Abstract

In October 2007 France's new national immigration museum, the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration, opened its doors to the public. A project nearly twenty years in the making, the Cité represents the cooperation of authorities, experts, and numerous civil society actors. It rewrites the French national narrative to take into account France's diverse demographic reality, legitimizing immigration as a key foundation of the French state. Since the early 1980s, immigration has been a prominent feature of the French political landscape, with immigrants' struggle for rights and recognition accompanied by the rise of right-wing xenophobia and racism. In particular, it is populations originating in former French colonial possessions that have been central to the debates.

Using the Cité as a case study, this thesis examines the evolution of French identity to an updated, multicultural model that strives to reconcile traditional French universalism with cultural and ethnic pluralism, encompassing the principle of 'unity in diversity.' The museum's permanent exhibit, Répères, highlights the important contribution to the French nation made by immigrants, but has been criticized for failing to adequately interrogate the colonial past, which intersects with immigration on many levels. Housed in the former Museum of the Colonies in the Palais de la Porte Dorée, the controversy surrounding the 'colonial lacuna' forced a deeper engagement with colonialism than was originally intended, particularly, through the museum's activities outside of the permanent exhibit. The museum must be understood as an active and dynamic institution, and space of negotiation between the state and civil society actors.
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### Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>CNHI</td>
<td>Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOM-TOM</td>
<td>Départements d'outre-mer et Territoires d'outre-mer</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMA</td>
<td>Institut du monde arabe</td>
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<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAAO</td>
<td>Musée des arts africains et océaniens</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCEM</td>
<td>Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée</td>
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<td>MDH</td>
<td>Musée de l'homme</td>
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<td>MNATP</td>
<td>Musée national des arts et traditions populaires</td>
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<td>MQB</td>
<td>Musée du Quai Branly</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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Introduction

The result of nearly twenty years of campaigning, France's new national immigration museum, the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration, opened its doors in October 2007. Located in the former Musée des colonies at the edge of the Bois de Vincennes in Eastern Paris, the project is the result of the increased presence of post-colonial immigrants in the French consciousness, as well as the government's increasing acceptance of its multicultural reality. It represents the evolving nature of French national identity as France officially recognizes the important place of immigration in its national history. In short, the opening of the Cité represents a rethinking of traditional Frenchness, or 'Francité.'

This thesis uses the Cité as a case study for examining the contested nature of Frenchness and state-society relations in contemporary France. It situates this within the context of traditional French universalism, which has shaped French political and cultural identity since the founding of the Republic in 1789. The turmoil wrought by decolonization, and particularly its long-lasting after-effects caused a rupture in the fabric of the French imaginary, with battles over identity and history becoming increasingly prominent over the course of the preceding few decades, and particularly since the 1980s, when immigration made its presence felt in a variety of spheres as migrants and their descendants, particularly those from former French colonial possessions, began pressing for more rights and recognition.

The thesis situates the museum within the broader context of globalization, immigration, and the changing reality of the nation-state, relating it to the role of museums in society in general. It views the museum as a dynamic institution and explores both its permanent exhibit and its wealth of other activities, paying special attention to the first temporary exhibit produced by the Cité, entitled 1931: Les étrangers au temps de l'Exposition coloniale.1 It critically interrogates the goals, content, and activities of the Cité, particularly concerning the museum's 'colonial lacuna,' and builds upon recent work by Mary Stevens (2007).

In her 2007 dissertation, Mary Stevens posits the question of whether the Cité can truly be viewed “as both the herald and the agent of a new cosmopolitan France,” to

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1 Translation: Foreigners at the Time of the Colonial Exhibition
which she answers “a tentative yes” (307). For Stevens, the primary accomplishment of the Cité is not in “communicating a particular vision of a multicultural society but in opening up a space where this vision was subject to debate,” in particular, as a space wherein numerous different actors came together to challenge the traditional republican paradigm (2007: 307). However, she argues, there “were limits to contestation, particularly around the sensitive subject of colonialism” (although she by no means argues that colonialism is absent from the permanent exhibit) (2007: 308).

I will build upon her work, in particular focusing on the two competing and yet intersecting histories of immigration and colonialism, arguing that although colonialism is not a subject explicitly addressed in the permanent exhibit, there are inevitably numerous references to contentious issues relating to the colonial past, such as the legacy of racist stereotypes born during the colonial period, as well as the Algerian War and its after-effects in the metropole. Such references succeed in linking the two histories of immigration and colonialism, while exposing the relevance of colonialism's structural and ideological legacies for contemporary French society. In addition, the Cité's numerous other activities and resources mark it as a dynamic, multifaceted institution, rather than as a more traditional, static museum, making it a forum for debating the complexities of the post-colonial French state.

While the state has only recently recognized the importance of immigration in shaping French society and culture, it has been even more hesitant in confronting France's colonial past, although both histories have played a role in public debate. As France reevaluates its national history and identity, it continues to have an ambivalent and problematic relationship vis-à-vis this past; however, the public controversy surrounding the decision to situate the Cité in the Palais de la Porte Dorée has opened up a site for engagement with colonialism, albeit through the lens of immigration. This, however, does not have to be seen as a weakness, nor as a negation of the colonial past, but rather, can be seen as a space for examining the heritage of colonialism and its relevance for contemporary France, as the legacy of colonial structures of domination intersects with the politics of immigration in French society. In time, such a space may contribute toward an even deeper engagement with this past that has been central to the construction of France on countless levels.
Chapter One provides a broad sketch of the relationship between the nation-state, history, and museums, outlining the evolution of state-society relations and highlighting the democratization of history and museums that has taken place in recent decades. Chapter Two discusses the politicization of immigration and identity in France, which has forced a rethinking of traditional notions of Frenchness, and especially, of French universalism. Chapter Three moves to the museum itself, exploring its evolution, goals, and permanent exhibit, as well as the politics of the Palais de la Porte Dorée. It highlights in particular the Cité's treatment of colonialism. Chapter Four examines some of the Cité's wide-ranging activities, focusing on the museum's potential as an active museum for further engaging with France's colonial past.
Chapter One: The Changing Nation-State

Linked to the emergence of the nation-state during the late eighteenth century, and often the result of major state-funded projects, public museums are important national institutions that offer a space for examining broad social, cultural, and political trends. Tied to both nationalist ideology and changes in modes of governance, particularly during the nineteenth century, museums were regarded as key sites for constructing citizens in the image of the nation. Long embracing the modernist narrative of progress and expressing a positivist worldview, they espoused a Eurocentric ideology; however, in recent decades, as minority populations have pressed for increasing recognition by reaffirming their identities and reclaiming their often marginalized pasts, both museums and history have become sites of contention in the West.

The Nation-State and the Global Moment

The subject of this thesis stems from a broad interest in the changing nation-state in the era of globalization, and in the politics of immigration in Western European societies. While much popular and academic discourse discusses the dissolution of traditional territorial borders between states, with the increasingly easy flow of goods, capital, and people around the globe, it is clear that boundaries nonetheless continue to exist, in particular, against immigrants. While contemporary states have relaxed barriers to the flow of goods, capital, and information, they have increasingly securitized the movement of persons (Balibar 2004). The figure of the immigrant, often conceived as the ‘racialized other,’ has thus become a powerful nexus for contemporary globalization debates. Whereas in other spheres, borders seemingly dissolve under globalizing forces, for the immigrant, boundaries continue to be salient, from policies aimed at curbing immigration to nationalist rhetoric that seeks to celebrate traditional myths based on (imagined) ethnic and cultural homogeneity. Immigration in virtually all countries in the West has become the subject of heated popular and political debate and is “widely seen by theorists as a key site for the crystallization of debates over the future of the nation-state in late modernity” (Stevens 2007: 16). Increasingly, diverse demographic realities are forcing traditional Western nation-states to re-examine their identities.

This change contradicts traditional nationalist ideologies that have underwritten
Western European nation-states since their rise to primacy as political formations during the nineteenth century and continue to influence politics and popular opinion today. But whereas traditional immigrant countries, such as Canada and the United States, have been more accepting of diversity as part of their national identities, Western European states have generally been more hesitant to adopt a multicultural approach, despite their realities as countries of immigration. This makes them particularly worthy of academic inquiry, and brings me to the broad question that frames my research. How are European states, traditionally based on notions of ethnic and cultural homogeneity corresponding to fixed territorial boundaries, adapting to their post-colonial and multicultural demographic realities in the sensitive area of national identity? Specifically, how is France, as a former imperial state of great ethnic and cultural diversity, adjusting to these forces?

The French case is of particular interest due to the specificity of France's republican tradition and colonial past, which have structured particular patterns of immigration, identity, inclusion, and exclusion. Thus, not only is France being forced to adjust to its contemporary reality as a society of increased ethnic and cultural diversity that is a part of general patterns of globalization and increased migration throughout the world, but due to the presence of specifically post-colonial patterns of migration, it is also being forced to come to terms with its colonial past, as a post-colonial state.

**History and the Nation-State**

Following scholars such as Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and Michael Billig, this project takes as its basis the constructed nature of national identity and nationhood. For Anderson, the nation constitutes an “imagined political community,” which, as any community too large for regular, face-to-face interaction among its members, is necessarily imagined “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (1991: 6). It is imagined as limited and sovereign: limited in the sense that every nation has a finite boundary that distinguishes it from other nations, and sovereign in the sense of wanting to be free (Anderson 1991). Lastly, it is a community “because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep,
horizontal comradeship” (Anderson 1991: 7). In order for individuals to imagine themselves as part of the same community, they must relate through a shared culture, made possible historically in large part by the advent of print capitalism, which facilitated the construction of common languages and ideas through the standardization and spread of vernacular languages (Anderson 1991). Without this common, 'imagined' bond, a national community would not be possible.

Hobsbawm similarly discusses the constructed nature of national identities, particularly in the years leading up to the First World War, through the state's 'invention of traditions' (2007). The development of mass societies after 1870 necessitated new methods of governance and of constructing common bonds and thus, along with standardized administration apparatuses, states developed new traditions, such as public holidays, ceremonies, and symbols, as state structures and signifiers increasingly reached into the everyday lives of individuals (Hobsbawm 2007). The push to create homogeneous national cultures and identities was seen as crucial for legitimating and consolidating the state and the creation of a mass, nationalized citizenry. According to Michael Billig, the permeation of national symbols such as flags into the the every day lives of individuals constitutes a 'banal nationalism' that, although largely unnoticed, reifies and perpetuates national identities (1995). Nationalism thus does not merely represent a fading idea or extremist ideology, but rather, is a fundamental element of contemporary Western states (Billig 1995). Both Billig and Hobsbawm treat nationalism from the perspective of top-down governance, thus for them, nationalism is an elite ideology used as a tool for state power; however, Anderson's more interactionist perspective helps to illustrate the manner in which nationalism can also be an emancipatory force.

While these scholars differ in their treatment of nationalism, they hold in common the idea that national communities are constructed and perpetuated through a shared culture that signifies the nation. The construction of national histories plays a significant role in this. Recognizing this in his “Qu'est-ce qu'une nation” speech delivered at the Sorbonne in 1882, Ernest Renan declared that “the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories” constitutes a key component of a nation's soul, along with “present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage.
that one has received in an undivided form” (Renan). The institution of history education in primary schools in late nineteenth-century France similarly illustrates the importance of history in the construction of nationness. Ernest Lavisse's *Histoire de France* served as a textbook for teaching the history and values of France in public schools for many years (Nora 1984). The construction of official, national histories was a key tool for the consolidation of nation-states during the late nineteenth century, as states utilized history as a homogenizing force in the creation of a common bond among their citizens, eliminating difference in an effort to construct homogeneous national identities. Such histories must thus be seen through the lens of the power relations inherent in the construction of official, legitimate nation-statehood. This is not to say that all national histories necessarily follow this pattern; the formation of identities through the construction of a common past has often been utilized as a liberatory force, particularly among minorities or oppressed populations. However, the general tendency of Western European nation-states in the late nineteenth century was toward the creation of homogeneous, national histories and identities.

The acceleration of the processes of globalization and immigration in recent decades has caused numerous changes to traditional nation-states, forcing many of them to re-examine their identities in light of their increasingly multicultural realities. As minorities press for rights in a negotiation of their place in the nation, they increasingly utilize history and memory as sites of struggle. History, throughout the West, has become a highly contested topic, with various states using public remembrance as a way of making up for past wrongs, and trying to accommodate minority voices, while numerous minority groups utilize history in order to reconstruct and reaffirm identities that have traditionally been marginalized from mainstream, official histories. Whereas in the past, states often used history as a homogenizing tool for the nationalizing of their populations, increasingly, previously marginalized groups are reclaiming their own histories, forcing the deconstruction and reconsideration of official state histories.

Pierre Nora attributes the resurgent interest in heritage, memory, and history to two main factors: the acceleration and democratization of history (2002). In the modern era, change has replaced continuity and permanence as the primary feature of Western societies, causing both a rupture and a preoccupation with the past in the form of memory
as a promise of continuity between past, present and future (Nora 2002). Along with this, history has been increasingly democratized, becoming an emancipatory tool for minority groups “for whom rehabilitating their past is part and parcel of reaffirming their identity,” and is linked to the international, domestic, and ideological decolonizations of the late twentieth century (Nora 2002: 5). History and memory, throughout the world, have become contested sites, a trend that is particularly strong in contemporary France, where “the experiment in synthesizing the regional, the national, the European, the ethnic postcolonial, and the global is a beautiful high drama” (Lebovics 2004: 190).

**Museums and the Nation-State**

The emergence of public museums was connected to the rise of nationalism and the nation-state in the latter half of the eighteenth century, as well as to new concepts of the public and the citizen that emerged out of Enlightenment thought. While in the sixteenth century collecting was conceptualized primarily as an encyclopedic venture, now the 'territorial state' and the 'nation' became organizing principles for assembling collections, with “the notion that a collection could honour the nation” expressed in France in the *Encyclopédie* in 1765 (Prösler 1996: 31-32). National museums were also connected to the rise of a bourgeois public as they struggled to gain political rights, demanding free access to royal collections as part of their rights as citizens (Prösler 1996). The gradual opening of the French royal collections to the public from 1750 onwards illustrates this evolution, in what represents a transition from *private* ownership to *public* ownership of state property, and thus, a fundamental change in the nature of the state and of state-society relations.

The Louvre's gradual evolution over the course of the eighteenth century from royal palace and private collection to public art museum followed the example of the Capitolini Museum in Rome, and the Enlightenment principle that works of art should be made public for the benefit of the citizenry (Babelon 1986). While the Louvre was not the first gallery to be turned over to the public, its political significance and influence have been widely recognized as a symbol of the fall of the ancien regime (Duncan 1999). In 1750 Louis XV authorized public viewings of selected collections on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and later in the century plans were made to allow increasing public access
During the French Revolution, revolutionaries made the museum a top priority: in 1793 citizens were admitted on selected days and by the following year, the Louvre was open to the public every day of the week (Babelon 1986). In this Enlightenment spirit, numerous national public museums opened throughout Europe, with the Hermitage in St. Petersburg opening its doors in 1764, the Nationalmuseet in Stockholm in 1772, and the Museo Pio-Clementino in Italy in 1772, among various others (Prösler 1996). The birth of the national public museum was thus intertwined with the emergence of the modern nation-state and bourgeois public. Established as important state institutions by the middle of the nineteenth century, museums were key for establishing a sense of shared identification with the nation-state among members of the public through their transmission of a common culture of shared knowledge, practices, ritual, and symbolism (Macdonald 2003).

National collections also signified a nation's glory. The Louvre, sacred site of the French nation and model for numerous other national galleries, espoused a narrative of progress in which France represented the culmination of Western civilization with roots in Ancient Egypt and Greece, a narrative that was imitated in state museums throughout Europe (Duncan 1999). As markers of a nation's greatness, museums also indicated “the state's spheres of political influence,” and were thus symbolic of a power relationship, in particular, as states acquired art and artifacts from conquered territories (Prösler 1996: 35). For imperial nations, possessing objects from colonized territories represented the state's power to extend and dominate beyond nation-state boundaries, and thus indicated the nation's place and might in the world (Macdonald 2003). National museums were also key for distinguishing the nation as unique, thus asserting the idea of particularism or difference from other nations (Prösler 1996). The late nineteenth century saw the establishment of ethnographic museums, which differentiated between 'civilized' Western cultures and 'primitive' non-Western cultures, with the German ethnological museum established in 1873, and France's Trocadéro ethnographic museum established in 1878. Ethnographic museums in particular provided a space for exhibiting other cultures, and thus, a platform for the identification of a progressive, national 'we' versus a primitive 'them' (Stevens 2007).

By the late nineteenth century, as the state increasingly penetrated into society
and the everyday lives of individuals through various national programs such as public education systems, museums were seen evermore in terms of their educational function, integrating into state schooling systems from the 1880s onwards (Prösler 1996). It was at this same time in France that free, compulsory, public education was extended to all citizens through the Ferry Laws of 1881 in what amounted to a further 'nationalizing' of the citizenry and expansion of the nation-building project to the masses (Weber 1976). Museums came to have broader appeal, growing at an unprecedented rate as nationalist ideologies flourished toward the end of the century, and were often geared toward societal improvement, although this social improvement agenda is now widely understood as “paternalistic and based on notions of civilising and facilitating the governance of the masses” (Prösler 1996; Sandell 2002: 21).

Museums here also linked to the positivist tradition and thus represent a certain epistemological view, a way of ordering and understanding the world. Emerging out of the modernist paradigm, the nineteenth-century museum, “generally presented [narratives] with anonymous authority, legitimised specific attitudes and opinions and gave them the status of truth” (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 151). Constructed in this positivist vision as purveyors of 'expert knowledge,' museums carried a certain authoritative weight. This authoritative voice contributed to the “objectification of culture,” thus naturalizing culture and identity as taken-for-granted truths, or “matters of fact” (Macdonald 2003: 3). The seeming neutrality of such 'objective' narratives masked the underlying power relations inherent in collecting, possessing, and displaying, which was particularly significant in terms of the representation of other, non-Western cultures. Recent museum theorizing and practice take issue with the modernist paradigm, deconstructing its Eurocentric, masculine perspective and unmasking the underlying ideologies inherent in its structures.

The contemporary battle over identity, history, and memory has positioned museums as sites of contention, even as they have retained their important social role as public education institutions. Numerous minority groups have challenged the authority of the museum, particularly regarding the politics of representation in the traditional ethnographic museum (Stevens 2007). Following the postmodern and postcolonial turns in the social sciences and humanities, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill proposes the model of the
post-museum, which she characterizes as a “[forum] for lively dissent,” in a reformulation of the museum's role in society (Stevens 2007: 28). The key characteristic of the post-museum is transparency, as it seeks to redress the authoritative structure of traditional museum practice by developing a less hierarchical power structure and encouraging active participation from the communities it seeks to represent, while critically engaging with issues of representation, particularly concerning social inequalities (Marstine 2006). The post-museum is a dynamic, multi-vocal and multi-faceted institution, with the exhibition being one of its many different activities and events, which may include performances, workshops, and discussions, and the establishment of different community partnerships (Hooper-Greenhill 2000). It explicitly articulates its decision-making processes, agendas, and strategies in a self-reflective manner, while acknowledging the politics of representation and the role of museum staff in upholding and communicating these agendas, rather than presenting itself or its curators as a neutral voice (Marstine 2006). Knowledge is therefore “no longer unified and monolithic; it becomes fragmented and multi-vocal;” thus, the post-museum deconstructs the modernist paradigm and the authoritative voice of the traditional museum, instead providing a space for the articulation of multiple perspectives (Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 152).

In a somewhat similar vein, James Clifford evokes the idea of the museum as a 'contact zone', where both elites and community members meet in search of different, yet mutually beneficial outcomes (Stevens 2007). The museum in this formulation does not simply represent a one-way relationship of domination, but rather, is a space of complex interactions and constant negotiation and improvisation (Clifford 1999). This model emphasizes the mutual push and pull exchanges between groups that have traditionally been segregated, historically or geographically, as these different groups engage in acts of exploitation and appropriation (Clifford 1999). Thus, while the contact zone museum model does not represent a relationship of equality, it alludes to the mutual usefulness of the museum for the various actors involved (Clifford 1999).

Both the post-museum and contact zone models question the traditional modernist museum paradigm, viewing museums instead as spaces of negotiation wherein multiple voices can be heard. Similar to the trend toward the democratization of history that has
taken place in recent decades, this represents a democratization of museums and representation, as minority voices use the museum space as a forum for negotiating their place in the nation. The work of Richard Sandell, however, suggests that museum-goers continue to look to the museum as an authoritative voice; Sandell advocates that museums should use their cultural authoritative weight to help combat inequality and promote social change (2007). Newman and McLean similarly advocate an overtly social role for museums, asserting the important role they can play in the construction of an inclusive society and citizenship (2007). Museums can play a significant role in the recovery of the past and construction of identity, thus enabling individuals to participate in the social, political, and cultural life of a society (Newman and McLean 2007). While museums have long been seen as a way of encouraging citizenship, consciously using them in order to promote social change and achieve particular objectives is new (Newman and McLean 2007). This position corresponds to the belief held by some that museums not only reify, but also generate culture and community, while it presents a moral dilemma for museums as they attempt to navigate a new political and social terrain of multiple voices, while struggling to determine their role in society (Stevens 2007).

The advent of the migration museum represents one of the most significant developments in the recent history of the museum, the most famous of these being the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York, which opened its doors in 1990. Several have recently been established in Europe. This trend is illustrated by the advent of a Migration Museums Network, a joint initiative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which seeks to promote the public understanding of the phenomenon of migration (UNESCO-IOM). These initiatives aim to acknowledge the contributions of migrants to their host societies, help to integrate them so that they feel a sense of belonging to the nation, educate the public on migration issues, foster empathy for migrants and refugees in particular, and deconstruct stereotypes (UNESCO-IOM). The migration museum, then, takes to heart the objective of societal improvement through education and the fostering of tolerance and understanding. The Cité is a member of this network, as well as of the Association of European Migration Institutions, and is explicit about its social improvement agenda, to be further discussed in Chapter Three. In order
to understand the significance of the Cité, it is first necessary to locate it within the traditional bases of French identity, as well as the recent historical trends that led to the creation of a museum dedicated to immigration.
Chapter Two: Diversity and Divisions in the One and Indivisible Republic

The creation of the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration is a response to what has been termed an 'identity crisis' in France, as France's diverse demographic reality has forced a reconsideration of French identity as well as the republic's foundational principle of universalism. France has only recently acknowledged its long history as a country of immigration, as the increasing presence of post-colonial migrants has exposed the underlying racial divisions that exist throughout French society, thus forcing authorities and the public to take notice. The social activism of minority populations pressing for recognition has led to the increasing acceptance and official legitimation of diversity and immigration by the French state, but a similar stance vis-à-vis France's colonial past is slow to emerge, despite deep intersections between the colonial legacy, contemporary immigration, and discrimination against racialized minorities, and despite demands for recognition of this history from many of these groups. This chapter will outline the emergence of the politics of immigration and identity in France in order to contextualize the Cité, as well as the controversy surrounding the Palais de la Porte Dorée.

French Universalism

Universalism has been a core principle of the French state since the founding of the republic following the French Revolution, holding that in the public sphere all individuals are free and equal citizens of France, enjoying equal rights based on a political contract with the state, independent of any other identity or affiliation they may have (De Wenden 2007). Any other group membership, such as belonging to a particular religious or ethnic community, is confined to the private sphere and therefore is not officially recognized by the French state; the state recognizes individuals based only on their status as French citizens and thus, unlike other countries such as the United States, it does not collect data on ethnic origin. This was one of the founding principles of the French Republic, as symbolized by the revolution's celebration of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which promoted individual citizens as the primary actors in the political sphere, as members of the nascent French nation (De Wenden 2007). Because of this,
rights are granted to people as individuals, but not to community groups, in a principle that was established in the early years of the French Republic when Jews were granted rights as individuals, but not as a nation (Clermont-Tonnere 1996). It is important to note the long history of this principle, which in dating back to the very foundation of the republic, has been a central tenet of French political identity for over two hundred years.

This is key to understanding the politics of immigration and identity in contemporary France, particularly concerning debates on multiculturalism, which in recognizing difference, has historically been understood as a threat to French principles of citizenship and national cohesion. The French have historically viewed the American or British multicultural models as divisive, citing the existence of African American ghettos and race riots in the United States as evidence that such policies do not work. However, as brought to light by numerous events, and particularly by the banlieues 'uprisings' of 2005, the French model has not succeeded in integrating its minority populations into French society.

Until relatively recently, republican universalism and the myth of national homogeneity went largely unquestioned, with defenders of traditional French republican values resistant to demands for the recognition of cultural difference (De Wenden 2007). However, numerous scholars have noted a shift taking place as France responds in a pragmatic manner to its reality as a country of great diversity. Riva Kastoryano argues that an 'applied multiculturalism' is taking place, through policies that favour community identities in the public space, as the French state negotiates its identity with immigrant communities in what amounts to the integration of differences into state structures, and thus, the recognition of community-based affiliations in the political sphere (2002). Vincent Latour has also noted France's increasing shift to a more British-style multicultural model, citing the institutionalization of the Muslim community through the creation of the French Council for the Muslim Faith in 2003, as well as the adaptation of school curricula to teach the history of different religions, as evidence of this change (2007). Alec Hargreaves also notes the increasing acceptance in official circles of the use of ethnicity as a category for the collection and analysis of census data, although the topic remains controversial (2007). In earlier years, “the question was how quickly [North African migrants] would adapt to the cultural contours of their host society; the
question in recent decades has been the extent to which those contours can be remodelled to adapt to the minorities” (Raymond and Modood 2007: 161). These changes are the result of the post-colonial condition in France, as minority populations from France's former colonies force a rethinking of French political and cultural identity. These changes are also reflected in the Cité, which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

**Immigration in France**

Only recently has France recognized the important place of immigration in its history as it comes to terms with its reality as a Europe's leading country of immigration.\(^2\) In 1990 it was estimated that approximately fourteen million people living in France, or a quarter of the population, were either immigrants or the children or grandchildren of immigrants (Hargreaves 2007). Immigration has come in three main waves since the end of the nineteenth century, with migrants originally coming primarily from France's neighbouring countries. The first wave saw mainly Belgians, Italians, and Spanish, while the interwar period saw more immigrants from Eastern Europe (especially Poland), and the post-war period saw an increase in non-European immigrants, and particularly those from the former French colonies in the Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa (Hargreaves 2007; Silverman 1992). It should also be noted that the interwar period saw the first wave of migrant workers from Algeria, although due to their status as French subjects, they were not legally considered foreigners (Blévis 2008). It was at this time that a significant Muslim presence was felt for the first time in the metropole, with the question of integrating Muslims in the secular French state becoming an issue (Maghraoui 2003). However, this became an increasingly important issue following the Second World War when the demographic makeup of populations immigrating to France changed.

Immigrants as a percentage of the overall population in France grew substantially at the beginning of the twentieth century, from 2.7 percent in 1906 to 6.58 percent in 1931 (Hargreaves 2007). The number declined in the wake of the economic crisis of the 1930s, but grew again in the thirty years after the Second World War, reaching 6.54 percent in 1975, and has remained relatively steady ever since (Hargreaves 2007).

to the end of the Second World War, non-Europeans constituted a small minority of France's foreign population; however, during the 1950s their numbers grew rapidly (Hargreaves 2007). Although the state had hoped to recruit workers from elsewhere in Europe, due to competition from other European countries, along with France's ties to its former colonies, migrants from former French colonial possessions made up an increasing component of foreign workers in France (Blatt 1997). In particular, the size of the Maghrebi population of Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians increased from 2 percent of immigrants in 1946 to 39 percent in 1982 (Hargreaves 2007). Among these, Algerians constituted the largest group, growing from 22,000 in 1946 to 805,000 in 1982, due to an agreement that allowed them freedom of movement between Algeria and metropolitan France until well after Algerian independence in 1962 (Hargreaves 2007).

While those of Maghrebi origin represent the largest immigrant population in France, since the 1970s the country has seen a large increase in immigrants from other parts of Africa and Asia (Hargreaves 2007). France's Sub-Saharan African population grew from 82,000 in 1975 to 282,000 in 1999, although the true size of these groups is undoubtedly much higher; most of this group also comes from former French colonies (Hargreaves 2007). There has similarly been an increase in South-East Asian and Turkish immigrants since the 1970s (Hargreaves 2007). Another population group comes from the DOM-TOM (primarily Guadeloupe, Martinique and French Guyana in the Caribbean, and Réunion in the Indian Ocean), and thus are not technically immigrants, as they are legally French citizens. However, due to the fact that most of them are of Asian or African descent, they are recognizable as non-European 'visible minorities' and are thus commonly treated as immigrants (Hargreaves 2007).

In short, the structural legacies of colonialism have led to particular patterns of immigration, with post-colonial migrants and their descendants making up the vast majority of France's 'immigrant' population in recent decades.

The Racialized 'Immigré'

While there are numerous structural and legal connections between immigration and colonialism, it is primarily the ideological remnants of the colonial period that are of concern here, as these have an impact on notions of culture and identity in France, which
are the areas that the Cité seeks to address. While the proportion of immigrants in relation to France's overall population has remained relatively stable in recent decades, as noted above, the composition of the immigrant population has changed, as have constructions and perceptions of immigration in French society (Gafaiti 2003). It is now widely understood that the figure of the 'immigré' in the contemporary French imaginary refers specifically to visible minorities of North African origin and their descendants, regardless of their actual nationality or citizenship status (Kastoryano 2002). Additionally, a legacy of the historical construction of the Muslim as Europe's primary Other, racial ideologies of the colonial period, as well as other political and economic factors, have led to the the conflation of various Magrebi groups into the nebulous category of the 'immigré.'

The stigmatization of North Africans in the French imagination has its roots in the colonial period, with the notion of 'une politique musulmane' first emerging in French politics during the late eighteenth century, as “a conscious attempt to take into consideration the realities of the Muslim world as part of an overall strategy of colonial rule” (Maghraoui 2003: 216). This continued into the twentieth century, and particularly after 1930, a period of widespread anti-Arab sentiment (De Wenden 1991). While Arab nationalism was characterized as Muslim fanaticism, Islam did not appear to be the primary factor in the construction of the image of the North African at this time; however, newspapers and novels stigmatized them as diseased, barbaric, libidinous, and delinquent (De Wenden 1991). The colonial period also institutionalized the discrimination of non-Europeans via ethnic categories that differentiated among various populations under French colonial domination, the legacies of which continue to impact contemporary French society (Hargreaves 2007). The populations of different colonies were granted different statuses and rights, the complexities and contradictions of which are best illustrated by the creation of the Algerian 'indigène.' In 1865, the French state recognized Algerian 'indigènes' as French nationals, but not French citizens, thus while they were recognized as French, they did not enjoy the rights of French citizenship (Blévis 2008). Their ambiguous status as neither entirely French nor entirely foreign reflects the contradictions within French colonial policy, which were brought to light especially with the increasing migration of North Africans to the metropole.
Such patterns of ethnic and racial discrimination existed as a result of the colonial legacy, but it was decolonization that further fueled the stigmatization of North Africans, with the trauma of the Algerian War (1954-1962) leaving a scar on the French consciousness. Although other French North African colonies gained independence relatively peacefully, the brutality and long duration of the Algerian War left a significant mark on French society and identity. It was this trauma, as well as other aspects of the global political situation, such as the increasing strength of the pan-Arab League, and the increasing presence of Maghrebi migrants on French soil, that further led to the majority French population's stigmatization of North Africans (Gafaiti 2003).

According to Maxim Silverman, a racialization of immigration occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which led to the subsequent racialization of numerous socioeconomic and political issues and laid the basis for contemporary immigration debates (1992). The term 'immigration' became synonymous with non-Europeans, and especially those of North African descent (Silverman 1992). Increasingly, immigration was constructed as a social problem, centering on concerns regarding social cohesion, assimilation, and ethnic balance, and leading to increased state intervention via policies on immigration control and integration (Silverman 1992). This was not due to a 'real' shift from economic to social immigration in the form of family reunification, nor to new patterns of permanent settlement, as has been frequently argued, but rather, “because the evolution of immigration began to be constructed in this way” (Silverman 1992: 72). The economic crisis of the 1970s further affected the racialization of the immigrant when in 1974 France imposed a strict immigration policy that targeted unskilled workers in particular and thus, primarily workers of non-European descent (Hargreaves 2007).

Subsequent immigrant populations that have settled in France have done so in the context of unfavourable economic circumstances that have prevented socioeconomic integration; “it is indeed arguable that the roots of present fears concerning ineffective integration lie far more in socio-economic circumstances than in cultural differences between post-colonial migrants and their European predecessors” (Hargreaves 2007: 35). An upsurge in asylum-seekers from Africa in the 1980s further complicated matters. Although earlier asylum-seekers from South East Asia had been largely welcomed as political refugees, African asylum-seekers were met with hostility, with the suspicion that they were
economic migrants in disguise becoming commonplace (Hargreaves 2007).

From the 'Arab, to the 'Nor'af' (North African), to the 'Maghrebin,' in the 1970s, the terminology used to describe those belonging to the North African community soon progressed to the term 'immigré' (Gafaiti 2003). This neo-colonial gaze ignores national or ethnic differences, instead racializing anyone appearing of Maghrebi origin as an 'Arab,' and thus, being perceived as Algerian, with Maghrebis continuing to rank the lowest on surveys measuring perceptions of different ethnic groups among the French population, nearly fifty years after decolonization (Hargreaves 2007; Hargreaves and McKinney 1997). Intersecting with stereotypes of Islam that are exacerbated by the contemporary political climate following the Gulf War and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, Maghrébis thus became the racialized Muslim-Arab immigré in the minds of the majority French population (Gafaiti 2003; Hargreaves 2007). Religion, race, and class thus intersect in the construction of the figure of the immigré in contemporary French society.

The French 'Identity Crisis'

During the 1970s “non-Europeans became more visible in virtually every sphere,” and thus, increasingly entered into French consciousness as well as mainstream debate over the course of the decade (Hargreaves 2007: 25). Racial cleavages in French society became apparent in the early 1970s, when with the memory of the Algerian War still fresh, several violent attacks targeted Algerian immigrants. Between March and May 1971 nine Algerians were murdered, with attacks again occurring in 1973 (De Wenden 1991; Hargreaves 2007). Along with increasingly visible racism at this time, disorders in the banlieues among socially and economically marginalized immigrant populations further brought to light the racial divisions in French society. A result of “deep-seated socio-economic inequalities exacerbated by entrenched patterns of discrimination against immigrant minorities originating in former colonies,” civil disorders in the banlieues have recurred intermittently since the late 1970s, culminating in the 2005 riots, when marginalized suburban youth took to the streets throughout France in violent protest following the deaths of two teenagers who were electrocuted while hiding from police in an electrical sub-station (Hargreaves 2007: 1; “Timeline”). The widespread civil unrest
prompted the government to declare a state of emergency (Hargreaves 2007). This time, unlike with past similar incidents, the majority of politicians as well as the mainstream media recognized that the roots of the problem lay not in the incompatibility between non-European and Western cultures, but rather, in entrenched patterns of discrimination (Hargreaves 2007). Along with the banlieues 'uprisings,' the three 'headscarf affairs' (1989, 1994, 2003) created fissures in the republic, when Muslim school girls' refusal to remove their head scarves in public schools sparked debate about the relationship between religion and secularism in the public sphere, culminating in the 2004 law banning “the wearing of ostentatious signs of religions affiliation in public schools” (Scott 2005: 109). This controversy is symptomatic of the greater problem regarding the reconciliation of a multicultural reality with the principle of French universalism (Scott 2005).

First asserting itself on the political scene in municipal elections in 1983, Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National signalled the politicization of immigration and rising xenophobic nationalism in French society, with a staunch anti-immigrant platform inciting fear that migrants threatened French national identity. Le Pen's calls for the repatriation of non-Europeans and strict nationality laws used immigrants as scapegoats in the context of economic uncertainty, while asserting their inability to integrate into French society and espousing a nostalgia for nineteenth century France (Hargreaves 2007; Lebovics 2004). “Will we still be French in thirty years?,” he questioned on national television in October 1985, in what symbolized the increasingly popular perception that immigrants posed a formidable threat to French national identity, in reaction to the large number of post-colonial migrants from Islamic countries (Hargreaves 2007; quoted in Kastoryano 2002: 21). Since first coming onto the scene in 1983, Le Pen has become a prominent figure in French politics, finishing second to Jacques Chirac in the 2002 presidential elections, and his success has forced immigration even more strongly onto the political agenda of mainstream parties (Hargreaves 2007).

In the early 1980s, François Mitterrand's socialist government adopted several measures in attempt to incorporate immigrants into politics, and subsequently, civil society groups have mobilized around immigration issues. Most notably, the 1981 law of

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3 For a detailed overview of the politics surrounding the headscarf affairs, see Scott 2007.
association for foreigners encouraged the emergence of several active immigrant associations, the most prominent of these being the Beur associations of second-generation North African immigrant youth (Blatt 1997). Immigrant associations garnered national attention in 1983 when they organized the six-week March against Racism from Marseille to Paris, and gained broader mainstream support with the founding of SOS Racisme in 1984 (Blatt 1997). Numerous immigrant cultural associations and social movements have since come into being, with the expression of immigrant cultures becoming a prominent element of French culture during the 1980s, and the subsequent politicization of these identities bringing minority identity politics into mainstream political debate (De Wenden 2007; Kastoryano 2002). Born out of a reaction to racism in French society and increasingly pressing for inclusion in the French national cultural space, the phenomenon of associations represents the inability of French political parties to represent minority groups (Maghraoui 2003). “The universal notion of the nation-state and its capacity to generate the symbols of cultural integration and social cohesion is no longer compatible with the growing diversity of the French population and its cultural landscape” (Maghraoui 2003: 228).

The increased presence of immigration in French consciousness has led to an 'identity crisis' in France, with questions of 'what it means to be French' being felt in both the political and cultural spheres. In what Herman Lebovics calls “the great era of what-is-France books,” the 1980s saw various tensions, stemming primarily from regionalism and immigration, force a rethinking of Frenchness and renewed interest in heritage, or “patrimoine,” with a great number of works exploring French identity (2004: 6-7). The most famous of these, Pierre Nora's seven-volume *Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-1993), celebrates important sites of French national memory, and is credited with ushering in a new field of historical study on 'sites of memory' in many different countries (Aldrich 2005). This turn to the past was also felt in other areas of the cultural sphere, as a nostalgia for nineteenth-century Frenchness caused a growth in heritage literature and cinema throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as idealized versions of the past served to quell present anxieties through a celebration of a sense of common French memory and identity (Oschewitz 2005). This was paralleled by the emergence of distinctly multicultural literature and cinema, which often engage with questions of national
identity and integration (Oscherwitz 2005).

The increased awareness of immigration in French society and politics also led to the emergence of immigration as a subject of scholarly inquiry. In the 1970s, numerous studies focused on the social history of the working classes as well as international relations, but it was not until the 1980s that research on the history of immigration began, in particular regarding the role of immigration, and immigrant workers, in shaping the French nation-state (Arquez-Roth 2007). Gérard Noiriel’s publication in 1988 of *Le creuset français: Histoire de l’immigration XIXe-XXe siècles*, signalled the importance of immigration as a subject of historical inquiry and highlighted the pivotal role played by immigrants in the construction of modern France. The publication of Catherine de Wenden’s *Citoyenneté nationalité et immigration* (1987) and Yves Lequin’s *La mosaïque France* (1988) similarly demonstrated the increasing acceptance of immigration as an important subject of academic inquiry. In a similar vein, the association Généries was founded in 1987, with the aim of improving knowledge of migration both worldwide and in France, primarily through the creation of extensive archives relating to France's immigrant population (Généries). The Généries produced the first major exhibition on the topic. Entitled “A France of Foreigners, a France of Liberties,” the exhibit traced two centuries of immigration through an examination of immigrant community newspapers (Généries). Since the 1990s, numerous resource centres aiming to facilitate the investigation of the impact of immigration on society, and to improve immigrant integration have emerged (Tirefort 2007).

Since the 1980s colonialism, too, has been forced into public debate, in large part due to the increased presence of migrants from former French colonies and the reappropriation of the colonial past by immigrant associations seeking to construct a cultural identity (Hargreaves 2007; Kastoryano 2002). In the decades following decolonization, the French state took active measures to efface its colonial past, but French society increasingly demonstrated a fascination with the colonies from the 1980s onwards, although it was primarily during the 1990s that colonialism came to be more critically interrogated (Aldrich 2005). 1992 marked a turning point in colonial remembrance, signalled by the opening of two temporary exhibits that critically engaged
with topics related to colonialism: one on slavery that lasted from 1992-1994, as well as one on the Algerian War, marking thirty years since Algerian independence (Aldrich 2005). But it is particularly since 2000, when an unapologetic General Paul Aussaresses confessed to having committed acts of torture and taken part in summary executions during the Algerian War, that colonial subject matter has entered mainstream debate (Aldrich 2005).

Despite this, many commentators have noted the problematic relationship France continues to have with its colonial past. Benjamin Stora and Robert Aldrich note the complicated nature of coming to terms with colonialism, particularly when different interested parties speak with a plurality of viewpoints that do not necessarily agree, often resulting in a competition of memories (Aldrich 2005; Stora 2006, 2007). In addition, many of these different groups seek recognition and reconciliation not from the state, but rather, from other communities also intertwined in this politics of colonial memory (Stora 2006). David Theo Goldberg argues that the centrality of the memory of the Holocaust throughout Europe has affected, and also deflected Europe's ability to come to terms with colonialism. While the Holocaust is central to memory politics in Europe, “colonialism, by contrast, is considered to have taken place elsewhere, outside of Europe, and so is thought to be the history properly speaking not of Europe” (Goldberg 2006: 335). Thus, although the French state has at long last come to terms with the memory of the Vichy régime, it has still not confronted colonialism. Similarly, the recent emergence of the Algerian War into the politics of memory does not necessarily represent an engagement with colonialism; rather, it can be argued that the memory of the war masks the memory of colonialism, which was the origin of the war in the first place (Stora 2006). According to Stora this is at least in part because of the historical lack of knowledge of the colonies in mainstream French society; it was primarily the 1931 colonial exhibition that brought knowledge of the colonies to metropolitan France, and French society only truly 'discovered' the colonies during the Algerian War (2006).

Seemingly contradictory policies, as well as the difficult birth of postcolonial studies in French academia, illustrate the continued ambivalent relationship between France and its former empire. While opposed to the independence of the DOM-TOM, and making considerable effort to commemorate those who fought for France during the
Algerian War, President Jacques Chirac also adopted measures that appear to be an effort to come to terms with the colonial past (Aldrich 2005). In 1999 slavery was recognized as a 'crime against humanity,' and in 2001, the bitter battle over Algerian independence was finally recognized as a 'war' (Aldrich 2005). On the occasion of the first Slavery Remembrance Day to take place in any European country on May 10 2006, Chirac asserted that “facing up to the colonial past was a 'key to national cohesion','” but the Colonial History Law of 2005 declared that high school teachers were to teach only the 'positive' aspects of French colonization, particularly in North Africa (quoted in “France Remembers;” Hargreaves 2007). The law sparked tremendous outcry, and has since been repealed; however, it demonstrates the ambivalent nature of France's relationship to this colonial past. Given the difficulty France has had in facing its colonial history, it is no surprise that postcolonial studies as a field has had difficulty emerging in French scholarship. A growing field of interest in the English-speaking world since the late 1980s, “the terminology and problematics of postcolonialism were largely shunned in France” (Hargreaves 2005: 1-2). Interest in French postcolonial studies has mainly emerged outside of France, although the publication of La fracture coloniale (Blancard et al. 2006) suggests the gradual growth of this field in the French metropole. It is in this context of identity politics and post-colonial reflection that the proposal for the Cité emerged.

Following the release of Le creuset français, left-wing historian and political activist Gérard Noiriel, and right-wing ex-footballer Zaïr Kedadouche, joined forces to form the Association for a Museum of the History of Immigration, the first group of its kind, composed primarily of historians (Stevens 2008). The idea floundered in the early 1990s, but in 1998, in the aftermath of France’s victory in the World Cup with their multiethnic football team, when “the boost to national grandeur through multiculturalism was still the rage,” historian Patrick Weil and journalist Philippe Bernard wrote to Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, encouraging him to reconsider the project (Lebovics 2004: 171; Stevens 2007). In 2001 Jospin commissioned a feasibility report, but the project was shortly thereafter pushed back off the political agenda (Stevens 2008). When Le Pen finished second to Chirac in the 2002 presidential elections,
eliminating socialist candidate Jospin in the first round,\(^4\) the new centre-right government was keen to find ways to tackle racism as well as hold on to their left-wing voters, and so Prime Minister Raffarin commissioned a new report from Jacques Toubon, former Minister of Culture and future President of the Cité, which led to the creation of the Cité project in 2004 (Stevens 2008). From its beginning, the push for the Cité thus received sustained political backing, and was the product of cooperation between left-wing activists and academics on the one hand, and more right-leaning politicians (Stevens 2008).

This politics of difference has forced the French state to take notice of its reality as a country of great diversity, and to reassess its traditional republican values, including that of universalism. An increasing number of scholars have noted the gradual move toward a more Anglo-Saxon model of multiculturalism, as post-colonial minority populations have forced a rethinking of France's political and cultural identity. And while the French state continues to have a problematic and ambivalent relationship with its colonial past, engagement with this history is increasing. It is specifically France's growing acceptance of immigration, multiculturalism, and diversity that may help it to further emerge, particularly given the close ties between contemporary immigration and colonial legacies.

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\(^4\) Although Le Pen's success in 2002 shocked many people, his success can primarily be attributed to splits on the left. Although the extreme-right vote was considerable, it has not grown substantially since the Front National came onto the political scene in the 1980s (Hargreaves 2007).
Chapter Three: The Museum and its Permanent Exhibit

This chapter will focus on the museum itself, using the building as a starting point for discussing the tension between two competing and yet intersecting histories: that of immigration and that of colonialism. It will begin with a discussion of the choice of site and the ensuing controversy, followed by an overview and discussion of the permanent exhibit, Répères, and its treatment of colonialism. It contends that both the site itself as well as the museum exhibit must be taken into consideration when discussing the Cité, based on the premise that the choice of site will inevitably have an influence on the Cité as an institution, as well as on its visitors. Although the Palais de la Porte Dorée remains a “material [vestige] of colonialism,” sites and memorials have a tendency to take on different meanings at different times (Aldrich 2005: 18). As Robert Aldrich points out, “memory and monuments can change” as social values change, thus infusing sites with different meanings (2005: 19).

The Building

“France is a country of powerful symbols” (Aldrich 2005: 1). The importance of architecture and monumentalism as an aspect of political culture in France has been widely noted, with memorials and architectural works serving as symbols of the nation, changing social and political landscapes, and legacies of its leaders (Aldrich 2005; Lebovics 2004; Norindr 1996). This notion has continued in contemporary France, most notably, by President François Mitterrand's (1981-1995) 'projet de culture,' which sought to reaffirm France's national identity and unity through numerous public architectural projects, at a time when France's 'identity crisis' was making itself felt throughout French society (Norindr 1996). As part of this project, and in response to the close ties between France and the Arabo-Islamic world, in 1987 the French government opened the Institut du monde arabe (IMA), in partnership with several Arabic countries. The first Islamic museum in France, the IMA celebrates Arabo-Islamic cultures, and serves as a significant marker of France's evolving identity and acknowledgement of ethnic and cultural diversity (Aldrich 2005). The project for the Cité, as well as several other
museums, occurred under the presidency of Jacques Chirac (1995-2007), who continued the French presidential tradition of monumentalism (Aldrich 2005). The creation of the Cité, as well as the choice of situating it in the Palais de la Porte Dorée, must thus be read in the context of this politico-cultural legacy. As stated by historian Pascal Blanchard in Le Monde, “[t]he Palais is not a neutral building”; thus, any examination of the Cité project must first address the importance of the site itself (quoted in De Roux, 2005a).

The museum is housed in the Palais de la Porte Dorée, originally built for the 1931 international colonial exhibition, and is situated in eastern Paris by the Bois de Vincennes, which served as the colonial exhibition grounds (Aldrich 2005). The exhibition celebrated France's overseas empire in spectacular fashion in attempt to foster support for the empire at a time when French imperialism and colonial vogue were at their height, and museums and monuments were built to capture France's imperial greatness and national identity (Aldrich 2005). The exhibition sold over thirty-three million tickets over a six-month period, with many of its eight million visitors returning more than once, a testament to the significant impact it made on the French public (Lebovics 1992; Zalc et al. 2008). It figured prominently in the making of France's interwar identity, as it sought to capture the unity of 'la plus grande France,' featuring pavilions of all of the French colonies, including a full-size replica of the Angkor Wat temples (Aldrich 2005; Lebovics 1992).

At the time of the exhibition, architecture was thought to be a material indicator of a civilization's level of sophistication (Norindr 1996). The Palais itself stood as a “colonial manifesto, a public and official display of French colonial policies,” and is a testament to the important place alloted to the empire in the French imaginary in the interwar period (Norindr 1996: 235). The building combines classical form with modernist style, representing a new, simplified, modern classicism, with stark columns running the full length of the front of the building (Norindr 1996). Keeping the architectural style simple and symmetrical, architect Albert Laprade left it to leading artists of the day to expand on the colonial themes that were meant to be featured on the building, through elaborate exterior bas-relief sculptures and interior frescoes (Jarassé

\footnote{All quotes from \textit{Le Monde} are my own translations.}
Known for being the world's largest bas-relief, the exterior facade depicts the colonies' economic contributions to France, in an idealized, exoticized portrayal of France's colonial possessions and prime example of colonial propaganda (Aldrich 2005). Gazelles, elephants and other exotic animals and plants are interspersed with images of 'typical' colonial agricultural and craft production, with peasants harvesting, among other things, bananas, sugar cane, rubber tree sap, and cotton (Aldrich 2005). Other activities depicted include the fabrication of palm oil, weaving, mining, fishing, and the transportation of ivory from the Congo, as 'natives' in 'typical' dress produce “a bounty for the enrichment and enjoyment of France” (Aldrich 2005: 42; Jarassé 2007). Needless to say, the phantasmic sculptures mask the reality of colonial exploitation. While the exterior facade depicts the contributions of the colonies to France, the interior frescoes of the main Salle des Fêtes depict the social and cultural contributions of France to the colonies, and thus, the benefits of the French 'mission civilisatrice' (Jarassé 2007). The colourful frescoes showcase the allegorical figure of France as a goddess at the centre of the five continents, extending the benefits of civilization to the rest of the world, holding Europe in one hand and a dove in the other as a symbol of peace (Aldrich 2005; Jarassé 2007). Allegories of peace, justice, liberty, work, art, and science represent France's gifts to the 'primitive' world (Aldrich 2005). The building's symbolism thus celebrates the global might of France, while emphasizing the multiple exchanges between the metropole and its empire.

The building went through various transformations and can be read as a representation of the evolving relationship between France and its colonies; its changing names reflect the progressive symbolic detachment and political disengagement of France from its empire (Murphy 2007). Following the colonial exhibition it became the permanent Musée des colonies et de la France extérieure in 1932, the Musée de la France d'Outre-mer in 1935, and in the context of decolonization, the Musée des arts africains

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7 The Musée de la France d'Outre-mer was meant to complement the Musée de l'Homme, established in 1938. While the Musée de la France d'Outre-mer displayed the benefits of imperialism on Europe and the colonies, the Musée de l'Homme was meant to show “civilisations in their natural environment,” and was conceived as an objective, scientific institution (Aldrich 2005: 253).
et océaniens (MAAO) in 1959 (CNHI 2009d; Murphy 2007: 66). During the 1960s and 70s, at a time when the state tried to forget its colonial past, certain rooms in the Palais were closed because of their colonial imagery (Aldrich 2005). Although the building was to be preserved as a heritage site, the museum itself fell out of fashion, and was renamed the Musée national des arts d'Afrique et d'Occéanie in 1990 in attempt to regain prestige and attract more visitors, a move that was met with moderate success (Aldrich 2005). Despite gaining some ground, it closed its doors in 2003, to be reopened as the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration in 2007, with no consideration of recreating the space as a museum of colonialism (Aldrich 2005).

The choice of housing the Cité in the Palais needs to be understood in relation to the significant museum reshuffling that has been going on in France since 1995, as French leaders attempt to reposition the state's relationship with its material heritage and especially, that of others (Stevens 2007). By the time the reshuffling is completed, eight major national museums will have been created, repositioned or closed (Lebovics 2004). This move impacted even the most sacred of French cultural institutions: the Louvre. In 1998, construction began to make way for art objects from Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas, with the new Pavillon des Sessions opening as a permanent fixture of the Louvre in April 2000 (Lebovics 2004). But it is the creation of three new national museums, costing the state five hundred million euros, that is the most interesting aspect of this restructuring (Deleporte 2006). Opening its doors in 2006 near the Eiffel Tower stands the new Musée du Quai Branly (MQB), President Chirac's “principle public monument to his presidency,” an art museum made up of collections from the former MAAO, along with the non-European ethnographic collections from the Musée de l'homme (MDH), which closed in 2003 (Lebovics 2004: 151). The physical anthropology collections from the MDH will go to the Musée d'histoire naturelle, and the European collections from the MDH as well as the collections from the now-closed Musée national des arts et traditions populaires (MNATP) will form the basis for a new Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MCEM) (Deleporte 2006; Lebovics 2004). The MCEM is scheduled to open in Marseilles in 2011, and will showcase the European, regional, and North African heritages of France (Lebovics 2004). The third of these is of course, the Cité nationale de l'histoire de l'immigration.
Apart from these three national museum projects, the Mémorial de l'outre mer (MOM) opened its doors in Marseille in 2007, as the first museum dedicated to colonialism since the 1950s, when the colonial museum in Paris became the MAAO and regional colonial museums throughout France closed closed their doors (Aldrich 2005). Throughout the 1990s authorities discussed the possibility of creating some sort of 'édifice' to recall colonial France, but never agreed on what such an establishment would entail (Aldrich 2005). When suggestions for a national museum dedicated to colonialism went nowhere, the local authorities in Marseille initiated their own project, thus reclaiming their city's central position “as the French city with privileged ties to the outre-mer, part of a quarrel between Marseille and Paris that stretched back to the colonial exhibitions of the early twentieth century” (Aldrich 2005: 328-329). A local initiative, the museum became a project jointly funded by both local and national governments and is meant to take a critical view of French colonialism (Aldrich 2005).

Herman Lebovics reads these changes as “the most important markers in our day of what French leaders see as the living French heritage” and of “France's evolving cultural identity” (2004: 177). The creation of the MQB, the MCEM, and the Cité, in particular represents an effort by the public authorities “to reinvent France for the post-colonial, global age” (Stevens 2007: 31). While not everyone agrees on what to make of this, several people have noted the continued ambivalent and problematic relationship of France with its colonial past. Several curators and conservative art lovers expressed their dismay at the inclusion of 'primitive' art in the Louvre, while the original plan to address colonial injustices in the MQB were dismissed with the resignation of the original director, Maurice Godelier, who had wanted to include a display dedicated to colonial injustices (Lebovics 2004). Some of those involved in the museum projects argue that the state is turning a blind eye to colonial history in favour of a universal art museum (the MQB), a Euromediterranean identity (the MCEM) and a history of immigration (the Cité) (Deleporte 2006). The MQB’s celebration of cultural diversity masks the relationship of domination between France and its former colonies, as though celebrating cultural diversity is all that is needed in order to “exonerate society for its failure to deal with peoples and cultures whose objects are in museums,” while the MCEM similarly presents France as the partner, not the oppressor, of its southern Mediterranean
neighbours (Dias in Stevens 2007: 308; Lebovics 2004; Stevens 2007). And although the MOM in Marseille is meant to critically interrogate colonialism, it should be noted that it originated as a local and not a national initiative, and the name of the museum itself does not address colonialism. The memorial itself was conceived without taking into account the voices of former colonial peoples (Stora 2007). And the MOM aside, it is nonetheless significant that Paris, capital of French symbolic culture and identity, still does not have a museum dedicated to colonialism, while the building that represents more than any other the national imperial project is now dedicated to immigration and not to the colonial past.

The choice of building for the Cité sparked controversy among museum staff, academics and the public. Some argued that housing a museum of immigration in the former museum for the colonies seemed to be a blatant denial of the colonial past, while others argued that it reinforced the racial stereotypes equating immigrants with former colonial subjects (Stevens 2007). For historian Pascal Blanchard “using [the Palais] in the name of immigration negates the colonial memory, which is at the centre of the political debate,” while Benjamin Stora asserts that housing the Cité in the Palais simply creates confusion, and that a museum dedicated to the history of the French empire would be a far more appropriate use of the site (quoted in De Roux 2005a; Stora 2007). Dominique Jarassé echoes this thought, describing the Palais as a site of competition between these two memories, arguing that the use of the Palais hides the meaning of the building as a “sacred site of French colonial fact” by substituting the memory of immigration for that of colonialism (2007: 57). He warns against making too strong an association between the two memories, while hoping that the Palais' decor will enable engagement with France's colonial past and post-colonial present without confusing it with the message of the Cité (Jarassé 2007). For Maureen Murphy, housing the Cité in the Palais “will be the occasion to confront, indirectly, the painful, rich and complex history of the relations maintained by France with her former colonies” (2007: 70).

According to Stevens, it was precisely the seeming naturalness of the choice that upset so many people; in 2003 Jacques Toubon reportedly denied that the Palais had ever been the museum of the colonies, and it was not until after the decision had been made that the choice seemed potentially problematic, with the ensuing controversy surprising the Cité project leaders (2007). In an article in Le Monde in November 2005, Toubon
expressed the reasons for housing the Cité in the Palais. Although other sites and other had been suggested, the museum team felt that the Cité should be in Paris, and that it should occupy a building of significance for the Republic (De Roux 2005b). According to Toubon, the choice also represented a look to the future, which lies with immigration, in attempt to reinvent the building that once symbolized the French 'mission civilisatrice' of the colonial period (De Roux 2005b).

The Cité's website acknowledges the controversial nature of the building, but it doesn't directly engage with the colonial past; however it acknowledges the important link between colonialism and immigration in contemporary France. It expresses the naturalness of the choice of site, while also acknowledging some of the issues surrounding the two different and yet intersecting histories of immigration and colonialism, in particular, concerning the persistence of racial stereotypes in French society: “the paternalism born during the colonial era influences images of immigration today, with stigmatizations inherited from that period still present in the French consciousness; the goal of the museum, among other things, is to combat these stereotypes” (CNHI 2009h). The website further expresses the need to deconstruct the heritage of the building's colonial imagery, while “taking into account the building's colonial past, giving colonial (and post-colonial) immigration its rightful place, but only its place, and evoking the long history of colonialism” (CNHI 2009h). It asserts the need to preserve the images in order to combat, in particular, the representations of populations emanating from the south, and especially those from former European colonies (CNHI 2009h). Thus, although this does not critically engage with the colonial past, it nonetheless does make explicit references to the controversy surrounding the choice of site, while clearly outlining the intersections between the colonial heritage, immigration, and discrimination in contemporary France, and alluding to the legacy of colonial structures that continues to influence French society.

While not everyone agrees on the consequences of housing the Cité in the Palais, it is clear that such a choice has opened up an area of contention, particularly between the project leaders and the public, but also within the museum team itself. The lack of engagement with colonialism was not mere oversight on the part of the project's leaders;

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8 All quotes from the Cité's website are my own translations.
issues regarding the colonial past were repeatedly raised at public meetings from 2005 to 2007, to the annoyance of Cité staff members (Stevens 2007). However, the public controversy surrounding the choice of building gradually forced the reluctant Cité team to acknowledge the colonial past, something which will be discussed further when examining the permanent exhibit and other activities of the Cité.

**The Cité**

The Cité must be understood as a dynamic public project that brings together multiple actors and viewpoints; it is important to note the processes of interaction and negotiation that went into its making and that will likely continue to shape its activities in the future. The project promotes a model of interaction through its 'network of partners,' and thus presents a complex and dynamic institution that opens up a space for engagement with a myriad of issues, allowing for multiple actors, such as academics, artists, voluntary associations, individual donors, and state authorities, to have input. This is not to say that everyone's voice gets heard, or that the opinions of authorities do not carry more weight; however, it does open up a space of negotiation, and thus serves as a meeting point between civil society and the state.

**I. Actors**

A basic understanding of the different actors involved in the Cité's construction is necessary in order to understand the goals and nature of the project. As per Clifford's formulation outlined in Chapter One, the museum fits the contact zone model, as civil society members and political authorities came together to use the museum for different, yet mutually beneficial outcomes (Stevens 2007). As discussed in Chapter Two, the project for the Cité was born as an initiative of historians Gérard Noiriel and Patrick Weil, as well as public figures Zaïr Kedadouche and Philippe Bernard, but eventually came to be endorsed by the state as a major national project, and soon involved numerous civil society actors. An in-depth analysis of the involvement of different actors was conducted by Mary Stevens and will not be outlined in detail here, other than to note the interaction and negotiation that took place among the various actors involved in the project's construction.
From the beginning of the planning stages the Cité was a collaborative project among authorities, experts, and community groups, linking historians, social scientists, public figures, and immigrant associations, among others. Part of the mandate of the project was to maintain a “participative and consultative relationship between [the] institution and a network of partners,” a feat that was not always easy due to the great number of players involved (Arquez-Roth 2007: 91). The Forum of Associations was established early on in order to ensure community participation in developing the Cité’s programming (Arquez-Roth 2007). The association Générales was one of the key players in the Cité’s construction, and continues to be involved in the project, along with other groups such as Elele, which represents the Turkish community, and Aralis, which focuses its efforts on immigrant housing and integration (Aralis; CNHI 2009i; Elele).

Along with the Forum of Associations, regional meetings were held across the country in order to give local stakeholders the opportunity to discuss the project (Arquez-Roth 2007). Participation from civil society was thus seen as central to the project over the course of its construction.

According to Stevens, however, the Cité suffered from a 'representation deficit,' due to a “discrepancy between discourse and practice,” (2007: 193). Although the project emphasized the participation of civil society members in its construction, this did not always amount to relationships of equality, and the voices of experts or authorities often carried more weight. Nonetheless, there was room for negotiation, and challenges from different actors led to changes in the museum agenda and content. Stevens concludes that in the future, greater incorporation of source communities is likely, while she emphasizes the processes of negotiation involved in establishing frameworks for participation (2007). During the construction of the permanent exhibit, individual curators and donors were able to effect change; however, there were limits to this agency, particularly regarding the subject of colonialism (Stevens 2007).

The Cité thus represents the bottom-up processes of civil society groups seeking legitimation from the state, while for the state it represents an opportunity for managing social conflict and fostering inclusion and national cohesion. It thus acts as a meeting point between society and the state where parties come together to negotiate their identities. This puts the state in an unusual position, as minorities it has historically
marginalized petition in an effort to gain official state legitimation (Stevens 2008). In fact, “the voluntary associations argued strongly for this project to be borne by the authorities, for they saw in this the stakes of their recognition and a means of transforming society” (Arquez-Roth 2007: 89). At the same time, the project's planners emphasized the importance of involving immigrant communities in the Cité's construction. Just as the voluntary associations sought legitimacy by seeking state support, the project leaders sought legitimacy by including community organizations, who represented “the long campaign for the recognition of minority histories” (Stevens 2007: 186).

According to Riva Kastoryano, this represents a new phase of the nation-state, that of 'negotiating identities,' which forces states to adjust their policies, institutions, and frameworks for citizenship in order to strike a balance between its own interests and those of civil society (2002). “The issue for states is negotiating the ways and means of including the descendants of immigrants into the political community. The issue for individuals or groups formed into communities is to struggle against every form of exclusion” (Kastoryano 2002: 4). Thus, national institutions provide a space of discussion and interaction, where both citizens and the state negotiate their identities within the nation-state framework. As a result, although some view the nature of the Cité project as problematic, others view it in more optimistic terms, as an effort to bring together both official, public recognition and local-level community-based activism (Arquez-Roth 2007).

II. Goals/Missions

Over the course of the Cité's construction, the negotiation between authorities and civil society actors impacted the project's goals, from its beginning stages in 2003 to its opening in 2007. Since its inception as an official state project in 2003, the Cité's primary goal has been the promotion of social cohesion; however, it has since evolved into a more multicultural approach than traditional French republicanism entails, as a reflection of a process of negotiation among various actors who challenged the government's original agenda for the institution (Stevens 2008). Addressing the creation of the Cité upon the commissioning of the study in 2003, Raffarin expressed the need for a project
on a national scale that would “contribute to restoring national cohesion,” asserting the incompatibility of multiculturalism or 'communautarisme' and French republicanism (quoted in Stevens 2008: 61). His concern reflects the tension between the traditional French approach favouring assimilation and national unity, and a more multicultural one that embraces diversity. Raffarin saw the Cité as a new front in the “battle against the 'divisive' forces of multiculturalism,” and as an instrument of national cohesion (Stevens 2008: 62). The official museum agenda was, however, significantly altered over the course of the Cité's construction, as a negotiation of ideology took place (Stevens 2008).

A statement by Jacques Toubon in October 2007 reflects this evolution. “In our country Republican principles have to a large extent contributed to the view that talking about and showcasing origins and differences is dangerous for the Republic. What's happening today, and the Cité is probably one of the first illustrations of this, is that we are able to reconcile the egalitarian individual French model of integration with the recognition of diversity. I think that if the Cité is a success we will have taken a big step towards a modernized French model” (quoted in Stevens 2008: 67). The Cité thus represents the evolution of traditional French universalism into a more multicultural approach that embraces France's cultural diversity rather than viewing this as a threat to national cohesion. And it was specifically civil society actors who contributed to this shift, although the original aim of promoting social cohesion remained nonetheless important. “In many respects the museum has operated in reverse of the original conception; instead of acting as a tool of the State for forging citizens it has acted as a conduit for the views of civil society actors (activists, academics) to permeate official discourse” (Stevens 2008: 67). The museum is indeed a 'contact zone,' or a space of negotiation, wherein both authorities and civil society actors come together to negotiate a new conception of French national identity.

Those involved in the Cité project pushed for creating a national museum dedicated to immigration precisely because of the important role museums play in French society (CNHI 2009e). While skeptics have argued that it is nothing more than a neutralizing strategy, those involved in the project, such as Gérard Noiriel, “wager that culture can be a means of civic action” (2007: 13). The choice of name is in itself significant; it is specifically called a cité d'histoire, and not a museum, which illustrates
the fact that the project strives “to go beyond the mere promotion of migration heritage,” implying an institution that is more dynamic and multifaceted than a traditional museum (Noiriel 2007: 13; Stevens 2007). The Cité aims to open up a space for dialogue by promoting educational and cultural activities, and through its temporary exhibitions in particular, plans to show that immigration encompasses a variety of issues faced by today's societies. Immigration thus provides a starting point for exploring a variety of interrelated issues (Vinson 2007). According to the Vice Chairman of the Cité, Luc Cruson, “if the [project]...can meet these objectives, it will become a place of confrontation, in the noble meaning of the term, between self and others in a national community. At least, it will have the merit of refuting the premise that migration equals conflict” (quoted in Vinson 2007: 6).

The Cité aims to preserve the history of immigration as a legitimate part of France's national heritage, while also promoting social cohesion and altering perceptions on immigration (CNHI 2009d). It is a scientific project that aims to be a resource centre for research on immigration, but is also an educational and cultural project that seeks to promote understanding of immigration issues among the public, and to promote cultural activities such as concerts, theatrical performances, and art exhibits (CNHI 2009d). Also important is its aim of developing a network of partners all linked by their common objectives (CNHI 2009d).

The Cité thus serves multiple purposes. It aims to meet the needs and goals of the state, while also opening up a space of negotiation and dissent among different civil society actors and the state. While there are certainly limits to community participation, the museum cannot be seen as merely a top-down hegemonic state institution that seeks to neutralize public debate. There were numerous occasions for various actors to influence the Cité's goals and content, and participation has the potential to increase in the future. The project must thus be understood as a dynamic and complex zone of interaction among various parties that has the potential to tackle a wide range of issues faced by contemporary French society, with immigration serving as a nexus for the exploration of a variety of issues.

Narrative of the Permanent Exhibit: Répères
The permanent exhibit follows the theme of a 'typical' migration story, from the migrant's arrival in the host country, to the struggles of being caught between two homes and two identities, to putting down roots and contributing to the nation. It thus places emphasis on gradual integration into the host society, even as it strives to reconcile community-based identities and affiliations with the nation-state framework, emphasizing diversity as a key component of the French nation, while avoiding overly assimilationist language (Stevens 2008). A museum without a preexisting collection, Répères relies heavily on video, photography, and art installations, objects from private donors, as well as multimedia 'tables de répères' that provide historical background and additional context to the objects on display in the form of text, images, and video clips.

The “Prologue” places immigration in an international context, situating France as a primary country of immigration in the context of global migratory movements through a series of maps. It asserts the necessity of giving immigrants their rightful place in the nation's history in order to better understand contemporary France. “Emigrer,” the first chapter of Répères, provides a chronological history of immigration to France, making explicit reference to the migratory link between France's former colonies and the metropole, with the post-World War Two era seeing an increase in migration from Algeria and other regions of the Maghreb. The section highlights the individual stories of migrants, thus moving from migration as a general phenomenon to specific cases, with displays featuring personal objects symbolizing migrants' journeys, such as suitcases and personal souvenirs, and video and sound clips narrating different individuals' stories. An evocative photo essay, “Le journal de Kingsley: carnet de route d'un immigrant clandestin,” documents one man's clandestine journey across Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, the Sahara, Morocco, the Canary Islands, and finally, France (Jobard 2006). “Emigrer” personalizes the migratory phenomenon while exploring different reasons for departure, be they political, economic or cultural, acknowledging that although emigrating to another country is in part due to larger social forces, it is lived in the everyday lives of individuals. It is in this section that individual donors were able to influence the representation of their own personal migration stories (although not without the curators' input), and where the migrant voice is the most prominent (Stevens 2007).

“Face à l'Etat” and “Terre d'accueil, France hostile” are perhaps the most critical
sections of the exhibit, as they explore the tensions between immigrants and the French state, as well as the rise of both the extreme Right and left-wing anti-racist movements. They present fluctuations in France's immigration policies over the years, as the state's stance toward immigrants changed according to social and economic needs, while examining the stigmatization faced by immigrants as “public opinion in each era reinvents the figure of the unassimilable Other” (CNHI 2007). They acknowledge the connection between the consolidation of the nation-state at the end of the nineteenth century, which brought with it a generalized fear of the Other. Foreigners became stigmatized as the “envers du National” (CNHI 2007). Finally, these sections acknowledge the lasting impact of stereotypes on immigrants, with political cartoons and marionettes displayed to illustrate immigrant caricatures and stereotypes. At each time of crisis or new wave of immigration, xenophobia would increase, with racism toward those from the colonies and antisemitism being particularly salient forces. Social activism is also showcased in a large photo essay of the Sans Papiers movement, further illustrating the constant struggle between immigrants and the state. The sections highlight the contradictions and fluctuations in government policies over the years, tensions between immigrants and the state, and the prominence of immigration in public debate in recent years, with mainstream discourse favouring the integration of those already in France, along with the curbing of incoming migration.

“Lieux de Vie” and “Ici et là-bas” emphasize the precarious situation faced by migrants as they struggle to find adequate housing, with most ending up in marginalized neighbourhoods. Over time, however, and particularly with the help of government housing projects, they gradually make themselves at home, as immigrant neighbourhoods become centres of diversity. Migrants establish their own 'micro-societies' and organizations, as they seek to negotiate their place between their country of origin and French society. These sections illustrate migrants' gradual adaptation to the host country, as they maintain their own cultural practices, but progressively integrate into French society, while being caught between two homes and two identities. Art installations in this section encourage empathy for immigrants and identification with the feeling of transience that accompanies the migratory experience. “Climbing Down,” a set of

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9 All quotes from Répères are my own translations.
bunkbeds littered with suitcases and personal belongings, is meant to convey the transient experience of migration as well as the notion of precarious lodging and tension between public and private, as migrants try to recreate their own lives in the new society; “but the border between the personal and collective, exterior and interior, is tenuous” (CNHI 2007; Toguo 2004). Similarly, “Les voitures cathédrales,” a set of six photos, illustrates the transient experience of migration as cars, or 'containers on wheels,' transport goods from Marseilles to the Maghreb (CNHI 2007; Mailaender). These 'voitures cathédrales' represent the material manifestation of the mixing of cultures across borders, in constant back-and-forth across the Mediterranean (CNHI 2007). The transient experience is also highlighted by pairs of 'diptych' head shots of migrant workers, photographed in black and white in both positive and negative exposures, which aim to evoke the internal struggle of being torn between two worlds: these individuals belong neither entirely to France, nor any longer to their home country (CNHI 2007). Other photos illustrate the unstable living situation of migrant workers and the ethnic diversity of the Bobigny neighbourhood, while a video and photography installation illustrates the difficulties faced by members of a family separated for sixteen years between France and Algeria.

These first several sections depict the stories of individual migrants, the state's attempts to deal with immigration, and the personal struggles of migrants as they try to adapt to the host society. In short, the 'tables de repères' provide historical background and context, while other elements of the exhibit place great emphasis on personal stories and experiences, evoking empathy and a personal connection to the lived experience of migration. Stevens notes the prominence of immigrant objects toward the beginning of the exhibit, while the curatorial voice becomes stronger later on, contributing to an overall feeling of assimilation as the exhibit progresses (2007). The following sections place greater emphasis on the French state, on immigrants' contributions to France, and on their progressive integration into the host society, as they retain their own communities and identities within the nation-state framework (Stevens 2008). Original plans for the exhibit placed greater emphasis on integration, but over time, the exhibit became less assimilationist and more accommodating to community-based affiliations, no longer seeing these as a threat to the French notion of public life and acknowledging
migrants' legitimate need to form 'micro-societies' (Stevens 2008).

“Au Travail” showcases the insecure working situation of migrants, while emphasizing the contribution of immigrants to the construction and modernization of France since the nineteenth century. It outlines the varying government policies over the years, as well as the political mobilization of workers and their struggles for rights. Artwork, still images, and workers' personal belongings animate the narrative.

“Enracinements” and “Sportifs” demonstrate immigrants' progressive integration into French society, as they strive to balance values of integration and national cohesion with diversity and community-based identities. The title “Enracinements” was chosen in place of the more assimilationist “French Melting Pot,” as was the original plan (Stevens 2008). Progressively, immigrants put down roots in France, with state institutions, such as schools and the army, further socializing them and enabling them to integrate into French society (CNHI 2007). The “Sportifs” section showcases immigrants' participation in sports both at the community and national levels. This is perhaps the most overtly assimilationist section of the exhibit, describing the immigrant contribution to national glory, with immigrants and their descendants regularly transformed into “flag bearers of the Nation and symbols of integration,” their success in the sports arena showcased as evidence of their increasing ties to France (CNHI 2007). However, not everyone embraces the increasing presence of immigrants and their descendants in the sphere of national sports; the section also highlights the presence of xenophobia against immigrant athletes.

The final section, “Diversité” presents a sort of synthesis of the exhibit, illustrating the principle of 'unity in diversity,' as it reconciles cultural diversity with French identity, acknowledging the many cultures that have come together to contribute to the French nation, while also highlighting some of the challenges that diversity poses for France. Objects from cultures around the world, a photo montage of a Chinese New Year celebration in Paris, a tribute to foreign linguistic influences on the French language, and a discussion of significant cultural figures who immigrated to France, all celebrate the cosmopolitanism of contemporary French society. A more critical panel explores the tensions surrounding the place of religion in France, discussing the importance of religion as part of cultural identity for migrant communities, as well as the
tension between Islam and the French state.

I. Discussion

_Répères_ thus tries to reconcile diversity and unity, and while the overall narrative is geared toward integration and national cohesion, it reflects a more multicultural outlook than traditional republicanism entails, and than project leaders had originally envisioned (Stevens 2008). The emphasis on 'micro-societies' in the “Lieux de Vie” chapter is particularly significant in this regard, as is the discussion of different religions in “Diversité,” particularly given the sensitive relationship between religion and the state in France. In the latter part of the exhibit, the voice of the _nation_ becomes stronger, as different cultures come together to construct a society “aux couleurs du monde,” and artists and writers come from afar are presented as forever enriching the cultural heritage of France, and athletes as contributing to national glory (CNHI 2007).

_Répères_ also critically engages with issues such as repressive state policies, right-wing extremism, xenophobia, the question of Islam, and racial stereotypes, as both historical and contemporary phenomena in French society. References to the Sans Papiers, the story of Kingsley's clandestine voyage across Africa to France, as well as references to the Sangatte[^10] and to 'boat people' all highlight the sensitive issue of illegal migration and asylum seekers in the contemporary world. Political cartoons and other media illustrate the stereotyped portrayals of various populations that have settled in France over the years, depicting the xenophobia towards Italians, Poles, Jews, and colonial populations, among others. Migrants' constant struggles, both in the private sphere of personal and family life, as well as in the public sphere with society and the state are effectively illustrated throughout the exhibit.

Issues of particular relevance for contemporary France are also brought to light in a follow-up section to the _Répères_ exhibit, “Questions contemporaines,” an internet station also available online through the Cité's website (Sitruk 2007). In a question and answer format, “Questions contemporaines” discusses some key issues that have shaped

[^10]: The Sangatte migrant processing centre in Northern France was infamous as an alleged hub for illegal migrants attempting to reach the UK.
the debates on immigration and diversity in France, defining terms such as 'refugee,' 'foreigner,' 'racism,' and 'integration,' and providing statistics and information on migratory phenomena. It places migration in the context of the European Union and globalization more broadly, and perhaps most interestingly, includes a section on the difficulty of reconciling cultural diversity and France's traditional republican principles. In particular, it discusses the dilemma of accommodating different religious practices while ensuring that fundamental human rights are upheld, and presents the debate regarding the collection of ethnic statistics, which France has historically viewed as antithetical to republican principles. It also emphasizes the need to teach cultural diversity in public schools. “Questions contemporaines” is thus an additional resource that provides some of the basic information necessary for understanding the key debates surrounding France's multicultural reality.

II. Colonialism in Répères

While one of the Cité's strengths lies in its critical engagement with both historical and contemporary issues, it has been criticized for failing to engage with France's colonial past. Stevens discusses the gradual erasure of colonialism from the permanent exhibit, accomplished primarily through processes of 'narrative flattening' (2007). This flattening was the result of conscious decisions made by the project leaders, which demonstrated a disjuncture between senior staff on the one hand, and junior staff and the public on the other (Stevens 2007). Discussion during the Cité's planning stages acknowledged that an engagement with the colonial past would be a necessary starting point for effectively altering perspectives on immigration; however, references to colonialism in Répères remain minimal (Stevens 2007). The original plan for a thematic section entitled “Colonisation et décolonisation” was altered over the course of the Cité's construction, and the space set aside for the topic was “reduced on the basis that it would be addressed later” (Stevens 2007: 237). This is not to say that there was direct censorship involved in this erasure; individual curators fought to include colonial references in the exhibit. Individuals with a more radical agenda undoubtedly chipped away at the dominant narrative in numerous places, but the overall framework of the
exhibit minimizes the colonial presence (Stevens 2007). 11

References to colonialism in Répères certainly do exist, although the history of colonialism remains subsumed under that of immigration. Nevertheless, colonialism retains enough of a presence to be felt, and in particular, it is Algeria that plays the most prominent role here. Although Répères does not treat the history of colonialism as a subject in its own right, one of the strengths of the the exhibit is that it explores (albeit in a limited number of places) the legacy of colonialism for contemporary French society. It thus highlights, somewhat indirectly, the specificity of post-colonial migration and the legacies of colonial structures and ideology in contemporary France.

Répères primarily focuses on the creation of racial stereotypes during the early twentieth century, which portrayed colonized people as exotic and infantile. Such portrayals had repercussions for colonial migrants in the metropole, and continued to affect perceptions even of those colonial soldiers who fought for France during the First World War (CNHI 2007). The exhibit includes a discussion of the strong presence of Islam in metropolitan France, emphasizing the link to France's colonial past, and the colonial mentality that was directed toward early Muslim populations that migrated to the metropole. The advent of Muslim institutions in the early part of the twentieth century stemmed from a combination of colonial paternalism as well as the desire to keep track of migrants (CNHI 2007). Colonial mentalities thus affected the reception and perceptions of colonial populations in metropolitan France. As they migrated to the metropole, they experienced the same structures of colonial domination as they did in their countries of origin, amounting to a continuation of colonial structures within metropolitan France.

Decolonization further contributed to structural and individualized discrimination directed against migrants from the former colonies, and especially, those from Algeria and other regions of the Maghreb. The Algerian War was particularly significant in this regard, resulting in increased xenophobia directed toward Maghrebi populations, which

11 Stevens is also critical of the Cité's suggestion, in places, of equivalence between antisemitism directed against Jewish migrants, and racism directed against colonial migrants (2007). However, the relationship between these two is a highly complex, debated, and controversial topic, thus, the subject would be difficult for the Cité to tackle, and would run the risk of alienating certain populations. Placing colonial racism and antisemitism alongside each other within the framework of immigration in France allows for the audience to engage with both, while reflecting on the relationship between historical structures and ideologies, and their relevance for contemporary France.
by this time, were becoming a significant presence in the metropole. During the early 1960s the French government implemented strict immigration laws aimed at curbing migration from the former colonies. In addition, police took repressive and often violent measures against Algerians in the metropole, as was seen in the harsh police repression of the October 1961 protest in Paris, during which tens of thousands gathered to protest the Algerian War (CNHI 2007). Police violence resulted in the injury of several dozen protesters, including some deaths (CNHI 2007). The trauma of the Algerian War further fueled stereotypes of Algerians as violent and unassimilable (CNHI 2007).

Discrimination directed toward Algerian migrants in the metropole was thus directly related to the processes and structures of colonialism and decolonization. Once colonial populations became part of metropolitan France, so too, did the colonial structures of domination become an integral part of metropolitan French society.

Répères thus references France's colonial past, but only in so far as it relates to immigration. This, however, can be seen as one of the exhibit's strengths, as it is the relationship between colonial structures (both material and ideological) and immigration that is especially pertinent for contemporary French society. The Cité does not privilege the colonial past, but nor is it silent on the subject. Colonialism further makes its presence felt in the museum’s other activities.
Chapter Four: The Cité as an Active Museum

In order to truly evaluate the Cité, it is necessary to examine not only its permanent exhibit, but also the wide range of activities that it engages in, since the Cité is a dynamic social, cultural, and educational institution and forum for discussion. In addition, an examination of activities outside of Répères provides an opportunity to further assess the extent to which there is a 'colonial lacuna' in the Cité, which will be the primary focus of this chapter, although the short history of the museum imposes limits to this assessment. The controversy surrounding the subject of colonialism illustrates the fact of the museum as a space of negotiation between civil society actors and authorities, as public outcry forced a deeper engagement with colonialism than was originally intended. Only time will tell how the various dimensions of the Cité are utilized in order to negotiate with the museum's dominant narratives and shift the museum's overall meaning.

While the permanent exhibit deals exclusively with immigration and closely related topics, the Cité provides a forum for discussing issues related to immigration and cultural diversity in France. It explores the general phenomenon of cultural diversity in contemporary societies through a variety of activities, including temporary exhibitions, conferences, plays, film showings, concerts, and educational activities for teachers and students. The Cité also aims to be a resource and research centre, as well as a network for connecting with others interested in immigration and related issues throughout France. Outside of the permanent exhibit, it is mainly the temporary exhibits that frame the Cité's activities. These provide the thematic content that shapes its programming, primarily through film and lecture series.

In the construction of Répères, there were both bottom-up and top-down processes at work, although there were limits to the extent to which civil society actors and junior staff members could influence the dominant narrative. The other activities of the Cité provide more occasions for interaction among different actors and the expression of different viewpoints, particularly through temporary exhibitions, which are generally
more flexible and more able to engage with controversial topics. After examining the presence of colonialism in other dimensions of the Cité, the temporary exhibit, *1931: Les étrangers au temps de l'Exposition coloniale*, will be discussed in detail. This will be followed by a brief overview of subsequent exhibits, which also demonstrate the institution’s potential to engage with colonial legacies.

**The Treatment of Colonialism outside Répères**

While the permanent exhibit contains a limited number of references to colonialism, colonialism appears in other ways in various other dimensions and activities of the Cité. In fact, it was as a direct result of public pressure that the colonial past came to be a more prominent feature of the Cité’s activities; over the course of the planning process, concerns about the potential occlusion of this past, especially given the history of the site, were raised repeatedly, which led to numerous concessions (Stevens 2008). In particular, the intense public controversy surrounding the Colonial History Law of February 2005, which asserted that only the 'positive' aspects of French colonialism be taught in schools, forced the Cité to respond to the colonial issue (Stevens 2007). Although this may have represented only a temporary change of tone, the modifications that did occur were clearly a result of public pressure (Stevens 2008).

The first move to address the controversy came in the proposal for a conference in September 2006 entitled *Histoire et immigration: la question coloniale*. Stevens is critical of the late decision to hold the conference, as it highlights the disjuncture between the Cité project leaders and the public: the decision to hold the conference “was largely a reaction to public pressure,” and thus not an indication of greater willingness on the part of authorities to critically engage with the colonial past (Stevens 2007: 228). The three-day conference, held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, brought together more than ninety experts in the social sciences and humanities in order to examine the links between the separate and yet intersecting histories of colonialism and immigration in France (CNHI 2009c). It examined topics such as representations of the other, the politics of labour migration, and the discourse of immigration and colonialism (CNHI 2009c).

Also as part of the reaction to public pressure, Cité leaders chose to mark Bastille
Day 2006 by holding a reading of Aimé Césaire's *Le Discours sur le colonialisme*, with the author himself present to bless the occasion (Stevens 2007). Over seven hundred spectators watched one of the three performances on July 14, 15 and 16, and opening night was a well-attended and elaborate affair (CNHI 2009j; Stevens 2007). Stevens debates whether this gesture symbolized a genuine change in attitude on the part of the Cité in finally taking a strong stance on colonialism, or whether “the performance was more of a one-off concession than a statement of future direction, a prime example of a strategy of containment” (2007: 236). While at the time she expressed an optimistic outlook, she eventually concluded that it was the latter, with the reading serving more as an act of exorcism and neutralization of the building than of critical engagement, an idea echoed by the thoughts of Jacques Toubon in *Le Monde* in November 2005, as well as in his speech on the occasion of the reading (De Roux 2005b; Stevens 2007). She also notes that some disagreed about the appropriateness of such a lavish event. Some actors from community organizations expressed discomfort at the disparity between the abundance of the affair and the poverty of the groups they represented (Stevens 2007). However, it can also be argued that treating the event in such an elaborate manner gave it legitimacy, thus addressing the colonial controversy in a highly visible fashion. As noted in Chapter Three, civil society activists pushing for the creation of the Cité petitioned the state to back the project specifically in order to gain legitimacy and recognition from the French government. In addition, holding the event on the French national holiday, marker of the founding of the republic, made a bold statement about France's reality as a post-colonial state and on the need to reflect on its traditional republican values.

Both the conference and the *Discours* reading were born out of a reaction to public pressure. This is a testament to the fact that the museum is a meeting point between the public and authorities, and presents an opportunity for civil society actors to influence official views. Public outcry forced the Cité to address the controversial nature of the building, and to engage more deeply with the colonial past than the project leaders had originally intended.

As part of its pedagogical mission, the Cité features online educational materials in order to prepare classes for the permanent and temporary exhibits, as well as the Palais building itself. The *L'histoire par l'image* website, a project of the Réunion des Musées
Nationaux and linked from the Cité website, provides a brief historical contextualization, analysis, and interpretation of the building's colonial iconography. The analysis points to the asymmetry between the interior frescoes' depictions of France as a 'modern' nation of art, science, commerce, and industry, espousing values of peace, justice, and liberty, on the one hand and the exterior facade that "reduces" colonial populations to a workforce aimed at fueling the international economy, while offering an idealized portrayal of the colonies' natural abundance, on the other (Thiault). Further descriptions discuss the stereotypical allegorical figure of Oceania, as well as that of the West bringing civilization to the colonies. *L'Histoire par l'image* thus exposes the disjuncture between the myth and reality of the colonial mission, while pointing to the inequality and injustice that structured colonial relations. It also addresses the era's dogmas of scientific racism, founded on notions of racial hierarchy and the superiority of Western civilization, that justified colonial expansion and sought to assimilate colonial peoples through the French 'mission civilisatrice' (Thiault).

Another tool for school visits is the *1931: le Palais des colonies parcours* workbook, which has students study features of the building's surroundings, its exterior, and interior. It primarily emphasizes the art deco style of the architecture and décor, but also encourages students to interrogate some of the building's iconography and colonial propaganda through a series of questions and activities. The aim of the workbook is for students to understand the art deco style of the 1920s and 30s, as well as France's vision of its colonial empire (*CNHI 1931: parcours*). After examining the building's surroundings, students are asked to identify the roles played by African students vis-à-vis the French officers they march with in the exterior monument to Commandant Marchand, leader of a mission in the the Congo and Djibouti (*CNHI 1931: parcours*). As they continue the discussion of the building itself, the section “Propagande et art colonial” deconstructs the colonial iconography and exoticism of the exterior bas-relief sculptures by asking students to decode their symbolism, and concludes by asking students to interrogate the contrast between the propagandic portrayal of economic exploitation and the reality of colonialism (*CNHI 1931: parcours*). A similar treatment of the interior frescoes has students analyze the colonial imagery, the influence of exoticism on the art deco style, the depiction of France's relations with its colonies, and
the stereotypical representations of black populations (CNHI 1931: parcours).

Colonialism thus appears in various aspects of the Cité's educational activities, with a critical questioning of the building's iconography serving to deconstruct stereotypes of the colonial other. The interrogation of these stereotypes draws implicit connections between colonialism and the present-day stereotyping of immigrant populations.

**Temporary Exhibit—1931: Etrangers au temps de l'Exposition coloniale**

From May to October 2008, the Cité produced its first temporary exhibition, entitled *1931: Etrangers au temps de l'Exposition coloniale*. It was accompanied by a lecture series elaborating the exhibit's themes and screenings of films from the 1930s. This was not France's first temporary exhibit on colonialism: since the 1980s, numerous exhibits have focused on colonialism (Aldrich 2005). In contrast to their silence in the aftermath of decolonization in the 1960s and 70s, curators rediscovered the colonies in the 1980s, although their exhibits at this time were primarily focused on the exotic and the aesthetic (Aldrich 2005). Beginning in the early 1990s, exhibitions began to confront more difficult issues relating to the colonial past, such as slavery and the Algerian War (Aldrich 2005). Given the controversy surrounding the Cité, the significance of the site as the former museum of the colonies, and the status of the Palais as a national site, the 1931 exhibit has particular significance. Although temporary exhibits cannot be viewed in the same manner as permanent ones, they represent a snapshot of current thinking on particular issues. More so than permanent collections, they reflect changing cultural and social perspectives, often connecting with current affairs and responding to political issues (Aldrich 2005). Furthermore, because temporary exhibits do not require the same level of support and investment as do permanent ones, curators can more readily address controversial topics (Aldrich 2005).

Stevens is critical of the choice to dedicate a temporary exhibit to the colonial question, in much the same manner as she is critical of the 2006 conference and staging of Césaire's *Discours*, despite the fact that the recruitment of well-known iconoclast Jacques Hainard as the guest curator for the exhibit led to a more radical position than the Cité leaders might originally have intended (Stevens 2007). During the Cité's planning
stages, the promise of a temporary exhibition on colonialism was used in order to defer tackling the subject, rather than addressing this controversial topic in the permanent exhibit (Stevens 2007). Limiting the exhibit to the 1931 colonial exposition restricted the exhibition's potential for engaging in an in-depth discussion of the continued impact of colonialism on French society, and Stevens warned that the focus on 'foreigners' in 1931 could occlude a discussion of colonialism, “since the colonial subjects who participated in the colonial exhibition were, at least insofar as they were from French colonies, not in judicial terms foreigners at all (...) at the very least it would be easy to qualify certain broader themes as 'irrelevant”’ (Stevens 2007). The revisiting of the colonial exhibition could also be read as a certain nostalgia for ‘la plus grande France,’ and the colonial vogue of the 1930s. Indeed, while the growth of temporary exhibits on colonialism in recent decades does indicate an effort to come to terms with France's colonial past, they may also be indicative of a nostalgia for the glory and heroism of the days of empire (Aldrich 2005). In a related discussion on colonial film, Alison Levine argues that despite recent attention to postcolonialism in France “the current syndrome d'empire also contains a considerable element of nostalgia for the empire” (Levine 2005: 83).

I. The Exhibit Content:

The exhibit centred on the theme of myth versus reality at the time of the colonial exhibition, with the contradiction between the spectacular, staged, propagandic portrayal of colonialism and the behind-the-scenes reality of foreign workers. These contradictions were punctuated by the theatrical nature of the exhibit, which, through its use of space and multiple media forms, recreated the indoor-outdoor feel and cacophonous experience of a fairground. 1931 presented a moment when the links between immigration and colonialism crystallized in many ways, as colonial migrants were beginning to make their presence felt in the metropole, and the cracks that were beginning to show in the French empire called into question the myth of 'la plus grande France' espoused by the exhibition (Pierre 2008; Zalc, et al. 2008). It is for this reason that the designers of the 1931 exhibit chose to focus on the everyday reality behind the colonial facade, with one of the exhibit's goals being to provoke further understanding and future work on the connections between immigration and colonialism (Hainard and Schinz 2008; Zalc, et al.)
The introductory “Mise en scène” described the sheer spectacle of the exhibition that served to glorify the empire and France's 'mission civilisatrice,' which depicted colonialism as peaceful and beneficial for colonized peoples, while ignoring colonialism's less glorious aspects (CNHI 2008). The opening display had the effect of recreating an element of this spectacle, with the monumental replica of the Angkor Wat temple and water fountains (some of the exhibition's main attractions) depicted on large screens hanging from the ceiling in the centre of a small, dimly lit room. The “Mise en scène” displayed art pieces from the 1931 exhibition, as well as maps illustrating France and its different overseas territories along with the different statuses and rights attributed to their respective populations.

From the introduction the exhibit moved to the reality of the xenophobia and discrimination faced by foreign workers at the time in “Entrée dans les coulisses,” which highlighted the reality of French society, far removed from the spectacular illusions of the colonial exhibition (CNHI 2008). It presented the precarious situation of foreign workers who held low-paying jobs with little security and very few rights, a situation rendered even more precarious due to the economic depression of the 1930s. Since the beginning of the First World War, foreign workers, particularly French colonial subjects, had been recruited to fill gaps in the French workforce, with nearly 2,500 foreigners working behind-the-scenes at the 1931 exhibition (Zalc et al. 2008). The economic crisis, as well as the cracks in France's overseas empire contributed to the mobilization of foreigners in France. The following section of the exhibit, “Politicisations,” depicts the anti-colonialist sentiment expressed by foreign worker organizations during the 1930s, particularly evident in their organization of the counter-exhibition to the 1931 exhibition, entitled “La vérité sur les colonies,” which sought to expose the reality of colonial exploitation (CNHI 2008). The counter-exhibition called for the independence of Indochina, decried the exploitation of colonial labourers as a crime, and called on the public to boycott the colonial exhibition (Leclercq 2008).

The following section, perhaps the most critical, “Le contrôle se resserre,” demonstrated the state's tightening grip on foreigners, and in particular, on colonial migrants. In the context of economic crisis and general political uncertainty, the French state toughened its stance against immigrants, encouraging the repatriation of many
foreign workers, and increased the policing and surveillance of foreigners across the country (Rosenberg 2008; Rygiel 2008). Surveillance targeted in particular colonial migrants, especially those from North Africa, as their ambiguous legal status as French subjects meant that they could not be treated in the same manner as could foreigners (CNHI 2008). The display highlighted this dilemma, a specifically French colonial construction. Following this section, “Etrange étranger” demonstrated colonial France's fascination with the exotic through a collage of different media illustrating myths of the exotic other at the colonial exhibition, which reduced foreigners to a set of clichés (CNHI 2008). Silent video clips of the 'human zoos' at the exhibit, recordings of aboriginal songs, costumes and masks from the colonies, and clips of colonial films all reflected the stereotyping tendency of the colonial gaze, while a discussion of 'exotic' dancers also highlighted the influence of foreign cultures on the Parisian cultural scene (CNHI 2008).

The final section returned to the everyday lives of immigrants and the difficulties they faced in adjusting to life in France. It also depicted the establishment of foreign language newspapers and different immigrant community organizations and clubs that focused on sports and religion. Diversity abounded, but so too, did xenophobia, antisemitism, racism, and the entry of racial ideology into everyday life in the 1930s (CNHI 2008). An epilogue entitled “Et après” brought the audience back to the present day with a brief timeline of significant events since 1931.

II. Discussion

A first reading of 1931 confirms some of Stevens' reservations. The concentration on the colonial exhibition narrowed the focus of the exhibit to a very specific moment in French history, and situating the subject matter within the nation-state framework narrowed the focus to France, minimizing engagement with the situation in France's overseas territories. By concentrating on France it took the perspective of the metropole and not of the colonies or the colonized.

However, the exhibit did highlight the ambiguous status of North African immigrants as colonial subjects and therefore as 'indigènes,' neither French nor foreign. It thus answered in part Stevens' concern that by discussing 'foreigners' in 1931, the exhibit would avoid discussing colonialism since colonial subjects were not de jure 'foreigners'
(Blévis 2008; Stevens 2007). The exhibit went so far as to discuss the particular structures of discrimination and surveillance enacted against North Africans, due to the specificity of their status, while the catalogue from 1931 explicitly addresses the different categories assigned to France's different colonies and their populations (Blévis 2008; L'Estoile 2008). The privileged treatment of North Africans and the engagement with colonial legal categories in the exhibit made the connections between colonial structures, immigration, and inequality quite explicit. The connections, however, localized in the France of the 1930s without extending explicitly to current problems in French society.

A similar criticism can be raised regarding the treatment of the exoticism of the colonial exhibition, and that of xenophobia, antisemitism, and racism in 1930s France. Although these are separate themes, they both reflect processes of othering that were prevalent in French society of the 1930s. The exhibit exposed the stereotyping lens of the colonial gaze, calling into question colonial myths of the exotic other. Similarly, it interrogated the increasing xenophobia, antisemitism, and racism of the 1930s, particularly in the context of the economic crisis, which led to increased hostility against foreign workers. The exhibit catalogue expands this analysis, including the racialized stereotypes of North African colonial immigrants as primitive, lazy, and violent that abounded at the time (Zalc 2008). While the treatment of these issues was certainly critical, the exhibit did not draw an explicit connection between the legacy of these colonial ideologies and the racism directed to the descendants of former French colonial subjects in contemporary France.

Finally, there is the issue of nostalgia. Certain aspects of the exhibit certainly can be read as evoking a nostalgic sentiment for the colonial vogue of the 1930s, particularly, in the “Etrange étranger” section, which to a certain extent recreated the colonial exhibition in miniature. In a small room off the exhibit's main corridor, spectators were invited (ironically) to “tour the world in one day”\[12\] and view objects from the 1931 exhibition such as souvenir books and 'exotic' dance costumes. Through 3-D lenses, they could view scenes from the exhibition. A floor-to-ceiling image of the exhibition grounds spanned the wall opposite the entrance in its entirety, thus creating the illusion that in stepping into this section, one was stepping onto the exhibition grounds. In this area in

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\[12\] The 'slogan' of the 1931 exhibition
particular, visual and auditory elements recreated the sensory experience of an outdoor exhibition. There is no reason to maintain, however, that nostalgia cannot exist alongside critical engagement with the subject matter. It may even encourage further critical engagement, forcing museum-goers to reflect on colonial myths, which was the original intention of the exhibit.

The 1931 exhibit thus critically engaged with a number of issues relating to the intersection of colonialism and immigration in France; however, it did so within the narrow confines of the 1930s. The “Et après” section that terminated the exhibit through a timeline of key historical events since the 1930s merely served as a brief epilogue and transition out of the exhibit space, relegating the climate and tensions of the 1930s to the past. Nonetheless, it encouraged a reflection on colonial ideologies and on the intersections between colonial structures and immigration, and also demonstrated the Cité's potential as a space for further critical engagement with controversial subject matter.

Since 1931

Subsequent exhibits at the Cité have demonstrated further potential for engaging with the colonial past, and particularly, for discussing the relevance of the colonial legacy for contemporary immigration to France. While an in-depth analysis of these is not possible in the context of this project, a brief synopsis will suffice to demonstrate the Cité's potential for engaging issues relating to colonialism through the lens of immigration.

From December 2008 to April 2009 the Cité produced, in cooperation with the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin, an exhibit on foreigners in France and Germany since 1871. *A chacun ses étrangers? France-Allemagne de 1871 à aujourd'hui* examined perceptions and representations of foreigners in the two countries since 1871. The exhibit discussed the construction of others in different periods in the two countries, with explorations of xenophobia and antisemitism. It highlighted in particular the racism specifically targeted against colonial subjects in both France and Germany, as both countries imagined colonial migrants as inferior, especially in the early twentieth century (CNHI 2009a). Along with the exhibit, numerous events were held in order to further
explore the themes of the exhibit, including a cycle of films on representations of foreigners in French and German cinema. One particular screening showed the film *Elise et la vraie vie*, which explores the situation of Algerians living in Paris during the Algerian War, denouncing the racism, poor working conditions, and political uncertainty of the era (CNHI 2009a). The film was introduced by Algeria expert Benjamin Stora, who recalled the importance of Algerian immigration to France during the war (CNHI 2009a). Also as part of the exhibit, and with the involvement of Gérard Noiriel, was a staging of the play *Chocolat*, which tells the tale of Chocolat, the first black clown of the French national circus, who joined the circus to escape slavery during the late nineteenth century. The play explores the racist ideology of French society at a time when France was launching itself into its colonial project (CNHI 2009a).

Another major exhibit scheduled to open at the end of 2009 and proposed by the Associations Génériques, will explore a century of Magrebi migrants in France. It will focus on the cultural and social life of Magrebi communities in France and will also address colonialism and the wars of decolonization (CNHI 2009b). Photography exhibits at the Cité also have the potential to explore the ties between colonies and metropole. An exhibit following the 1931 exhibit showcased the photography of two artists who explored migration to France from Turkey and the Maghreb (CNHI 2009g). A second one, scheduled from May to October 2009, will explore themes of identity, memory, and immigration in the banlieues of France (CNHI 2009f). Although these latter two exhibits do not address colonialism specifically, they do specifically feature post-colonial migrant populations.

Through these and other future exhibits, the Cité thus provides a space for the exploration of a variety of issues, with immigration serving as a nexus for engaging with a wide range of interrelated topics, including colonialism. Given the strong connections between France's colonial past and post-colonial present filtered through its large immigrant population originating in former colonial territories, the subject of colonialism is never very far from the Cité's activities. Temporary exhibits in particular have the potential for engagement with controversial subject matter, and for giving voice to different civil society actors, artists, and academics.
Conclusion

The project for the Cité has been a long-time coming. The failure of traditional French universalism to integrate ethnic minority populations, the increasing awareness of racial and ethnic cleavages throughout French society, and the actions of civil society groups pressing for recognition in the national political and cultural space have forced the state to reassess traditional notions of Frenchness and to reflect on its republican values. The Cité is a manifestation of evolving French identity and captures the increasing acceptance of multiculturalism in official circles, processes of cooperation and negotiation among authorities, experts, and the public, as well as the increasing influence of civil society actors in the political sphere. Not only does it reflect these changes in France, but it also hopes to communicate an updated, multicultural French identity, in attempt to generate an inclusive society and culture through its social improvement agenda. The museum represents a forum for the discussion of the many issues surrounding cultural diversity, as a space of negotiation between society and the state.

While it is increasingly accepting multiculturalism as part of its political and cultural identity, the French state has been hesitant to engage with colonialism. However, France's multicultural reality is forcing the state to negotiate its identity and traditional republican model, and increasingly, to interrogate this colonial past, due to the significant population of migrants (and their descendants) from former colonial territories, their demands for recognition, and the intersections between ideologies and structures born during the colonial period and issues in contemporary French society. It is these post-colonial immigrant populations that are central to immigration debates, and who face the neo-colonial racialization that is the legacy of the colonial period. “[T]he colonial legacy is a foundational premise of the Cité; were it not for racism directed at immigrants of colonial origin, and specifically the (institutionalized) violence to which North Africans and their descendants have been subject in France ever since the wars of decolonization, such a project would never have been deemed necessary” (Stevens 2007: 258). For post-colonial immigrant populations, reclaiming the colonial past is an important part of their
struggles for reaffirming their identities and for gaining recognition in the French political and cultural space. For the French state, confronting colonial legacies is necessary in order to combat racial and ethnic inequality, build an inclusive society, and foster national cohesion.

The Cité's permanent exhibit addresses colonialism indirectly through immigration, exploring the intersections between France’s colonial past and its multicultural, post-colonial present. Although it does not directly interrogate colonialism, it addresses colonialism’s material and ideological structural legacies that affect France's significant immigrant populations. But the fact of the Cité as an active museum allows for the discussion and the expression of multiple viewpoints on a variety of issues, and thus, the Cité has the potential for further engaging with the colonial past. This does not necessarily imply an equal exchange among all actors. Experts and authorities may have a stronger voice, but this does not mean that other voices are silenced. As is illustrated by the controversy surrounding the museum's 'colonial lacuna,' as well as the evolution of the Répères exhibit, civil society actors and individual curators and donors were able to influence the museum's content and overall meaning.

Colonialism is further explored in the Cité's other dimensions, such as its website and educational materials. It also provided the subject matter for the 1931 exhibit, which explicitly interrogated the connections between colonialism and immigration in 1930s France, and the colonial structures that were brought to the metropole as the spatial divide between metropole and colonies collapsed. As colonial populations migrated to the metropole, colonial relations of domination became a foundational structuring mechanism in metropolitan France, exposing the underlying contradictions, inequalities, and complexities inherent in the French republic.

The politics of the site itself has forced colonialism onto the agenda, as the public reacted to the use of such a symbolic location. While the Cité project attempts to reinvent the Porte Dorée as a museum of immigration, its reality as a material vestige and symbol of the colonial empire has also forced a deeper engagement with the colonial past than project leaders had originally envisioned, as well as a reflection on the connections between colonialism and immigration. The building itself is widely recognized as a political site. In May 2005, approximately three hundred sans-papiers occupied the
building in protest, demanding the regularization of all sans-papiers living in France (“Deux actions”). In January 2008, in protest of the European Union's directive on the detention of foreigners, approximately three thousand people protested at the Porte Dorée (“Manifestations”). Robert Aldrich notes the fluid nature of sites and memorials, which can take on different meanings at different times (2005). It is thus up to actors to use sites to create and negotiate meaning. Because of the Porte Dorée's significance as a grand testament to France's colonial history, as well as the close relationship between immigration and colonialism in contemporary identity politics, colonialism will inevitably appear and reappear in the Cité's activities.

What the Cité points to is the fact that museums must not merely be viewed as static narratives that reflect dominant ideologies, but rather, they must be understood as active and dynamic institutions, and viewed from the perspective of museum users. In order to assess the direction, meaning, and effectiveness of the Cité, it will be necessary for researchers to examine the Cité's future exhibits and activities in order to evaluate the manner in which civil society actors such as immigrant associations, academics, and artists use the space to negotiate meaning. In addition, audience response studies on the perceptions of museum-goers would enable an assessment of the effectiveness of the museum as a means for fostering an updated, inclusive, multicultural vision of Frenchness.

A related topic in need of exploration is the educational aspect of the museum. As part of its pedagogical mission, the museum hopes to foster a deeper engagement with the history of immigration among educators and students, in what amounts to the implementation of multicultural education into the public education system, the traditional site for socializing citizens in the image of the nation. The manner in which educators utilize the Cité's resources to integrate cultural diversity into school curricula presents another topic for future inquiry.

Lastly, while the Cité provides a valuable space for opening discussion on cultural diversity and related issues, it nonetheless has limitations. Fostering empathy for migrants and a deeper understanding of discrimination, inequality, and the history of immigration is but one step in the construction of an inclusive society. The danger remains that by creating such a significant national monument to immigrants and their
history, officials may decide that they have 'done their bit' for multiculturalism. In order to truly address the deep structural inequalities and racial and ethnic divisions that permeate French society, the state will have to accompany this cultural approach with more concrete policy measures.
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