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Foucault and museum geographies: a case study of the English ‘Renaissance in the Regions’

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This paper explores the subject of museum geographies, focusing particularly on the development of museum policies in a changing political context. The empirical focus is the emergence and transformation of the museum programme Renaissance in the Region, which is linked to the concepts of primary, secondary and tertiary spatialisations presented by Michel Foucault. The paper discusses the development of the programme and how it transformed aspects of the primary, secondary and tertiary spatialisations of museums in England, before focusing attention on the geography of school visits to museums. The results of two extensive studies of school visits to museums in the programme suggest that large numbers of visits come from schools located in areas with high indices of multiple deprivation and income deprivation affecting children. It is argued that this social geography reflects the tertiary spatialisisation of museums linked to their emergence in areas of past industrial development, although practices linked to reconfigurations of the primary and secondary spatialisation as part of the Renaissance in the Regions programme may also have played some role. The paper concludes by discussing recent changes in government policy and the degree to which the ‘New Renaissance’ policy may signify reductions in the social reach of museums into areas of social deprivation and exclusion.

Keywords: museum geographies; Foucault; spatialisations; Renaissance in the Regions; social inclusion; deprivation

Foucault et les géographies du musée: cas d’étude de la « Renaissance dans les régions » anglaise

Cet article explore le sujet des géographies du musée, en mettant particulièrement l’accent sur le développement des politiques de musée dans un contexte politique changeant. L’accent empirique est mis sur l’émergence et la transformation du programme de musée Renaissance dans la Région, qui est lié aux concepts de spatialisations primaire, secondaire et tertiaire, présentés par Michel Foucault. Cet article discute du développement du programme et de la façon dont il a transformé les aspects de spatialisation primaire, secondaire et tertiaire de musées en Angleterre, avant de se concentrer sur la géographie de visites scolaires dans les musées. Les résultats de deux études importantes de visites scolaires de musées dans le programme suggèrent que de grands nombres de visites viennent d’écoles situées dans des zones aux indices de privations et de manque de revenus élevés affectant les enfants. Il est

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argue que cette géographie sociale reflète la spatialisation tertiaire des musées liée à leur émergence dans les secteurs d’ancien développement industriel, bien que les pratiques liées aux reconfigurations de spatialisation primaire et secondaire en tant que programme de Renaissance des Régions aient aussi pu jouer un certain rôle. L’article conclut en discutant des changements récents en politique gouvernementale et dans quelle mesure la politique de « Nouvelle Renaissance » risque de signifier des réductions à l’accès social des musées dans des zones de privation et d’exclusion sociale.

Mots-clés: géographies des musées; Foucault; Renaissance des Régions; inclusion sociale; privation

Foucault y geografı́as de museo: estudio de caso del ‘Renacimiento inglés en las Regiones’

Este artículo explora el tema de las geografı́as de museo, centrándose especialmente en el desarrollo de las políticas de los museos en un contexto político cambiante. El enfoque empı́rico es la aparición y transformación del programa del museo Renacimiento en la Región, que está vinculado a los conceptos de la espacialización (spatialisation) primaria, secundaria y terciaria presentados por Michel Foucault. El artículo analiza el desarrollo del programa y cómo se transformó aspectos de las espacializaciones primarias, secundarias y terciarias de museos en Inglaterra, antes de centrar la atención en la geografía de visitas escolares a museos. Los resultados de dos estudios extensos de visitas escolares a los museos en el programa sugieren que un gran número de visitas proceden de escuelas ubicadas en zonas con altos índices de carencia múltiple y de privación de ingresos que afectan a los niños. Se argumenta que esta geografía social refleja la espacialización terciaria de museos relacionados con su aparición en áreas de desarrollo industrial pasado, aunque las prácticas vinculadas a las reconfiguraciones de la espacialización primaria y secundaria como parte del programa Renacimiento en las Regiones también pueden haber jugado algún papel. El documento concluye con un análisis de cambios recientes en la política del gobierno y del grado en que la política del ‘Nuevo Renacimiento’ puede significar reducciones en el alcance social de los museos en zonas de privación y exclusión social.

Palabras claves: geografı́as de museos; Foucault; espacializaciones; Renacimiento en las Regiones; inclusión social; privación

Introduction

As Geoghegan (2010, p. 1467) highlights, geographers have become increasingly interested in museums,1 such that there is a ‘nascent field’ of studies related to ‘museum geography’. She suggests that this field encompasses strands related to knowledge, identity and material culture which might be extended to involve performance, poetics, objects, practices and museums’ political context. In this paper we engage in further reflection on ‘museum geographies’, forging connections with arguments on space briefly outlined within Foucault’s (1973) Birth of the Clinic. We suggest that Foucault’s identification of three spatialisations – described as primary, secondary and tertiary – connect to three strands of socio-cultural geography, namely interests in cultural identity, material assemblages and social construction. As Munro (2013, pp. 54–57) notes, geographical engagements with museums have hitherto ‘been sporadic’ and focused particularly around ‘the materiality of museums’ but could be extended to encompass engagement with museum activities that ‘fall out with the practices of collection, preservation and display’ as well as ‘museums’ entanglement within a variety of
governmental agendas, particularly social policy concerns pertaining to social inclusion, health and wellbeing’.

This paper seeks to both illustrate these claims and highlight how geographical engagements with museums could be supplemented by investigation of museum identities and the socio-spatial location of museums, as well as consideration of tensions that exist within museums concerning activities that fall within and outwith collection, preservation and display. The paper also aims to illustrate how museum studies, a discipline exhibiting a penchant for drawing on concepts and debates from other subjects (Macdonald, 2011), might productively employ both conceptions of spatiality and methods of spatial analysis to cast new light on long-established concerns about the form, value and social reach of museums.

The paper advances these arguments in four stages. First, it outlines the concept of primary, secondary and tertiary spatialisations discussed in Foucault’s (1973) *Birth of the Clinic*. Philo (2000b) has argued that an important characteristic of this book, and indeed of Foucault’s work more generally (Philo, 2000a, 2012), is that it does not build from abstract or metaphorical conceptions of space but rather from very worldly, and indeed one might also say ‘wordy’, geographies. That is, it draws from discussions of very tangible spaces and spatial practices, and from the terminology employed in these discussions. Following Foucault’s lead, the second section of the paper considers how his notions of spatiality can be connected to an examination of the spaces, practices and terminology deployed within a major museum funding and policy programme in England, entitled *Renaissance in the Regions* (hereafter RitR). This section begins by outlining the emergence of this programme, highlighting its usage of highly geographical terminology in discussions of museums and museum organisation. It then explores how the programme enacts in discourse and actions the three spatialisations identified by Foucault. In developing these arguments the paper draws on research in geography and museum studies, thereby illustrating how Foucault’s spatialisations have wider relevance to the study of museum geographies.

The third section explores one particular facet of RitR, namely school visits to museums involved in this programme. As outlined in Hooper-Greenhill (2007) and Hooper-Greenhill, Phillips, and Woodham (2009), museums have long been viewed as having an educational role, with visits to museums, for example, being considered in the UK as an activity that can be formally counted as part of school education since 1885. However, the extent to which schools and their pupils have engaged with museums is questionable, it being suggested that there has been, at least in the UK, a ‘serious mismatch’ between assertions about the educational value of museums and actions to realise this, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2009, p. 151). RitR, at least in its rhetoric, appeared to address this mismatch with a commitment that half its expenditure be directed towards educational outputs (Renaissance Review Advisory Group, 2009, p. 41). The success of RitR with respect to education and learning became the focus of major empirical study (see Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2004c, 2004d, 2006a, 2006b, 2009). Amongst the findings was the need to examine ‘the geographical pattern of school use of museums’ (Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2009, p. 152), not least because although museum visiting is widely perceived as a ‘high-brow’ middle-class activity, school visits to museums involved in RitR appeared to come disproportionately from schools located in areas with high indices of deprivation. The third section of this paper explores this geography of schools visits through situating it in a broader analysis of museum geographies in RitR that makes use of Foucault’s spatialisations. The paper concludes by considering the relation of the spatialisations identified in RitR with academic discussions of museum geographies and how a prospective ‘New Renaissance’ programme might change or even restrict these emerging geographies.
Foucault, Birth of the Clinic and museum geographies

Foucault’s Birth of the Clinic might seem a strange point of entry into museum geographies, given that a range of his other works have been widely drawn upon within museum studies: Hooper-Greenhill (1988, 1992) and Bennett (1995), for example, draw extensively upon studies such as Discipline and Punish (Foucault, 1977), The Archaeology of Knowledge (Foucault, 1972) and The Order of Things (Foucault, 1970), whilst Hetherington (1995, 1997, 1999) was drawn to Foucault’s concept of heterotopia which appears scattered throughout many of the above writings as well as in an explicit discussion of museums within ‘Of Other Spaces’ (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986). Birth of the Clinic has also been relatively neglected within geography: Philo’s (2000b, p. 11) claim that this book was ‘a remarkable work despite remaining almost entirely un referenced and unnoticed’ by geographers is echoed by Hannah (2007, p. 85) who describes it as a ‘classic if underappreciated’ study. One aspect picked up by Philo, and also by Hooper-Greenhill (1990) in museum studies, is the elaboration of spatiality that Foucault presents there, specifically his briefly sketched outline of primary, secondary and tertiary spatialisations.

Foucault, as Philo (2000a, pp. 221–222) observes, elaborates his ideas on spatialisisation in an investigation spanning nosologies of disease, practices of pathological investigation and provision of medical facilities. Nosology is a ‘primary spatialisation’ in that classification of disease involved the creation of spaces of distance in resemblance, with diseases being conceptually classified as being close or distant from each other in character, creating abstract maps of disease, or what Foucault terms an ‘essential space’ (Foucault, 1973, p. 9). Foucault argued that a key feature of modern medicine was the emergence of this space and its connection into practices of observation by doctors and clinicians, which he claimed involved movement into the ‘concrete space of perception’ (1973, p. 9), concerned with understanding how disease is articulated upon and embedded within the corporeal space of individual bodies. Whilst the ‘essential space’ of nosology abstracts disease and medicine away from ‘doctors and patients’, medical practice involves engagement with ‘the thick, dense volume of the organism’, with the bodies of both patients and doctors. It signalled, so Foucault argues, a movement into ‘the secondary spatialization of the pathological’ (1973, p. 10). In this space, ‘acute perception of the individual’ is required, as symptoms of disease are assembled in accordance with the particularities of the bodies it inhabits, and indeed within particular locations within any one body. A third spatialisation, termed ‘tertiary’ by Foucault, relates to the medical institutions and practices that emerged to identify, investigate and treat disease. Tertiary spatialisations, Foucault argued, were the ‘whole corpus of medical practices and institutions’ through which society ‘confronts the primary and secondary spatializations’ in such ways that ‘disease is circumscribed, medically invested, isolated, divided up … or distributed’ (1973, p. 16). Tertiary spatialisations, he adds, were not derivative of the other spatialisations but rather were forms of space ‘whose genesis, structure, and laws are of a different nature’ (1973, p. 16).

Whilst Foucault elaborates these ideas within an analysis of anatomical-clinical knowledge and practice, they exhibit parallels with the knowledge, identity and material culture strands of museum geography identified by Geoghegan. Her suggestion that social and cultural geographers have ‘identified and theorised the role museums play in the production and legitimation of identities’ (Geoghegan, 2010, p. 1467) is a focus commensurable with aspects of Foucault’s ‘primary spatialisations’. Studies of the spatial organisation of museums and its effects on the production of knowledge can be seen to
constitute examinations of aspects of Foucault’s ‘secondary spatialisation’, as indeed are studies of the material geographies of ‘collectors, collecting and collections’ (Geoghegan, 2010, p. 1468) and work on ‘the affective, emotional and sensual relationship between people and things’ in the storage spaces of collections (Geoghegan & Hess, 2014, p. 5). However, Geoghegan’s analysis of museum geographies arguably pays little attention to issues constitutive of tertiary spatialisations. This is despite extensive research on the role of museums in urban regeneration, as well as studies examining the role of museums as agents of social inclusion, community engagement, well-being, disciplining and social learning (see Table 1). In this paper we will explore in more detail how concepts of primary, secondary and tertiary spatialisations as outlined in Birth of the Clinic might be applied to the study of museums, focusing particularly on their value in interpreting the RitR programme but also using them to sketch out contours of wider studies in museum geographies.

**RitR and museum spatialisations**

**The emergence of RitR**

*RitR* formally emerged in 2000 when, following governmental, public and museum concern, the then Secretary of State for Culture, Chris Smith, convened a taskforce to

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examine the state and development of so-called ‘regional museums’. The report stemming from this taskforce noted that there was ‘no universally agreed list’ of these museums, although they were described as:

museums and galleries which, by virtue of their size (collections, staff and multidisciplinary nature), historical importance (foundation date, collecting hinterland and quality of collections) and status of location (regional capital, population size or economic hinterland), have a pre-eminent position in their region and an ability to deliver significant benefits to the people who live there. (Resource, 2001, p. 18)

Phrases redolent of geography abound, supporting Geoghegan’s (2010) claim that geographers might address the political context surrounding museums, a context that has being subject to considerable contestation and change.

The RitR report, published by the non-departmental public body Resource, subsequently renamed the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), was well received by the Labour Government, not least because it resonated closely with governmental agendas and objectives (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Lawley, 2003; Selwood, 2002). Many of the taskforce’s recommendations were enacted when the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) tasked MLA to develop a programme to implement ideas from the report, with DCMS and the then Department for Education and Schools (DfES) committing almost £300 million of funding to the programme between 2002 and 2010 (DCMS, 2007).

The original RitR report proposed that ‘regional museum hubs’ be created within each government region in England, with hubs consisting of a lead museum service and between one and three satellite museums. Although the initial five years of governmental funding was some £165.2 million lower than the £267.2 million initially proposed by the taskforce (Renaissance Review Advisory Group, 2009), and consequentially there were ‘significant losses or changes of emphasis’ (Wilkinson, 2009, p. 5), the idea of establishing regional hubs was retained, albeit through a competitive phased introduction whereby three ‘path-finder’ hubs were established before 7 ‘phase two’ hubs (see Figure 1).

The programme sparked critical commentary, with concerns expressed about its initial vision, degree of implementation, organisation, impacts on included and excluded museums, and significance in terms of governmental relations with museums and culture (Everitt, 2009; Flude, 2002; Heal, 2002; Heywood, 2002; Selwood, 2002). The latter concerns linked to a series of debates about the agency, instrumentalisation, governmentality and commodification of museums and culture (Belfiore, 2002; Gray, 2008; Holden, 2004, 2006; Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2009; Levitt, 2008; Newman & McLean, 2004b; O’Neill, 2008).

As Gibson (2008, p. 247) remarks in relation to the instrumentalisation debate, the predominant tone was one of ‘deconstructive criticism’. She suggests this could produce a return to elitist/exclusionary policies that ‘characterized cultural administration in the past’. It is striking, for instance, that a 2008 examination of the programme by a ‘Renaissance Review Advisory Group’ focused particular attention on managerial aspects, with little consideration of governmental agendas such as regionalism and social inclusion. The group’s recommendations included the ‘dismantling of regional hubs’ (Renaissance Review Advisory Group, 2009, p. 15), and their replacement by a network of 10–12 ‘core recipients’ selected on criteria linked to ‘traditional’, or ‘core’/’endogenous’ (Gray, 2008), concerns of the museum sector, such as quality of collections, accessibility to a generalised public, audience size, staff expertise, managerial procedures and degree to which museums create self-transformation and inter-museum learning/development. The supposedly ‘exogenous’ concerns of social inclusion, regionalism and regeneration which
figured strongly in the original vision of the RitR taskforce, and in criteria for regional hub selection (Hegyi, 2002), were noticeably absent from the 2009 review and associated policy statement (MLA, 2010a).

The switch in focus was conditioned by shifting economic fortunes and expectations of governmental change. The election of a Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government, and associated emphasis on fiscal deficit reduction and a ‘slimming down’ of the state, certainly impacted on RitR. MLA, which had been driving delivery of the programme, was a casualty of the so-called ‘bonfire of the quangos’, it being outlined in July 2010 that it would cease to exist by April 2012, with responsibility for RitR transferred to the Arts Council. It was subsequently announced that funding for the programme would be reduced by 15% over four years, it being renamed the ‘New Renaissance’ (MLA, 2010b) and refocused to minimise ‘overhead costs tied up in Hubs’ (Roy Clare, quoted in Sharma, 2010). The emphasis on endogenous concerns established by the Renaissance Review Advisory Group seems set to continue, along with, if current rhetoric is any guide, a more centralised geography of museums in terms, at least, of
funding, organisational relations and activities. ‘Cores’/‘major partners’ have superseded ‘hubs’, ‘national programmes and strategies’ replaced ‘local capacity building’ and ‘stimulation of localised change’, and national museums tasked with providing access to ‘national-quality’ collections and exhibits in a ‘limited number’ of locations (MLA, 2010b). Such changes have not gone uncontested. A Museums Association survey, for example, suggested that all respondents foresaw Renaissance funding reductions leading to loss of ‘public facing services’ including ‘work with hard to reach audiences’ (Museums Association, 2010, p. 2; see also Heywood, 2010a, 2010b). However, rather than speculate about potential impacts of these changes, this paper explores the Renaissance programme when it clearly had a regional focus. Specifically, the paper draws on research material generated through two evaluations undertaken by the Research Centre for Museum and Galleries (RCMG) and associated staff at the University of Leicester for the MLA, conducted between July 2003 and February 2006 (see Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2004c, 2004d, 2006a, 2006b, 2009). The studies were themselves symptomatic of the reconfiguration of government/museum relations associated with the RitR programme, being established to address issues of data availability, which, Selwood (2002, p. 65) suggests, was a prevailing preoccupation within New Labour policy-making. The research, consisting of two large-scale mixed-methods studies, focused principally on school visits to hub museums and evaluating the impact of these on learning. However, as noted in Hooper-Greenhill et al. (2009), an unexpected outcome was evidence that high proportions of such visits originated from areas classified as having high levels of social deprivation according to indices produced by the then Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) (see Figure 2). In this paper we want to explore this finding further, drawing on Foucault’s tri-fold conception of spatialities to first examine the geography of museums as they relate to the development of RitR, and second to explicate the distribution of school visits to hub museums. The paper will briefly consider the inter-relation of the spatialisations identified in RitR and how a prospective ‘New Renaissance’ programme might change these geographies.

Museums, RitR and primary spatialisation

Primary spatialisation involves consideration of how museums are conceived and classified. As Geoghegan (2010) notes, whilst museums have been around for hundreds of years, research has highlighted that they have changed over time. Hooper-Greenhill (1990, p. 58), for example, argues that whilst museums are often thought to have considerable historical continuity, such that the presence of museums can be traced back at least to the emergence of ‘cabinets of curiosity’ in the European Renaissance, in practice there have been abrupt re-evaluations and changes in the constitution of museums. Notions of the ‘post-museum’ (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, 2007), ‘networked’/’hypercomplex’ museums (Cameron & Mengler, 2009) and a ‘new museology’ (Vergo, 1989) have emerged as ways to characterise recent articulations, expressed less abstractly by Geoghegan (2010, p. 1463):

Endeavouring to shake off the image of boring and dusty storehouses, museums are redefining themselves as spaces of community, dialogue, public engagement, identity-formation and performance.

There are at least three clear geographies associated with the idea and definition of museums. The first relates to where the idea of museums originated and how it travelled to
all manner of places, such that fewer than three nations currently have no museums (Chu, 2009). Second, debates have surrounded the degree to which a museum does, or does not have, a spatially bounded form. Hetherington (1995), for example, highlights Malraux’s (1967) concept of a ‘museum without walls’, which suggested that museum objects often have a presence well beyond the bounds of museum buildings because their images are reproduced via mass media. He later draws attention to the complex topology of relations associated with objects within museum collections which, if traced out, again lead to locations well beyond the walls of museums (Hetherington, 1997; see also Hill, 2006a,
director with a self-confessed lack of spatial awareness, the spatiality of museums is far
more than simply the physical bounds or internal sub-divisions of a museum:

What do we mean by ‘museum space’? … it is the sequence of rooms, voids and bits in
between that a visitor encounters having entered the museum. But museum space is also …
exterior of the building itself, its immediate surroundings … At what point does museum
space begin? As the museum hoves into physical view? I suggest not. Leaving aside the issue
of the virtual space of the internet … the visitor enters the ‘psychological space’ of the
museum perhaps long before actually visiting … I had heard, for example, all sorts about Te
Papa, the National Museum of New Zealand, before I ever made a visit.

A third aspect of the primary spatialisation of museums is the presence and constitution of
scaled spatial identities. It is common for museums to be differentiated into national,
regional and local museums, distinctions figuring clearly in the RitR
report, which explicitly distinguished ‘the nationals, the regional museums … and small local
and community museums’ (Resource, 2001, p. 5). It has been suggested that the report
provided an illustration of, and perhaps an impetus for, ‘an emerging new spatialization of
museums’ (Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2009, p. 176) centred on their ‘social reach’, which is
seen to involve ‘the geographical span and extent of the collections and audience’ (2009,
p. 177). For the taskforce, the majority of ‘museums in the regions’ were ‘local museums’
in terms of their size and reach, whilst there was also a set of ‘regional museums’ that
could ‘convincingly claim to be regional in status’ in that they attracted visits far ‘beyond
the boundaries of their host local authorities and their collections often reflect region-wide
collecting over many decades’ (Resource, 2001, p. 7).

The report also makes frequent reference to national museums, which are
differentiated from other museums principally by receipt of core-funding direct from
central government. However, just as their definitions of regional and local museums
draws upon the geographical extent of collections and audiences, so delimitation of
national museums may encompass such issues. Studies such as Anderson (1991),
example, have all highlighted how some museum collections from the seventeenth century
became viewed as repositories and symbolisations of the cultures of nations, whilst, by
contrast, regional and local museums with more localised collections came to be seen as
providing a ‘map or guidebook to the surrounding area’ (Naylor, 2002, p. 495; see also
Finnegan, 2009) or, as the RitR taskforce argued, ‘tell the story of the locality through the
experiences of its people and, as such, … generate a sense of civic pride and citizenship’

Studies of national museums also emphasise the significance of audiences to their
delimitation. Prössler (1996), for example, notes calls from the early eighteenth century for
‘national museums’ to be accessible to all of a nation’s citizens, although it was only in the
late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that such museums began to emerge as
previously private collections became public in the sense of being accessible to everyone
within ‘the nation’, or at least everyone in the educated, literate public.

Many of these national museums were located in capital cities, places taken to
symbolise the centre of the nation as well acting as sites of central government
administrative power. The definition of national museums both drew upon and fostered
these notions as they became a materialisation and visualisation of the nation (Hooper-
Greenhill, 2000), with both collections and audiences drawn to them from other areas of
the nation. This spatialisation was, however, subject to critique, with concerns long voiced
about the degree to which capital city museums were accessible to people from across a
nation (Minihan, 1977). Recent developments addressing such concerns include use of the Internet to make collections accessible without physical movement, including use of Web 2.0 and social media technologies (Cameron & Mengler, 2009), although earlier media such as book publishing and television also enabled museums to reach into nations (Geoghegan, 2010; Malraux, 1954, 1967). In addition, a late twentieth century development was the establishment of national museums beyond national capitals. In the UK, for instance, the Science Museum (or National Museum of Science and Industry as it was until recently formally entitled) established the National Railway Museum in York in 1975 and the National Museum of Film, Photography and Television in Bradford in 1983; followed by the Imperial War Museum (Duxford 1977 and Manchester 2002) and the Tate Gallery (Tate Liverpool 1988 and Tate St. Ives 1993). Partnerships constitute another mechanism for taking nationals into the regions: the National Portrait Gallery, for example, has partnerships with three country houses – Montacute House, Beningbrough Hall and Bodelwyddan Castle – and, along with 11 other national museums, engaged in partnerships with regional museums as part of a DCMS/DfES funded ‘Strategic Commissioning Programme’ (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2004a, 2004b, 2007a, 2007b).

Whilst such features imply that national as well as local and regional museums are present in regions, it is also evident that many aspects of national museums exceed the nation. Driver (2001), Duncan (2003), Jacobs (1996, 2003), Hooper-Greenhill (2000) and Hill (2006a, 2006b, 2007) have all emphasised how museum collections have been tied up with imperialism and globalisation. It is also clear that much of the audience for national museums is international in character: in 2005/2006, for instance, 50% of recorded visitors to the British Museum were from abroad, whilst for the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich the figure was 53% (derived from Travers, 2006).

There has been growing recognition of such issues within the museum world. One route has been to recognise and represent imperialist entanglements in the creation of seemingly national collections (e.g. see Duncan, 2003; Jacobs, 2003), whilst another path taken has been to redefine the character of national museums, as in the British Museum recent descriptions of itself as a ‘museum of the world, for the world’ (Trustees of the British Museum n.d.). Its claims that it holds ‘a collection representative of world cultures’ (Board of Trustees of the British Museum, 2004, p. 3) and ‘serves people of every nation’ (The British Museum, 2003), is echoed in a report from the National Museum Directors’ Conference (2002, pp. 5–6) which argued that Britain’s National Museums have ‘encyclopaedic’ collections, which can be described as fundamentally universal in their mission’; that their location in the global city of London gives them ‘an unrivalled access to a global audience and the ability to tap into a global pool of resources’; and that their international character and universal mission lies in an ‘Enlightenment tradition’ that predates both globalisation and the ‘age of nationalisms’ (National Museum Directors’ Conference, 2002, pp. 6–7; see also Cuno, 2008, 2009; Gorman, 2011). However, as O’Neill (2004) notes, such claims have been widely criticised, not least for obscuring colonial relations that underpinned the creation of their collections and the degree to which they remain inaccessible to non-metropolitan audiences.9

Museums make use of geographical identifiers other than local, region, nation and global, including those such as ‘county’ or ‘city’ museums, as well as museums with various supra-national regional identities, such as Durham’s Oriental Museum. However, as argued in Hooper-Greenhill et al. (2009, p. 176), RitR may have created some impetus for a primary spatialisation of museums focused on the local, regional and national (see Table 2).
Table 2. English museums categorised on a spatial classification derived from *Renaissance in the Regions: a new vision for England’s museums.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of museum</th>
<th>Collections</th>
<th>Audiences</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>Other characteristics</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National museums</td>
<td>Large, encyclopaedic, spectacular collections encompassing or signifying the nation, collections of international significance</td>
<td>National and international audiences</td>
<td>Central government</td>
<td>Located in national capital cities, or regional ‘outposts’ or ‘partnership’ (nationals in the regions); research and outreach expertise; extensive on-line presence</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large regional museums</td>
<td>Encyclopaedic and spectacular collections linked to region-wide collecting; collections included items of national and international importance</td>
<td>Large audience from region and beyond</td>
<td>Local government (and 4 independent museums)</td>
<td>Large cities; limited on-line presence; limited new acquisition budget; some research and outreach expertise</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small local museums</td>
<td>Small diverse collections, often focused principally on the local area</td>
<td>Attract largely local audience or tourist visitors to locality</td>
<td>Local government, independent, armed services</td>
<td>Large range of localities</td>
<td>1153</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University museums</td>
<td>Range from internationally renowned to relatively unknown; may be encyclopaedic but often discipline-based collections</td>
<td>Limited audience: students, researchers, and often poor public accessibility</td>
<td>Arts and Humanities Research Council</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Trust, English Heritage Total</td>
<td>Property-related collections</td>
<td>Often highly reliant on tourist visitors</td>
<td>National Trust, English Heritage</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>To be registered as museums properties must have objects and a permanent collection</td>
<td>1432</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Museums, RitR and secondary spatialisation

Secondary spatialisations of museums are concerned with the way various elements of a museum act in concert with one another. Hetherington (1999), for example, highlighted how museums are both spaces of heterogeneous assemblage and diverse orderings/framings of heterogeneity. Secondary spatialisation can be seen as the ‘multiplicity of frames for the articulation of material things, subjects, and knowing’ (Hooper-Greenhill, 1990, p. 59), which encompass a range of museological and geographical concerns. Crampton (2003), for instance, has highlighted how museums’ classifications of content, internal layout and objects incorporate spatialised identities and boundaries, features also highlighted in Naylor’s (2002) and Finnegan’s (2009) work on local museums, as well as Duncan and Wallach’s (1980) discussion of ‘universal survey museums’.

The last three studies also highlight how spatial representations connect to physical design and layout of museums, an issue also prominent in the design of new museums by so-called ‘signature architects’ (see Message, 2006a, 2006b). Studies in MacLeod (2005) reveal some of the tensions, as well as synergies, between iconic architectural forms which attract visitors to a museum, and other museum agendas such as access, education and inclusion (see also Bourdieu & Darbel, 1991; Duncan, 1995; Duncan & Wallach, 1980; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; MacLeod, 2013; Prior, 2003). There have, as Geoghegan (2010) notes, also been studies examining the differentiation of public and non-public spaces within museums, as well as the growth of practices of public performance.

Just as Foucault argued that the secondary spatialisation of disease marked a point of complex and at times uncertain articulation of conceptual distinctions with the diverse corporeal spaces of individual bodies, so secondary spatialisations of museums can be viewed as involving uneasy engagements between various conceptualisations of museums and the heterogeneous assemblages which make up specific museums. As Macdonald (2002) and Geoghegan and Hess (2014) highlight, these material engagements involve complex affective, emotional and sensual relationships, as well as practical/tactile responses to material presences and absences. Primary spatialisations in a sense seek to bring order to secondary spatialisations, although this is forever partial and at risk of being undermined by more or less unruly actants.

A sense of seeking order within complexity is very evident in the development of RitR. The initial vision report, for example, argued for a new spatial structure to address seemingly disordered patterns of provision:

the nation’s system of museums has developed piecemeal, lacking clear policy or legislative frameworks. As a result, provision of museums is illogical: there are both gaps and overlaps. (Resource, 2001, p. 18)

It was claimed that ‘radical change’ was required, involving formation of a ‘network of regional hubs’ in which lead museums would act ‘not only as centres of excellence but also as leaders of their regional museum communities’ (Resource, 2001, p. 11).

The vision report argued that regional hubs could act as centres of museum research/scholarship, documentation production, marketing and retailing within a region, as well as taking the lead in developing intra-regional partnerships to establish exhibitions, object loans, training programmes and centralised storage facilities. The programme also had a very strong educational component, linked to its co-funding by DfES, with encouragement being given to educational visits to museums and extending museum activities ‘beyond the walls of the museum’, through, for instance, provision of education-related materials through the Internet, the lending of museum artefacts to schools or school staff, and outreach visits by museum staff. Examples of such activities include the Magic (Museums
and Galleries Inspiring Children) bus run by the North East Regional Hub, which carried exhibits to schools which had not previously engaged with museums in the hub, and the museum without walls initiative in the West Midlands which involved ‘school loan boxes’ containing objects linked to curriculum areas and on-line web-resources. An estimated 51,621 children made use of material within the school loan boxes in 2008–2009, with 720,463 visits to the website (Renaissance West Midlands 2009), whilst, more generally, out-reach activity with school-age people was said to have increased by 664% in the first year of operation of the pathfinder hubs (MLA, 2006, p. 5).

Whilst figures such as these were highlighted by advocates of RitR, it is clear that attempts to change museum practices drew considerable criticism, not least because of association with modernising governmental agendas, a link clearly made within the initial report of the Renaissance taskforce which argued that ‘the museums and galleries domain must be prepared to reform itself, to modernise and to rationalize’ (Resource, 2001, p. 56). As noted earlier, there were objections to such agendas from both practitioners and academic commentators, with later reviews of the programme tending to both re-enact these criticisms and criticise the extent to which such modernising agendas were being implemented. The Renaissance Review Advisory Group (2009), for example, argued that revision was needed in order to focus ‘unambiguously on museums’ unique contribution, undiluted by government’s commitment to a cross-domain agenda’, whilst Kinghurst Consulting et al. (2005, p. 6) argued that museum modernisation had not received ‘sufficient emphasis in the Renaissance programme’. More generally, Lawley (2003), Sandell (2003), Newman and McLean (2004b) and Tlili (2008) all identified resistance to change within the museum sector.

Museums, RitR and tertiary spatialisation

Whilst RitR’s attempts to modernise/rationalise the heterogeneous secondary spatialisations of museums was subject to a range of critical commentaries, issues of tertiary spatialisation excited most controversy.

Tertiary spatialisations of museums involve, as stated in Hooper-Greenhill (1990, p. 59), consideration of ‘social processes and the broad contextual field within which specific museum-related practices emerge and operate’. This spatialisation constitutes, as Philo (2000b, p. 16) argues, a ‘terrain across which the negotiations between primary and secondary spatializations’ are played out, although as previously noted, having its own dynamics. This is illustrated by Hooper-Greenhill et al. (2009) who suggest that quite different primary spatialisations of museums emerged in Britain and France. More generally, a series of studies have argued that the meanings, practices and spaces of museums have changed as societies have altered, or as Macdonald (1996, p. 4) puts it, ‘Museums are socially and historically located; and, as such, ... inevitably bear the imprint of social relations beyond their walls and beyond the present’.

Museums’ relationship to social worlds and relations was of major significance in the construction of RitR. The initial taskforce report argued that whilst museums had long been viewed, particularly by curators and other museum professionals, as institutions for ‘developing and interpreting ... collections and safeguarding them for future generations to enjoy’, museums actually ‘have a much larger role in society’, being potentially capable of making ‘a real difference to people’s lives’ (Resource, 2001, p. 7). More specifically it was claimed that museums in general, and the RitR programme in particular, could make a difference through promotion of learning/education, cultural inspiration/creativity,
economic growth/regeneration and social accessibility/inclusion, all set within a context of providing excellent/quality services.

Developing museums’ capacity for fostering social inclusion was identified by the taskforce as amongst the highest priorities for RitR, it being claimed that it should be ‘mainstreamed as a policy priority’ (Resource, 2001, p. 43). Whilst not providing an explicit definition of the term, the taskforce clearly drew upon work by the Cabinet Office’s Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) and the language of ‘policy mainstreaming’ reflected the focus of Governmental activity at the turn of the millennium (Levitas, 2004). The lack of definition, whilst a focus of criticism from museum professionals and academic commentators alike (e.g. Morris, 2000; Newman & McLean, 2004b; Tlili, Gewirtz, & Cribb, 2007; West & Smith, 2005), has been viewed by Tlili (2008) and Levitas (2004) as having more ‘strategic’ value to New Labour. Levitas (2004, p. 41), for example, argues the uncertainty and divergent interpretations of the term social inclusion, and its widely conjoined anti-thesis, social exclusion, allowed these terms to convey ‘both more and less than their users intend’. Levitas claims lack of specificity facilitated widespread adoption as the terms became ‘flexible concepts’ to which people could and, as Newman and McLean (2004b), West and Smith (2005) and Tlili (2008) demonstrate, did add their own meanings. Levitas adds that this supplementation of meaning was undertaken within as well as beyond government, with New Labour moving, in a far from linear manner, from redistributive conceptions of social exclusion connected to notions of structures of economic poverty to performative cultural ones, whereby the socially excluded were seen as people who failed to adopt the values and attitudes seen as requisite to participate in mainstream society. For Levitas this movement served to simultaneously obscure and legitimate class relations and inequalities whilst still providing a language of concern. Similar, although arguably less critical, arguments are developed by Tlili et al. (2007), who identified movements in discourses of social inclusion within New Labour’s museum policy, from an initial concern with inequalities of audience access, to a second focus on addressing issues of self-identity and community engagement/control, and onto a third concern with issues of social welfare and economic wealth, whereby museums were conceived as locations for life-long learning, skill and employment generation, place marketing and cultural consumption.

RitR clearly expressed the last interpretation of social inclusion, which also connects most directly with the concept of a tertiary spatialisation of museums that seeks to ‘socialise museums’ by situating their operation in ideas, practices and relations operating across a broad contextual social field. Having said this, it is important to recognise that the other senses of social inclusion also operate within this contextual field, and as a consequence all three senses of social inclusion are of relevance to investigations of the tertiary spatialisations of museums. Whilst social inclusion does not simply involve ‘getting underrepresented, non-visiting individuals and communities to develop an interest and investment in museums and visit the museums, or to visit more frequently’ (Tlili et al. 2007, p. 281), not least because, as Newman and Mclean (2004b, pp. 176–177) argue, social inclusion would seem to require that the lives of these visitors are ‘changed in some way’ as a result of the visit, it is also clear that many of the social processes in which museums are located do involve people entering museum spaces.

The broad interpretation of social inclusion favoured by RitR, such that museums are seen to require and deliver on a ‘valued social purpose’ (Resource, 2001, p. 21), provoked considerable critical commentary. Critics, ranging from the right-wing libertarian social commentator Josie Appleton through the National Museums Directors Conference and on to the left-leaning think-tank Demos, all complained about the ‘instrumentalisation’ of
museums through the imposition of what were seen as exogenous concerns and their impact on what were presented as more traditional/endogenous concerns such as ‘collecting, studying and presenting artefacts’ (Appleton, 2001), acting to ‘preserve’ and ‘hold and display’ collections of ‘science, natural history and art’ (National Museum Directors’ Conference, 2004, pp. 4, 46), or presenting cultural artefacts that have some intrinsic ‘capacity and potential ... to affect us’ (Holden, 2006, p. 15). Such viewpoints have been countered, it being argued, for instance, that the instrumentalisation of museums is both necessary, to bring about some social accountability and avoid museums becoming elitist/exclusionary spaces (O’Neill, 2005, 2008), and also unavoidable in that museums are ‘constitutively instrumental’ (Gibson, 2008, p. 249) because they have had socially instrumental dimensions from their inception. As O’Neill (2008, p. 304) argues, whilst many museum professionals and commentators espouse social distance or ‘neutrality’, this is not in practice attainable and its espousal is ‘in effect a denial – naive or disingenuous – that museums are embedded in society and embroiled in its structures of power and inequality’. Or to put it another way, museums are always embedded in tertiary spatialisations.

The tertiary spatialisations of museums do not, however, necessarily correspond to those explicitly imagined by museum practitioners and policy makers, a possibility readily evident in relation to RitR. Whilst many critics railed against the notion of museums having the explicit social purposes outlined by the taskforce, other critics questioned whether these purposes were being achieved and/or, more epistemologically, whether information was being generated which would enable assessment of such achievement. These concerns were raised across the five social purposes identified by the taskforce, although particular attention was focused on museum as agents of social inclusion. Belfiore (2002), Newman and McLean (2004b) and Newman, McLean, and Urquhart (2005), for example, all argued that whilst policy documents asserted museums had the potential to address social inclusion/exclusion, it was hard to find substantive evidence that this was happening, and indeed identify mechanisms for producing such effects.

It was in this context that the RCMG study was conducted and the results as shown in Figure 2 emerged. As previously mentioned, these indicated that a large proportion of schools visiting museums were located in areas classified as having high levels of deprivation. Although focused on school visits, the results clearly connect to notions of social inclusion as audience access, which as discussed earlier may be seen as a pre-requisite for other processes of social inclusion. However, as will be revealed in the next section, this geography of accessibility may be a product of processes linked to Foucault’s notions of primary, secondary and tertiary spatialisations.

**RitR and the geography of school visits**

**Initial viewpoints**

Figure 2 illustrates questionnaire responses from teachers and other leaders of educational groups for children and young people who visited RitR hub museums and for which identifiable postcode and super-output area (SOA) locations were obtainable. It shows visits according to rank of the school’s location on the 2004 index of multiple deprivation (IMD) and suggests that these were far from evenly distributed, with SOAs ranked within the highest 20% bandings appearing with much greater frequency than expected in an even distribution. In relation to the three pathfinder hubs, 19.5% of visits were from schools located in SOAs classified as being amongst the 10% most deprived in England, and 32.7% of visits were made by schools located in SOAs within the 20% most deprived
category. In the case of the second study of pathfinder and phase two hubs, the respective figures were slightly lower at 15.3% and 29.6%, although strong showing amongst the two most deprived deciles was still evident. It was also apparent that visits were much lower than might be expected for schools located in SOAs ranked as amongst the 20% least deprived.

As discussed in Hooper-Greenhill et al. (2009), such results suggested a rather unexpected pattern of social reach given widespread perceptions of museums as rather elitist institutions, although it was a finding consistent with aspects of the social inclusionist vision established by the RitR taskforce, published criteria for hub selection and the tone of subsequent Renaissance-related assessments (e.g. MLA, 2006).

The identification of postcode locations allows not only the identification of a potentially significant pattern of social reach, but also examination of spatial reach, and its connections with social reach. Figure 3 shows postcode locations for schools visiting hub museums in the two periods of study. It is clear that the vision of regional museums attracting most visitors from broad ‘city-region’ areas as expressed by the original taskforce was borne out to some extent in terms of school visits, albeit with some instances of long distance travel by schools and over half the visits being under 10 kilometres distance, with just under 28% less than 5 kilometres.

This pattern of school visits suggests that hub museums overall had relatively limited spatial reach, raising the question as to whether the pattern of social reach outlined earlier has regional variations. As discussed in Hooper-Greenhill et al. (2009), a comparison of school visits within each of the three pathfinder regional hubs suggests significant variations in the distribution of school visits ranked against SOA measures of deprivation, although in the cases of the North East and West Midlands, the general observations about a strong showing of visits from areas with high levels of deprivation held. In the South West, by contrast, fewer than 3% of visits came from SOAs classified within the country’s
most deprived decile, a result concordant with the social structure of the region (see Figure 4). This was also the case in relation to the North East, where the proportion of schools visiting museums from areas located in the 10% most deprived SOAs conformed closely to the regional proportion of SOAs in this category. In the case of the West Midlands, however, there were significantly more visits from schools located in the 10% most deprived category than might be regionally expected, such that whilst this region as a whole had fewer SOAs in the 10% most deprived decile than the North East, in relation to visits from schools in this category, the West Midlands exceeded the North East.

These results go some way to countering claims that museums have no role to play in addressing issues of social inclusion, although as Newman and McLean (2004b, pp. 176–177) observe, getting people from disadvantaged situations to enter a museum might represent a broadening of a museum’s audience but ‘tells very little about the impact being made upon visitors’. Furthermore, whilst it is tempting to ascribe high numbers of visits from schools in areas with high levels of deprivation to successful outreach activities, and therefore in a sense to the formation of secondary spatialisations which break down exclusionary walls to museums, interviews with museum staff and teachers revealed that the delivery of such activities was variable, even within a hub museum. As illustrated below, for example, two members of the Museum Learning Team in the South-West Hub, for instance, clearly saw value in out-reach activities, whilst a third argued that schools needed to visit the museum:

I’ve done some early years outreach, reception and nursery in Torpoint . . . near Plymouth . . . there was no way they were going to get here, they are far too little;

We’ve got a secondary outreach officer who goes out and does things; [secondary schools] don’t tend to come in, because they won’t come in;

But what we don’t want to do is to offer the sessions at school, because they won’t come in and we need them to come in and they should be coming because the whole experience is about coming to the museum as well as handling the artefacts.

However, even more significant in influencing patterns of school visit than variations in the practices of outreach may well be the tertiary spatialisation of these museums.

**Tertiary spatialisations of museums and the geography of school visits**

There are at least three reasons to be cautious about ascribing differences in the social geography of school visits simply to the outcome of regional differences in the social geographies in which schools are located and the degree to which museums have undertaken outreach activities. First, museums in the North East have actually had a very long tradition of social outreach (see Hooper-Greenhill, Sandell, Moussouri, & O’Riain, 2000; Newman & McLean, 2004a, 2004b; Newman et al., 2005; Resource, 2001) and have clearly sought, through schemes such as the *Magic* bus, to use *RitR* funding to facilitate further such engagement. Second, is the issue of intra- and inter-regional variation. So, for example, whilst the South West governmental region as a whole can be characterised as having relatively few areas of social deprivation, it does include areas ranked as having high levels of deprivation. These include parts of urban settlements such as Bristol (35 SOAs in the most deprived decile), Plymouth (19 SOAs), Swindon (6 SOAs) and Bournemouth (6 SOAs), but also significantly rural districts, such as Penwith (2 SOAs) and Restormel (2 SOAs).13

In addition to intra-regional variations and their connection to the location of schools, analysis revealed that attention should be paid to the association of such variations with the
Figure 4. School visits to Renaissance Phase 1 hub museums, by IMD and hub.
location of museums. Figures 5–7 indicate the location of museums within the three pathfinder hubs, revealing that they are largely located within or close to areas with high indices of deprivation. This can be seen to reflect social processes underpinning the formation of these museums. The RitR taskforce, for example, explicitly argued that many potential hub museums were ‘located in areas of the highest social deprivation’ (Resource, 2001, p. 44), whilst a ‘potential to impact on areas ranked within the top 100 district level indices of deprivation’ was also included as a formal criterion for designation of the hubs (Hegyi, 2002), although there is clear suggestion that more endogenous factors related to ‘museum credibility’ were in practice utilised (Wilkinson, 2009).

Whilst measures of social deprivation may not have figured strongly the selection of museum hubs, the taskforce’s initial vision of hubs located in areas of high social deprivation may have come to pass through processes of tertiary spatialisation in operation long before the onset of the programme. Whilst seemingly not necessarily chosen on the grounds of their spatial proximity to areas of social deprivation, many of the museums which became part of the selected hubs were established in the mid to late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by industrial and commercial philanthropists, and institutions such as scientific, philosophical, archaeological, historical and literary societies that were

Figure 5. Location of Renaissance hub museums in North East government region against IMD.
closely associated with the urban industrial bourgeoisie (Billinge, 1984; Finnegan, 2009). Examples from RitR pathfinder hubs include Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery (established 1872 but relocated to present site 1905), Great North Museum: Hancock and Wolverhampton Art Gallery (both opened 1884). Another set of museums strongly represented in the RitR hubs was industrial heritage museums established after the onset of de-industrialisation in the 1970s. Examples include Monkwearmouth Station Museum established in 1973 to conserve an 1840s station building and Washington F-Pit established on the site of a coal pit closed in 1968. A final set of museums reflective of an industrial past are those such as the Hartlepool Museum established as part of regeneration activities over the last two decades.

Whilst these three sets of museums were established in different periods, they all illustrate how the establishment of museums links into social processes and practices underpinning the formation of the locality in which they were situated. In other words, they all reflected processes of tertiary spatialisation. Furthermore, with the onset of processes such as de-industrialisation, these locations have all become prone to high levels of social deprivation.

This finding is significant not only in relation to arguments concerning the importance of the historical dimension of tertiary spatialisations of these museums, but also poses
interesting questions regarding their role within contemporary processes. In particular, these results, along with evidence of generally quite localised patterns of movement, suggests that the high incident of visits from schools located in the two most deprived deciles of SOAs might be a reflection of the social character of areas in close proximity to the museums involved in RitR. Or to put it another way, the apparent success of the programme in reaching children from schools located in some of the most socially deprived areas may be a product of processes of tertiary spatialisation which have placed

Figure 7. Location of Renaissance hub museums in West Midlands government region against IMD.
many museums within or in close proximity to areas of social deprivation, rather than being the product of either museums reaching out particularly well to schools located in areas with high levels of social deprivation, or indeed of schools within these areas being particularly keen to use museums. Support for this finding is provided by Figure 8 which shows average distance travelled to hub museums tended to increase as IMD ranking for school location increased, meaning that schools located in areas with higher levels of multiple deprivation tended to travel shorter distances to museums than those in areas with lower deprivation levels. There may be a range of factors creating such a result, including that schools in more deprived areas find it harder to cover the travel costs for longer distances than schools in less deprived areas. There were clear instances where the cost of travel was an influence on the selection of museum visits, amongst both rural and urban schools:

The Bus fare today is only £2 but as soon as you start going out of Birmingham we have to have a coach and then the price just for the coach is about £5 per child, and then whatever the cost of the entry [is] (Teacher from Birmingham school located in 10% most deprived SOA decile);

It isn’t necessarily so much the entrance fee to where you’re going . . . it’s the coach travel to get there [which] is expensive. And the thing is, parents can get in a car . . . or they can get on the local bus, and they can get a round trip return for two pounds fifty or something . . . and they say ‘Well why are you charging us five pounds? (Headteacher from Cornish school located in 10% most deprived SOA decile)

The linearity of the relationship between average distance travelled and IMD ranking, however, suggests that such accounts may be of limited explanatory value, with the result perhaps more generally being the outcome of areas with higher levels of social deprivation being closer to museums than areas with lower levels of social deprivation. It was certainly the case that close proximity to museums was valued by at least some teachers in schools located in areas of high deprivation:

![Figure 8. Average distance travelled to Renaissance Phase 1 and Phase 2 hub museums, by IMD ranking.](image)
Probably the Discovery Museum is the most used... basically because it is just a mile down the road. It is easily accessible and there is such a wide range of topics covered there (Teacher from Newcastle school located in 10% most deprived SOA decile);

We use a local museum a lot, which is Soho House, because that’s within walking distance. We also use places within Birmingham ... like Aston Hall ... Blakesley Hall ... we also use the City Museum and Gallery. (Headteacher from Birmingham school located in 10% most deprived SOA decile)

Such findings might disappoint advocates for the social agency of museums in that they imply that the pattern of museums attracting high numbers of visits from schools located in areas of high deprivation is not the product of museums actively seeking to reach socially excluded children but is the outcome of museums attracting visits on a distance decay function, such that the number of visits decreases as distance from museums increases, working in combination with a tertiary spatialisation of museums which resulted in museums being established in or close to areas with high levels of social deprivation. However, an alternative interpretation is that Renaissance hub museums can play a key role in social inclusion as a result of the geography of their establishment. As previously mentioned, the initial Renaissance taskforce and the criterion for hub selection both implied that location within or close to areas of social deprivation was significant, although concerns more endogenous to the museum community were in practice given prominence. However, if tertiary spatialisations are always an element of museum establishment and practice, then seemingly endogenous concerns will reflect, albeit perhaps implicitly, so-called exogenous relations. So, for instance, the concepts of ‘credibility’ and ‘status’ which have been seen to be of central importance in the selection of hub applications (Hegyi, 2002; Kerr, 2002; Wilkinson, 2009) were explicitly seen as reflective of such endogenous concerns as the size and quality of collections, but were themselves in many cases quite clearly reflective of the industrial and commercial origins of these museums, which were also, it has been suggested here, significant in positioning museums close to areas with high levels of social deprivation at the start of the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

Johnson (2008, pp. 618–624) has argued that the spatialisations outlined in Birth of the Clinic provides an instance of how Foucault seeks to ‘create a new space to think’ about, amongst other things, the ‘conflicts and compromises between different forms of spatialisation’. Johnson adds that this involves neither complete rejection nor overhaul of existing understandings, but rather an endeavour to ‘test the possibility of thinking about ... problems differently’ in order to ‘capture something that is missed by “readymade syntheses”’. It is this possibility that we have sought to explore in this paper, arguing that Foucault’s notions of primary, secondary and tertiary spatialisations can be used to inform, and add further ingredients into, the construction of museum geographies, before employing these ideas to develop a geographically focused evaluation of RitR.

In relation to the first argument, the paper has identified parallels between museum geographies that have focused explicitly or implicitly on concepts of identity and assemblage, such as reviewed in Geoghegan’s (2010) discussion of museum geographies of identity, knowledge and material culture, and Foucault’s conceptualisation of primary and secondary spatialisations, with the latter also having connections with Geoghegan and Hess’ (2014) call for affective geographies of collections. Attention has, however, also been drawn to studies that locate museums in wider social contexts, including work on
museums as agents of economic regeneration, social care, learning, social discipline and social inclusion. These studies, along with Geoghegan’s (2010) call for studies of the political context of museum development, point to aspects of the social construction of museums that lie within the terrain of Foucault’s notion of tertiary spatialialisations.

In line with Johnson comments above, we are not suggesting that Foucault’s spatialialisations be viewed as a framework to displace earlier understandings of museums and museum geographies but rather seen as a starting point for drawing work together to think about a range of museum geographies and their inter-relations, differences and absences. We suspect that each of the three spatialialisations could be unpacked, and indeed Table 1 does this to a limited extent highlighting eleven distinct foci within the museum geographies of identity, assemblage and social location. Clearly other museum geographies can be identified: Geoghegan and Hess (2014), for example, have highlighted affective dimensions that supplement material geographies of collections and museum spaces, a focus that suggests that the secondary spatialisation of museum assemblages could be differentiated, at least analytically, into material and affective geographies. Similarly Tlili et al.’s (2007) identification of three dimensions of social inclusion, namely audience accessibility, self-identity and community engagement/control, and the performance of economic and social welfare roles, could be seen to point to potentially distinct lines of inquiry within the tertiary spatialisation of museums, and indeed act to disrupt the triad of spatialialisations by highlighting connections between the geographies of identity in secondary and tertiary spatialialisations.

In this paper we have hence not sought to set up Foucault’s triad of spatialialisations as some universal ontology of museum geography, but rather draw attention to Philo’s (2000a, 2000b, 2012) claim that an important characteristic of Foucault’s work is that his conceptualisations do not build from abstract or metaphorical conceptions of space but rather draw from discussions of very tangible spaces and spatial practices, and the terminology employed in these discussions. Likewise, in this paper we have developed our discussion of museum geographies within an analysis of a specific museum development programme, highlighting how RitR had within its formative text, the report of a government established taskforce, quite explicitly expressed geographical concerns and practices, as well as a focus on reconfiguring museum/society/government relations that became subject to considerable criticism. This paper sought to build upon these two foci, exploring the geographical and social dimensions of RitR, considering both policy statements surrounding its formation and administration, and research itself commissioned as part of attempts to reconfigure government/museum relations through the programme.

The paper argued that RitR fostered a new primary spatialisation of museums centred on the geographical span of museum constituents such as collections, audiences, funding connections and administrative capacity. Within this spatialisation, museums were often described through the spatialised identities of national, regional and local. It was further suggested that the programme sought to create a new secondary spatialisation centred on ‘regional hubs’. These were seen as a means to reconfigure the pattern of provision and administration of museums, creating networks of people, collections, knowledges and spaces that would integrate hitherto largely disconnected institutions. There was also the promotion of linkages between museums and other institutions, especially schools, through both increased visits to museums and the extension of museum outreach activities. Whilst far from unique to this programme, evidence suggests that at least some museums involved in it engaged with significantly more children and young people than previously.
Particular attention was focused on school visits to museums involved in *RitR*, which were an important strand of the secondary spatialisation of museums promoted by the programme, although it is argued that their geography related strongly to the tertiary spatialisation of museums. It was shown that school visits came disproportionately from schools located in areas with high indices of deprivation, it being argued that this in large part reflected historical processes that positioned many of the programme’s constituent museums within or close to areas with high levels of social deprivation.

An important issue relates to the inter-relation of the three spatialisations, which were in a sense, all present within the initiation of the programme. This presence, however, was not widely recognised nor developed in the way initially envisaged. With regard to the presence of these spatialisations, for example, the taskforce explicitly stated that regional hub museums should be selected in part on the basis of their location with respect to ‘population catchment and social deprivation indices’ (Resource, 2001, p. 13), whilst one deliverable was to ‘ensure that the profile of museum visitors more closely reflects the profile of region’s population’ (Resource, 2001, p. 27). The findings of the postcode analysis, whereby hub museums attracted visits from schools located in areas of both close proximity and high measured levels of social deprivation, and also attracted visits that in cases reflected the social profile of their respective local government region, could be interpreted as the product of the implementation of these criteria. However, not only does it appear that these museums were drawing on quite localised visitor patterns, such that one might question the degree to which they were acting as regional museums in terms of their audience reach, but it was also evident when the results were first produced (Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2004d) that neither museum policy makers nor practitioners expected visits would come disproportionately from schools located in areas of high social deprivation. This, at least in part, may reflect continuing non-engagement with attempts to socialise museum discourses so as to bring so-called ‘exogenous concerns’, such as social inclusion, into understandings of the purpose and structure of museums. This could be seen as a resistance to recognise tertiary spatialisations, which the primary spatialisations of museums emerging in *RitR* implicitly sought to do through notions of social and spatial reach. It is certainly evident that whilst *RitR* fostered highly spatialised definitions of museums, and in the process clearly raised the profile of regional museums (Renaissance Review Advisory Group, 2009, p. 71), other conceptions of museums continued to be widely employed.14

It is also clear that the re-spatialisation of museums were far from secure, particularly with the onset of reductions in central state expenditure. First, it has been claimed that the programme’s success in raising the profile of regional museums led to it becoming mainstreamed as a museum funding mechanism, a perverse consequence of which was dilution of monetary allocations to regional museums because wider funding demands were placed on the scheme (Atkinson, 2011). Second, as previously noted, there have been claims that reductions in funding threaten out-reach activities and promote a return to more endogenous concerns such as the preservation and display of collections of objects of intrinsic/national cultural value. Such developments can be viewed as entailing a return to primary spatialisations that view museums as quite autonomous institutions and, in the process, neglect their tertiary spatialisation. Third, such developments impact on the secondary spatialisations of museums fostered by *RitR* in relation to extending the social and spatial reach of museums through out-reach activities and also the extent of inter-museum working. The replacement of museum hubs by ‘major partners’ has seen inter-museum partnerships decline from nine involving 42 museums to three involving just seven museums. Fourth, reductions in the number of museums involved in the ‘New
Renaissance’ may impact on the degree to which its museums are accessible from areas of social deprivation. This reflects processes of tertiary spatialisation in that whilst all but one of the major partner museums had been RitR hub museums, and hence exhibit a common tertiary spatialisation, there are under half as many of major partner museums than RitR hubs (Table 3). All English Government regions have seen a decline in the number of museums supported by Renaissance, but there are also clear regional differences in the reductions, with the most notable being the emergence of the East Midlands as a Renaissance ‘cold spot’ (David Fleming in Kendall, 2012), with no major partner museums, despite this region previously supporting five RitR hub museums. The West Midlands, identified here as a region where hub museums attracted high levels of visits from the schools located in areas of high social deprivation, has seen a 60% reduction in the number of museums in receipt of Renaissance funding. Overall, the geography of museum visits characteristic of the former RitR programme may well change, in ways that appear unlikely to make for more socially inclusive museums.

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Notes
1. The phrase ‘museum’ is used throughout the paper to encompass institutions designated as museums or galleries. This is because the bodies overseeing these institutions in the UK, such as the DCMS, generally conjoin them.
2. The taskforce consisted of three members of Resource, two National Museums/Galleries Directors, two representatives of regional museums, a local authority representative and a Labour MP.

3. It might be objected that there is contestation over what constitutes the ‘core’ concerns of museums. Coles (2008, p. 333), for example, claims that the core purpose of museums as ‘caring for collections and displaying wonderful artefacts (for artefacts’ sake)’ are ‘indefensible’ and ‘illogical’, and that aspirations to provide benefits to particular audiences should not be seen as endogenous but as constituting core museum functions. However, Coles makes these remarks in order to contest prevailing views on the purpose of museums and therefore acts to clearly demonstrate the significance, as well as potential problems, of these constructions.

4. After assuming responsibility for RitR from MLA, Arts Council England slightly revised the ‘core model’, announcing that it would support 16 ‘major partner’ museums across England, plus a strategic support fund, a new museum development fund and national programmes that support museum standards such as accreditation and designation (Arts Council England, 2012). The major partner museums are single organisations or partnerships of separate museums (six of the funded major partners were partnerships). The criteria used to identify the major partners strongly reflected endogenous concerns, being: excellence, audiences, leadership and diversity, resilience, and children and young people (Arts Council England, 2011). Excellence, for instance, was delimited in terms of the quality and use of collections, research related to collections and the standards of conservation and care of collections; audiences are discussed in a general sense of expanding their size and the quality of engagement; leadership and diversity are considered largely in terms of skills and effectiveness; and resilience in terms of finance. Reference to children and diversity are arguably the only criteria that might be viewed as exogenous in focus.

5. Both Hooper-Greenhill and Phillips were involved in these studies. Phillips’ involvement was stimulated by quite conventional academic interests, whilst Hooper-Greenhill has worked in museum and galleries, headed the University of Leicester’s RCMG which has conducted many practice-orientated studies, as well as published a series of studies of museums explicitly informed by academic social theory (e.g. Hooper-Greenhill, 1992, 2000). Hooper-Greenhill’s connections with museum and educational practice were central to the theoretical and practical development of the research, but the project was also explicitly driven by a policy that was, at least in part, driven by concerns that were seen as exogenous to museum practice by many museum practitioners. Members of the research team, along with Woodham in the follow-up research study, had to continually negotiate these complex positionalities in the conduct of their research.

6. The RCMG studies, ‘What did you learn at the Museum today?’ First and Second studies, were established to evaluate the learning outcomes of school visits to museums using the conceptual interpretive framework known as the Generic Learning Outcomes (GLOs) (see Hooper-Greenhill, 2002, 2004; Moussouri, 2002). Quantitative data was gathered through questionnaires distributed at participating hub museums to teachers and school pupils (key stages 2 and 3) after their museum visit. This was supported by qualitative data collected through focus groups and school visits. The two studies resulted in an aggregated data-set of 2579 teacher questionnaires and 47,395 pupil questionnaires (see Hooper-Greenhill et al. 2004d, 2006a).

7. Analysis was also conducted using the Index of Income Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI), although as shown in Hooper-Greenhill et al. (2004c, 2004d, 2009) the patterns were broadly similar. Both IMD and IDACI analysis centre on the location of the school, and as discussed in Hooper-Greenhill et al. (2009) and Woodham (2009) this poses significant issues because it does not follow that because a school is located in an area of deprivation its pupils necessarily come from this or other areas with a similar deprivation scores. A pupil-centred indicator of deprivation is often viewed as preferable to a school location-based measure. However, in the present study it was not possible to employ such a measure. Amongst the reasons for this was restrictions placed on accessing pupil locational data at a national scale, the time of the study and the impracticability of obtaining pupil details in a questionnaire survey conducted at a museum visit. To help assess the significance of the use of school location-based measure, a comparison was undertaken with one available pupil-based indicator, eligibility for free-school meals, it being found that
there was broad correspondence with the IMD and IDACI analysis (see Hooper-Greenhill et al. 2006a; Woodham, 2009).

8. This second quote is from the Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums, which, as Curtis (2006) notes, is widely associated with the British Museum, which published a copy of the declaration. The declaration is, however, no longer available on the British Museum website and there has been contestation as to whether or not the British Museum was one of the signatories to the document (see Curtis, 2006; Flynn, n.d.; O’Neill, 2004). There are, however, at least two sources which reproduce copies of the declaration which purport to be based on the entry on the British Museum website, which are cited in the bibliography to this article.

9. It might be objected that there are examples of national museums, including the British Museum, working with organisations in the country of origin of artefacts. However, the degree to which such activities represent a significant challenge to post-colonial critiques of these museums is debatable given the claims made about the value of being a universal museum.

10. There were 936 questionnaires completed between September and October 2003 by teachers visiting three pathfinder hubs museums and 1643 completed by teachers visiting pathfinder and Phase 2 hub museums between September and October 2005. As outlined in Hooper-Greenhill et al. (2004d, 2006a, 2009), because it was possible that more than one teacher on a visit to a museum might have completed a questionnaire, a comparison of school and museum names, dates of visits, age-groups and theme of visits were undertaken to identify distinct school visits to museums. Overall, 843 and 1594 school visits were identified in each study, although this was reduced to 770 and 1319 visits with identifiable SOAs and IMD scores (the latter are available only for English locations (see Hooper-Greenhill et al., 2009; Woodham, 2009)).

11. The more deprived an area, the lower its ranking (i.e. the most deprived SOA in England is given a rank of 1, and the least deprived one a rank of 32,482). SOAs included in the IMD analysis ranged in rank from 2 to 32,458.

12. The DCMS ‘Taking part’ survey for 2009/2010 suggests that people ‘who lived in the least deprived areas of England were twice as likely as those who lived in the most deprived areas to have visited a museum, gallery or archive’ (DCMS, 2010, p. 10).

13. Both local authority districts are classified as having at least 80% of their population in rural settlements or larger market towns according to the 2005 Defra Rural/Urban Local Authority Classification (www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/geography/products/area-classifications/rural-urban-definition-and-la-classification/rural-urban-local-authority--la--classification/index.html, retrieved from February 25, 2011).

14. The MLA’s (2004) Overview of Data in the Museums, Libraries and Archives Sector, for example, makes use of an ownership/funding-based classification.

References


