… so I will take on the feelings of others maybe perhaps more than some. And I have a very overactive imagination so in that sense I could imagine myself *being* those people. So it was definitely like I felt comfortable enough to be able to do that … if it had been done badly I don't think I would have felt that connection.

In this *intercultural mimicry*, visitors are playing with their own identities and moral landscapes. Throughout the interviews, the link between mimicry as an interpretive performance and critical reflection is remarkably strong. And yet, while play is familiar—even instinctual—for all of us, some are more skilled or perhaps more inclined to play than others and, as with all games, the outcome will always be uncertain and varied. It is important, then, for developers of international exhibitions to appreciate that the visitor enters the exhibition with his/her own biography/background (travel, occupation, interests etc.) and an existing level of intercultural skills, including sensitivity to difference, curiosity, imagination, and the ability to manage emotions that arise from processes of putting oneself in the others' shoes and/or seeing through their eyes. As discussed earlier, some visitors had hybrid identities and therefore significant existing experience in seeing the world from multiple perspectives. Others, like Harry, were well practised at imagining themselves "as another" (Ricœur 1992). Recognising different levels of comfort with cultural difference can aid in designing exhibitions that cater for a range of intercultural skills, as well as considering elements that encourage visitors to relativise their own position and foster awareness of ambiguity and contradiction through, for example, playful activities, polyvocality and other prompts for "perspective taking" (Nilsen and Bader 2016), such as the text labels discussed in Chapter 3 (see Tables 3.4 and 3.5).

It is also worth repeating that transformation and cosmopolitan insight evolve over time—one exhibition alone is only ever likely to be yet another step in getting "used to one another" (Appiah 2006, 85). Laurence recognises this, describing it as a "personal journey":

> The more you look at it and compare, it doesn't happen in a moment, but there are moments when a light goes on, you say "I can see where that fits with that", but that only comes after a lot of looking. You don't get it with a cursory glance or a quick... you've got to compare over years with some things, till sometimes you say: "I see where that is."

Chapter 5

Connecting through the contact zone: cultural diplomacy and the value of international exhibitions

The hundreds of exhibitions that mobilise cultural heritage, art and professionals from one part of the world to another each year are generally driven by a combination of diplomatic, mission-related and market-oriented goals (see Chapter 1). In this chapter we focus on understanding the diplomatic dimension of international exhibitions, and its contribution to the ways in which international exhibitions are valued.

Culture has been used for political ends for centuries (Bound et al. 2007), however modern forms of cultural diplomacy, involving the exchange and display of cultural goods by nation states, began in the second half of the nineteenth century when world fairs and museums emerged as part of a new form of representation that Bennett (1995) calls the "exhibitionary complex". World fairs were complicated events that served multiple functions (Rydell 2006; Greenhalgh 1988). For nations like Mexico they "were a training field for a big bureaucratic apparatus that would shape the emerging cultural institutions" (Tenorio-Trillo 1996). Although they were focused more on propaganda than on mutual understanding, world fairs can be understood to be primarily national image-building exercises that established ideas that would, in the long run, become 'what is Mexican', 'what is French', 'what is Spanish', etc. They were a mix of exhibitions on science, industry and economic aspects, but in national pavilions, culture was also on display. More than a hundred and fifty years after the first world fair held in London in 1851, Expos—as they are known today—are events where national branding is taken to its maximum expression, as economic, political and touristic interests are intertwined with the presentation and representation of cultural elements.

During the twentieth century, the exchange and display of cultural goods to improve international relations moved beyond promotion or propaganda. Culture began to be considered as a medium to soften friction between nations by promoting dialogue and understanding (UNESCO 1963). Post-World War Two, UNESCO's advisers for museums and exhibitions encouraged international exchange as a means of contributing toward this general purpose

(McCann Morley 1950, 55). To promote international exhibitions, UNESCO published a *Manual of Travelling Exhibitions*, with advice for their organisation, including crating, transportation, installation and insurance. The manual sold out and a revised edition was published in 1963 (UNESCO 1963).

Numerous examples now exist of national governments supporting exhibitions either directly or indirectly in order to create favourable impressions, counter negative images abroad and/or provide conduits for political negotiation and dialogue (Villanueva Ulfgard 2012; Flamini 2014; Hoogwaerts 2016; Villanueva Rivas 2009a; Wallis 1994). The assumption by national governments, as well as organising museums and funding bodies, is that exhibitions and other cultural performances allow engagement with the heritage of others and enable us to find "points of commonality and difference, and the means to understand one another" (Bound et al. 2007, 26). This type of cultural diplomacy depends upon the global networks and partnerships between museums, which involve relationship building, negotiation and reciprocity (Flamini 2014) (see Chapter 2).

The first challenge in examining the role of international exhibitions in cultural diplomacy is unravelling the seemingly endless debates about what it is, who does it and why. In Chapter 1 we mapped out this theoretical terrain, suggesting it was an important component of an interdisciplinary analytical approach to international exhibitions. In the first section of this chapter we pick up this thread and consider in more detail aspects of the theoretical debate that are most relevant for understanding the diplomatic work of museums.

This opens the way to explore the extent to which cultural diplomacy was an important facet of the exhibition exchange at the heart of this book. The first step is an overview of the national agendas and key characteristics of New Zealand and Mexican cultural diplomacy. We then explore, through the perspectives of professionals involved in this project, the extent to which they saw themselves as *doing* diplomacy when they were engaged in this work. What combination of personal, institutional and cosmopolitan values underpinned their activities? What kinds of practices were involved and what skills did it require? When and how did this work intersect with state-sponsored cultural diplomacy?

The final section of the chapter explores perceptions of the value of international exhibitions—not only as a tool for diplomatic agendas, but also in terms of their interconnected market-oriented and mission-related goals. This raises the prickly question of how this value might be measured. The language of success has broad implications for how the current and future roles of international exhibitions are framed.

Cultural diplomacy explained: theory, debates and the role of museums

The difficulty with defining cultural diplomacy stems in large part from the plethora of closely related terms applied to various practices used for the "management of the international environment" (Cull 2009). These include 'public diplomacy', 'soft power', 'national branding' and 'propaganda'. For Mark (2010), not having a precise definition is related to the lack of agreement about cultural diplomacy's objectives, practitioners, activities, timeframe and whether or not the practice is reciprocal. The inclusiveness of Cummings' (2013) oft-cited definition—that cultural diplomacy is "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding"—perhaps exacerbates the problems.

Mark (2010, 63–64) offers a more precise definition: that cultural diplomacy is a diplomatic practice of governments, carried out in support of a government's foreign policy goals or its diplomacy (or both), usually involving directly or indirectly the government's foreign ministry, mobilising a wide range of manifestations of the culture of the state which the government represents, targeted at the general population as well as elites. His emphasis on a state role appears, on the face of it, to exclude many international exhibitions from the formal realm of cultural diplomacy.

While cultural diplomacy is still perceived to be most appropriately implemented and coordinated by a country's ministry of foreign affairs in cooperation with a ministry of culture (EUNIC 2016, 2–3), non-state actors have been taking an increasingly active role (Goff 2015b; EUNIC 2016; Ang, Isar, and Mar 2015). At the same time there is a growing call for museums to be more involved in cultural diplomacy (Bound et al. 2007), and in particular to become key actors in a "new cultural diplomacy" that bypasses a state-centred, top-down approach, using tools such as social media to communicate directly with international audiences and facilitate "cross-cultural experiences that bring different nations together in an engaging international community" (Grincheva 2013, 45).

Museums have most often aligned themselves with the more idealistic goals of cultural diplomacy, such as promoting mutual understanding (Tarasoff 1990), with some suspicions existing with regards to the instrumentalisation of culture for advancing national economic or political agendas. Negative views of cultural diplomacy often stem from its association with "colonialism, imperialism, propaganda, and the unethical and immoral practices associated with such activity" (Nisbett 2013, 558). Nisbett's (2013) research suggests that far from becoming the pawns of governments, by aligning themselves with national foreign policy agendas and participating in cultural diplomacy initiatives, museums are successfully pursuing their own institutional goals, including attracting significant funding and influencing cultural policy to

their advantage. Cai (2013, 127), on the other hand, cautions that while museum exchanges "can serve as symbolic gestures of political goodwill, their effectiveness in shaping the preferences of other nations … is limited". And while their original intentions may not be political, their consequences may well be, given the unequal power relations that are often involved.

More recently there has been a call to frame the international work of museums, including exhibitions, as a tool of "soft power" (Lord and Blankenberg 2015). The concept of soft power was coined by Nye (2002) in the 1990s to make sense of the foreign policy options available to the US in the post-Cold War era. Soft power is the ability to pursue national interests in the international arena using attraction and persuasion rather than coercive economic or military strategies (Cull 2009, 60). The concept, however, is most relevant in a US context and while it has helped to diversify diplomatic options at the level of national security, it is problematic in terms of the relationship between hard and soft power, as well as perceptions of cultural imperialism (Cull 2009).

Villanueva's (in Siqueiros 2015, 6) approach is helpful in terms of better understanding soft power in relation to other diplomatic approaches involving culture. He conceptualises cultural diplomacy as "a specialised field of diplomacy, which has as the key role of representing the symbols and identity of the nation and society abroad in order to achieve three possible goals: promoting cultural events; activation of cultural cooperation, especially in the intellectual field and educational exchanges; and the ability to build an attractive discourse on the nation, to attract the interest of international actors".

Villanueva (2015, 12–13) distinguishes three current profiles of cultural diplomacy: soft power, national brand, and cosmopolitanism. The first two approaches are related to what he calls instrumental realism, because they pursue national and corporate interests. The third takes a reflexive position with the promotion of national culture considered both an end in itself and a means of understanding one's own national identity in relation to other cultural identities at a global level. Villanueva (2010) advocates for Cosmopolitan Constructivism:

> defined as the recognition that the construction of a peaceful community of states matters as the highest goal for diplomacy, and that governments must make use of cultural and public diplomacies as mechanisms to collaborate in the common understanding of their own cultures, diversities and differences. Put simply, Cosmopolitan Constructivism aims at constructing long-lasting friendly relations among states by inviting their societies to learn from each other in the construction of cosmopolitan cultural attitudes.

Concerns have been raised regarding the limitations of national expressions of culture at a time when other identities—local, regional and global—are on the ascendency. Todorov (2007) distinguishes between cultural nationalism—ethnic entities—and civic nationalism—political entities. He claims that while the two forms are strongly linked, they are not always coincidental: a nation as a culture—a group of persons that share certain characteristics—may only partially coincide with a nation as a state—a country differentiated from others by political borders. If cultural diplomacy adopts a similar image for both entities, this could be problematic. Meanwhile, Mason (2006, 21) reflects on whether national museums are becoming irrelevant because of their "traditional association with concepts of the nation and place-bounded identities" but concludes that they are "more than capable of telling stories that resonate with new, contemporary, and cosmopolitan ways of being in the world".

Cultural diplomacy, then, presents an official view of culture, for official purposes and offers the opportunity to make a coordinated cultural impact abroad (Mark, 2010, 241), which may be national and/or cosmopolitan in its intent. Museums are potentially implicated in the practice of cultural diplomacy at a number of levels: directly as government agencies specifically funded to undertake cultural diplomacy programmes; indirectly supporting foreign policy objectives by co-operating with diplomatic agencies while also pursuing their own agendas; or they may undertake international activities for their own diplomatic purposes.

In light of this, we follow Goff's (2015b) recommendation of applying practice theory in order to better understand this hybrid form of diplomacy, allowing us to look for what it *does* instead of what it *is*. As Berger (2008, 4) argues, cultural diplomacy is called 'diplomacy' "Not because it is the work that diplomats should do, but because it is an interaction that requires diplomatic skills on a human level". In this respect, it might be possible to envision a community of practice, created by museum professionals producing and touring international exhibitions, that applies diplomatic skills in order to achieve cosmopolitan ends.

National agendas and the role of governments: Aotearoa New Zealand and Mexico in brief

National foreign policy agendas and related government agencies provide an important context within which international exhibitions take place, irrespective of how directly they are involved in formal cultural diplomacy programmes. Although the relevance and power of nation states has been seen as declining compared with corporations and supranational powers, and the proliferation of free trade agreements has contributed to a less regulated transit of goods, even cultural ones, working in this arena still requires muse-

ums to deal with national laws and regulations, foreign affairs and cultural ministries, and embassies.

Cultural diplomacy in Aotearoa New Zealand

For a small country like Aotearoa New Zealand, cultural diplomacy may be an effective way of raising an international profile (Mark 2010, 2008). Like its near neighbour Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand suffers a "reputational deficit", or a generally positive but limited image abroad, largely based on a "tourist image of leisure and landscape" (Carter 2015, 480). It is not surprising, then, that in both Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia official cultural diplomacy policies are focused on enhancing the national image abroad.

While Aotearoa New Zealand has been involved in international cultural relations since the nineteenth century, it was not until 1943 that the country established a separate ministry for foreign affairs and began building a professional diplomatic service. In its first few decades, the ministry had no dedicated budget for cultural diplomacy and undertook only a limited amount of cultural activity with ad hoc funds (Mark 2008). In the 1970s a Cultural Exchange Programme was established to enhance bilateral relationships with countries of political, economic and defence importance, at the same time as presenting Aotearoa New Zealand's artistic achievements to the world and exposing New Zealanders to overseas artistic influences. Over time, the programme became more heavily focused on projecting "the New Zealand personality" abroad, rather than two-way exchanges (Mark 2010, 76).

From Aotearoa New Zealand's early participation in international exhibitions, Māori culture has played a key role in the country's projection of an image of itself abroad. At the Paris exhibition in 1889, for example, alongside various samples of minerals, wool, hemp, kauri gum, birds, photographs and agricultural products, Aotearoa New Zealand presented a group of four Māori figures modelled from wax and "dressed with mats, spears, &c, of Native manufacture" (*Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1889, H-52, p. 1). According to the Colonial Secretary F. D. Bell, the Māori group "at once became the greatest attraction of the court, and are always surrounded by a crowd." At the White City exhibition in London in 1911, a Māori village and theatre was, according to Greenhalgh (1988, 93), "by far the most popular and unusual attraction" among the native villages on display. While Victorian era exhibitions have been harshly critiqued as products of colonialism and "imperial violence" (Greenhalgh 1988, 94), McCarthy (2007, 38) has drawn attention to the ways in which Māori, "by participating in local and international fairs … saw themselves as partners in colonial development rather than as subjects of it". The exhibitions were, he argues, "a compromise between

the scientific order of carefully arranged specimens, the romantic allure of foreign peoples and the commercial spectacle of material possessions" (McCarthy 2007, 34).

The legacy of Māori participation in international exhibitions as a means of advancing their own cultural and political agendas is evident a century later in one of the most pivotal moments in Aotearoa New Zealand's cultural diplomacy: the exhibition *Te Maori* (see Chapter 3). A total of 621,000 visitors saw *Te Maori* in the US and it attracted widespread media coverage (Hanham 2000). In the aftermath of *Te Maori* visitor arrivals to Aotearoa New Zealand increased by 21 percent for three years, and the rates of visitors from the exhibition's host states in the US were even higher (Mark 2008, 173). The country's foreign ministry played a crucial role in facilitating the international tour of *Te Maori*. The government's objectives were to raise Aotearoa New Zealand's profile as a country of growing strategic importance, to provide a platform to further explore trade, investment and tourism interests, and to enhance the prestige of Māori as the Indigenous people (Mark 2008). As Mark (2008, 134–35) explains:

> The exhibition was used by New Zealand diplomats to advance New Zealand interests in the United States, by showing an aspect of New Zealand with which Americans were unfamiliar, and by showing Americans that New Zealand had a cultural aspect to it that was on a par with the great cultures of the world. The exhibition was used by some Maori to use the power of international recognition for the benefit of Maori interests at home, to improve the mana and power of Maori in New Zealand, and to change the relationship between Maori and Pakeha.

In another significant initiative, the government invested NZ$9 million in capitalising on the international success of *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy—made in Aotearoa New Zealand and directed by New Zealander Peter Jackson in the late 1990s and early 2000s—to promote the country's landscapes and technological innovation to the world. Of this, NZ$1.25 million contributed to the development, by Te Papa, of *The Lord of the Rings Motion Picture Trilogy—The Exhibition* (Mark 2008). Between 2003 and 2007 the exhibition toured to eight venues, across Europe, the US, Australia and Singapore, with an international audience of over one million (Te Papa 2008).

Citing both *Te Maori* and *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy, Mark (2008) draws our attention to the way in which international cultural success can have important domestic impacts. Both contributed, he argues, to Aotearoa New Zealand's sense of being a "unique" and "well-defined" community, and

in the case of *Te Maori,* a recognition that Māori culture was an important part of that distinctiveness and sense of identity (Mark 2008, 231–32).

Figure 5.1 Opening ceremony of *Te Maori*, Metropolitan Museum, New York, September 1984 (Mobil).

With the establishment of a new Cultural Diplomacy International Programme (CDIP) in 2004, the government sought explicitly to develop cultural programmes that projected "a distinctive profile of New Zealand as a creative and diverse society with a unique, contemporary culture strongly rooted in its diverse heritage" (Mark 2008, 153). The programme's aims were not mutual understanding, rather, it was set up as "an instrumental programme … [to] help in the achievement of New Zealand foreign policy goals" (Mark 2008, 160). In terms of museum activity supported by the programme, Te Papa received funding to develop the exhibition *New Zealand, New Thinking,* focused on innovative technologies and creative industries, that toured four large shopping malls in major centres in China in 2007.

The new emphasis on an updated, "modern" image had implications for the role of Māori in cultural diplomacy. For instance, Te Papa was declined CDIP funding for the exhibition *Mauri Ora*—in some respects a successor to *Te Maori*—that travelled to Japan in 2007 (see Chapter 3) because it was not perceived as being sufficiently contemporary (Mark 2008). Subsequently, however, Te Papa was granted funding to support an exhibition exchange with the National Museum of China (NMC). In its successful application, Te Papa

explicitly stated that their aim in sending two exhibitions was "to further the Government's broader aims for the China relationship",[1] in particular, to support events marking the fortieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Aotearoa New Zealand and China. Both exhibitions—*Brian Brake: Lens on China and New Zealand,* a photographic exhibition, and *Kura Pounamu: Treasured stone of Aotearoa New Zealand,* about the importance of jade in Māori culture—focused on themes that connected the two countries. In 2014, the NMC reciprocated by sending two exhibitions to Te Papa.[2]

Cultural diplomacy in Mexico

According to Villanueva (2009b, 11), Mexican cultural diplomacy has traditionally followed one of two strategies: either a soft power strategy utilising folkloric and exotic forms, adapted to foreign policy goals through a national branding strategy; or cultural cosmopolitanism based on cooperation and international education exchanges, at which Mexico has been particularly successful.

Like Aotearoa New Zealand, Mexico has been involved in international cultural relations since the nineteenth century. William Bullock's *Ancient Mexico* exhibition in London in the 1820s (see Chapter 3) was made possible by the Mexican authorities and local intelligentsia, who were "more than helpful" in making artefacts from their Pre-Columbian past available to him (Medina Gonzalez 2011, 103). Post-Independence Mexico was seeking support and recognition internationally and, as Bullock explains in his exhibition guide, the new Mexican government "was anxious to diffuse knowledge of Spanish America and to cultivate intercourse with Europe". The exhibition was, then, an early example of the "intersection between nationalistic and imperialistic agendas" (Medina Gonzalez 2011, 103–4).

Mexico's subsequent involvement in world fairs was an opportunity to portray itself as a modern nation and helped to create a Mexican nationalism that largely persists to this day (Tenorio-Trillo 2010), including the re-evaluation of the Aztec people as the "true antecedent of the Mexican modern nation" (Tenorio-Trillo 1996, 75). Mexico's exhibits at these international events also acted as a training ground for the large cultural bureaucracy required to select, structure, transport, install and manage these substantial enterprises. Both the nineteenth-century world fairs and their twentieth-century counter-

[1] Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade application for Cultural Diplomacy International Programme funding for the Te Papa Project', 2012. Cited in Bayly-McCredie (2017, 64).

[2] For a detailed discussion of the Te Papa-NMC partnership and exhibition exchange see Bayly-McCredie (2017).

parts have therefore attracted scholarly attention for their interconnected roles in the formation of national identity and the professionalisation of the museum field (Galindo Monteagudo 2012).

The Mexican system of cultural administration took shape in the post-Revolution period (see Chapter 2). Since that time, INAH has participated intensively in cultural exchange. Between 1988 and 2012, sixty-eight Mexican pre-Hispanic exhibitions travelled the world, presented in 148 venues. Mexica and Mayas have been the most commonly portrayed cultures (Soraiz Guizar 2015). While there have been moves towards developing strategies to represent the broader cultural diversity of Mexico internationally, these intentions have not been fully realised (Pérez Castellanos 2013).

Critics have noted the ways in which the promotion of Mexican culture abroad has been intertwined with political and economic intentions (Mewburn 1998; Wallis 1994). Indeed, the Mexican government's utilisation of culture for foreign policy goals is generally acknowledged and viewed as positive by public officials (Villanueva Ulfgard 2012; Villanueva Rivas 2009a). It was during the presidency of López Mateos (1958–1964) that the long tradition of Mexican cultural diplomacy became more institutionalised, assisted by a number of key cultural figures who were also politically active (Villanueva Ulfgard 2012, 190). One of these was Fernando Gamboa, a cultural promoter, bureaucrat and manager who worked closely with top-level government officials for many years on international exhibitions that helped to mould the country's image abroad. The main concept behind Gamboa's curatorial approach and exhibition design was the idea of an uninterrupted line of Mexican artistic tradition, from ancient to modern times (Gaitán 1991). For this purpose, he selected four aspects of Mexico's artistic heritage: pre-Hispanic artworks, colonial art, the folkloric element represented by popular art, and modern art (Molina 2013, 286).

Gamboa worked on 135 exhibitions touring Mexican art and culture to prestigious institutions on five continents, beginning in 1952 with *Art Mexicain du Précolombien à Nos Jours* presented at the Musée National d'Art Moderne in Paris (see Chapter 1). The opening of this exhibition was attended by high-level representatives from both countries, recognising support for the exhibition from Mexico's president and ministries of foreign affairs and education, in cooperation with the Director of Cultural Relations at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Gamboa 1991, 66). A subsequent iteration of this exhibition was shown at the 1958 Brussels International Exhibition where it complemented the Mexican commercial pavilion and assisted in promoting the country's export goods (Revista Tiempo 1991, 76). In 1960, the same model was used for an exhibition, entirely funded by the Mexican government, that toured thirteen European venues with the purpose of preceding visits by President López Mateos (Malvido 1991, 88). Gamboa himself, along with oth-

er scholars, attributed to this series of exhibitions very specific political achievements, from obtaining credit from French companies to build Mexico City's subway to the country's selection to host the 1968 Olympic Games (Malvido 1991; Ortega Orozco 2016).

In 1964, the President asked Gamboa to produce another exhibition. *Mexican portrait,* funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SRE), travelled to twenty countries over sixteen years (Malvido 1991, 89). Gamboa's "particular view of Mexico" (Molina 2013) is still influential, with exhibitions ranging from *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries* in the 1990s to the Hanover International Exhibition in the 2000s following the same format. He is also credited with demonstrating to the global museum world that highly valuable artworks can be toured safely (Malvido 1991). The beginnings of Mexico's reciprocity model of international exhibitions have also been traced to this period.

The institutional system supporting cultural diplomacy in Mexico that evolved throughout the twentieth century is highly complex. At least three state entities are involved in the promotion of art and culture abroad: the cultural area within the SRE (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), the Directorate of International Relations at the former Conaculta (now the Ministry of Culture), and specific departments inside INAH and INBA. The cultural area within SRE lost prominence when Conaculta was created in 1989. Today it is the Ministry of Culture that is responsible for setting the agenda to promote Mexico abroad, while SRE is responsible for the international management of those activities through its seventy-five cultural attachés and eleven cultural institutes throughout the world. INBA and INAH are responsible for content and technical matters. Perhaps not surprisingly, the field of Mexican cultural diplomacy has been critique for lacking coordination, consistency and continuity (Ortega Guerrero 2008; Villanueva Rivas 2015). Some of the personnel working on these tasks within certain parts of the system—for instance at INAH's CNME—do not view their international work as a form of cultural diplomacy.

Museum diplomacy in practice: the international relations of *E Tū Ake* and *Aztecs*

While the exhibition exchange with Mexico sat outside Aotearoa New Zealand's formal programme of cultural diplomacy, its diplomatic agencies and foreign policy environment played a crucial role, including growing government interest in strengthening ties with Latin America. The two countries have had formal diplomatic relations since 1973, with Mexico being Aotearoa New Zealand's largest trading partner in Latin America for more than twenty years. In August 2000 the New Zealand government launched a Latin America strategy aimed at increasing its engagement with the region through "trade, tourism, investment, student, scientific and academic exchanges and collabo-

ration, and international and regional co-ordination and cooperation" (Mark, 2008, p. 150). Within the scope of the strategy were exchanges in the areas of the media, arts and culture, science and education, and sports (Mark, 2008). During the first decade of the twenty-first century bilateral trade between Mexico and Aotearoa New Zealand doubled, and there was a "dramatic upsurge" in cultural and educational links (Aranda 2010, 15). In 2007, President Felipe Calderón visited Aotearoa New Zealand and pledged his commitment to an ongoing strengthening of ties, while Prime Minister John Key made a similar commitment in Mexico City in March 2013, a few months before the opening of *Aztecs* in Wellington (Key 2013; Aranda 2010).

Since opening in 1998, Te Papa's evolving touring exhibitions programme and international strategy, which led to the exchange, has been implicated in government cultural diplomacy initiatives, while at the same time being intertwined with market-oriented and mission-related objectives. The *Lord of the Rings* exhibition, developed with government funding and national promotion objectives, kick-started Te Papa's activity on the international touring scene. Hay described it as "semi-commercial, but very very high profile for New Zealand and New Zealand Inc." Based on the success of *Lord of the Rings*, the New Zealand government gave Te Papa specialist capital funding, which the museum then used to develop the exhibition *Whales | Tohorā* which has been touring North America since 2007, drawing blockbuster audiences and critical acclaim. Besides its clear commercial success, *Whales | Tohorā* delivers a bicultural message, as Hay explains:

> it's a natural history show, it's a cross-generational family show, it is primarily a science show, but it is very much also wrapped in the bicultural context which is really what Te Papa's mandate's about.

According to Roberts-Thompson, much of the positive response to *Whales | Tohorā* is the inclusion of "a Māori concept and *taonga* Māori—that's actually what people want to see … Because that's what's different from anywhere else in the world … you have all these stories from an Indigenous perspective that sit alongside the science and it works".

Although *E Tū Ake*'s predecessor, *Mauri Ora*, had been declined CDIP funding, it nonetheless involved "high end diplomatic engagement", as Smith puts it, "There's a lot of negotiating to be done and there was a lot of pressing the flesh going on in regards to getting those relationships established in the first place." Then Chief Executive Cheryl Sotheran enlisted the help of freelance curator Alexa Johnston who "was close friends with the then ambassador for New Zealand to Tokyo and his wife who is Japanese. So it's all about people knowing people and then pulling those threads together".

When Japanese museum staff visited Aotearoa New Zealand as part of the exchange, "we went hard out on the *manaakitanga*" Smith explains. "They got taken around the country … We really did 'pour it on' as far as hosting them was concerned. And so similarly when they reciprocated with us, gosh, did they look after us … It was just amazing. So that facilitated the beginning of a really strong relationship with Tokyo. I know from that experience that Te Papa could work in Japan anywhere".

Roberts-Thompson (TP) visited Tokyo with Te Papa *Kaihautū* Te Taru White to make arrangements for the opening ceremony for *Mauri Ora* and brief museum staff on the necessary protocol. For a ceremony that would "take no longer than an hour" it was felt that they "needed to invest that much effort and resource" to make sure everyone would be comfortable and understand what was happening. The ceremony took place at dawn on an icy, cold "stunning morning". The Māori King Tuheitia was there with a small delegation of his people "and that really blew the Japanese away— 'Wow, you've got a king. Well, your king must meet our emperor'", Smith recalls.

Roberts-Thompson (TP) agrees that opening events had a high impact:

> The media, everything, it was like, "oh my goodness." There's a station in Tokyo, it's the main station, and we had a performing group … two days out and throughout the programme … ten million people walk through that railway station in the morning and so that was the audience. They like just … Stopped in awe of, "what's going on here?"

According to Hay, the same government fund used for *Whales | Tohorā* contributed to the capital development of *E Tū Ake* and was therefore "very key to it happening in the first place". *E Tū Ake* was intended to have an impact in terms of challenging global audiences' perceptions of Indigenous people by Māori representing themselves as a vibrant "living" culture, as well as influencing museum practice relating to the care and display of Indigenous collections (see Chapter 3).

Smith says she was always interested in using the *taonga* in Te Papa's collection to "link in with all these people around the world". She believes *taonga* are particularly powerful in forging connections because they "resonate spiritually" and affect people, and that they were instrumental in ensuring that relationships in Japan "were so well-cemented".

> I understand that when the *taonga* did leave Tokyo, most of the staff were crying. It does have quite a strong human impact, and I've seen that happen many times … it tends to move people at that human, emotional level. People may not understand exactly what's going on,

> but they think, "Oh, the hairs on the back of my neck have gone up," or "I'm feeling all kind of tingly".

In an example of overlapping civic and ethnic nationalisms, *taonga* serve as ambassadors not only for Te Papa and "NZ Inc", but for Māori themselves. Roberts-Thompson and Hakaraia, from Te Papa's Iwi Relationships Team, are responsible for liaising with *iwi* who are the traditional owners of *taonga* in Te Papa's collection. *Iwi* agreement is required for any *taonga* to travel. Some *taonga* in *Mauri Ora* and *E Tū Ake* were out of the country for a long time. Roberts-Thompson describes the reactions of some *iwi*:

> "That means we actually have to travel to the other side of the world to see it." And you can hear that in people's voices when they respond to you. You're like, "Yes that's a very valid point, but it also means that you as a tribe and a people are actually being considered and talked about on the other side of the world because of that *taonga* and the story and your connection to it," you know?

Both women agree that *iwi* are "quite astute at seeing the opportunities that can come from their *taonga* travelling around the world and their story being shared in some way" particularly if the exhibition includes material "that's written in their voice" or "images of them today with their *taonga*": "that's their presence and ownership and connection that gets to travel". As Smith puts it, Māori are both Indigenous *and* a "global people".

Sandahl is a strong advocate for Te Papa's biculturalism and its potential global impact, and believes the museum "could within the museum world take a much stronger position":

> I think in some ways [that] could become a broader concept than biculturalism, but it's the 'living with difference' which Europe finds really really hard. We're not good at living with difference. Equal world views that are not identical, we find that really really hard. So that ability to negotiate respectfully in conflict and disagreement and difference I think is something where Te Papa and New Zealand could position itself *really* strongly in a global situation. I don't know anyone who does it as well. And living there, we all know that this is not perfect and da-da-da-da-da—we all know that—but it's *way* better than anyone else is doing it. *Way* better than anyone else is doing it. And people don't know that outside of New Zealand.

When seeking venues for international exhibitions—even when not part of a formal cultural diplomacy programme—Te Papa gets advice from senior government officials and considers national interests and political sensitivities. This includes, as Garrett explains, "what city's best for the New Zealand trade agenda or whatever. It's x and we can meet y through our ambassador and all that sort of diplomatic stuff".

There were discussions about routing *Mauri Ora* to a Chinese venue on its return from China, although this didn't eventuate. Subsequently there were "very high level" discussions with China about the possibility of hosting *E Tū Ake*, but given the political content of the exhibition the advice was, as Garrett put it, "caution at least was the thing, which is why we're much better off going with *[Kura] Pounamu* and *Brian Brake*". Garrett explains the museum's sensitivity to general foreign policy contexts when making decisions about international exhibitions and where to send them:

> the conversation with Japan, China, Southeast Asia, I suppose the new economies really, intersect with a desire in New Zealand to make sure that our economy is working with these successful [neighbouring] economies … Things like that. So what I'm saying, I guess, is that these sorts of initiatives and activities and excursions actually click into other people's higher thinking about how to form relationships and strengthen relationships and keep them going and so on. And it's pretty evident that a meeting around a cultural experience is apparently a jolly good way to start talking about—what about some more milk or something [laughs]. So there's all sorts of connections here … we were also very interested in France and it was Rugby World Cup year[3] and France was a key target in terms of tourism. So again an economic strand if you like to position the thing.

In developing *E Tū Ake*, Te Papa staff were conscious of its role as an ambassador for their country. Hervé Michaud (Writer, TP) describes working on the exhibition as "amazing" because of the level of energy and enthusiasm he encountered within the museum for the project. He attributes this to the "theme of the exhibition [and] to the fact that it was touring": "everybody was keen to help and everybody could see the importance of getting it right".

[3] New Zealand hosted the Rugby World Cup in 2011. New Zealand narrowly beat France in a nail-biting final.

Managing the touring side of the exhibition, Kent and Hay both saw their work as diplomatic in the sense of the "delicate relationships that we're brokering with the venue[s]". This informed how they dealt with any issues that arose, as Hay explains:

> We're trying to build long-standing relationships so these people respect us, view us as friends, will talk to other colleagues and say, "Look Te Papa's just amazing to work with", will want to work with us again, all that sort of stuff. That's what we're in the game of doing. That drives how we then deal with the situation.

While overseeing installations at host venues, Kent sees himself and his team as having an ambassadorial role when interacting with the "local crew". He views it as "an opportunity for us to sell our country while we're away as well and tell them about New Zealand" and "to talk about the culture … and then, of course, they go away and they tell their friends and so on and so on".

Hay described Chief Executive Michael Houlihan (2009–2014) as "very focused on a quite bold international strategy". While this strategy was not directly determined by a government agency, Te Papa's efforts to build an international brand took the general foreign policy context into account. Wen Powles, an experienced diplomat, was seconded to the national museum from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) specifically to help develop the international strategy. Powles, who was subsequently appointed as International Strategy Advisor at Te Papa, commented that "In everything that I did I was thinking of Te Papa and how we could make this wonderful museum go out there and have a big name for itself". Describing Houlihan's policy orientation, Powles said:

> he saw that Te Papa's international branding and international presence could be strengthened on the strong base it already had in terms of the Māori presence—e.g., the repatriation work that Te Papa does and its exhibitions that have gone overseas. *E Tū Ake* and some other ones had already left a good footprint, particularly in the United States, Europe (Quai Branly) and Canada so that that was such a good basis to build on. But to do that we needed not just to go to those more 'traditional' markets if you like, easier markets to deal with because they have less of a cultural difference with New Zealand, less of a language difference, but tried to break into really challenging markets but markets that are important for New Zealand as a country.

Te Papa's Annual Report of 2012–13 (2013a, 2) states that its "international activities are aligned with government priorities and are supported wholeheartedly by New Zealand's diplomatic representatives around the world, and partner country representatives in Wellington". The latter half of 2012 saw five Te Papa exhibitions crossing international borders: *E Tū Ake* crossed into Canada after leaving Mexico; *Whales | Tohorā* moved down to the Cleveland Museum of Natural History after a stint in Ottawa; two exhibitions flew into Beijing to go on display at the NMC, and a small art exhibition was en route to the Shanghai Art Museum. Hay explained how each exhibition fulfilled "different missions", with the China exhibitions, supported by the CDIP, "very much about Te Papa serving New Zealand in the cultural ambassadorial role, and opening up doors into very senior museums". Venues paid a fee for *Whales | Tohorā* and looked to attract high visitation in order to recoup their costs. While *E Tū Ake* was a fee-based exhibition for venues in Paris and Quebec City, with all venues covering the cost of freight (see Chapter 2), Hay explains that:

> These fees really don't by any means cover even direct, let alone, the internal overhead cost of developing an exhibition like this— [it's] pretty substantial, you can imagine. So they're really about doing cultural diplomacy and serving New Zealand in that wider context of giving people insight and appetite for understanding New Zealand culture, and in particular with *E Tū Ake*, Māori culture and the journey of Māori really.

Bringing *Aztecs* to New Zealand depended on government support and cooperation. The New Zealand Embassy in Mexico was involved from the beginning of the negotiations. Te Papa had a relationship with MFAT that Fox describes as "critical right at the beginning", particularly through the New Zealand Ambassador in Mexico who "did amazing work for us in terms of trying to engage senior officials in the cultural sector in Mexico at the time. I can't overstate how important that relationship was". In April 2010, Fox travelled to Mexico City with senior colleagues from Te Papa, as well as Howarth from Australian Museum, to formalise the request for *Aztecs* and meet top officials at INAH. The New Zealand Embassy facilitated communications, acted as host for meetings and provided a courier for the original letter of intent. Over the period of the exchange, the embassy remained connected with INAH staff. On the occasion of the *E Tū Ake* opening ceremony, it provided New Zealand wines and hosted a small greeting event for INAH staff, and later invited them to premieres of *The Hobbit* movies in Mexico.

On the Mexican side, INAH's international exhibitions work tends to be organised in a reactive rather than a proactive way (Pérez Castellanos 2013). The Mexican government sets the agenda with broad objectives for the promotion

of Mexican heritage, and then INAH responds to proposals for exhibitions from museums around the world, while working in partnership with the cultural area of SRE and the international area within Conaculta (now the Ministry of Culture). In this sense, the exhibition exchange with Te Papa was part of the cultural diplomacy programme of the Mexican government, and other government bodies responsible for international relations became involved at various points. In an attempt to avoid the lack of coordination described by some authors (Villanueva Rivas 2009a; Ortega Guerrero 2008), the CNME office at INAH was often in contact with the appropriate people in Conaculta, and regular meetings were held with the SRE's cultural area to share information and supervise progress.

While the Mexican Embassy in Aotearoa New Zealand had previously facilitated small exhibitions from Mexico to tour regional museums with whom they had fostered relationships,[4] it does not have a large budget for cultural activities and, therefore, it would be impossible for it to finance projects like *Aztecs*. It is some time since the State fully funded exhibitions like Gamboa's, so it is considered fortunate when significant cultural events are presented as a result of collaboration between Mexico's cultural institutions and foreign museums. As Alberto Fierro, a member of Mexico's Diplomatic Corps, frankly admits, the work of a cultural attaché today is "to find the occasions that the chance brings to them to position Mexican culture in the area they are acting; the task is also to generate the conditions for a good reception of cultural events, trying to look for alliances" (Fierro 2015, 196).

Once the *Aztecs* project was underway, Leonora Rueda, Mexican Ambassador to New Zealand at the time, was keen to assist in order to see the exhibition succeed. She recognised it as an opportunity to counterbalance the poor image of Mexico prevalent in the media—one of the stated objectives of Mexican cultural diplomacy (Villanueva Ulfgard 2012; Villanueva Rivas 2011). Mexico's embassy in Wellington followed the progress of the exchange and stepped in when necessary to help Te Papa navigate Mexican bureaucracy and secure insurance, welcomed INAH staff when they arrived and participated in *pōwhiri* at Te Papa. They also worked to soften relations between INAH and Te Papa when the final *Acuerdo Secretarial* was not signed and the objects' arrival was delayed (see Chapter 2). The Ambassador played a key role in the opening and closing ceremonies for *Aztecs*,

[4] The Eastern Southland Gallery in the small South Island town of Gore, for example, hosted two photographic shows courtesy of the Embassy of Mexico: *3 Moments in Mexican Photography* (Nacho Lopez, Graciera Irtubide & Egmont Contreras) in late 2002, and *Guardianes del Tiempo—Guardians of Time* (Javier Hinojosa) in 2008 (David Luoni & Jim Geddes, personal correspondence, 25 August 2017).

including organising a Mexican cultural group—coincidentally in the country for celebrations of forty years of New Zealand-Mexico diplomatic relations—to perform at the opening evening event.

Figure 5.2 Mexican Ambassador Leonora Rueda with the Mexican cultural group performing on the Te Papa *marae* at the opening of *Aztecs*, 28 September 2013. Photograph courtesy of Lee Davidson.

Defining success: in search of indicators for institutional, market and diplomatic value

International exhibitions, and cultural diplomacy more generally, have been critiqued for the lack of any evidence of, or even reliable methods for assessing, their value. Debates over the potential benefits of cultural diplomacy have contributed to an absence of clear criteria for defining and measuring its success. This, Clarke (2016, 147) argues, "is not merely problematic from an academic point of view, but also in terms of the way in which policy is formulated". As Mark (2008, p. 242) points out, it is precisely this absence that has undermined support for cultural diplomacy.

Visitor numbers and revenue generated (or lost) have often been used as defacto measures of the success (or failure) of international exhibitions. But as we have argued throughout this book, these exhibitions are complex, multi-level and long-term projects and the impacts that they seek are often dis-

persed across institutional, market and diplomatic domains. Success in one domain is no guarantee of a positive impact in another. The Royal Academy's *Aztecs* (2002-2003) is a pertinent example. While its blockbuster status is undeniable, the London exhibition was something of a disaster in terms of cultural diplomacy and intercultural understanding.

Gorji (2004) drew parallels between responses to the exhibition and the political climate in the UK at that time. A newspaper cartoon published in February 2003 showed Aztec statues that had come to life and were "carrying off white gallery visitors, kicking and screaming, like ironic, postcolonial trophies. These spectators are, quite literally, carried away" (Gorji 2004, 46). Indeed, public reactions, Gorji (2004, 48) argues, reflected "both a sinister and insidious attitude of cultural superiority and a dangerous paranoia about the threat of the barbarian, both in the world at large and closer to home". While such attention was a boon for ticket sales, the very year after the Royal Academy had made a loss for the first time in six years, it is hard to imagine that this was the kind of exposure the Mexican government was hoping for, nor that it did much for intercultural understanding.

Questions of value and its measurement have, in general, become more pressing for museums since economic reforms in the 1980s and the widespread introduction of managerialism and accountability into publicly funded organisations (C. Scott 2002, 41). The situation has been exacerbated by increased competition in leisure markets and by funding cuts, particularly during times of economic recession. To consider these issues in relation to international exhibitions and cultural diplomacy, it is important to distinguish between three words that are often used interchangeably: outcomes, impact, and values (C. Scott 2002, 2015).

Value can be seen as "the importance attributed to something—the perception of 'actual or potential benefit'" (Poll and Payne 2006, 2 in Scott, Dodd, and Sandell (2014, 6)). Bollo (2013, 14) argues that value and impacts are "theoretical constructs strictly intertwined to the extent that they can be considered two sides of the same coin". Perceptions of value inform museum outputs, such as international exhibitions and related programmes and events by which museums make "the generation of value feasible and possible", with the intention that these outputs will result in certain impacts, whether they be social, economic or environmental (Bollo 2013, 15). These impacts may be assessed through the evaluation of outcomes. Short-term outcomes can be represented by measures such as visitation, satisfaction, the number of people attending specific programmes, numbers of membership and so on. Long-term outcomes are much more challenging to evaluate, and causation is difficult to prove. A solution is to rely on indicators to show a

contribution to impact, rather than claiming causation and the possibility of precise measurement (Bollo 2013, 14).

Scott (2002) states that in order to understand the value of museums, one must consider the point of view of all stakeholders, including visitors and society in a broad sense. So while outcomes such as visitor numbers, revenue, and even visitor satisfaction are, to some extent, convenient measures of success, they fail to capture the full value of museum activities. The museum sector, according to Scott (2009, 198), is "hindered by its failure to clearly articulate its value in a cohesive and meaningful way, as well as by its neglect of the compelling need to establish a system for collecting evidence around a set of agreed indicators that substantiate value claims". What is needed is a broadening of the way in which museums articulate and demonstrate value. This might be achieved with a values framework that includes both traditional quantitative measures alongside qualitative indicators that represent a new language for narrating the social purpose of museums, including international exhibitions. As Campbell (MM) says: "it's very short sighted perhaps to say 'oh you know this exhibition costs so much and we had so many visitors that did not make the targeted whatever', either audience figures or in terms of revenue. The critics don't seem to understand the basis for how some of these projects are thought about".

In relation to international exhibitions, we argue for the development of a value framework that encompasses diplomatic, institutional mission-related and market-oriented goals, and the identification of appropriate indicators for each. While these goals are often intertwined, with different weightings for any specific exhibition, for analytical purposes we consider them separately in the following discussion and provide examples of value and potential indicators within each sphere, as articulated by staff, visitors and stakeholders of the exhibition exchange.

The market-related domain

The market-related domain includes internal revenue as well as the wider economic impact generated by international exhibitions, including employment and local tourism. This domain is perhaps the easiest to quantify, and thereby obtain evidence of impact. Internal revenue generation includes revenue from corporate sponsorship, ticket sales, and merchandising, as well as flow on revenue from parking, food services, memberships, special events, public programmes and educational services.

Visitation—and its flow-on effects for other revenue centres—is, of course, highly important to museums, ensuring their financial viability while working within funding constraints. Revenue generated by international exhibitions may

be used to recoup costs and, if possible, generate a profit to support other museum activities, although mostly they are not profit-making (see Chapters 1 and 2). At Te Papa, general admission is free, but special exhibitions are charged. Australian venues for *Aztecs* also relied on visitors paying an extra ticket price on top of general admission to recoup the investment made. In other cases, such as the MNC, revenue is not an important issue. At the time *E Tū Ake* was exhibited, the entrance to the museum—and the exhibition—was free. Even though visitation did not have a direct economic value in this case—except in relation to the sale of merchandise and exhibition catalogues—it was still considered an important measure of success (see Chapter 4).

If an exhibition is not totally funded by a sponsor—whether a public or private entity—museums must make a business case based on estimated costs and projected revenue. Ultimately, the viability of the exhibition depends on it, as well as the ongoing sustainability of the museum's temporary exhibition programme and any dependent activities. This assessment typically involves market research to determine the level of interest among existing and potential audiences, as well as the testing of exhibition concepts, titles and marketing images etc. The potential to attract new members and sponsorship, for current and future projects, will also be taken into consideration.

Visitation, and related revenue generation, is clearly linked to an exhibition's appeal and its ability to compete with other leisure options. As Fox (TP) notes, because there had never been an Aztec exhibition in Australasia before, its "blockbuster" potential was unknown. Research conducted by the Australasian consortium, however, produced promising results. Ferguson (AM) points out that "*Aztecs* came up, three out of the four top out of twenty subjects or topic tests that we had done, and I'd seen the exhibition, a version of the exhibition in London, in November 2002, which was at the Royal Academy, which punched through about 450,000 visitors, so we had some sense that there was potential here for that". Based on these assessments, visitor projections were made. However, all three museums fell short of their targets (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 *Aztecs* visitation figures – actual and projected

Museum	Projected visitation	Actual visitation
Te Papa	100,000	39,861
Melbourne Museum	140,000	88,000
Australian Museum	105,000	65,970

Most staff interviewed in the latter stages of our project, once these figures were known, expressed concern about the low visitation. Many were puzzled that visitor satisfaction was rated so highly (see Chapter 4) but did not translate into people through the door. Dorey (AM) for example states:

> It hasn't performed anywhere near what was expected. Everyone's had very low figures ... which is disappointing because … we've actually had the critical review … and the audience reviews and even our harshest critic was very, very polite about it. So we've had really good feedback and really positive reviews … but just not the visitors.

Museum staff commented on a range of factors that may have led to lower-than-expected visitation, including a lack of prior knowledge about the subject matter among local audiences, as identified in formative evaluations. Kent believes, "if we'd marketed it slightly differently and educated our audience pre exhibition opening about the Aztec culture we may have drawn in a larger audience". Te Papa was able to pass on to Melbourne Museum its experience of barriers to participation before the exhibition crossed the Tasman Sea. Campbell (MM) explains:

> based on that information we were actually able to change our strategy but probably just a little bit too late … and again resourcing was an issue because the team were exhausted … what we realised was that we had to do some education and pre-awareness of what *Aztecs* actually was and tell the stories of the Aztecs because what we were hearing from Te Papa was that was a little bit missing and therefore visitors weren't compelled to go automatically because they didn't have enough base knowledge.

They worked on "pulling out some of those really interesting stories that would spark people's imaginations and teach them a little bit about Aztecs so that they would then be more compelled to come when the exhibition opened". They looked particularly at "the links to modern-day Mexico because that's obviously cool", including "conversations with one of the really awesome Mexican restaurants in the city" and looking at "the chocolate link". Campbell thinks "that was the right strategy, we probably just didn't give ourselves enough time to execute it in a really effective way". They also relied on traditional print media channels, whereas, in retrospect, she believes digital media would have been better "to capture the imagination of the audience who we ended up getting in":

> we found it difficult to get media cut through and so the pre-awareness campaign in theory sounded amazing and we did loads of great work but it didn't always hit the base … we probably would have needed some more time to cultivate that strategy and those relationships but we were somewhat reactive.

Others questioned the effectiveness of the marketing images, the development of which had been a difficult and contentious process (see Chapter 3). For some at Te Papa the campaign should have been more aggressive, while in the Australian Museum Dorey noted that the marketing was done in-house on "a *very* small budget" compared to other international shows when they have hired an external marketing company and "publicity was far more intense".

The decision to develop the exhibition for an inter-generational audience was questioned by some staff. As Greene (MM) points out, Melbourne Museum has a "predominantly" family audience "and I know there was some nervousness amongst at least some parents, knowing enough about Aztecs to know the subject of human sacrifice was inevitably part of it, maybe they'd shield their children from that experience, so that was one factor". Ferguson (AM) agrees that "we got the target visitors wrong".

At Te Papa the entrance price was high compared with previous shows, and in relation to other leisure options in the city. There was also on-site competition with two paid temporary exhibitions in the museum at the same time. Campbell reflected on the high recent turnover of international shows at Melbourne Museum and questioned how often you can stage temporary exhibitions without "exhausting your core audience". Dorey also noted that "museums across Australia are not doing well at the moment … [so] you can't just blame the exhibition". For the Australian Museum and Te Papa, not having a sizable local Mexican community was seen as a disadvantage. There was also some questioning of the extent to which initial expectations were overly ambitious, encouraged by how well Aztec exhibitions had performed in other markets. This led Ferguson (AM) to reflect on the need to "look closely at what your visitor research is telling you, look very closely at the budget and where the risks are".

Many staff commented that the fact visitors responded so positively to the exhibition was "the most important thing". As Greene (MM) says, "the people who saw it loved it, we [just] wished that more people had seen it in order to love it and that would have helped the finance as well of course, which is an important consideration for us … ultimately, eighty-eight thousand people saw it, it's still a large number of people".

The economic value of temporary exhibitions for stimulating city tourism has been mentioned in the literature (see Chapter 1), but was not discussed by any of our interviewees. In Australia, particularly, international exhibitions are often

subsidised by tourism promotion agencies, local or state government based on their potential to stimulate cultural tourism as part of the event mix of a city (Gorchakova 2017). The wider economic impacts to a city from exhibitions may be calculated using economic modelling. The DMNH, for example, claimed an estimated US$60 million impact on the local economy from *Aztec: The world of Moctezuma*, while their museum membership reached a record high (Nein 1993). However, economic impact assessments like these can be expensive to commission, their methods are somewhat contentious, and causation is difficult to prove (Carey, Davidson, and Sahli 2013). Nevertheless, museums can collect data that helps to capture this impact, such as the percentage of out-of-town visitors to an exhibition, the extent to which the exhibition influenced their decision to visit, their length of stay and average daily spend in the city.

The institutional mission-related domain

Museum missions encompass a wide spectrum of values that encapsulate their *raison d'etre* and are realised through a broad range of museum functions. In relation to international exhibitions these may be more internally focused, such as providing enjoyable learning opportunities for existing audiences, developing new audiences, engaging new communities and stakeholders, and professional development for staff; or they may be externally focused on participation in the international cultural arena, sharing collections globally, building an institutional brand and reputation.

Summative evaluations capture a number of potential measures of internally focused impacts, including visitor satisfaction, first-time versus repeat visitation, and audience profile data. Interviewees for both *Aztecs* and *E Tū Ake* valued visitor satisfaction very highly as a measure of success, offering many anecdotes of positive feedback. Ambassador Rueda, for example, told us, "I went to the exhibition many times, just to see how much people they were going, or trying to hear the comments, and everybody, everybody expressed their admiration for the exhibition, inside and outside I mean, I heard that from friends and all that".

Interestingly, lower visitor numbers may have contributed to higher visitor satisfaction, as crowded exhibition spaces can lead to less than positive experiences (Ballantyne and Uzzell 2011). Campbell (MM) observed that *Aztecs* had "a really comfortable amount of people in it, in the times I've been in there, it's not dead, but it's got enough life in it, there are people in there looking, but you've also, it's quiet enough that you can contemplate and look at all that amazing stuff easily".

Satisfaction, however, is often viewed as a relatively superficial and narrow measure of visitor experience. Attempts to measure visitor learning can also be problematic, particularly if this involves the short-term retention of di-

dactic messages (Hein 1998). As shown in Chapter 4, much of what visitors gain from international exhibitions is subtle, cumulative and takes place over time. Indeed, Smith (2015) questions whether learning is the best conceptual framework for understanding what visitors do in exhibitions. Rather, as we have argued, the focus is shifting to meaning-making, transformative experiences and developing the likes of emotional intelligence and empathy. These impacts are best captured by qualitative, long-term research. While this is more time intensive to gather, and will not produce quantitative measurements, it would be possible to derive qualitative indicators to help demonstrate the value of international exhibitions to visitors, using this research as a starting point. As we saw in Chapter 4, visitors have their own ways of articulating value, and these may be useful in developing an appropriate set of indicators (C. Scott, Dodd, and Sandell 2014).

Staff articulated value for visitors in terms of traditional concepts of learning, as well as the importance of exposing them to other cultures and world views, and allowing them to make connections and see parallels with their own culture and history. It was noted that this was part of the role of a national or major metropolitan museum. As Powles (TP) argues:

> with these exhibitions which focus on objects and history you are not necessarily going to get a huge audience base such as from dinosaurs and movies and games. But with these more historical and art exhibitions there's a lot of learning to be done by the audience even if in number terms you are not getting a huge turnout.

Opportunities to involve local communities that the museums had not previously engaged with directly, were also mentioned. As Hirst (MM) explains:

> We have never done an exhibition from this part of the world before … and it really allowed us to make a lot of connections with the Mexican community in Melbourne and some of the Mexican, the Ambassador, the Embassy, the Consul … connections which will continue through putting that exhibition on.

In other examples, the Art Gallery of New South Wales has used touring exhibitions extensively for developing relationships with communities (O'Reilly and Lawrenson 2015), while the DMNH found that their Aztec exhibition contributed to practice at the museum by strengthening its commitment to community outreach and education, and initiated three annual minority internships to increase staff diversity (Nein 1993; Stevenson Day 1994).

In terms of professional development, a number of staff expressed pride in what they had achieved by bringing such an ambitious project to fruition. As Project Manager, Smith-Kapa (TP) felt that "just getting the exhibition" was an achievement:

> Getting the Mexican government to loan us their national treasures … I think it'll be a very long time before something of this quality comes back to New Zealand … and that we succeeded in getting a three-venue tour.

Others spoke of satisfaction in overcoming challenges, solving problems, keeping within budget, "returning the objects without damage" and experiencing no issues with insurance or freight.

Staff from all three countries referred to the fact that the exchange was a significant "first" for all involved; it was a culture that Australasian museums had little knowledge about and limited access to as none have their own Mesoamerican collections. The quality of the objects from Mexico was also a common theme, as staff valued the privilege to work with them and said there was unlikely to be another exhibition of this quality for a long time.

Working in the international arena also helped staff to develop professionally by fostering a range of attitudes and skills that facilitated this work (see Chapter 2). Many staff valued this opportunity to develop practices that could be used in cross-cultural work either at home or abroad. Te Papa, in particular, through the development of its international strategy, saw itself as having a role on the world stage that involved building an international reputation, establishing relationships, contributing to international practices and, at times, supporting government cultural diplomacy programmes. While this diplomatic role is essentially driven by the institutional mission, to be successful it requires staff that can function in this environment, with the appropriate cosmopolitan attitudes and intercultural skills such as cognitive flexibility, curiosity, empathy, humility, hospitality, cultural literacy, dialogic communication, cross-cultural sensitivity, openness to diversity and ability to listen. But, as noted by some interviewees, currently these intercultural skills do not form part of traditional training for museum professionals. Instead, they are acquired more intuitively and through experience.

The intercultural skills of professionals feed into the quality of the relationships established through international exhibitions, something mentioned by staff working on both *Aztecs* and *E Tū Ake*. An indicator of this quality was their perceived longevity and their ability to affect change. Smith (TP) felt the impact of the Māori exhibitions, aided by the power of *taonga* to affect people "on a human level rather than solely an intellectual level", have "created some lasting

relationships" and, once established, this "cultural connection won't go away." As evidence of the impact, she cites examples of "relationships warming up" and museum directors becoming allies to support the work of Te Papa's Karanga Aotearoa, a government-mandated programme working to repatriate Māori human remains from overseas institutions. She also felt that *Mauri Ora* had helped to "shift things" at the Tokyo National Museum in terms of its "look and feel" being different from their usual ethnographic exhibitions (H. Smith 2016).

Hay (TP) also sees the exhibitions as having an impact:

> at the close of each exhibition season, the people who we've worked with, have come back to us and said, look, not only was this very successful because we got a lot of visitors, they enjoyed the exhibition, that was fabulous, but we ourselves, something in us has changed. We've learnt something new. We've been touched; something's happened. And I think that's a great privilege to be involved in something, and it's really powerful and it's very positive.

The impact of *E Tū Ake* on staff in Mexico was commented on by Medina and others (see Chapter 3), while staff on both sides hoped that the exchange would "open the door" to further collaboration: that is, an indicator of success would be future travelling exhibitions between the countries and staff exchanges.

The diplomatic domain

This chapter has already outlined many of the ways in which international exhibitions can, either directly or indirectly, contribute to foreign policy goals and formal state cultural diplomacy. As discussed, government agendas may focus on idealistic and/or instrumental goals. The first includes aspects such as mutual understanding and dialogue, while the second, encompasses the desire to create favourable impressions, counter negative images, and advance other national interests, such as tourism and trade. The most commonly used measures in this domain have been the level of attendance at events, media coverage, positive reviews or favourable comments from influential people. More specific indicators, such as the impact of exhibitions on behavior or changing attitudes towards other cultures are more difficult to identify. Through our research we found statements of the value of exhibitions for cultural diplomacy by staff and other stakeholders. We also asked visitors if the exhibition changed their impressions of the originating country.

Ambassador Rueda felt that *Aztecs* was the "top achievement" during her tenure in Aotearoa New Zealand. While she could not point to any direct impact, she explained that it helped her to have conversations: "when I see the

people, or, the people in the street and I talk about Mexico and all that 'Oh yes, the Aztec exhibition we saw it there.' That's a door, not just a window, it's for me that's a door [laughs] to get together Kiwis and Mexicans". Before the exhibition, she says, "even if I try through many means to promote that positive image of Mexico is very hard to go against the trend sometimes of the media". *Aztecs* gave her the opportunity to talk about the culture and history of Mexico and show people that there was more to the country than what is portrayed in the media. It was "a tool from which I continue, the deepening in the knowledge of the country" for example in relation to export products, such as chillies and avocados, which were cultivated in pre-Hispanic times.

As a former diplomat and Te Papa international advisor, Powles notes that exhibitions are sometimes considered "a little bit old fashioned" in terms of being a tool for cultural diplomacy, but she considers them "a very worthwhile enterprise". She believes that through *Aztecs* "we've got such a good diplomatic relationship with Mexico. That's worth a lot. There are parts of the New Zealand government and the New Zealand people who do care about that, and certainly, the Mexican Embassy does care about that so how do you actually quote unquote 'cost' values like that?"

In Australia, the exhibition acted in a similar way. In Melbourne, the Mexican Embassy and ProMexico, the international trade agency, supported a presentation by archaeologist Carlos Javier González, MTM Director. "The Australian Ambassador to Mexico and the Mexican Ambassador to Australia both spoke, and I spoke" Greene explains. "It was part of a programme which has led to a decision by ProMexico to open their Australian office in Melbourne, so as a piece of cultural diplomacy, very successful".

For Mexican staff, there is no doubt the exhibition was perceived as a way to promote national heritage abroad and they were very proud to be able to show their culture in a place as far away as Australasia. Gómez felt it was "very important because it's the first time that we present an exhibit in New Zealand". Martin Antonio Mondragón (Director/Courier, Museo Arqueológico Román Piña Chan):

> I think it is the fact that it's the first exhibition of this kind in these two countries, New Zealand and Australia, it's important because it allowed them to see a part of the pre-Hispanic times in Mexico, right? Because it was one of the most representative cultures. People said that it aroused a lot of interest in learning about other aspects of Mexican culture.

For INAH it was significant that this was the most complete exhibition that has been abroad to date, contrasting with previous exhibitions and their art

historical focus. From Te Papa's side, the bicultural dimension is important, as Hay (2016) explains:

> I know that Te Papa's international touring programme has an enormous cultural diplomacy impact … I know Te Papa is a very exceptional museum, and I know that our bicultural model [and the] spirituality we give to our shows has an impact.

Evaluating the cultural diplomacy of international exhibitions includes assessing their impact in terms of creating a favourable, or countering a negative, image of a country. We asked visitors what their impressions of each country were before they visited the exhibition and whether or not they had changed as a result of their visit.

It may be a tough call for one exhibition to make a significant impact on public perceptions, particularly when it must counter a strong impression created by the media. Visitors to *Aztecs* often had an existing negative impression of contemporary Mexico that they attributed to media reports and "crime dramas". This included drug cartels, violence, corruption, overpopulation, and poverty. More benign impressions included stereotypical images of a colourful and exotic country, Mexican food, hot chillies, tequila, sombreros, cactuses and beach resorts. Other sources of knowledge, aside from first-hand experience, were friends or family who had travelled to Mexico, and friendships with Mexicans living abroad.

Those visitors who had previously travelled to Mexico had positive impressions, describing it as "fascinating", "interesting" and the people as "absolutely beautiful", and often mentioned a desire to return. Rowan's previous trip to Mexico gave him a good context within which to understand the exhibition:

> I think my visit to the anthropological museum in Mexico City really opened my eyes as to just how culturally and ethnically diverse Mexico is, because I guess for me, prior to my visit there I just thought that Mexico itself, there was like just one core ethnic group within Mexico which would have just been the Mexicans but I sort of understood, upon visiting there, there was a lot of diversity … going into that *Aztecs* exhibition over at the Australian Museum last weekend I understood that this was just simply going to be a snapshot … of the various Mexican cultures and the different ethnic groups as well and I think for a lot of people who probably don't know a lot about Mexico, they might just think "oh well you know the Aztecs are the chief group or the only ethnic group within Mexico" or the Aztecs evolved

> into what is now modern-day Mexico where that isn't actually I guess yeah scientifically or historically correct either.

For many visitors, the exhibition increased their curiosity about Mexican culture, and sometimes also increased their desire to travel. Dana from Melbourne said "you could say that as a result of this exhibit I may end up visiting Mexico in the future because, you know, I didn´t realize that that museum [Museo Nacional de Antropología] was there and this exhibit has made me more interested in going and visiting it". The idea to travel was reinforced in visitors that already have been in similar places in South America and want to know more. Basil felt that if he was ever travelling in the vicinity of Mexico, now that he has "some background grounding" he would have a "much stronger interest … to go and view the actual place itself". Isaac, in fact, travelled to Mexico, Guatemala and Belize between his first and follow-up interviews, crediting the exhibition as playing a part in his decision to travel, saying "I was really kind of inspired by it".

Visitors who declared no interest in travelling to Mexico claimed that they were highly influenced by news reports of violence and crime. Changing such perceptions has been one of the priorities of Mexican cultural diplomacy for some years (Villanueva Ulfgard 2012). And while this has led to improvements in Mexico's image as an attractive tourist destination with a rich cultural and natural heritage, Villanueva (2016, 2011) questions whether enough has been done.

There was a mixed response from visitors as to whether or not the exhibition had changed their impressions of contemporary Mexico. As discussed in Chapter 4, many visitors left the exhibition confused about what happened to the Aztecs post-Conquest, or assuming that they had been wiped out. Despite a small section at the end of the exhibition on the legacy of the Aztecs many, like Dana, found it "hard to sort of associate Mexico with these people from such a long time ago". Jean found it not "terribly informative" while Jill thought there "weren't many clues" about modern-day Mexico. Kim, on the other hand, was left with the impression "that it's much older and there's much more to it than what I actually knew". Others mentioned they were now aware that there were "ruins" in Mexico, and that "they honoured their culture on their flag". But although it gave visitors more of a sense of the history of the country, it tended not to make a deep impact on their thoughts about contemporary Mexico.

However, Andrés, our sole Latin American interviewee, watched the reaction of family and friends to the exhibition and discussed it with them. He formed the opinion that:

> it touches people and makes them understand that these cultures are, let's say, more ancient, more elaborate … it creates some sort of deeper respect, so to speak, in people, because us Latin Americans are perceived, at first sight, for Europeans like a bit backwards, like disorder … [it] explains a little bit about the origins of Latin Americans, where does this dance, and culture, and everything comes from, I think it opens people's minds a little bit and it makes them understand and respect the Latin American cultures … it was discussed a bit with friends … the exhibition, and you feel like, it is a cultural depth that now exists, and that changes their vision about what Latin America is, you know? So it is interesting, it's interesting because you can notice in the conversations, the vision shift, after this exhibition, see?

Hana, a New Zealander with a Latin American husband, has a similar perspective:

> I think that although you know in the back of your mind that it's a country that has a lot of history and, you know, different culture, it's easy to forget that when you're thinking about modern-day Mexico and so going to an exhibition like that reminds you to be thoughtful of those matters and when you're looking at the society as it is today or meeting people from Mexico just to remind yourself about how that history might affect who they are.

This reinforces our previous points, that the meanings people make from exhibitions evolve over time, through experiences and conversations. As Rowan puts it, an exhibition offers only a "snapshot". These responses, however, do raise again the question of the value of Aztec culture as an ambassador for Mexico, particularly when the story remains primarily in the past. While Aztec exhibitions have been box office gold for European and North American museums, many reviews have been negative, particularly in relation to depictions of human sacrifice, using emotive language such as "revolting", "despicable" and hideous" (Silbermann 2012). The use of Aztec culture to represent Mexico was even questioned by INAH staff travelling with the exhibition. Carmona (MNA) noted that "Aztecs and Mayas are best-sellers. They sell very well. They're cultures people know really well, but it's the same: the Aztecs are known because of the centralism we have in Mexico and the Mayas because everybody goes to Cancún". Other examples of Mexico's diverse cultural heritage, such as Teotihuacan or the Olmecs, do not have the same profile and therefore feature less often in international exhibitions (Pérez Castellanos 2013).

Admittedly, INAH's objectives for the exhibition did relate explicitly to changing perceptions of Mexico today, their concerns being primarily

about a balanced representation of Aztec culture, and in this sense, the exhibition seems to have been largely successful (see Chapter 4). At the same time, no visitor we interviewed mentioned leaving the exhibition with a worse impression of Mexico.

E Tū Ake did not have the broad objective of promoting New Zealand culture either, and while we have data from only a very small number of visitors to *E Tū Ake*, their thoughts are an interesting point of comparison because of a relative lack of prior knowledge about Aotearoa New Zealand among Mexicans and because the exhibition spoke about both the past and the present. Our interviewees' impressions of Aotearoa New Zealand as a result of the exhibition were consistently positive: they were curious to learn more and they had a strong desire to travel there, although the cost was seen as prohibitive. Interestingly, even though the exhibition included stories of protest and struggle that showed aspects of New Zealand society in a poor light, this did not lead to negative assessments of the country as a whole. Instead, it was appreciated that the exhibition addressed the "reality" and did not just show the "romantic" side of the culture. In the context of Mexican society at least, this open reflection on "difficult" histories generated admiration. Javier, for example, concluded that Aotearoa New Zealand must have a good political system compared to Mexico if Māori have been able to survive and participate to the extent that they have. His general impression of Aotearoa New Zealand is of:

> the huge respect they have for their different ethnic groups. The support that they have as a society to preserve their cultural heritage, their lifestyle and promoting the growth and the progress of the society, and the country. The support they also have in order to show the world who they are—you know all this together, to show the world who they are, which is what he got from the exhibition, that they are trying to show the world who they really are, and are proud of.

Jorge was also interested in "how they regard Indigenous or ethnic groups in other countries":

> That vision of New Zealanders, the way they see and treat their Indigenous or ethnic groups, that was very interesting for him and inspiring, and he considers it could be, or it's a good example or good model to follow or to take, to adopt in other cultures, that we should adopt.

There is a suggestion here that warrants further research: that exhibitions that tackle difficult issues such as conflict and protest, as part of an overall "hope-

ful" story, may be highly effective ambassadors in cultural diplomacy, engendering respect and admiration, perhaps even more so than sanitised or romanticised depictions of national cultures.

Our case study opens up a debate about the value of international exhibitions in terms of revenue generation versus other benefits. Greene's (MM) assessment of the success of *Aztecs* suggests that a range of factors are taken into account:

> It was successful on all but one count, and that was we did not get the number of visitors we expected … We are still puzzled by why that should be, because it was a fantastic exhibition. … we were delighted with the way it looked and the actual staging of it, we were delighted with the quality of the exhibits, we were delighted with the collaboration with our colleagues in Mexico. So, a lot of pluses for it, but, as I said, the number of visitors was less than we'd hoped.

As Houlihan (2014) points out, blockbusters "are also notoriously difficult to predict. No museum can expect that every exhibition they stage will be equally as financially successful". Campbell (MM) considers that *Aztecs* "did well for the subject matter" but "it just wasn't going to be a blockbuster". It's a question, she says of "'what does good look like?' … and it's not always about numbers and revenue". From a marketing perspective, it is possible to do something that is "good for the brand" but doesn't make money. It's about "defining that upfront":

> the museum needs to do a broad range of things and that's okay but we need to make sure we manage our own expectations and not set ourselves targets that we just can't meet.

If financial imperatives mean that museums prefer perennial favorites like dinosaurs and mummies this raises questions about the future sustainability of international exhibitions like *Aztecs*. Looking to the future, Smith-Kapa says:

> Would we do it again? I hope so! I hope we push the boat out for exhibitions of that quality and that importance, I really do. There is stuff that you can pick off and it's easy, like the commercial companies … but some are harder to get than others, so I hope we don't shirk from that [laughs] again. For something of such rarity and beauty.

Powles was also concerned that Te Papa is now more inclined to take "turnkey" exhibitions "rather than a genuinely relevant project that has New Zealand culture, history, art and society at its core":

They would not necessarily curate an exhibition with an overseas museum from scratch now, because that would cost too much and profits are not guaranteed. I personally feel that museums should curate original exhibitions. It's a huge challenge particularly for curators, but this is what good museums do to build up an international reputation as great institutions—you want to push intellectual boundaries, explore art especially your own art, you want to do research, you want to bring in external expertise. You're not going to build a name if you're just going to bring in commercial shows. You may earn a lot of money and you'll have huge amounts of kids coming in but ultimately what's that going to do for the reputation, research and the really core functions of a museum? … Some of the staff at Te Papa work hard, they really do, and decisions such as "going commercial" at the expense of expanding learning and cultural exchanges affect them. Ultimately is the museum a venue or is it a 'living museum'—one that values scholarship and beneficial links with other museums in key countries?

Chapter 6

Museums as cosmopolitan ambassadors: towards an intercultural practice of international exhibitions

> This system of endless changes is one of the most extraordinary properties of the Kaleidoscope. With a number of loose objects, it is impossible to reproduce any figure that we have admired. When it is once lost, centuries may elapse before the same combination returns.
>
> David Brewster, 1819, *A Treatise on the Kaleidoscope*, pp.111–113

We set out in this book to critically and systematically examine international exhibitions as mobile sites of multiple cultural encounters. The growing number and complexity of this museological practice mean that these forms of encounter are increasingly diverse and significant. Embarking on this journey, we were drawn to address a gap in our understanding about what international exhibitions do and how, and what they contribute, if anything, to intercultural understanding. While more attention is being paid to international exhibitions, our interdisciplinary approach is novel, as is the anchoring of our analysis in practice, through the investigation of an exhibition exchange involving a six-year international partnership and a complex collaborative process connecting four major cultural institutions across three countries. Our long-term, multi-sited ethnographic approach—made possible by contemporary technology and mobility, and marked by its own processes of cultural encounter—allowed for the empirical grounding of our theoretical discussion in a manner not previously attempted.

International exhibitions are complex and time-consuming, involving numerous people in highly specialised roles, and taking place across complicated political, institutional and cultural contexts. To understand them, we need to understand these contexts. Political contexts include national agendas, legal frameworks, policies and cultural diplomacy goals. The institutional context consists of organisational structures, museological perspectives, policies and procedures, practices and working styles. Against this multi-faceted backdrop, we sought to understand the partnership structure and production models adopted for the exhibition exchange.

These factors were vital in terms of shaping both the nature of the partnership and the ways in which the project progressed.

Taking a practice theory perspective, we explored what museum professionals do when they develop and tour international exhibitions. Museum practice develops over time through active processes of meaning-making by those engaged in it (Wenger 2010). Producing international exhibitions requires museum professionals to spend time on the boundaries of practices, where they encounter museological as well as cultural, political and institutional differences. In this space, heavy with potential for innovation and learning, we looked for signs of an intercultural museum practice.

We chose a cosmopolitan lens to bring into focus the transformational, creative and critical outcomes of cultural encounters in the mobile contact zone, and approached interculturality as a process rather than a goal of international exhibitions; something, it might be argued, that should be an integral part of all museum practice (Bodo 2012). Investigating in this manner, we identified the ways in which museum professionals undertaking international projects can feel part of a community of practice when working with overseas colleagues, while at the same time being aware of difference, even seeking it out as an opportunity for learning. We also located examples of staff working across difference to find intercultural solutions: by re-evaluating existing practices and the assumptions that underpin them, and considering the benefits of adaptation and compromise. Some spoke of the "diplomatic" nature of this work, encompassing communication styles, open-mindedness and willingness to incorporate other perspectives, while being respectful and receptive to the feelings and needs of others.

Indigenous museum practices at Te Papa emerged as particularly conducive to fostering relationships and creating conditions for intercultural feelings and understandings. The two most important factors in facilitating this type of contact are represented by the Māori concepts of *kanohi ki te kanohi* and *manaakitanga*. *Kanohi ki te kanohi* is a physical interaction that conveys integrity and credibility. *Manaakitanga* expresses respect for the *mana* of others, generosity and reciprocity. These concepts were put into practice through the performance of welcoming ceremonies for visiting staff and the blessing of their collections—thereby acknowledging their *mana*. These practices are a means of grounding people in a Māori cultural context and "acknowledging the spiritual cultural conversations that go on between the living and the ancestors" (H. Smith 2016). They had a profound impact on Mexican couriers and helped to build mutual respect and trust, cementing "professional friendships" that were viewed as reciprocal and long-lasting. The day-to-day practice of *manaaki* complemented these more formal protocols.

Our journey also led us to reflect on exhibition development as a process of mediation and translation. Presenting one culture in another cultural context forces professionals to address issues of cultural representation. Each case study exhibition, in its own way, drew our focus to the tension between emphasising sameness (to establish relevance, engagement, connection) and emphasising difference (to create drama, sensation, stimulation). In making decisions about possible display and interpretation strategies, professionals can feel they are walking a "fine line" between being dynamic and engaging and being respectful of another culture; between conveying complexity and making a culture accessible to an international audience. Strategies for engaging visitors included showing the "human face" and projecting a first-person voice, as well as immersive multi-sensory environments, depictions of lived experience and contemporary references.

The task of developing international exhibitions also raises questions relating to how to portray difficult issues such as protest and conflict (*E Tū Ake*) or human sacrifice (*Aztecs*)—offering visitors insight into a complex, often ambiguous "reality" versus presenting a palatable but shallow and stereotypical view of a culture. Opting for the first, professionals suggest, requires having the confidence and maturity to talk about both the positive and negative aspects of a culture, in a balanced, non-judgmental but ultimately "hopeful" way. Differences in institutional and cultural approaches led, in some instances, to disagreement and misunderstanding, but also to moments of reflection and the transformation of outlooks. This reinforced the view that intercultural solutions take time and require a willingness to talk through differing perspectives in order to create a "new centre" on what may have previously been a boundary.

Shifting to the visitor perspective, we sought to understand to what degree international exhibitions lead to intercultural meanings and foster cosmopolitan imaginations. Taking a qualitative, in-depth and long-term approach allowed us to see how visitors connected with the cultural other through sensory experiences which evoked embodied understandings, where they were able to "touch" and be "touched" by another culture—making the conceptual tangible. This was achieved by encountering the "human face" of the other, through *mana taonga* complemented by contemporary objects, videos and photos in *E Tū Ake*. In *Aztecs* it was models and materiality that evoked an "aura of the past", connecting people across time and space; as well as an atmosphere created by groupings of objects, lighting and soundscapes. Outcomes also depended upon certain imaginative skills and inclinations of the visitors, including *intercultural mimicry*, *polycentral identification* and "perspective taking", along with the ability to manage the emotions prompted by these engagements.

In successfully negotiating difference, some visitors gave expression to cosmopolitan attitudes such as recognising cultural contingency, relativity, and

ambiguity, thereby avoiding cultural superiority and reaching "charitable" moral evaluations—others struggled to make that leap. Nevertheless, the most memorable experiences created ongoing resonances and ripples in the lives of visitors, as they reflected on the thoughts and feelings evoked by the exhibitions. One exhibition cannot necessarily make a profound change, as cosmopolitan insight takes time to evolve and exists "by degrees" (Delanty 2011, 648). However imaginative encounters with the ideas and experience of others if "properly conducted" are, according to Appiah (2006, 85), "valuable in themselves". Change comes not as a lightning bolt, but as a "gradually acquired new way of seeing things" (Appiah 2006, 73).

Finally, we mapped the broader national agendas with which international exhibitions intersect and the role that diplomatic and other state actors play. Professionals 'on the ground' describe what they do—and the value of this work—in ways that can be read as forms of diplomacy, such as building relationships, forming communities of practice, increasing understanding and enhancing the reputations of their institutions, as well as their countries. Our findings, therefore, suggest that museums *are* intentionally performing diplomacy through international exhibitions, sometimes on behalf of governments, sometimes on their own behalf, and sometimes on behalf of another group, such as Māori in the case of *E Tū Ake*. What's more, international exhibitions may serve all these interests simultaneously, illustrating the hybridity of museum diplomacy. It is not a question of either/or, but of both/and. And while the stated institutional intentions focus on instrumental purposes, staff themselves held unmistakably cosmopolitan aspirations.

As visitor numbers to *Aztecs* fell short of expectations, the latter stages of the project, for the Australasian museums at least, were coloured by a fair degree of soul-searching with regard to the value of international exhibitions and how this might be measured. While recognising the importance of financial bottom lines, there was clear support among museum staff, visitors and other stakeholders for a broader understanding of the value of international exhibitions, spanning the diplomatic, mission-related and market-oriented domains. What this requires is a set of broadly agreed indicators of the impacts to which international exhibitions contribute. While our research was not aimed at developing this, we hope that its findings will prompt and inform further work in this area, so that a new language for articulating and demonstrating the full value and potential of international exhibitions might emerge.

Looking through the polycentral kaleidoscope: a theoretical understanding of international exhibitions

The fields of museum studies, cultural diplomacy, cosmopolitanism and intercultural studies provided multiple lenses through which we viewed inter-

national exhibitions. Drawing together key threads from this theoretical literature, we conceptualised international exhibitions as relational and fluid: as assemblages (a temporal and spatial coming-together of diverse components), that intersect with other assemblages including global networks of cultural institutions and inter-governmental diplomacy, and act as mobile contact zones—creating multiple forms of encounter that shift in relation to each other as each exhibition moves through time and space.

At the end of our journey, we believe this vision of international exhibitions still holds. We identified five principal groups of actors interacting in the contact zone. They are: the represented culture (past and/or present), encountered primarily through their material culture and the stories connected to it; a diverse range of professionals from the sending institution/s; professionals from the receiving institution/s; visitors to the exhibition, events and programmes, including users of digital media, and others they affect as a result of their encounters; and stakeholders, including communities, sponsors, public funders, diplomats and other public service representatives. The encounters of these various groups were mediated by the exhibition, either as a process or a product.

When attempting to give this theoretical understanding of our topic more definition, we ran into a fundamental problem. Every time we tried to capture the multiplicity of encounters, meanings, and practices we had identified and give it form, the images that came to mind always failed to represent everything that we saw happening in international exhibitions. Any model we could envisage was inevitably too static and fixed; nothing we could think of gave an adequate sense of flux, complexity and movement.

Somewhat exasperated, we struck on the analogy of a kaleidoscope—a common enough metaphor that suggests "perpetual transformation" as well as "a dialogue" between various parts to create a "playful synthesis of objects and effects" (Groth 2007, 217–18). On consulting Brewster's (1819) *Treatise on the Kaleidoscope*, we learned that a *polycentral* kaleidoscope, utilising three or four reflectors and a small number of objects, will produce beautiful reflected images of these objects, arranged around multiple centres. Achieving this effect requires careful and precise construction: a certain lens, the reflectors at just the right angles in relation to each other, and an appropriate distance between all components. But once assembled, with every revolution of the kaleidoscope the pattern changes, there being an infinite number of potential "figures".

The idea of multiple centres, and infinite variation, was illuminating. While talk of polyvocality in museums is not uncommon, the notion of polycentrality was not one we had come across, and yet it offers many advantages. In particular, it helps to see past a number of binaries that have plagued muse-

ums: past/present; self/other; national/cosmopolitan. In relation to our mobile contact zones, the notion of polycentrality appeared as a way to move beyond the opposition between what is inside and what is outside: rather than crossing borders, they might dissolve them; they are both here and there; they might make themselves at home wherever they go. Polycentrality was also reminiscent of Alred, Byram and Fleming's (2002, 4–5 emphasis added) description of intercultural experience where:

> The locus of interaction is not in the centripetal reinforcement of identity of one group and its members in contrast with others, but rather in the centrifugal action of each which creates *a new centre* of interaction on the borders and frontiers which join rather than divide them.

The new centres created by international exhibitions are, inevitably, ephemeral. Like the kaleidoscopic image there is perpetual flux; a sense of being always in the process of becoming. Rather than there being a centre and periphery, there are only multiple centres. The skill is to recognise these centres as contingent, as not fixed, as created by the curvature of a lens, and the positioning of reflecting plates and "loose objects", and to have the flexibility and dexterity to constantly reposition oneself in relation to them.

International exhibitions are assemblages of people, objects, practices and meanings that offer a kaleidoscopic vision —a series of temporary centres that dissolve cultural frontiers and boundaries of practice, where dialogue and negotiation take place, and intercultural understandings are sought. The vision is momentary, existing only in that particular time and space. And yet, each time we engage in this creative process there is something that endures: a "shift", a connection, a thought or a feeling that stays with us only to be triggered again when next we find ourselves out there in the borderlands. Sharing the perspective of another may not mean that we come to consider ourselves similar or that we change our point of view but we will have, however fleetingly, spent time in "a realm where the law of the point of view no longer holds" (Buber 2002, 7).

Rather than *decentering* museums, we argue for a multiplication of centres, emphasising not just dialogue between different voices, but the creation of new centres of shared meaning as both a process and product of this dialogue. It is this, after all, that will keep us together in spite of our differences. We, therefore, envisage an intercultural museum practice that is about exploring this *space in between*; a borderland where point-of-view is temporarily suspended and transformation and mutability are highlighted so as to *unfreeze* both practices and identities.

Guiding practice: from cross-cultural encounters to intercultural solutions

Throughout this book we have hinted at a number of practical ways in which our findings might inform the successful development of international exhibitions and an evolving intercultural museum practice. Our historical overview of international exhibitions and the debates that have surrounded them suggested that a good starting point was to carefully consider the particular mix of drivers for any specific exhibition across diplomatic, institutional mission-related and market-oriented domains. If these are clearly articulated at the outset of a project, and evaluated using an appropriate set of indicators, this will help communicate value to funders, stakeholders and the general public.

Investigating how our case study exhibitions were organised, and some of the issues faced, highlighted the importance of clearly understanding the available economic and production models for international exhibitions, and the forms of partnership these might involve. Each model has certain advantages and disadvantages, an awareness of which could enhance decision-making, reduce potential conflicts and misunderstandings, and help institutions to develop better strategies and plan partnerships that are most appropriate to their needs, resources etc. Considerations include:

- Establishing clear and realistic expectations of what model is being adopted; and what its benefits and challenges are.
- Identifying areas of strength and weakness being brought to a partnership; exploring areas of commonality and difference; clarifying perspectives and articulating a shared vision.
- Exploring how the partnership will work at different levels and throughout different stages of the project, not just at senior management level and in relation to contract negotiations; involving as many staff in different roles as possible when deciding how a collaboration will function.
- Seeing partnerships as evolving over time and considering contingencies for institutional change in longer timeframes.

For institutions heavily involved in their production and touring, a system of recording and categorising international exhibitions could inform ongoing practice. Sharing this information through international networks would provide a better overview of the global sector, and enable more strategic decisions around, for example, the "imbalance of content" whereby visual art

shows significantly outnumber exhibitions on anthropology/ethnography, social history, the built environment and climate change, as well as child-focused exhibitions (Touring Exhibitions Group 2007, 9; Tarasoff 1990).

Cross-cultural collaboration requires a thorough understanding of different working styles, processes and timeframes. Consideration needs to be given to preferred communication styles and channels, and the desired frequency of communication. Language was another important consideration. Assessing existing staff competencies and having staff on project teams who are fluent speakers wherever possible is desirable. Otherwise, the use of interpreters can ensure important meanings are not "lost in translation". Working face-to-face with staff from other institutions has many advantages and while costly, may often be worth the investment in terms of strengthening relationships, building trust and clarifying understandings—all of which may increase productivity and save time in the long run. Where the costs of travel are prohibitive, a suitable digital platform may work as a substitute to help staff see the "human face" of those they are working with, facilitating professional friendships. Formal protocols, as well as informal practices, for welcoming and hosting visiting staff will be culture-specific, but can be deeply beneficial for enhancing working relationships and long-term connections.

Where co-development is involved, and even for less intensive adaptations, the translation of meanings between cultures can require extensive consultation, and this needs to be allowed for in production timelines. Reaching intercultural solutions requires a back-and-forth dialogue, where adequate time investment will likely result in a better outcome, as well as a greater level of professional development. Considering all aspects of the overall exhibition in a comprehensive intercultural engagement strategy, including object selection, design, text, graphics, marketing, community outreach, events, programming, merchandising and other commercial components—will mean a cohesive and integrated approach to the exhibition concept and help ensure adequate time for consultation with institutional partners in order to overcome potential misunderstandings and achieve cosmopolitan outcomes.

Marketing images, which must sensitively encapsulate a culture and engage a "foreign" audience with its own set of cultural references—all in one simple image—emerged from our case study as a particularly difficult aspect of intercultural translation, requiring sufficient time for dialogue and adaptation. Exhibition developers should be aware of the complexity of this process and allow sufficient time and adequate modes of communication to enable these issues to be discussed and solutions to be found. A degree of flexibility and understanding of different cultural perspectives can facilitate this process, as well as an appreciation of the dynamic of cross-cultural mediation and translation that means something "new" will be created from the fusion of perspectives.

Understanding the ways in which visitors engage with other cultures in exhibitions can also inform a design that helps facilitate these processes, allowing for different styles and preferences, as well as varying levels of intercultural competency and degrees of cosmopolitanism. Recent theories of visitor meaning-making, including embodied understandings and the idea of intercultural mimicry, could inform all aspects of exhibition design, marketing and events, complementing what many staff already understand intuitively. The inclusion on development teams of a staff member with an insight into the target audience and/or a grounding in intercultural engagement could enhance outcomes for international exhibitions.

In the intercultural space of an international exhibition, staff are exposed to situations in which they must decode the language and practices of others in order to work together effectively. Successful intercultural communication minimises misunderstanding. It demands a cosmopolitan outlook which is open to different perspectives and different ways of doing things, and a willingness to negotiate new meanings, solutions and practices through dialogue. Most professional development for international exhibitions is currently informal and happens on-the-job (Andrew 2016). We propose that museums should equip staff with the necessary intercultural skills and cosmopolitan attitudes to work on the boundaries of practices, through more formal training. This will contribute to the development of an intercultural museum practice, and ensure that staff are adequately prepared to perform this complex and important work.

Where to from here? Future directions for international exhibitions

> [M]useums need not be sites where one culture displays dominance over another; they are potentially spaces in which issues of power and identity can be rehearsed, and in which our understanding of civility should be tested.
>
> (Gorji 2004, 49)

At the beginning of this book we proposed that international exhibitions are a means by which museums might advance a cosmopolitan agenda on the world stage. In this aspiration we add our voices to a growing chorus arguing for museums—and nations—to engage people in conversations about cosmopolitanism, both at home and abroad (Villanueva Rivas 2010; Schorch, Waterton, and Watson 2016; Mason 2013). International exhibitions can—and do—play a role in creating new centres, in which power, identity and notions of civility are performed and explored in open-minded, reflexive and constructive ways. Our hope is that this book contributes in some way to museums doing more of this type of diplomacy, more effectively.

Museums pursue diplomatic goals in the fulfilment of their institutional missions which may, or may not, intersect with national branding and foreign policy objectives. Their relative independence positions them to act as *cosmopolitan ambassadors* in ways that differ from, but are not necessarily in conflict with, national agendas. Rather than replacing a national with a cosmopolitan agenda, museums have the potential to undertake a global diplomatic role that explores the dynamic relations between the two.

To do this most successfully, appropriate objectives should be articulated and indicators developed to evaluate their success. We see our model of international exhibition drivers as a useful starting point, but further research is needed to gain more clarity around the purpose, practice and potential impact of international exhibitions. Further work is also required on different partnership models and how they work in practice, in order to inform strategies and planning. Finally, research on value is needed in order to establish a comprehensive framework and a working set of indicators across all domains.

International exhibitions is an evolving field. Emerging trends include new venue types, such as archives, libraries, and schools, and new models, such as "concept touring" where a curatorial concept encapsulated in a core group of objects forms the nucleus of a touring exhibition, creating a "changing installation" at successive venues, and "split-venue" touring where shows are hosted simultaneously across multiple sites (Touring Exhibitions Group 2007, 11). Host venues are increasingly seeking exhibitions for particular audiences, which requires more specifically created content, interpretation, and promotion (Touring Exhibitions Group 2007). Future international exhibitions are likely to make far better use of the internet and the virtual world (Jacobsen and West 2009, 9) as new media enables innovative forms of cultural exchange, replacing top-down and one-to-many models with cultural encounters that are facilitated, rather than led, by cultural institutions (Hoogwaerts 2016; Bound et al. 2007; Grincheva 2013).

Concerns that arose from our case study include the challenges of balancing market-oriented, mission-related and diplomatic goals. Market drivers appear to encourage the "export" model for international exhibitions, with museums opting for commercially "safe" topics and leading metropolitan institutions competing for the tourist dollar. However, our research demonstrates the value of an exchange model, based on "going to the source" (*mana taonga*) and reciprocity (*manaakitanga/tequitl*), as promoting more meaningful relationships and deeper engagement for staff, visitors and other stakeholders.

While much of the discussion on how to market *Aztecs* revolved around concerns about sensationalising human sacrifice or representing the Aztecs as a living culture, our research suggests that there were other "universal"

themes and contemporary concerns that may have engaged visitors and enticed them to visit, such as colonialism, imperialism, perspectives on life and death, environmental sustainability, politics and social inequality, to name a few. Far from merely wanting to see rare and precious objects from lost civilisations, most of the visitors we spoke to expressed a desire to engage with the everyday "reality" of a culture, as opposed to a romanticised or sanitised view. They were drawn to engage with other cultures in order to explore issues of relevance to their daily lives, to better understand themselves and the world around them, to contemplate aspects of the human condition and enduring human issues such as how we might live together and respect one another.

As *cosmopolitan ambassadors*, international exhibitions might help us envisage a world not of boundaries, but of multiple centres, perpetually in a state of transformation and becoming, a place to meet with and imagine the other selves we might have been. Sasha explains that exhibitions can help visitors to appreciate another culture in ways that are not possible through other media because "you actually go to the museum and can touch … it was simply fascinating to see it and to feel, imagine how people actually were living there". The potential that exhibitions have to engage people on both sensory and cognitive levels, creating embodied understandings that are more profound and long-lasting than intellectual engagement alone, make them particularly effective in developing cosmopolitan imaginations. The role of materiality in understanding cultural difference—an embodied experience that includes thoughts, reflections, and emotions acquired from the whole 'landscape' of the exhibition and the visitor's internal landscape—provides a strong argument for turning museum objects into ambassadors and sending them on journeys around the world.

At the end of his interview, when asked if there was anything else he wanted to share about *E Tū Ake*, Ricardo told us:

> It's kind of surprising that some exhibition in a museum changes your life in that way because, I'm an anthropologist so, I thought before the exhibition that I could know about the people [by] talking with the people. But you can talk with objects, you can talk with the people [by] seeing the people. It's not like a real conversation but it's like another kind of conversation. So I think that the Māori stone that we touched at the beginning of the exhibition … I don't know how the connection comes but you feel real connected and I could see the faces of the people when touching the stone, like they are leaving their Mexican pounamu and they're taking the Māori pounamu from the stone and that's the way they come into the exhibition and feel familiar and feel connected and the only thing that I want to say is that it really changed my

way of seeing people, of seeing museums, of seeing tattoos, a lot of things. … You can learn about Māori, about Egypt, about Greece, about everything, reading or the Internet or videos or anything. But the interaction that you have with the object is not given away by the Internet or the books. You can have a real experience with the object and that is what changes something in here [touches his chest].

List of Acronyms

AM – Australian Museum, Australia

CAMD – Council of Australasian Museum Directors

CDIP – Cultural Diplomacy International Programme, Aotearoa New Zealand

CNME – Coordinación Nacional de Museos y Exposiciones, INAH, México

CONACULTA – Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes (1988-2016)

DE – Dirección de exposiciones, CNME, INAH, México

DMNH – Denver Museum of Natural History, United States

ENCRyM – Escuela Nacional de Conservación, Restauración y Museografía, INAH, México

ICOM – International Council of Museums

INAH – Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, México

INBA – Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, México

MFAT – Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Aotearoa New Zealand

MM – Melbourne Museum, Australia

MNA – Museo Nacional de Antropología, INAH-México

MNC – Museo Nacional de las Culturas, INAH-México

MoMA – Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States

MTM – Museo del Templo Mayor, INAH-México

NAME - Network of Australasian Museum Exhibitors

NMC - National Museum of China

SECULT – Secretaría de Cultura (2016-) (Cultural Ministry), México

SFMoMA – Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, United States

SRE – Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores (Foreign Affairs Ministry), México

TEG – Touring Exhibitions Group, United Kingdom

TP – Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa)

Glossary

Māori words and phrases

Atua – god, supernatural being

Haka – war dance

Hei tiki – carved pendants, usually made of greenstone

Hongi – traditional Māori greeting, pressing of noses and forehead

Iwi – tribal group

Kai – food

Kaihautū – Māori leader of Te Papa, shares strategic leadership with the Chief Executive

Kanohi ki te kanohi – face to face, in the flesh

Karakia – prayer

Kaumātua – Māori elder

Kaupapa – foundation, topic, policy

Kōrero – speech, conversation, story

Mana – personal power or prestige

Mana taonga – Māori museological concept recognising the power of taonga and their spiritual and cultural connections to ancestors and descendents

Manaaki – support, hospitality, caring for

Manaakitanga – (the process of showing) hospitality, respect, caring for others

Marae – communal meeting place

Mauri – life force, life essence

Mokomokai – preserved tattooed heads

Pākehā – New Zealander of European descent

Pātaka – storehouse

Poi – traditional performance art

Pounamu – greenstone, jade (New Zealand nephrite)

Pōwhiri - welcoming ceremony

Tā moko – traditional tattooing

Taonga – cultural treasure

Tikanga – protocols, practice

Tikanga taonga – a Māori way of caring for taonga; Māori museum practice (McCarthy 2011, 128)

Waiata - Māori song/s

Waka – canoe

Whakapapa – genealogy, connection

Wharenui – big house

Mexican words

Aztec – common name for Mexica

Chinampas – special agricultural technique to gain land from a lake, popularly known as floating gardens

Día de Muertos – Day of the Dead celebrated on November the 1st

Huipil – traditional tunic worn by Indigenous women in Mesoamerica

Jarabe tapatío – Mexican traditional dance

Maya –Indigenous group established in south west Mexico

Mexica – Nahuatl group established in Mexico central plateau from 1413 to 1521, also known as Aztecs

Mesoamerica – cultural area covering central part of Mexico and some areas of Central America

Nahuatl – an Indigenous language of Mesoamerica, spoken by around 1,376,000 people in Mexico today

Ofrenda – offering

Penacho – feathered headdress

Tequitl – reciprocity, love, respect

Tenochtitlan – name of the city established by the Mexica in the Texcoco Lake; Mexico City is built over its archaeological remains

Tlachtli – pre-Hispanic ball game

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