

**CENTRE FOR
ANTHROPOLOGICAL
RESEARCH ON
MUSEUMS
AND
HERITAGE**

**CARMAH
Paper #1**

OTHERWISE
Rethinking
Museums and Heritage



CARMAH aims to deepen understanding of the dynamics and potentials of museums and heritage in the contemporary world. It looks globally to identify and analyze the significant social, cultural and political developments facing museums and heritage today. Its in-depth research tackles how these play out and are reconfigured in specific national and institutional contexts. In this way, CARMAH provides new insights into what is going on now and innovative ideas for good karma in the future.

Central themes of CARMAH's research programme are how the following shape and are shaped through museums and heritage:

- > Diversity and difference
- > Citizenship and knowledge formation
- > Media and material culture

These raise questions of social recognition, audience, collections, cultural property, power relations, communication and public culture.

We use established methods – especially ethnographic – and also develop innovative methodological approaches. Our perspective is anthropological in its insistence on addressing specific cases in-depth and attending to practice and process, at the same time as thinking comparatively and reflexively.

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INTRODUCTION

by Sharon Macdonald



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The essays collected together here each explore a concept that offers the potential to think and do museum and heritage practice *otherwise* – that is, to think and do museums and heritage differently from the ways in which they have more recently or more usually been done. This ‘otherising’ is thoroughly anthropological. It draws from a disciplinary approach that seeks to explore diverse ways of doing and thinking – to learn from other ways of being wise – in order to rethink, re-do, and transform, what might otherwise be taken for granted or left unexamined.

We examine, then, concepts that seem to hold transformational promise: provenance, translocality, alterity, the post-ethnological and engagement. Some are already in widespread and international use, others less so; some are relevant for all or many kinds of museums and heritage and others for more specific problematics. Our aim is to consider the practices and other concepts with which they are, or might be, entangled, and to reflect on how far they might not only enable scholars to think about museums and heritage differently but also provoke changes in future practice.

The Making Differences project

The essays are written by researchers in the *Making Differences* project – a multi-researcher ethnographic project that analyses ongoing transformations in museums and heritage.¹ Beginning in 2015, though with most of the researchers only joining the project in 2016 and 2017, this five-year project's full title is *Making Differences in Berlin: Transforming Museums and Heritage in the 21st Century*. It has Berlin as its key empirical focus but is also concerned with what is going on elsewhere in Germany and internationally. In this way, our aim is to understand Berlin in relation to more trans-local developments elsewhere, as well as to be able to grasp the specificities of particular national or local conditions. Moreover, our ethnographic approach – which includes in-depth participant observation – allows us to access practice and process; that is, to see what happens in action on the ground in even more specific settings, such as particular museums, heritage and cultural institutions or communities.

The 'making differences' of the title of the project recognizes the important and constitutive role that museums and heritage play in classifying and differentiating knowledge, objects and people – and, in various ways, in engaging the public in this. Specifically, it signals the project's core focus on the contemporary challenges for museums and heritage institutions of (a) revisiting and addressing problematic aspects of their earlier differentiating activities, especially in relation to colonialism; and (b) recognizing and finding new ways of dealing with contemporary diversity and diversification, including that resulting from migration. It

does not, however, restrict itself to these areas but seeks to investigate them as part of a broader analysis of the difference- (and its necessary correlate, sameness-) making activities of contemporary museums and heritage. As such, it looks across a wide range of sites and endeavours, including established museums of various sorts – ethnological, art, city, history and also natural history – as well as related cultural institutions and groupings, such as smaller galleries or activist groups – that grapple with similar problematics.

The research is divided into four inter-related themes, each of which indexes areas of considerable push towards transformation within museums and heritage institutions, and indeed within society more widely. *Transforming the Ethnographic* takes as its cue the extensive calls to rethink ethnographic and ethnological museums, and the disciplines of social and cultural anthropology and ethnology alongside them. It concerns itself especially with colonial legacies, not only in terms of the holding of objects that result from colonial encounter but also in terms of wider practices of difference-making. *Representing Islam* begins from the struggle of many museums and heritage institutions – again, as also in other parts of society – to deal with what is often popularly characterised as an especially challenging form of cultural difference in contemporary society. Our other two themes partly cross-cut these. *Media and Mediation* looks at the affordances and transformative potential of different kinds of media – especially new media – for difference- and heritage-making. *Science and Citizenship* probes

how difference-making intersects with citizen-making, and the role that science plays within this.

In all of the themes, research seeks to go beyond a mapping of supposedly known differences or a filling in of pre-determined analytical categories, to investigate instead the discursive and also practical work of difference-making. This means adopting an ethnographic, hermeneutic openness to the field, allowing initial research framings and suppositions to be open to revision. It requires attentive watching, listening and feeling in order to grasp what is going on – the said and the unsaid, as well as what is only said to certain people and at certain moments and why. It also requires attention to practice – to what people do; and to process – how things unfurl over time. By doing this across a range of sites and cultural formations within Berlin during the time of the making of the Humboldt Forum – around which so much contemporary debate coalesces – we in effect are conducting a multi-researcher ethnography of museum and heritage-making in the city. This is at once multi-sited, in that we look at a wider range of heterogeneous locales, and common-located, insofar as Berlin is our shared larger focus. Even here, however, our perspective means that we need to avoid taking ‘Berlin’ as a known quantity and instead try to grasp how it is itself made-up in the different sites and practices that we investigate.

In relation to difference-making, what our multi-researcher, multi-sited ethnographic approach allows for, then, is, first, an examination of what kinds of differentiations museums and heritage institutions see themselves to be making, and which forms of social and cultural (and in the case of natural history museums, biological) diversity they regard as important and, or problematic, as well as those which they do not recognize. Second, the ethnographic approach enables researchers to see what happens when particular differentiations are made – what and who is involved in these and what is at stake; and what happens, especially as attempts are made to address forms of diversity that have been relatively ignored in the past or which are being addressed in new ways. In addition, ethnography potentially enables a grasping of marginal and emergent ways of forming relations – of difference, identity, partial connection, similarity, overlap and so forth; as well as following of the practices through which these are performed, instantiated and sometimes reconfigured.

Exploring Otherwise

Exploring concepts and practices that seem to hold transformational promise in the museum and heritage world is central to the *Making Differences* project. Our focus in this set of essays – forming the first volume in our CARMAH Paper series – is especially, though not only, on new and relatively new or repurposed, concepts and practices. That is, we are particularly interested in looking at the biographies and active lives of concepts and their associated practices (or practices and their associated concepts) that have begun to circulate and that are charged with some kind of potential to change the scene. In many cases, these *charged concepts* have an international life, circulating globally but taking on new inflections in particular national, local and organizational contexts. They do so as they encounter existing political, legal and institutional structures, and in relation to particular social, cultural and linguistic complexes. In addition, their lives – and sometimes deaths – are also shaped by specific actors, such as certain intellectuals, activists or artists who promote or criticise them; or even particular realisations (e.g. an influential exhibition or controversy) that gain fame or notoriety for one reason or another.

This *Otherwise* volume grew directly out of this research interest. Our starting point was that each of the researchers employed on *Making Differences* at the time we began planning the idea – namely Summer 2016 – was to select a term that they viewed as significant for the settings that they were researching. This could either be a concept that was already in active use and debate

or one that was less so but that seemed to have the potential to become so. All of the concepts, therefore, had some traction in the Berlin context, though some were less widespread in their use than others. As it happened, all also have international currency, evident not least from the fact that they all translate readily into English and in at least one case, namely ‘engagement’, work better in English than in German. This currency itself speaks to the international entanglements of the museum and heritage world that we are investigating – though it makes it no less pressing to try to analyse the more localised inflections and realisations.

To help in the process of reflecting on the chosen concepts, we all, as a research team, discussed them intensively together and also carefully designed a process for further development. What this entailed was that each researcher invited one or more scholars and thoughtful practitioners, from anywhere in the world, to come into discussion with them about the concepts – and also, possibly, alternatives to those concepts. As part of the process, the *Making Differences* researchers sent their own initial reflections to these non-Berlin-based interlocutors, together with questions that they wished to address. Then, in July 2017, we came together, with further selected participants, from within Berlin as well as from elsewhere in Germany or overseas, in a two-day symposium for in-depth discussion. During this, each researcher presented their own reflections on the concept, opening up points for dialogue. This was followed by

the two interlocutors whose primary focus was not Berlin presenting their reflections, variously focusing on their experience in another part of the world, as well as their intellectual take on the concept and associated debates. This was then usually followed by a commentary from a Berlin-based participant, who was usually directly involved as a practitioner in a particular new development in the city, often one that was part of the *Making Differences* researcher's own fieldwork. Further discussion open to all participants followed.

In some ways, the symposium was a kind of fieldwork for our project. Those who took part, even if not from our specific fieldsites in Berlin, were part of the broader museum and heritage field that we are investigating. This blurriness is a feature of working in this context. Fieldwork is not merely observation, of course, but is an iterative and two-way process, in which the researcher is engaged in figuring out by participating and communicating. The symposium allowed for a kind of trying-out interjection – throwing the concepts under the spotlight to see what the result would be. In some cases, those brought together included people who actively deployed the terms, or who had even coined them, as well as others who were either interested in using them or were perhaps more skeptical. The interjection also involved us bringing our own thoughts, sometimes derived from fieldwork experience, into conversation too, thus allowing variously for confirmation of our ideas and/or for us to be prompted to think about them otherwise than we had done initially.

The essays brought together here, then, are the *Making Differences* researchers' reflections on the concepts that they originally selected after this conceptual fieldwork phase. What this has meant in practice is that each researcher has gone back and revised their essay, still setting out their own original motivations for selecting the concept and their own perspectives but then extended and developed in light of the further interrogation and debate during the symposium. Our hope is that presenting them in this way provides the reader with a distilled and focused discussion of each concept.

The Concepts

Selecting concepts related to their individual subprojects of *Making Differences*, then, allowed researchers to varying extents, to examine the existing life and effects of the concepts in their current fieldwork. In some cases this meant concepts whose journeys they had been following for many years or that they had encountered or worked with in previous projects too; in other cases, the concepts were ones that researchers had only more recently subjected to investigation. We purposefully, however, left the remit very open, not seeking to impose much stricture other than that they should be concepts that researchers felt deserved more interrogation and reflection. What we present here, then, are not the concepts that we think necessarily hold the most potential for future transformation. Neither are they the most common or the most problematic ones. Some of them

might later turn out to fit into any of these categories. That, however, is not the point. Rather, they have been chosen from the individual vantage points of the researchers involved as concepts deserving of more attention and analysis. As such, they do not seek to collectively map a field but instead to provide a provocatively heterogeneous set of interventions into a longer conversation and analysis.

Some of the concepts that we have selected, then, are already in widespread use. **Provenance**, indeed, seems to be *mot du jour*, especially, though certainly not only, in Germany. Here, however, it is the subject of numerous newspaper reports, conferences, political documents and speeches, sometimes being read back into the past (even if it was not then referred to in such terms), and often heavily freighted with the hope that giving it more attention might transform museums and heritage. In quite what directions, however, is less clear and indeed the possible directions sometimes even seem to be at odds with one another. Likewise, there are discrepancies in quite how it is understood. In her essay below, Larissa Förster, who has also contributed more extensively to the debates elsewhere,² and indeed become a major voice in the arguments for more provenance research, highlights the trajectory of the term, especially within Germany, before considering – inspired especially by her invited interlocutors – some of the possible variants that might be deployed.

By contrast with provenance, **translocality** as a term has much less discursive presence in the museum and heritage world. Nevertheless, there is growing attention to something at least approximating it, often phrased in such terms as ‘post-national’ or ‘heritage across borders’. Quite whether such terms do in fact equate or not is, however, a question that needs to be addressed, as Katarzyna Puzon, who selected ‘translocality’, inspired partly by her previous research on heritage in Beirut,³ discusses below, and developed further through multi-sited research on the representation and (non-) recognition of Islam in Berlin. As she and her interlocutors during the symposium showed, translocality holds much potential for breaking out of the place-as-container thinking that so often characterises heritage and museum framings. It does so by emphasizing mobility but without ignoring the significance of place(s).

In choosing the term **alterity**, Jonas Tinius was inspired both by philosophical and anthropological theorising and by discussion and deployment of the term in his fieldsites in Berlin. These are independent art galleries and exhibition spaces that are engaged in developing forms of post-colonial critique. In the face of dilemmas over whether and how to recognise difference without engaging in problematic othering, a host of concepts has been proposed, ‘alterity’ or ‘post-otherness’ among them, as he discusses below. As Jonas Tinius argues, less mainstream cultural institutions such as the ones he studies (also in previous fieldwork with theatre companies in the Ruhr region) can potentially be especially generative of new

concepts and approaches as they try to find ways to counter the canon.⁴ Whether alterity might gain more widespread traction as a term remains to be seen but the reflection here certainly provides an insightful, if ambivalent, basis from which to consider its impact and alternatives to the concept.

Also addressing the awkward issue of difference is the term **post-ethnological**, selected by Margareta von Oswald for its particular relevance to her work on ethnological museums. This research, which includes work in the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, has also led her to investigate questions of colonial legacies in such museums and to collaborate on new approaches.⁵ In relation to the 'post-ethnological', her interest is in what such a term might potentially mean for such museums – how might it transform them or, indeed, potentially even dissolve them? Does it have reformative or possibly even revolutionary potential? In effect, what the term and these questions open up is consideration of the ethnological museum itself as a form – whether it can (or should) be rescued from the potentially damning critique of its roles in 'othering'. And if it can – how? To address this and related questions, the discussion focused primarily on the role of research, and more particularly, the role of anthropology, within such museums. To all of this, the interlocutors brought some creative suggestions as you can read below.

Engagement is a concept that could be seen as relevant to all kinds of museums and heritage institutions, concerning as it

does their modes of relating to their visitors. These are issues that Christine Gerbich, who chose the term, has been working on in a range of ways over many years and that she is currently exploring in the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin.⁶ As she discusses here, the term engagement is difficult to translate into German. One reason for the difficulty seems to be that it is descriptive of a rather indistinct complex of ideas and practices that have been developed in the English-speaking museum world, especially in the UK, and that cannot be straightforwardly mapped on to Germany. At the heart of the engagement issue, however, are transformations within museums that seek to not only give greater access to visitors or communities but to more fundamentally transform relationships such that greater input into museums' own agendas and practice comes from those who do not formally work in them, and especially from those who previously saw little to interest them in such institutions.

Charged concepts

All of these concepts, then, are charged in the sense that they carry particular semantic load from the debates and contexts in which they have already been deployed. They are, however, also charged in a second sense, namely that they carry the equivalent of an electrical charge – a burst of energy that can spark activity as well as debate. How powerful that is – or whether it might just fizzle away – remains to be seen. Doing that seeing is what our fieldwork – our

Making Differences project – enables. In effect the work allows for an analysis of concepts in action, to see which do what and how.

That words can be performative has been recognised at least since J.L. Austin used the term in *How to do things with words* (1962). It is worth remembering, however, that he was at pains to point out that ‘performative utterances’ are just one kind of ‘speech act’, to use his terms – and quite an unusual one. Indeed, none of the concepts that we discuss here is a performative utterance in the sense in which Austin used it. Nevertheless, in an interestingly self-exemplifying manner, his term has itself prompted a productive extension of thinking about what terms might bring about, exemplified, for example, in Judith Butler’s deployment of the term.⁷ All the same, however, it is worth recalling Austin’s original intention, namely to investigate different kinds of words and the different sorts of roles they can play, and, moreover, to do so through close attention to what he and the group of philosophers who shared this conviction called ‘ordinary language’. And even though the terms on which we are focusing are not always ordinary in the sense of everyday, they nevertheless open up the potential for an ethnographic tracking and examination in a way that seems fully congruent with Austin’s proposal – even if not quite what he had in mind.

A considerable body of scholarship in the humanities and social and cultural studies has given attention to the meanings, transformations and active or constitutive

roles of concepts. In recent years, for example, Mieke Bal’s notion of ‘travelling concepts’ has been widely welcomed, especially for the impetus that it provides for working across and between disciplines, allowing and recognizing the transformations that that brings in the process. Paying attention to the journeys of concepts across scholarship and culture is, suggests Bal (2002), more productive than trying to pin down shared definitions.⁸ That the term ‘travelling concepts’ has been productively used by scholars in such a range of disciplines is itself testimony to the approach for which she argues.⁹

Perhaps one of the most extensive uses of giving primacy to concepts as method, as well as methodology, can be seen in Reinhard Koselleck’s conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*). Arguing that “concepts are like joints linking language and the extralinguistic world” (Koselleck 1996: 61), he promotes an approach to history in which the identification of key concepts, such as, for example, ‘progress’, ‘emancipation’ or ‘crisis’, and their transformations is central to an analysis of social and political change. His seven volume co-edited (with Brunner and Conze) *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* – among other works – presents its analysis as a lexicon, glossary or dictionary with extended entries, as its subtitle indicates; though these do not seek to pin down the meanings through definition but, rather, constitute short essays tracing changes in meanings of terms and the social and political changes with which they are implicated. At this point, I should probably

hasten to add that our own research project does not intend to emulate this gargantuan and impressive effort, not least because this approach is only part of our larger programme of work. It might, however, possibly come to approximate more modest similar projects, such as Raymond Williams' *Keywords* (1985), whose second volume contains 131 entries, so we still have some considerable way to go.

More otherwise-ing

Contributing further important conceptual work at the Otherwise symposium, in addition to the panels at which the above concepts were discussed, was further stimulating content that shaped our collective thinking. First, to kick us off, we invited Haidy Geismar from University College London to give a lecture relevant to our theme. Entitled *Object Otherwise*, this tackled a core issue for museums and heritage – namely objects in museum collections – to draw on her own extensive expertise as an anthropologist in the Pacific and as also working in the area of digital anthropology.¹⁰ As she showed, through four fascinating examples of new mediation of mostly old objects in collections, what these new interfaces – of mediated objects – afford was often unexpected but not necessarily only on account of capacities restricted to new media. Importantly, they often allowed for establishing new relations – and new kinds of relations – between people across space, sometimes rethinking notions such as authenticity, materiality and cultural difference in the process. Her inspiring and nuanced thinking

also fed directly into discussions that followed, being relevant especially to discussions of provenance and translocality.

At the end of the symposium, we invited Duane Jethro and Erica Lehrer to reflect on the proceedings. In doing so, they not only enriched the discussion by identifying threads and posing further questions but also by suggesting some other concepts and perspectives that might have been given critical attention. These included postcoloniality, race and emotion, as well as empathy.

In making these suggestions, our colleagues were contributing to our aspiration both to identify other circulating concepts deserving of more analysis and to open up to other ideas, especially to concepts or approaches that have as yet been given relatively little attention in museum and heritage studies but which might have transformational potential – potential, that is, either for analysis or practice or both. For this reason, we also held a competition for early career researchers to submit such ideas and we invited the seven best of these to also come and participate in our symposium, each hosting a table in a *World Café* format. They were joined too by our own more recently begun *Making Differences* PhD researchers, Nazlı Cabadağ and Chiara Garbellotto, who presented on queering.

The other ideas – whose headline names do not always speak to the originality of the suggested perspective – were:

- *Artification*: Edilson Pereira (Rio de Janeiro State University)
- *Dialogic communication*: David Francis (University College London and British Museum)
- *Hauntology*: Colin Sterling (University College London)
- *Infrastructure*: Sowparnika Balaswaminathan (UC San Diego)
- *NGO-isation*: Claire Panetta (CUNY)
- *Virtual heritage*: Saima Akhtar (Yale University)
- *Wasted Legacies*: Francisco Martínez (School of Arts, Design and Architecture of Aalto University)

All of these – together with a review of the symposium by early career researcher Anna Weinreich (New York University) – can be found on our website.¹¹ They are evidence of a remarkable creative energy among such early career researchers – promising hope for the future.

Other Concepts

There are, of course, many other concepts that we could have chosen, some of which were contenders earlier on or that make bit part appearances here. Restitution, mobility, post-migrant, post-colonial and

participation were some of those. All would certainly be worthwhile to subject to analysis in the same way as those here. So too are others that our fieldwork is raising. These include, for example, multiperspectivity, shared heritage, source community and the world, as well as key terms that shaped the design of our project itself, such as citizenship, science, difference and diversity.

For now, however, these must wait their time and perhaps other formats, including ones in which they are more integrated into fuller ethnographic accounts rather than pushed so much into the foreground. There is no doubt, however, that this has been a very productive approach for our larger project and that it will flow into refining and improving our future work. We hope too, however, that it will also flow into future discussion in the museum and heritage field and itself contribute to making a difference to both discourse about concepts and to practice itself.

Acknowledgment

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on Museums and Heritage (CARMAH), to whom we also wish to offer sincere thanks. Katarzyna Puzon and Jonas Tinius took a lead in the organization of the symposium, and Christine Gerbich and Margareta von Oswald in that of the world café. Jonas Tinius has galvanized us to produce this publication, undertaken most of the editorial labour, and has organized it into fruition with assistance from Farina Asche.

We also thank the other colleagues who took part in the symposium, whether as named speakers or in the lively open discussions and world café. To those whose contributions especially helped refine our ideas for this publication – most particularly those who presented and commented directly on the concepts here and whose names appear in the texts that follow – we are especially grateful and do hope that they will like the result.

Endnotes

1 More details about the Making Differences project and about the Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage can be found at: www.carmah.berlin. The project and the Centre are funded primarily by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, with further support from the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, the Berlin Museum of Natural History and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation.

2 See, for example, Förster 2016, 2016a; Förster and Stöcker 2016; Förster, Edenheiser, Fründt and Hartmann 2018.

3 See, for example, Puzon 2016; 2017.

4 See, for example, Tinius 2017; 2017a; 2018.

5 See, for example, von Oswald and Rodatus 2017;

Macdonald, Lidchi, and von Oswald 2017.

6 See, for example, Gerbich 2013; Bluche, Gerbich, Kamel, Lanwerd, Miera 2013.

7 See, for example, 1997.

8 This point is made in the introduction and at various other points in 2002. It is, perhaps, also worth pointing out that Bal's discussion is also directed specifically to exhibitions later in the book, a topic with which she has also dealt elsewhere, e.g. Bal 2007.

9 E.g. Neumann and Nünning 2012.

10 Geismar's arguments and examples are drawn from her forthcoming book.

11 They are published as individual essays on our reflections blog: <http://www.carmah.berlin/reflections/>.

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PROVENANCE

An essay based on a panel with Ciraj Rassool, Paul Basu, and Britta Lange

by Larissa Förster

The age of provenance

Over the past few years the talk of *provenance* has gained astounding momentum in public as well as academic debates on art and ethnographic collections in Germany. There have been at least three events or projects that came to provide catalytic moments for this conjuncture. In 2011, the ‘discovery’ of human remains of indigenous Australians and Namibians in various German collections resulted in a – still ongoing – debate on colonial collections, their provenances and their repatriation (see Stoecker, Winkelmann and Schnalke 2013).¹² A year later, in 2012, the Munich artworks discovery sparked a heated debate on Nazi-era looted art and led to an accelerated institutionalisation of Nazi-era provenance research in Germany.¹³ Another year later, in 2013, the campaign *NoHumboldt21!* organised by an alliance of Berlin’s postcolonial NGOs and aiming at a moratorium for the Humboldt Forum, put the provenance of Berlin’s ethnographic collections on the agenda of the city’s museum debates.¹⁴

As a consequence, the debate on the Humboldt Forum and on German ethnographic museums in general has been shaped considerably by public and academic discourses on provenance,¹⁵ by pleas for more provenance research, and eventually by provenance research projects implemented in ethnographic museums in Bremen, Stuttgart, Berlin, Hamburg and in other places.¹⁶ And it was only shortly before the *Otherwise* symposium, i.e. in July 2017, that renowned art historian Bénédicte Savoy

from the Technische Universität Berlin, a scholar of the history of art plunder, stated publicly that provenance research should be “the thing” in the Humboldt Forum, but had been neglected for too long – causing her to pull out of the advisory board of the Humboldt Forum (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 2017). Her move provoked a long and heated debate on the provenance of ethnographic museum objects in the German media during the summer and early autumn months of 2017, which did indeed make provenance “the thing”, at least for a while, even if so far with no concrete and manifest outcome for the Humboldt Forum.¹⁷

Altogether, the concept of provenance created and continues to create a lot of dynamics in museum debates and in museum practice, with “problematic provenances” (Förster 2016) like those of colonial loots being foregrounded and issues like return being addressed increasingly (e.g. Snoep 2018). As a result, provenance research has even made it into a political document lately, namely the German coalition agreement of February 2018 where it is stated that the “we will promote working through the provenances of cultural heritage of colonial origin in museums and collections [...] with a special focus”¹⁸ (CDU, CSU and SPD 2018). It remains to be seen what the effects of provenance in the political arena will be – in particular after the French president’s foray on the restitution of African artworks (Macron 2017).

Questioning provenance

As useful as the concept of provenance has proven, the transfer of the term from the field of art history to museum anthropology has also been commented on critically by anthropologists emphasising the amount of work that has been done around Appadurai's and Kopytoff's concept of 'object biographies' and 'social lives of things' over the past decades (see e.g. Feest 2018; Hauser-Schäublin 2018). In this light, it can be seen as a very interesting convergence that art historian Anne Higonnet points to the Eurocentric history of the term provenance and, as a consequence, argues that provenance should rather "be re-named the social life of art things" (Higonnet 2012: 201). So it seems high time to ask: What do we gain from working with the term provenance, what does it enable, what or whom does it bring to museums? And on the other hand, what do we lose when adopting it as a key concept? What perspectives does the term maybe obstruct or obliterate, what sort of in- and exclusions does it create?

Measured against the current vibrancy of the term in the (German) museum world, there is a remarkable lack of theoretical engagement with it.¹⁹ Provenance, or provenance research respectively, is often treated as only a methodology, and a subfield of art history. With the conference panel we wanted to go beyond that and probe provenance as a concept in museum discourse and practice. First of all, it seemed necessary to investigate the 'history of provenance' not only from within art history or anthropology, but across different disciplines engaged in historicising their museum collections. Such endeavour can be

the beginning of a broader epistemology of provenance that extends, for example, the fruitful comparison between art history's and archaeology's conceptions of provenance and provenience that Rosemary A. Joyce (2012) has undertaken.

If, in the years to come, provenance research is deepened and broadened (in terms of the range of historical contexts covered) and institutionalised as a field in German universities (as a sign of which the recent establishment of four (temporary) professorships for NS-era provenance research at the universities of Hamburg, Bonn and Munich can be interpreted), we have to also ask in how far we need a 'theory of provenance' that creates a framework for reflecting on provenance(s) in the context of new museology, (global) history, (museum) anthropology, and the anthropology of law. In particular a more nuanced and theoretically informed (and not only politico-cultural and practical) critique of provenance would help to weigh the pros and cons of the term, alert to its shortcomings, equip us to counteract the latter and eventually create a space for thinking through alternative terms and concepts, as they came up in the panel and the panel discussion.

I will briefly touch upon a couple of points that could feature in such a more thorough critique of provenance. First of all, one of the problems of conceptualising provenance seems to be how to strike a balance between the 'routes' and the 'roots' of an object, which, as Paul Basu (2011: 29) argued in his essay on *object diasporas*, speaks to issues lying at the heart of

anthropological thought. Interestingly, in both disciplines, in art history as well as in anthropology, provenance research has been criticised for its overemphasis on the routes – usually framed as the *succession/chain of ownership* – and its neglect of the roots of objects. However, foregrounding the roots of objects runs certain risks, too. For example, the term's close link with debates and practices of return invokes a rather straight, two-directional model of traffic where objects are taken from an identifiable point A, the often so-called “original context” or “source community”, to point B, a European or ‘Western’ museum collection, and sometimes back again. In this macro-historical model of thought both sides tend to be taken as rather stable entities with not much room for past and present manoeuvre in between and beyond. Deviations and circulations, multi-faceted entangled histories, multi-directionality and multi-layeredness, as we frequently encounter them on the micro-level of provenance research, i.e. when following actors and transactions and reconstructing the dispersal of objects, cannot be accommodated easily.

Therefore, provenance researchers have to reflect more thoroughly on the question of which parts and aspects of an object's past, an object's trajectory they can or cannot zoom in, on and why. Often the emphasis is still put on the moment of acquisition of an artefact by a European individual or institution (mostly for a lack of documentation on the parts of the object's biography). This means that the artefact's history is more or less told ‘from the end’ – from the viewpoint of its final deposition, its

‘death’ in the museum. However, scholars who write people's biographies – historians and literary scholars – have already hinted to the difficulty that such an approach poses: It stands to lose sight and sense of the alternative paths that a life could have taken (and that an object in the museum storage could still take).²⁰

Another challenge when using the term provenance is to deal with temporality, or temporalities respectively. European historiography – be it political history, social or art history – usually comes with specific understandings of time and temporality (Palmié and Stuart 2016). Since provenance research very often starts in European institutions and archives, it is prone to reproducing the temporal regimes created by these very institutions, becoming insensitive to alternate conceptions of time, the passage of time and the passage of objects through time and place as they may be formulated and imagined in the sociocultural contexts in which objects were produced. This may be particularly relevant in the context of trans-cultural discussions on the age of objects, on the temporal impact of culturally-laden things from the past, on reciprocity, e.g. between donors and receivers of objects, or on the temporal validity of claims (for ownership or return of objects).

This leads to another aspect of the notion of provenance that must be questioned from an anthropological point of view: the concept of property itself, which provenance is tied to so strongly through the idea of a *chain of title*. Anthropologists have outlined that European notions of property

are rooted in economic and legal constructions of either (exclusive) individual/private property or collective property/commons that neglects the manifold and multi-layered property relations that an object may be embedded in sociocultural contexts that do not or not solely subscribe to the private property model. In the latter, different actors can hold different rights regarding the same object; or rights and claims are nested and cannot easily be separated, attributed to one single person/group and boiled down to an all-encompassing ‘right of disposition’ as implied in European notions of *title* and *ownership* (Hauser and Lankau 2015: 168).

As indicated above, questions of origin and of return are often closely linked with certain ideas of property and in particular with discourses of legitimate vs. illegitimate property and ownership. As important as this is in the context of dealing with redress for expropriation and colonial exploitation, it may fix our interest on moral/ethical, political and legal debates and overcast more ontological questions of what an object is and can achieve – questions that have been addressed very productively in material culture studies, in the anthropology of art and of exchange. There is a line of anthropological thought – from Marcel Mauss to Alfred Gell and Marilyn Strathern – that has emphasised very convincingly that giving things is about creating relationships and distributing personhood (Hoskins 2006). It seems that this analytical lens needs to be sharpened again, in particular with regard to non-sensitive or ‘not-so-sensitive’ collections in order to explore the multiple kinds of agencies and intentionalities connected

with the traffic of things.

Presentations and discussion

Starting from the observations and question laid out above, the panel brought up a series of pertinent critical reasonings and suggestions. South African historian **Ciraj Rassool**²¹ (University of Western Cape) cast a look at how the term provenance operates in the German debate, which he has had the opportunity to witness over a couple of years during his repeated stays in Germany, and in particular as a member of the Luschan Advisory Board; the latter was called together to look into what has become known as the *S-Sammlung* in the possession of Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, i.e. the collection of skulls that Felix von Luschan assembled when employed at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin.²² Rassool (2015) expressed his dissatisfaction with how the “radical idea of rethinking the object” through provenance is often misunderstood as an empirical project only – a matter of adding information to existing classification systems, of trying to unearth the ‘real story’ and hence of improving collection management. In contrast to that, he argued, provenance must be understood as not only an empirical, but rather a critical project aimed at decolonising museums, deconstructing and questioning their classificatory systems and generating new forms of understanding objects and the social relationships surrounding them (ibidem). How can we engage with the evidentiary in a critical and not only

empirical way, Rassool asked – referring to the closing down of the Ethnography Hall at Iziko South African Museum (Cape Town) as a way to start rethinking outdated museum epistemologies. In order to address issues of provenance in such a critical way, Rassool suggested the term of the forensic – but not in the narrow sense of the work that denotes a scientific methodology employed in bioanthropology, but in the wider sense (derived from Latin *forum*) of an engaged museology, a space of citizenship and of negotiating histories of origin, belonging, access, circulation, authority and coloniality. Academic disciplines making claims for their competence in the field of provenance should be involved in this forum according to their abilities to speak not only to the methodologies of provenance, but also – or even rather – to its ethics.

Ciraj's criticism of the epistemologies underlying museum practice was shared by many in the audience. Two aspects were emphasised in the discussion. First, it was argued that given the disciplinary violence embodied in museum documentation and classification practices contemporary, provenance research – or whatever we may call it – must seek and find ways to accommodate alternative forms of knowledge, for example indigenous epistemologies that may chart different types of genealogies for the object under investigation. Second, current inventorising and documentation practices need to be questioned, too, because they determine the ways in which objects can be researched, provenanced, interpreted and exhibited in the future. It was criticised that the rather rigid, standardised forms

of documentation prevent new forms of knowledge, be it artistic, activist or even collaboratively produced (i.e. multi-authored) knowledge and expertise, to enter the museum documentation and thus institutional memory. Provenance research, one may conclude from the debate on epistemologies, still needs to be *provincialized*.

The contribution of second speaker Paul Basu (University of London) was based on his above-mentioned thought-provoking, widely and well-received essay *diaspora of objects* (2013) in which he draws on his experience in researching the history and the potential of museum collections from Sierra Leone dispersed across European museums. Reminding the audience of Anne Higonnet's example of how much history can lie buried in short-spoken museum labels (2013: 197ff.), he zoomed in on the years immediately after the plunder of the Benin palace in 1897, finding indications of how "local producers started to control the market [of Benin brasses] and were able to exploit European and North American competition" for objects. His plea was to recognise "the broader context of colonial relations, with its more (or less) subtle forms of coercion". As for the debate on origins, Basu detailed his concept of object diaspora, pointing to the gradual shift in the conceptualisation of the term diaspora over the past 30 years, which replaced ideas of origin, autochthony and return with ideas of a lived "inbetweenness" (Basu 2017). He reminded the audience that "assertions of purity, indigeneity and autochthony" must not be taken as "essential properties, but as political positionalities". Building on

the concept of *remittance corridors* (along which migrants share their income with their families of origin) as developed in migration studies, Basu argued that “migrant things”, too, may

serve their erstwhile homelands better from their diasporic locations, than if they were returned.

Borrowing from anthropological analyses of gift exchange, he argued, that remittances generated by museum objects can be understood as “reciprocation”:

The responsibility of museums then becomes one of considering what ‘gift’ they can return, in order to maintain or, in most cases, establish or re-establish relationships with source communities.

Basu ended by introducing the notion of the “stolen gift” or “solicited gift”, bringing together the above-mentioned aspects of rupture, violence and coercion with ideas of reciprocity, responsibility and relationality, and provoking museums

to be more creative in re-activating the historical pathways along which collections have travelled, facilitating the return flow of value.

The discussion that followed Basu’s presentation raised a general point about the usage and circulation of (new) terms and notions across fields of discourse and spheres of interest. Even if they appear convincing and unequivocal at first sight,

notions and pertinent practices intended to broaden the discussion can as well be used to close down discussions, it was observed. For example, while Basu’s diaspora argument, on the one hand, is highly inspiring for museum work, it could, on the other hand, be instrumentalised in order to reject claims for the relocation of object as in the much-criticised *Declaration on the Universal Museum* issued in 2002, it was warned. The ambivalence of how innovative notions and practices are adopted by (conservative) institutions became even clearer when it was remarked that, at the same time, the very discourse and practice of return may be used to free museums from further obligations to work through their history and hence allow them to desist from engaging in long-term processes of dialogue and engagement – a diagnosis that invoked Nora Sternfeld’s notion of the ‘transformism’ of museums (2009) and Friedrich von Bose’s analysis of the ‘strategic reflexivity’ of institutions (2016). Finally, the suggestions to have a closer look at the intellectual, but also historical context ‘in’ which and ‘on’ which ideas of provenance as well as object biographies were produced (like for example the German contexts with its experience in NS-era provenance research) prompted Basu to speculate how provenance would be formulated in the context of for example Caribbean (postcolonial) cultural theory with its emphasis on creolisation rather than on origin, authenticity and purity.

In commenting on the two larger talks respondent **Britta Lange**, head of the sound archive of Humboldt University (together with Sebastian Klotz), pointed to some

commonalities of the two talks. Both linked things to people more generally, but at the same time looked at the specific processes through which people and things were linked in the museum world: processes of objectifying human remains, of rehumanising ‘objects’ as well as of anthropomorphising things. She suggested that it would be worth putting more effort into reflecting on these processes as they were not only going on in museums, but also in our theorising about museums. Against the background of her experience with sound recordings in their various mediated forms, she emphasised that objects do “not come alone, but with their remediations/reproductions”, which makes it necessary to think about the relevance of materiality and substance. As proposed in the book *Sensible Sammlungen* [sensitive collections] coedited by Lange (Berner et al. 2011), sensitivity is not (only) a question of materiality or ontology, but of context, of the means, conditions and effects of the acquisition of an object. Therefore, Lange argued, provenance should not be left to certain disciplines, but could rather be considered a whole new paradigm of engaging with collections. Her plea raised the question of whether the **post-ethnographic** or *post-ethnological* museum, as discussed in the panel organised by Margareta von Oswald, could indeed be brought about by such a *historical turn* in the world of ethnographic museums, which are often perceived as culturalising and essentialising diversity. Consequently, I would argue, we may have to explore how much provenance we ‘need’ to break up with older modes of ethnographic collecting and exhibiting?

Or rather, how we need to reconceptualise provenance as anthropologists if we want it to help us rethink ethnographic museums for the future?

Finally, Lange also suggested to use the figure of the *empty museum*, which is usually employed to defend the retention of museum collections, in order to provoke imaginations on what else museums could be filled with – other than objects –, as for example stories, ideas etc. The *empty museum*, she argued, may become a conceptual space for advancing critical and creative museology.

Outlook

If we recognize the multiplicity of historical, geographical and social trajectories and agencies that each object’s disposal at the museum storage is a result of, we arrive at a notion of not only the museum in general as a translocal site – as discussed in Katarzyna Puzon’s panel on **translocality** –, but in particular of the museum storage as a radically translocal site. Keynote speaker **Haidy Geismar** even asked, whether, as a consequence, we should rather speak of *trans-provenance* instead of *provenance*. By this, she argued, we may be able to avoid the risk that provenance is defined and over-determined by the local, i.e. the idea of local origins. In my view, the resulting questions must be how to re-animate the many translocal agencies sedimented in museum storages so that people, places and things can be reconnected. What if we set objects free, not for sporadic loans, exhibition

exchanges and the like, but systematically, as a methodology of inquiring into the cultural, economic and political processes and practices that start surrounding things once they move from hand to hand? Of course, such a projection of provenance into the future – a production of future provenances – turns the idea of the museum storage on its head (maybe even provoking fears of an *empty museum*). But it may throw into sharp relief how provenance could contribute to future-making in and through ethnographic museums in a globalised world (cf. Harrison et al. 2016).

Endnotes

- 12 The six resulting repatriations of human remains from the Charité and the University of Freiburg – including a repatriation to Paraguay – were followed by returns from the Weltkulturen Museum and Senckenberg Naturmuseum in Frankfurt (2011 and 2017), Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte (2017), Übersee-Museum Bremen (2017) and Landesmuseum Hannover (2017) to Australia, New Zealand, Hawai'i and Japan. Übersee-Museum Bremen had already returned human remains to New Zealand in 2006. See Fründt and Förster (forthcoming).
- 13 For further information, see the homepage of the German Lost Art Foundation: <https://www.kulturgutverluste.de/Web/DE/ProjektGurlitt/Index.html>
- 14 For further information on the campaign, see <http://www.no-humboldt21.de> and the recent publication by AfricAvenir (2017). The moratorium was preceded by some earlier events organised as a critical comment on the Humboldt Forum plannings, see the public discussion *Der Anti-Humboldt. Eine Veranstaltung zum selektiven Rückbau des Humboldt-Forums*, Berlin,

11.7.2009., <http://www.sophiensaale.com/archiv.php?IDstueck=668&hl=de>.

15 The author, for instance was co-organiser of a conference entitled *Provenienzforschung in ethnologischen Sammlungen*, published by Förster et al. (2018)

16 For overview of current projects and recent conferences on the topic see Förster, Edenheiser, Fründt & Hartmann (2018), in particular the introduction. Conferences, a formal working group of the German Museums Association and an informal working group of curators of ethnographic museums are all part of – and contribute to – these new dynamics.

17 See for example a *Stellungnahme* (statement) circulated via e-mail by the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss on 21 July 2017 as well as newspaper comments by Jürgen Zimmerer (2017), Viola König, Karl-Heinz Kohl (all 2017) and Katharina Schramm (die tageszeitung 2017), a panel discussion organised by Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, <https://www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de/event-detail/news/2017/09/20/gehoert-provenienzforschung-zur-dna-des-humboldt-forums.html> as well as the conference »Prussian Colonial Heritage«, organised by Berlin Postkolonial on 14/15 October 2017, and Förster 2017.

18 Original German version: „Die Aufarbeitung der Provenienzen von Kulturgut aus kolonialem Erbe in Museen und Sammlungen wollen wir [...] mit einem eigenen Schwerpunkt fördern.“

19 So far only Feigenbaum and Reist (2013) have set out to explore the history, usages and capacities of the term and the methodology more systematically.

20 See for example Blamberger (2017). I am grateful to Günter Blamberger and my former colleagues at the Centre for Advanced Studies Morphomata (University of Cologne) for inspiring discussions in this regard.

21 See Rassool (2015) for his seminal work on repatriation.

22 See for more information on this collection: <http://www.universitaetssammlungen.de/sammlung/1396>.

Speaker bios and original paper titles

Provenance Politics

Ciraj Rassool is Professor of History at University of Western Cape, South Africa. He was chair of Iziko Museums of South Africa and the District Six Museum and serves on the Advisory Board of the Luschan Collection, Berlin. His latest co-edited book is *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts* (2017).

Provenance Beyond Origins and Return: Thinking Through the Metaphor (and Politics) of Diaspora

Paul Basu is Professor of Anthropology at SOAS University of London. A core strand of Paul's research has been to explore the intersections between migrations of people, things, ideas and histories. Recent books include *The Inbetweenness of Things* (2017) and *Museums, Heritage & International Development* (2014).

Author and chair

Larissa Förster is a postdoctoral research fellow at CARMAH. Her current research focuses on provenance research, restitution and repatriation in/from European (ethnographic) museums. Her latest co-authored/-edited books are *Haut, Haar und Knochen. Koloniale Spuren in naturkundlichen Sammlungen der Universität Jena* (2016) and *Provenienzforschung in ethnografischen Sammlungen der Kolonialzeit. Positionen in der aktuellen Debatte* (2018).

Discussant

Possible Locations

Britta Lange is a lecturer at the Institute of Cultural History and Theory at Humboldt- Universität zu Berlin and heads the Lautarchiv of Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin together with Sebastian Klotz. Together with Margit Berner and Anette Hoffmann she published *Sensible Sammlungen. Aus dem anthropologischen Depot* (2011).

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TRANSLOCALITY

An essay based on a panel with Beverley Butler, Banu Karaca, and Paola Ivanov

by Katarzyna Puzon

By way of introduction

The impulses and intentions behind diving into the concept of translocality as part of our collective **otherising** (see Macdonald, this volume) were informed by current discussions on mobility and migration, as well as my own research and practice, both within and outside museum and heritage contexts (Puzon 2016; 2017). Although translocality is not necessarily a widely used concept by museum and heritage scholars and practitioners – and is a relatively new approach – it seems to fit into the ongoing debates. This is exemplified in the theme of the 4th Biennial Conference of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies.

²³The organising committee have selected *Heritage Across Borders* as a guiding concept to think about and through borders, broadly understood, in relation to the role of heritage in today's world. The aim is to reflect upon recent and future attempts at 'transcending boundaries' and 'crossing frontiers' of different kinds within heritage studies, and to look into other ways of thinking and doing museums and heritage that surpass divides, such as east-west, tangible-intangible or rural-urban.²⁴

In that vein, this essay deals with the binary conceptions of the local versus the national or the global, as well as seeking to move beyond the understanding of translocality as a type of transnationalism. My contribution offers a critical reflection on the concept of translocality and asks how it can be useful for the current museum and heritage transformations, and

whether translocality opens new avenues for re-thinking museums²⁵ and heritage, and if so, how. Addressing a variety of ways in which translocality is manifested in the movement of people, objects, practices, and discourses, I draw attention to the salience of socio-spatial dynamics and the promise of thinking with scale about museum and heritage developments. Translocality brings together the local (broadly defined), the national and the global, along with their various interconnections and interactions. And in this respect, my concern is also with how translocality can enable a non-Eurocentric understanding of museums and heritage, and in what ways it opens up space for multiple articulations of movements.

Based on a panel with three invited scholars whose work spans East Africa, Egypt, Germany, Jordan, Palestine and Turkey, this essay puts forward a set of ideas that I have found useful in thinking about and with translocality. It is not intended as a review of scholarship on the concept.²⁶ I engage in ruminations about translocality that centres on movement and captures overlapping locales or localities, rather than situating certain phenomena either 'here' or 'there'. My contribution probes into its meaning and possible use as a theoretical tool and a methodological approach, in particular in museum and heritage developments, including the field sites of my ongoing research.

Translocality as a heuristic concept

The translocal approach holds the potential to challenge a fixed idea of location and to enliven local-local connections and place-to-place relationships, as does the transcultural in relation to the notion of culture. There are, however, various understandings of what translocality might actually imply. For example, Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak (2013: 380) look at it as “an approach in its own right” that builds upon transnationalism, and so does Katharyne Mitchell (1997) who puts special emphasis on the agency of places and spaces in mobility practices, as well as their relational dimensions. Translocality is considered by some as a kind of transnationalism that although it does not centre on the nation-state, it nevertheless includes a transnational perspective. Peggy Levitt sees it as

critical to examine how these [i.e. transnational] connections are integrated into vertical and horizontal systems of connections that cross borders. Rather than privileging one level [for example the local] over another, a transnational perspective holds these sites equally and simultaneously in conversation with each other and tries to grapple with the tensions between them (2004: 3).

By questioning place-boundedness, translocality strives to reconcile rootedness with mobility. In this vein, British geographers Katherine Brickell and Ayona Datta (2011) define it as a place-based concept reflected in *groundedness* during movement. They discuss translocality as “simultaneous

situatedness across different locales” (ibid: 4) that encompasses both situatedness and connection to other locales or localities and entails ‘being’ in several places and spaces at the same time. This involves a multi-scalar take on the concept that is not restricted to the national. Still, it acknowledges its presence and importance, and as such, includes inter-regional and inter-urban movements as well as those within a city or a neighbourhood. Adopting scale, both as a category of analysis and a category of practice, helps to avoid the pitfalls of flattening place, space, and time.

Some scholars make a distinction between the prefixes ‘trans-’ and ‘inter-’, the former implying ‘within’ or ‘across’, the latter suggesting ‘between’. This differentiation regards ‘trans-’ as having a more transformational character (e.g. Munkelt et al. 2016). ‘Trans’ words bring to the fore the notion of fluidity, and unpacking the prefix ‘trans’ indeed provides some productive insights. It connotes the notion of transfer, moving across or going through. It is also associated with a change from one form or condition to another, as in the case of transformation or transition. ‘Trans’ as used in ‘transgender’ encompasses these two interpretations by bridging being across and in-between, as well as belonging beyond the dichotomies. In addition, it deals with body in terms of scale, as a location of transgression and a locality of difference. Through the lens of translocality, one views, I contend, multifarious interconnectedness and interdependence of spaces, places, and scales. This includes an important role of the concept of engagement, the subject of one of the symposium

panels (see Engagement, this volume), as an essential dimension of transformative processes.

While the primary focus of translocality seems to be on space and place, it is also concerned with time and particular moments of situatedness, connections and movements, which refer to both mobility and the consequences thereof. Contextualisation remains a key attribute of any anthropological endeavour. The concept's use and usefulness is of course contingent upon context that is geographical and historical, spatial and temporal. In addition, it is not just about whether it is applied, debated and thought through in museums or heritage, but also what these museums and heritage are, as well as when and where these developments unfold.

Translocality has been frequently connected to globalisation processes,²⁷ which manifest, as Anthony Giddens notes,

the intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa (1990: 64).

Such processes are part and parcel of what Doreen Massey (1993) calls the “power-geometry” of global flows and movements whereby the “time-space compression” exposes difference and differentiation that accompany them. While Massey examines how the capacity of the mobility of social groups and individuals are connected to a

position of power, the concept of “power-geometry” applies to knowledge production too, and highlights how some discourses and practices travel freely whereas others have limited power to do so. This shows how movements are also about the dynamics that reflect power relations interwoven into mobility, which is in turn linked with the position in which people, objects and knowledge are placed, often in distinct and differentiated ways, within and in relation to these flows and interconnections.

The aforementioned approaches have their possibilities and limitations, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Thus, rather than adopting one particular perspective, what interests me is both mobility and the tensions between order and movement (see also Freitag and von Oppen 2010). I do not see translocality as a unidirectional phenomenon, that is, movement from one place to another, but rather as embeddedness in more than one location. In other words, I am interested in the ways in which people, practices, objects and ideas are located – or locate themselves – in “networks of movement, communication, and imagination” (Bowen 2002: 9).²⁸

Translocality in museum and heritage contexts

Mapping productive tensions between translocality and museum and heritage developments, the concept of translocality takes as a point of departure mobility rather than stasis. Also, by means of translocality, I direct attention at scale as fluid and fixed at the same time. It brings to the fore spatial dimensions and applications of museum and heritage practice by asking how museums and heritage are shaped, reconstructed and transformed via the mobility of people, ideas, artefacts, and discourses.

Within museum and heritage contexts, this notion often conjures up displacement or dispossession, which links it to debates on restitution and provenance – the concept discussed by Larissa Förster (see Provenance, this volume). Along these lines, art historian Bénédicte Savoy formulated the rationale of her current project entitled *Translocations. Historical Enquiries into the Displacement of Cultural Assets* and based at Technische Universität Berlin. Conceptualising translocations in terms of “displacements of cultural assets”, the project centres on “the actual phenomenon of the transfer itself”²⁹ from a historical perspective (2016: 2-3).

Justifying the need for such examination, Savoy posits that

the field of translocations as such – that is, not the history of the transferred object, but the actual phenomenon of the transfer itself, with all its traumas, discourses, actors, gestures, techniques and representations – has hardly been recognised, and certainly not fully researched (ibid: 3, emphasis in original).³⁰

Holding the promise to address the dynamics that reflect power relations interwoven into mobility practices, translocality deals with the interplay of the local and the global. Such an approach implies an attempt to include flows and movements, including their effects, in the museum and heritage context. Looking through the lens of translocality, I suggest, might be useful to examine not only the circulation of ideas and concepts, but also gaps and silences that occur as a result of these movements and flows, often represented as a rather sanitised history, largely devoid of what could be considered “difficult heritage” (Macdonald 2009). Such endeavours exemplify an attempt to ‘anaesthetise’ the complex history of interactions and relationships between the so-called west and non-west (see also Winegar 2008). In this vein, the translocal approach might engender alternative historiographies and it can also contribute to silencing some phenomena by amplifying mobility and silencing the unfavourable effects of those particular movements, for instance in the contexts in which violence is

central to the displacement of people and artefacts.

Given the growing presence of the digital in museum and heritage practices, it is also important to include the role of new media as a vital contribution to this discussion and examine how this yet another scale of locality adds up to the reconceptualisation of locality and a multi-scalar understanding of translocality. Rather than reinforcing the binary of the real and the virtual, I see the potential in translocality to explore the interdependency and dialectics of online and offline contexts.

As CARMAH's *Making Differences* project demonstrates, translocality seems to be embedded in our current research on museum and heritage developments in Berlin. Here researchers investigate processes happening simultaneously at different locations in one city, albeit not only. This involves new media and digital technologies too, as it is explored by Christoph Bareither and Nazlı Cabadağ whose work falls within the Media and Mediation research area of the *Making Differences* project. Dealing with the ways in which Islam is constructed through museum work and heritage-making, my research is situated within and across places, spaces, and scales. It thus exemplifies a multi-scalar and multi-sited examination of museum and heritage developments in Berlin, which encompasses the Museum of European Cultures, a neighbourhood, urban and national institution, and local actors operating within one district, such as the Neukölln Museum. And in this sense, I see translocality also as a methodological approach.

I could not agree more with Michael Lambek who argues that

the novelty of translocality should not be exaggerated any more than the polyphony of tradition should be overlooked (2011: 3).

All the same, examining museum and heritage transformations through the lens of translocality enables to map out productive tensions as well as expose and recognise translocal dynamics and manoeuvres that are inscribed in those tensions and transformations.



Figure 1 Kunstasyl's exhibition *daHEIM: Einsichten in flüchtige Leben* at the Museum of European Cultures.
 Photograph by Katarzyna Puzon.

Session contributions and discussion

With the aim of discussing the concept of translocality as part of the Otherwise symposium, I invited scholars whose work revolves around the questions of displacement, dispossession, mobility, and translocality. The session was conceived as an invitation to critical reflection upon the concept, both its limits and its possibilities, as the speakers' contributions sought to illustrate. The panel asked, among other questions, how "constellations of difference" (Macdonald 2016) and the production and reproduction of locality play out in the intensification of movement. And how is translocality put to work in museums and heritage, or how might it be? In what ways might translocality create new avenues for re-thinking museums and heritage?

In her presentation *Heritage Rites – Translocality, Creativity & 'Acting Back' in Refugee Camp Life*, **Beverley Butler**, Reader in the Institute of Archaeology at University College London, addressed the interrelationship between heritage and translocality in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan. She discussed heritage efficacy and how place and space play out in movement and immobility whereby translocality does not emerge solely in terms of scale and space. It thus resonates with Appadurai's definition of locality (1996: 178) as chiefly contextual and relational. In her ethnographic examples, she associated translocality with creativity and heritage rights to show how both mobility and fixity manifest in the refugee camp life. By recounting the practices of enforced displacement and "objects acting back", her contribution sought to problematise the ideas of origin, homeland, and elsewhere.

Butler argued that "everything about the Palestinian case, in a sense, tests the notion of what a refugee is, and what translocality and heritage might be." Heritage is pharmakonic, as she put it using Derrida's term, and as such it can be both poison and cure.

Arguing against the opposition of the local to the national, Butler contended that "popular heritage rites" indicate the crisis of the latter. She continued by saying that these rites

emerge as significant expressions of refugee agency and as synonymous with activated heritage forms, powerful ritual acts of communion – including magical thinking and wish-fulfilment – that ultimately create new 'factness' and 'realities' on the ground.

This chimes with the view of translocality as kind of space where the ideas of the national and the local fall apart. The case of the refugee camp provides an especially thought-provoking example because "it keeps the local in the national as well as the global in the imaginary", as Butler formulated it, and exposes the simultaneity of the past, the present, and the future.

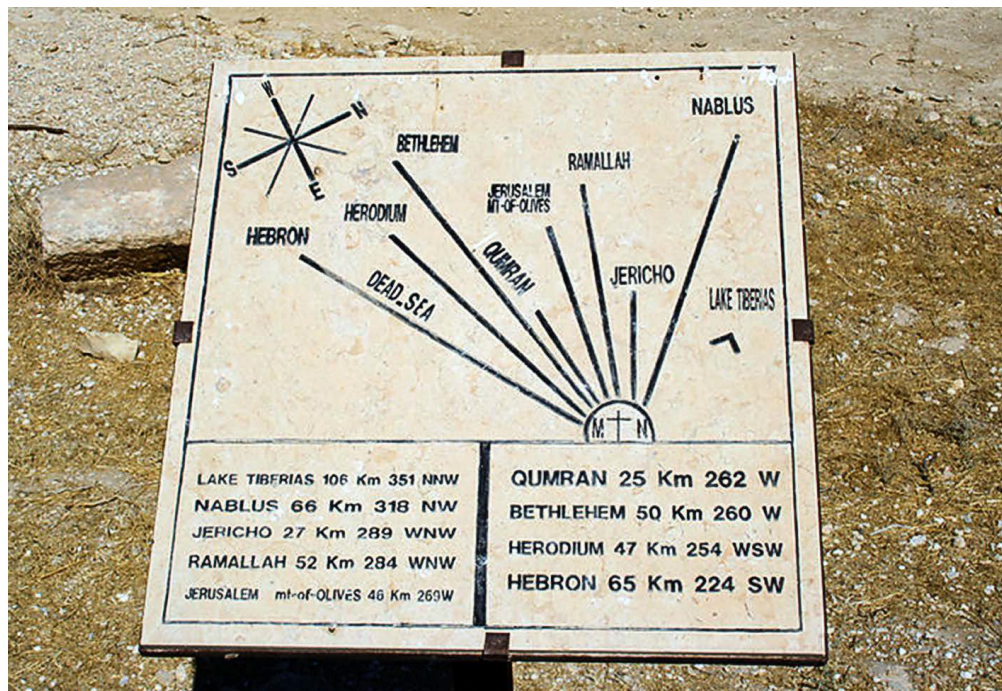


Figure 2 Photograph by Beverley Butler. Permission courtesy of the author.

The second speaker, sociocultural anthropologist **Banu Karaca** (Sabanci University), concentrated on dispossessed, lost and looted art works, as well as other cultural assets in the Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic. Her contribution drew on her project *Lost, not Found? Missing Provenance, 'Lost' Works, and the Writing of Art History in Turkey*, which probes into the distribution of those art works into the Islamic collections of different institutions in Berlin, New York, and London.

Speaking about their displacement, she asked: “what kinds of loss [do] ‘missing’ art works engender?” and “how do you sustain this economy of forgetting despite all that we know about it?”

Her presentation, *Diasporic Trajectories, Art Historical Taxonomies: Dikran G. Kelekian and Islamic Art*, focused on the Met’s³¹ collection of Islamic art, more specifically the south side of the gallery, and the figure of Dikran Kelekian (1868–1951),

an Ottoman-Armenian art dealer and collector, and his translocal trajectories. She talked about the Damascus Room, gifted by Kevorkian, and a new room for Ottoman art, supported by Vehbi Koç, as the ones that do not address multi-religious and multi-ethnic backgrounds of those who contributed to those collections, which puts it in contrast to other sections of the museum. She argued further that

without this history being at all reflected within the museum, it produces certain silences in this physical adjacency that are really, I think, telling of the field of Islamic art and the taxonomies of Islamic art, and what they obscure in terms of their producers and their audiences at one time.

Drawing a distinction between translocality and translocation, she suggested that the translocations of art works had been embedded in state violence and the category of Islamic art had been complicit in excluding the category of Turkish art history. In this respect, the question of translocality pushes towards the process of rethinking archives and collections. It amplifies movements and silences. This holds promise to disturb certain categories, such as the one of Islamic art.

In the final panel contribution, entitled *Conceptualising and Exhibiting Translocality as a Corrective to Dominant Narrative*, **Paola Ivanov**, an ethnologist and a curator of the Africa collections at the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, responded to the two

preceding speakers' presentations and offered her own reflection on the concept of translocality, both in East Africa and Germany, more specifically Berlin. In her work on the Swahili Coast of East Africa, she focused on aesthetics and translocality in Swahili and Zanzibari societies. This allowed her to approach the phenomenon of translocality as a way of living that is not that much influenced by the idea of the nation-state, as it is very characteristic of the coastal communities of the Indian Ocean. She highlighted the importance of relating translocality to other 'trans' concepts and suggested that

in the focus of the concept of translocality are not only the mobilities between localities as well as interconnections created by these mobilities, but always and at the same time, the question how locality is created in the context of interconnectedness.

Referring to Berlin's context, she maintained that museums had not sufficiently dealt with mobility. As one of the prominent exceptions, she pointed out the *Objects in Transfer* exhibition trail at the Museum für Islamische Kunst. The reasons for this status quo, Ivanov argued, is the classification system that still dominates in museums and reflects a 19th-century model of culture. She raised the salience of the current political context as another factor, in particular the reemergence of identity politics and new nationalisms in Europe, along with the so-called 'refugee crisis'. Speaking about the idea of translocality as a "corrective to dominant narratives", she emphasised its

capacity to “provincialise” the dichotomous understandings of identity and belonging and challenge them with multiple “logics of belonging”. The simplified ordering of belonging is reflected in museum practices. In one of Berlin’s museums, she mentioned, some artefacts from the East African Coast were included in the Islamic collection because they were classified as of Arab descent.

During the ensuing discussion, anthropologist **Haidy Geismar**, the keynote speaker of the symposium, addressed the close interrelationship between provenance and translocality. Juxtaposing these two concepts, she brought up for consideration the possibility and potency of their connection. Geismar put forward the term *trans-provenance* that could potentially enable us to look at origins as both fluid and evidentiary at the same time.

people move, but also how categories are disrupted. Indeed, as was addressed during the Q&A session, the challenge remains: how do we act with this knowledge? And, as Paola Ivanov added on a final note, in what ways can we make translocal concepts more accessible in museums? Discussing translocality in the anthropological tradition, Lambek maintains that it is “a product of horizon clearing” (2011: 5). Although he links it with ability to look at phenomena more broadly, rather than holding transcending qualities, the idea of “horizon clearing” could offer another starting point for discussion that would take on a different significance in the museum and heritage context, and thus potentially open new avenues to think and do museums and heritage otherwise.

Futuring remarks

Doing and thinking with translocality makes it possible to engage in ‘otherwising’ that might transform the ways in which museums and heritage have so far been predominantly conceptualised and practised. This is not to say that this concept holds revolutionary promise, but rather to highlight its heterogeneous potential and liberatory capacity, which does not necessarily lead to paralysis or flattening of certain phenomena, such as space and time. This conceptual exercise and the concept itself, which can and hopefully will be put into practice, have sought to bring to light not only how artefacts, ideas and

Endnotes

23 The conference will be held in Hangzhou, China, on 1-6 September 2018. For a full description, see <http://www.criticalheritagestudies.org/hangzhou-conference/>.

24 The term *traverse* offers yet another take on this issue that will be explored in relation to mobility, heritage and postcolonialism as part of the event *Traverse Heritage: Voice, Body, Movement* at Amsterdam Museum in May 2018. This includes an interactive performance of the interdisciplinary artist collective Moving Matters Traveling Workshop, which I am a member of.

25 This concerns museum storage, too. For a recently published study on museum storage areas, see Brusius and Singh (2017).

26 For a comprehensive review paper on translocality, see for example Greiner and Sakdapolrak (2013).

27 Ulf Hannerz's research (e.g. 1998) has been concerned with placing local issues in a global context.

28 See also, for example, Leichtman 2015 and Mandaville 2001.

29 In German, it says "das Phänomen des Abtransports", which could be translated as the phenomenon of removal or relocation.

30 For a full draft, see http://www.kuk.tuberlin.de/fileadmin/fg309/bilder/Forschungsprojekte/Translocalities.DEUTSCH_WEISS_FINAL.pdf.

31 The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, popularly known as the Met, is one of the world's largest museums and the oldest one in the United States.

Speaker bios and original paper titles

Heritage Rites – Translocality, Creativity & 'Acting Back' in Refugee Camp Life

Beverley Butler is Reader in Cultural Heritage at University College London. Her research focuses on critical heritage perspectives, heritage in refugee camps, 'heritage wellbeing' and transformative 'efficacies of heritage', especially in contexts of marginalisation, displacement, illness and extremis, as well as the Middle East. She is the author of the monograph *Return to Alexandria – An Ethnography of Cultural Heritage, Revivalism, and Museum Memory* (2007). Beverley is C.I. on a joint ESRC/AHRC Global Challenges Research Fund research project which looks at the role of creative arts and cultural activities in improving health and wellbeing. She is currently writing a monograph *Possessing Palestine – A Quest for the Efficacies of Heritage* (IoA/ Routledge).

Diasporic Trajectories, Art Historical Taxonomies: Dikran G. Kelekian and Islamic Art

Banu Karaca is a sociocultural anthropologist and Mercator-IPC Fellow at Sabanci University. She works at the intersection of political anthropology, art and aesthetics, nationalism and cultural policy, and museums and commemorative practices. Her manuscript *Decivilizing Art: Cultural Policy and Nationalism in Turkey and Germany* examines the entrenchment of art in state violence

based on extensive research in the art worlds of Istanbul and Berlin. Some of her recent publications interrogate the politics of intercultural exchange programs in the EU, freedom of expression in the arts, the visualisation of gendered memories of war and political violence, and visual literacy.

Discussant

Conceptualising and Exhibiting Translocality as a Corrective to Dominant Narratives

Paola Ivanov is an ethnologist and a curator of the collections from East, North East, Central, and South Africa at the Ethnological Museum of the National Museums in Berlin. Her research, publications and exhibitions focus on art, aesthetics, visual/material culture, museum theory, provenance research, as well as on African history and global interconnectedness. One of her main research interests is the relationship between translocality, aesthetics, and space on the Swahili Coast of East Africa. Recently she has co-edited the volume *Humboldt Lab Tanzania: Objects from the Colonial Wars in the Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin – Tanzanian-German Perspectives* (2018), with Lili Reyels and Kristin Weber-Sinn.

Author and chair

Katarzyna Puzon is an anthropologist and a postdoctoral research fellow at CARMAH. Her main interests lie at the intersection of heritage, memory, mobility, and the city. In her current research on Berlin, she examines the politics and poetics of representation and recognition, primarily in relation to Islam and heritage-making. Her recent publications include “Saving Beirut: heritage and the city” in *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (2017).

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ALTERITY

An essay based on a panel with Henrietta Lidchi, Katharina Schramm, and Alya Sebti

by Jonas Tinius

Anthropology and alterity

The Oxford English Dictionary offers a straightforward entry into the concept. ‘Alterity’, we read, describes the state of ‘being other or different’, a sense derived etymologically from the Latin word ‘alter’, meaning ‘other’, or ‘the other’ (here also ‘the other of two’). To alter is to make or become different, the alter ego is an ‘I’ different from our conscious self.

Unsurprisingly, such a basic dictionary definition conjures up questions: To what extent does the construction of alterity imply a comparison, a relation, and a norm? From whose perspective is something ‘other’, or someone an other? Is alterity necessarily a relational and situated concept, and if so, who or what inscribes and recognises difference? Can we even speak of alterity as a ‘thing’, or is it always enacted in the act of normative comparison? Or can I become other to myself, divide the self into multiples, as in the psychological state of schizophrenia (Biehl 2005; Biehl and Locke 2010), the phenomenon of ‘phantom pain’ (Billé 2014), or the much-discussed Melanesian-derived notion of the ‘dividual’, according to which “persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them”, thus affording that “the singular person can be imagined as a social microcosm” (Strathern 1988: 13).

This reflection thus begins with the simple observation that alterity – or otherness – is not a singular, clearly defined entity ‘out there’. Rather, as an anthropologist, I cannot help but notice and be curious about “the diversity of ways in which ‘otherness’ has been constituted, communicated and transformed in contemporary and historical contexts” (Hallam and Street 2000: 1). To some extent, alterity is a foundational concept to any critical anthropological self-reflection. We ask how cultures, societies, and practices differ from one another in order to appreciate their singular complexities, to recognise their values, but also to compare them, rendering visible patterns of self-differentiation and self-determination, but equally structures of discrimination, racialization, and Othering. The study of and challenge to alterity is, for better or for worse, one of the founding preoccupations of the various iterations of the discipline of anthropology (social, cultural, European, and ethnological) and likewise one of the principal ways in which anthropologists have gone about answering the question of what makes us human and what doesn’t. From kinship to hospitality, nation and statehood, culture and heritage, religion and ethnicity, questions of the ‘other’, of otherness, and alterity, therefore also of identity and similarity, have been central to key anthropological theorising about social and cultural phenomena, and, in turn, to the critique of its own practices and rhetorics of representation themselves (see e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986; Hastrup 1990). Evolutionary and racist ideologies of biological differences constructed and deployed alterity

to justify inequalities between persons and entire groups of people. Yet the notion has also been mobilized and modified in relativist and post-colonial theories, orientalist critique. Furthermore, it has been at the heart of creative ways to challenge reifications of difference, being central to crucial recent critiques of cultural hybridity, representation, and ontology. Still in other ways, this debate has taken further turns, away from questions of what we might call 'subalterity' (minor forms of politically charged alterity, from subalternity, Spivak 1988) to those of radical alterity and ontological difference (for the most recent exchange on this debate, see Holbraad and Pedersen 2017; Laidlaw 2017). The debate around the so-called ontological turn has raised pertinent questions about theoretical experimentation, political self-determination, and the conceptual creativity of anthropological research. Is it the case that "people see the world in different ways, but the world is still the same" (Heywood 2017)? Or do we need to recognise that, as proponents of the ontological turn suggest, "worlds, as well as worldviews, may vary" (ibid.)? Again, others may find that this debate has taken so many turns that it might be time to ask whether, in the end, "radical alterity is just another way of saying 'reality'" (Graeber 2015). Or, as it was posed to participants of the 2008 *Group for Debates in Anthropological Theory* a few years earlier in Manchester, whether "ontology is just another word for culture" (Venkatesan 2010), bringing us all the way back to debates about cultural difference.

Alterity has remained a contested terrain central to the practice, politics, and theory of anthropology. The principal reason for conceiving a panel session for this conference on the subject of *alterity* was not, however, to rehearse anthropological histories or to collect eclectic uses of the notion; rather, it was to recognize that the notion of alterity has re-entered anthropological discussions through impulses from outside the discipline that might reinvigorate our conception of it. Challenges from critical museologists, curators, and artists to anthropology museums and ethnographic collection display in Europe, and particularly in Germany and Berlin – the ethnographic focus of our research – have led to a rethinking of the display and engagement with alterity. As my colleagues Margareta von Oswald and Larissa Förster explore in their research projects, and discuss with regard to other key concepts included in this collection, the quest, for instance, for greater and more systematic research into provenance poses relevant and complementary challenges about the identity, origin, and also the different classifications of difference that objects afford and invite – and which may evoke new framings of anthropology museums, e.g. as 'post-ethnological museums'. In different but equally pressing ways, the representation of Islam in museums and heritage institutions, as studied by my colleagues Katarzyna Puzon and Christine Gerbich, urges new questions about religious differentiations; what message will the Christian cross, to be erected on the cupola of the Humboldt Forum – a contested site for the display and 'encounter' of the world's cultures – send to Muslim

Difference, heritage, and new populisms

citizens? As a focal point for debates about the past, present, and future of German and indeed European identity with regards to non-European heritage, religion, and culture, the Humboldt Forum acts as a performative projection screen for debates about inclusion and exclusion, cultural *Leitkultur* and social *Erinnerungskultur*, awkward and difficult heritage (Macdonald 2009, Tinius 2018a). And again, alterity becomes a means through which the Humboldt Forum and its brokers refract discussions on German identity. As the three founding directors of the Forum, Horst Bredekamp, Neil MacGregor, and Hermann Parzinger (2017) write in a position statement on the issue of symbols on the Forum, discussing the various framing symbols that acted as important signifiers over the course of the previous palaces' existence:

The eloquence of the word 'doubt' together with the powerful visual symbolism of the Sanchi Gate and the cupola cross invite us to view the world not just through the eyes of our own selves. That is the message of the Humboldt Forum.

In some ways, both the two abandoned palaces as well as the 'anticipated castle' thus haunt the city with their manifold signifiers, driving activist challenges as well as artistic responses to the retrospective architectural structure as well as its Humboldtian imaginaries for an encompassing post-ethnological museum future (Tinius and von Zinnenburg Carroll, 2016; forthcoming).

In Berlin, the Humboldt Forum and other current museum, art, and heritage developments thus position themselves in urban "constellations of difference" (Macdonald 2016: 4), witnessing, reflecting on, and creating constantly new civic, religious, and cultural differentiations and ways of thinking through alterity. However, another development intersects with these institutional processes. The pressing issue of new populisms that have swept across Europe since 2015, creating new alliances and right-wing coalitions in governments, have also created new challenges for dealing with the question of alterity in the context of heritage, citizenship, and belonging today that are at the heart of our multi-ethnographer research projects at CARMAH. How do we respond as anthropologists to populist movements and centre-right parties, who recycle notions like *Volk* and *Heimat*, mobilizing *nativist* and *identitarian* narratives to incite fear and hatred against variously essentialised 'others' within and at the threshold of European borders? What does it say about the public awareness of anthropological critique if the German Federal Ministry of the Interior is soon to receive the suffix – and *Heimat*, while anthropology museums and faculties are busy renaming and distancing themselves from antiquated notions of *Heimat*, *Volk*, and *Ethnos* (Vermeulen 2018). These are new challenges that need to be understood, and yet historically and comparatively contextualised in longer trajectories of German and European identity formations and movements that strategically entangled heritage, nationalism, and a scepticism towards diversity. Heritage has long been an instrument in these debates, used for

Alterity between museum practice and theory

claiming difference within similarity,³² but it also serves as a way to challenge histories of German-ness, not least through geographical activism which repeatedly calls to rethink the very location and naming of the street on which the Institute of European Ethnology here in Berlin is situated, but which has had a broader impact on the theorising of urban space (Ha 2014).

In my own previous doctoral research on professional German public theatres and their engagement with migration, it has been particularly noticeable to what extent the German theatre landscape (itself recognised, since 2014 as UNESCO intangible cultural heritage) has responded to the so-called ‘refugee crisis’, creating new initiatives, funding structures, and aesthetic reflections (Tinius 2017b and 2018b). More than that, the “refugee as theatrical character” has, as Pedro Kadivar (2017: 11f, my translation) recently noted, for a long time acted as a looking glass for reflections on German cultural identity. While Kadivar writes about the refugee as a recurring character on the well-funded stages of German public theatres, a similar observation has been made by Thomas Thiemeyer (2016) regarding the performative impact of the nascent Humboldt Forum, and the postcolonial critique levelled against it, on German memory culture; both arguments that will not surprise social philosophers, such as Thomas Bedorf (2011), who have been reflecting for quite some time on the mutual constitution of an ‘other’ or *Anderer* with regard to whatever might be considered as ‘familiar’ or *Eigen* in a given social or cultural context.

But rather than exhausting ourselves in a single definition of the notion of alterity, for instance, as just an ontological ascription of radical difference or a decolonial critique of Othering, the panel conceived for the symposium and its speakers tried to think through the multiple ways in which the notion of alterity has entered and been given new meanings in the fields of exhibition and museum practice.

For this purpose, I invited **Henrietta Lidchi**, Chief Curator of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen in Leiden and until very recently Keeper of the Department of World Cultures at the National Museums Scotland in Edinburgh; **Katharina Schramm**, Professor for the Anthropology of Global Inequalities at the Freie Universität in Berlin, and **Alya Sebti**, director at the gallery of the institute for foreign cultural relations in Berlin. Lidchi opened her talk by reference to alterity, change, and metamorphosis, making us think about how perceptions of space and time – working environments, objects, institutions – can transition from being familiar to seeming other, different, or strange. How, then, she asked, can such change and metamorphosis lead to feelings of otherness as an “inhabited, embodied experience” – especially when one assumed to have become oneself very much part of a place and space, in her case as a curator whose role had become that of “embodied corporate memory” and an “ambulatory human archive” (Lidchi 2017)? What is the consequence, she continued, of “overfamiliarity” in one environment of display and curation as opposed to “comparative ignorance” to questions of why and how in another?

Confrontations with such bracing alterity, here understood as relations of difference between people in unfamiliar environments, be they museums or fieldwork contexts, is thus at least for a while a transformative “embodied and reciprocal process”. Drawing on work with Stuart Hall on questions of signification and her research on Native American Art and exhibition-making (Lidchi 2013), she underlined the differences and parallels between such characterisations of fieldwork and immersion to the historical and epistemic violence committed through acts of Othering.

Schramm co-authored and presented a contribution with curator, scholar, and artist Greer Valley, whose work as a graduate student of Visual Art degree at Stellenbosch University focused on curatorial interventions in exhibition spaces that remember South Africa’s past. In their paper, they problematized the institutionalized reframing of postcolonial resistance as it crystallised around the *#rhodesmustfall* campaign, which ignited at The University of Cape Town. Focusing on what they described as “postcolonial heritage politics”, they analyzed in their talk the student protests in South Africa since 2015 through the lens of “epistemic disconcertments” and social solidarity. Embedded in a broader inquiry about the slippery and problematic social life of concepts of race and inequality, they discussed creative processes, exhibition projects, and collaborations for interrogating *whiteness* in institutionalized contexts of Higher Education. Thinking of collaborative activist participatory art collective *Open Forum* and their residency program as “the

disruption of an academic comfort zone”, Schramm outlined her own positionality as a researcher and collaborator. It developed into a space “where students who ‘felt’ marginalized could talk openly about their struggles and experiences”, a “place of refuge from the militarized campus environment, and the social tension and polarization” (ibidem). Their joint reflection opened up strongly contrasting and highly politicized antagonisms over difficult heritage, protest performance, and identity politics in institutionalized spaces.

When we conceived of the panels on which we based these essays, it was important to us that the third speaker could contribute a different perspective onto these themes; one that would reflect on the professional and practical curatorial issues at stake and on the significance of these discourses in the context of Berlin’s museum and heritage landscape. We chose to complement perspectives in this way so as to find a correspondence to the *Making Differences* project, in which researchers focus on the urban dynamics of Berlin, with a strong emphasis on collaborative methods and institutional changes. As part of this project, I have been investigating the significant role played by notions of alterity and otherness in contemporary art spaces, curating, and exhibiting in Berlin at the moment. For this work, I am accompanying curators in three contemporary art institutions in Berlin – the independent project space *SAVVY Contemporary*, the district gallery of Berlin-Wedding, and the state-funded gallery of the Institute of Foreign Cultural Affairs in Berlin-Mitte – who are investigating and dealing with

questions of alterity, asking how these might challenge or create other forms of approaching these issues in museums, particularly against the backdrop of the Humboldt Forum.

Curating alterity and art

Amid the hype and scandals about the anticipated reconstruction of this contested site, my research project seeks to highlight how these smaller, less canonical albeit certainly not ‘peripheral’, sites for the production and exhibition of contemporary art engage in ‘reflexive theorising’, that is, a kind of theoretical creativity that responds to one’s own practices and one’s personal, or one’s institutional situatedness. One such context has been the role of curatorial concepts as creative spaces for the production of ‘emic’ theory that is relevant to anthropological concerns. In relation to alterity and shared curatorial-anthropological knowledge production, the initial curatorial concept of the Galerie Wedding *Post-Otherness Wedding*, for instance, took inspiration from an article co-authored by Bonaventure Ndikung and anthropologist Regina Römhild, entitled *The Post-Other as Avant-Garde* (2013). Therein, they take issue with the ways in which

[u]ntil today, constructing an Other that is constantly kept in the waiting position of yet to be integrated - at the culturalized borders of the nation-state and the EU - is constitutive for the

supremacy of a national, European majority and its powers to define, ascribe, or withdraw cultural standards of ‘normality’ (ibidem: 213).

Reviewing artistic and curatorial responses to an emergent figure they call the “post-Other”, they suggest that

[i]t is worth situating the post-Other or at least the intent to reflect on and quest to comprehend this concept, from the framework of artistic practices. In many ways, artists and art exhibitions have, consciously or unconsciously, tried to tackle the notion of the post-Other by deliberating on the evanescing of the ‘border’ between the ‘self’ and the ‘Other’ in contemporary art (ibidem: 215).

But of course, such work cannot entirely be limited to a single location, but rather will be affected by broader debates that come in and out of Berlin. Through this fieldwork and the curators I work with, among them Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung from *SAVVY Contemporary*, I was thrust into discussions, for instance around this year’s *documenta14*, one of the world’s biggest contemporary art exhibition, which took as its theme during 2017 the phrase “Learning from Athens” and which took place in both its birthplace Kassel and post-crisis ridden Athens. The mega exhibition, some argued, was thus reinscribing not only a sort of internal European relationship to its southern ‘other’ and a kind of ‘crisis chic’ or ‘ruin pornography’ into contemporary art,



Figure 3: Olu Oguibe's Monument for strangers and refugees (2017), Königsplatz, Kassel. Photographs by Jonas Tinius.

but, as others responded, was also creating a platform for combining an engagement with questions of migration, hospitality, and alterity with those of contemporary colonialisms. Some of these debates revolved around the sculpture of that year's Arnold Bode documenta14 award-winner Olu Oguibe's *Monument for strangers and refugees* (2017),

situated poignantly in Kassel's central Königsplatz as a public reminder of responsibilities and virtues of hospitality. Referencing, as Nora Sternfeld (2018) intimated in a recent lecture, established canons of imperial inscription and loot, the phallic obelisk acted as a quasi "para-monument" embodying and problematizing itself.



Figure 4 Olu Oguibe's Monument for strangers and refugees (2017), Königsplatz, Kassel. Photographs by Jonas Tinius.

A different, equally ambivalent, and yet provocative artwork that was much discussed at documenta (and in 2018 also in Berlin's Galerie-Wedding) is artist Emeka Ogboh's dark and strong stout beer *Sufferhead Original*, which he promoted all over Kassel with a difficult albeit humorous reference to the fear for the dark or black (advertisements, for instance, asked 'Wer hat Angst vor Schwarz?'). I discussed Ogboh's works with documenta14 curator-at-large and founder of SAVVY Contemporary, Bonaventure Ndiukung, for whom the artist was "using this beer not only as a possibility for people to drink, but also using the beer

to think about Blackness in Europe – and about immigration, in general" (Ndiukung and Tinius 2017). Ndiukung furthermore stated that the beer

also plays with the purity commandment, which is the most important thing when you brew beer in Germany. He uses this discourse on the purity of the beer to talk about the politically charged and historically connoted ideas of the purity of blood and issues of race in Germany especially, but also in Europe at large (ibidem).



Figure 5 Advertisement billboard for Emeka Ogboh’s *Sufferhead Original* beer in Kassel. Photograph by Jonas Tinus.

My fieldwork in Berlin thus connects to issues pertaining to urban planning and cultural heritage in the city, but it also extends beyond it. All three of my fieldwork sites articulate such forms of relatedness and imbrication. With Alya Sebtî, I developed a form of collaborative interlocution for which we use her programming in the ifa-gallery in Berlin-Mitte as a way to think through the relation of anthropology and curating and to practise new forms of ethnographic fieldwork. At the gallery, Sebtî has been active in rethinking questions of international and global relatedness with a diverse team of interlocutors and curators. She has done so from a curatorial point of view, dealing intensely with the question of how and why certain concepts, such as otherness, circulate in museums and heritage today, and what they allow and what they inhibit. The two of us have been setting up a series of collaborative discussions around central themes of the programme, centering on issues of representation and artistic engagement, which we called *gallery reflections*. Through conversations I moderate with activists, artists, and writers, these gallery reflections have problematized issues of diasporic urban space (#1), time, temporality, and heritage (#2), intersectional feminism (#3), and identity politics and protest (#4). A central aim of these discussions and the collaboration in general is experimental. We hope to generate concepts and practices that allow us to frame our encounter as one between “Sparring Partners”, as Bonaventure Ndikung once referred to it in conversation, who train and keep each other on their feet, but also question our respective assumptions

about similarities and difference of practice (Tinius 2017a). The collaboration also, however, constantly recurs to issues of alterity and the other, be it in our session on time (Fabian 1983) on space (Glissant 1981 [1997]), on feminism and intersectionality or the politics of identity construction. Crucial for this collaborative relationship is that we seek to base the encounters in the space of the gallery and in an intention not to level the differences between anthropological and curatorial practice, but rather in a practised recognition of the fact that we are “on speaking terms” (Schneider 2015: 27). While it is part of the educational aspect of sparring to learn from each other’s skill, techniques and even tricks, its aim in this case was a change of institutional and disciplinary habitus – which, far from being merely cognitive, involves practical, emotional, communicative, and spatial learning as well. These are all aspects of a trained conduct that any collaborative anthropological practice affords, but their value added is the feedback into the very perspective and stance of the discipline itself: confident to venture out of its own comfort zone, but with the greatest respect and attention to the movements, thoughts, and reflections it can learn from others.

Outlook: Empathy and collaboration

Curator and director Alya Sebti opened the discussion of the panel introduction and the two presented papers by emphasising the distinct possibilities of such anthropological and curatorial work in the arts. Exhibitions in contemporary art spaces are frequently conceived with less time for preparation and engagement than anthropological research. However, these limitations also offer possibilities. Instead of aiming at the holistic representation of other cultures, people, or ways of living, she underlined the important of personal enunciation, subjectivity, and empathy. Citing specific exhibition projects that emphasised the vulnerability of both artist and spectator, the discussion opened the notion of alterity to questions about mutuality and understanding: How can I consider 'others' as already part of my own sense of self, think identity through relations of difference, and alterity as a constant tension and movement between self and other – not as distinct but as intricately and ungraspably related, as porous. Her analysis raised a significant question about the possibility of thinking 'otherwise' about anthropology, museums, and heritage, namely from where we can think and see differently. Can we think otherwise about transformations of curatorial knowledge through metamorphoses of ourselves and our epistemic habitus, as Henrietta Lidchi suggested? Or does thinking otherwise require more radical collaborations such as those between Schramm and Valley to unearth normative constraints and allow for self-critical disruptions of institutional heritage discourses? Sebti explored some of the consequences of thinking through and expanding out concepts for understanding

alterity along pathways of intersubjectivity, empathy, and the recognition of the multisensory. Asking not just on behalf of and for whom but also in *resonance* with whom, and in dialogue with whose perspectives exhibitions are made and experienced, the discussion led us to explore power dynamics in museal and curatorial representation. Whether alterity can thus be retranslated into a productive notion and practice rather than a violent inscription of difference, epistemic or otherwise, through the language we use, became apparent as a crucial question and shared conflictual terrain between art, anthropology, and curating. Iterating in writing, exhibition, and discussion forms of representation and intersubjectivity, both anthropology and exhibition-making (or curating) can be understood as practices of performative concept-work. This imbues them with the responsibility but also with critical potential for reciprocal interrogation of each other's conceptual undergirding, for generative disturbances and experimentation that may allow other ways of thinking alterity in museums and heritage today and tomorrow.

Endnotes

32 Matei Candea's Corsican *Fragments* (2010), for instance, offers a complex case study of how national heritage is implicated through negotiations of alterity and identity in the Mediterranean.

Speaker bios and original paper titles

*Bodies Changed into New Forms:
Metamorphosis and Museums*

Prof Henrietta Lidchi is the Chief Curator of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Leiden and until 2017 was the Keeper of the Department of World Cultures, National Museums Scotland, Edinburgh. Here she led the redevelopment of the World Cultures galleries at the National Museum of Scotland (reopened in 2011). Trained as an anthropologist, she has worked in museums for twenty years, starting at the British Museum.

*After the Fire: Disrupting Whiteness
Towards New Forms of Collaboration
in the Space of the South African
University (Joint Reflection with
Greer Valley)*

Prof Katharina Schramm is Professor for the Anthropology of Global Inequalities at the Freie Universität Berlin and Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Archive and Public Culture Research Initiative of the University of Cape Town. Her theoretical focus is on conceptualizing race as an unruly and slippery object in politics and science. She has carried out extensive fieldwork in Ghana and South Africa. Her current research in South Africa is situated at the interface of classificatory practices, the materiality of scientific objects and emerging political subjectivities.

Discussant

Alya Sebti is Director at ifa-Galerie (Institute of Foreign Cultural Relations), Berlin. She has curated several exhibitions in Europe and North Africa and was the Artistic Director for the 5th edition of the Marrakech Biennial (2014). She has written and lectured extensively on art and the public sphere. In 2018, she will act as a Guest Curator of the Dak'Art Biennial.

Author and chair

Jonas Tinius is a postdoctoral research fellow at CARMAH. His research explores how curators in contemporary art spaces in Berlin negotiate questions of difference and alterity. He has previously worked on theatre and migration and has most recently published the article "Art as ethical practice: anthropological observations on and beyond theatre" (2017) in the journal *World Art*.

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POST - ETHNOLOGICAL

An essay based on a panel with Clémentine Deliss and Dan Hicks

by Margareta von Oswald

Progressively used by museum theorists and practitioners, the *post-ethnographic* or *post-ethnological* has been employed with reference to museums and/or practices linked to ethnographic collections. My point in selecting the term was not to position myself for or against its use. It was, rather, to sense how the 'post' was used to distance and dissociate oneself from past ways of doing and thinking the ethnographic museum, and, in doing so, to draw visions for future practices. More particularly, I was interested in the relation between the ethnographic museum and its founding discipline, anthropology.³³ Resonating with CARMAH's *Transforming the Ethnographic* theme,³⁴ I thus asked myself: Where, how and what is 'anthropology' in the ethnographic museum today? What could the 'post' in the 'post-ethnological' stand for in the context of ethnographic museums? What was, then, considered to be *ethnological* or *ethnographic*?

The prefix 'post' means 'behind', 'after', 'later', 'subsequent to', 'posterior to', and thus can refer to a temporal dimension. However, in other contexts, such as in discussions around the post-colonial or the postmodern, different dimensions of the post have been highlighted. Peter Hulme has argued that the post in the post-colonial

has two dimensions which exist in tension with each other: a *temporal dimension* in which there is a punctual relationship in time between, for example, a colony and a post-colonial state; and a *critical dimension*

in which, for example, postcolonial theory comes into existence through a critique of a body of theory (Hulme in Hall 1996: 253; my emphasis).

Concerning the post-ethnographic, I had come across the term on several occasions, employing the term in exactly those different dimensions.

The 'post-ethnological' and 'post-ethnographic' in literature and museum practice

In his article *Can French anthropology outlive its museums?* (2015), Benoît de L'Estoile uses *post-ethnographic* in the temporal, rather descriptive sense by tracing the interdependent relationship between the history of anthropology and its museums in France. Focusing on the Musée du Quai Branly (MQB)³⁵ in Paris, he concludes by describing the museum as *post-ethnographic*, depicting a shift from the ethnographic to the art museum. For him, the post-ethnographic MQB is, in effect, a "National Museum of the Other, a monument to 'cultural diversity' as the 'common heritage of mankind'" (De L'Estoile 2015: 100)³⁶.

He asserts that

the objects have lost their status as scientific data, gaining instead alternative values as art and heritage that challenge anthropologists hold on them (ibidem: 99).

Here, the post-ethnographic is thus equated the post-anthropological – an ‘after anthropology’. The progressive loss of importance of anthropology within the museum, depicted by De L’Estoile concerning the French case, seemed to be confirmed by other ongoing changes in similar museums all over Europe and North America. One development was the name changes of ethnographic museums in the context of recent transformations and rebranding strategies, in which words such as ‘anthropological’, ‘ethnological’, ‘ethnographic’, ‘Völkerkunde’ have progressively been discredited and (as a consequence) disappeared from their titles or they have been disguised in acronyms. This has most recently concerned Hamburg’s *Museum für Völkerkunde*, currently in search of a new name (Mischke 2017)³⁷. Another development has concerned the recruitment of personnel. In Tervuren (Belgium) or in Vienna (Austria), director positions have been taken over by managers rather than researchers. The current advert for the new ‘director of collections’ of the Humboldt Forum, who will be responsible for both the collections of the Ethnological Museum and the Museum for Asian Art, does not mention a requirement for anthropological expertise (Bernau 2017). Similarly, art historians have progressively been appointed as curators of

ethnographic collections.³⁸ This trend not only highlights the collections’ redefinition as ‘art’ collections – at least of those objects deemed worthy of exhibiting – but also their progressive ‘historic’ character, with most European museums disposing of little or no resources to collect.

The abovementioned changes – a reorientation of the ethnographic museum towards museums of art, the lack of anthropological skills in the profile of personnel, the changing of museum names – could be interpreted as the museums’ reorientation in a context in which museums in general are progressively being requested to refocus on financial success, and to produce blockbuster exhibitions to attain large visitor numbers. With such priorities, critical (anthropological) approaches are likely to be neglected. Such a situation seems to find resonance with some of the developments at the MQB, which regularly leaves space for private collections to be exhibited and is generally known to have become a museum adored by art market professionals rather than one highly regarded for its cutting-edge anthropology.³⁹

In 2016, on the occasion of the MQB’s 10th birthday, James Clifford spoke of this threat, which he had detected at the museum’s opening, namely that the MQB would replace the project of ethnology in favour of “primitive arts” (Clifford 2007).

In view of the museum's evolution, he evaluated the situation differently, pondering whether the museum's contemporary practice could be qualified as *post-ethnological*:

I am ready to adopt the prefix as long as 'post' does not mean simply 'after'. Post refers to something new that we can't name yet. Post means 'following from' with a difference, still very much entangled in what is been displaced. So we are not talking about an ethical shift, a whole new kind of museum. Working in a time of transition without a trustworthy sense of direction is what I hope to refer to as post - ethnological - a time of possibility and constraint, invention and contradiction (Clifford 2016).

The post-ethnological is used here as a notion filled with potential, not as description. Clifford's use of post-ethnological rather than post-ethnographic, was not insignificant in this context. He stated that with the post-ethnological's "fusion of 'ethnos' and 'logos', the name evokes a crucial vocation for the changing institutions we are discussing today, the question of serious cross-cultural research and interpretation, inextricably ethnographic and historical" (ibidem). The term *post-ethnological* then, more explicitly than the term *post-ethnographic*, held the potential to address the critical dimension of the 'post', by addressing theory-making through the 'logos', as well as the discipline's ambivalent (theoretical) history through the 'ethnos'.

In Clifford's understanding, as he stated in Paris, the post-ethnological consisted thus in the "following from' with a difference".

Focusing on the term's critical dimension, the usage of the *post-ethnological* has not only to do with the contextualised use of *ethnography*, *ethnology* and *anthropology* depending on specific places, times and purposes. In Germany, for example, the term *Ethnologie* is still most largely used to denominate the academic discipline (even though it is progressively put into question).⁴⁰ In France, it's 'anthropologie' that is most commonly used, 'social anthropology' in the British and 'cultural anthropology' in the US-American context. In contrast to placing the 'anthropos' (the human) at the discipline's centre, 'ethnos' evokes the sometimes fatal history of classification and categorization of peoples into 'races' or 'ethnic tribes'. This understanding can also be seen in the following reflections on the *post-ethnological* by Wayne Modest, director of the Research Center for Material Culture in Leiden (NL). Envisioning the collections as a place where "questions of redress, where repair can be inaugurated", he went on to explain:

I am interested in a transition in which we move away from a representation that says this is who those people are, or a practice that hides from its historical violence, and continues to conscript certain humans into what I call the 'deep cultural' and incommensurably different. I am more interested in a shift towards a place that acknowledges

the museum's implicatedness within certain pasts and uses this to reposition it as a space where questions of redress, where repair can be inaugurated (von Oswald, Soh Bejeng Ndikung, and Modest 2017).

The 'post-ethnological' as indicator for a discrepancy between anthropological research and its representation in the museum

The different usages of the term show how malleable it can be, serving different arguments for different visions of what an ethnographic museum might be(come). One could conclude that similarly to the ethnographic museum's acclaimed 'crisis', the *post-ethnological* has been drawn on by people in the field to depict a moment of change, differentiation, and turbulence. In contrast to this declaration or desire for ongoing change within ethnological museums, I would argue that we are witnessing above all the contradiction that Clifford refers to, which has at its heart the question of how

and what anthropology is in the museum today. For me, one of these contradictions consists in the stark contrast of what is still imagined as an 'ethnographic exhibition' and what is actually happening in contemporary knowledge production in anthropology. The definition of such an exhibition has been clearly set out by Henrietta Lidchi:

So in referring to 'ethnographic museums' or 'ethnographic exhibitions', one is identifying institutions or exhibitions which feature objects as the 'material culture' of peoples who have been considered, since the mid-nineteenth century, to have been the appropriate target for anthropological research. Ethnographic museums produce certain kinds of representations and mobilize distinct classificatory systems which are framed by anthropological theory and ethnographic research (Lidchi 1997: 161).

For her, ethnographic exhibitions include the following characteristics:

Ethnographic exhibitions most usually adopt the **format of contextualizing and reconstructing**. Curators work with **objects** and contextualize them so that these assume a purposive role; objects are commonly selected as **representative**, rather than unique, **examples** [...]. Since the **primary purpose** of such exhibitions is **the translation of difference** – to acquaint the viewer with unfamiliar concepts, values

and ideas – their **key motive is communication through understanding and interpretation**. Ethnographic exhibitions are typically syncretic (pulling together things from different sources). Nevertheless, though their ostensible forms is that of *mimesis*, the imitation of ‘reality’, their effectiveness depends on a high degree of selectivity and construction (Lidchi 1997, 171–72; my emphasis).

This form of exhibition-making has been extensively criticized, as has the understanding of anthropology underlying this notion of ethnographic exhibitions. Few curators today, would characterize their way of exhibition-making as above, or they would at least reject some of the points in the characterization. Still, the post-ethnological as contradiction reveals the flagrant discrepancy between what the ethnographic exhibition is imagined to be and contemporary anthropology. Whereas the abovementioned characteristics of the ethnographic exhibition – as representative, focused on difference and ‘other’, and mimetic – carried a decade long tradition of being challenged within and outside anthropology, the majority of exhibitions in ethnographic museums still resembled Lidchi’s characterization. In contemporary art, in contrast, recent knowledge production as well as its ongoing debates in anthropology have been successfully used, problematised and displayed. Debates, (co)-produced in anthropology departments, have attracted large crowds in institutions such as the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in

Berlin, for example during their programme on Animism (2012)⁴¹ or the Anthropocene (2013-2014).⁴² Contemporary anthropological knowledge-production has not found its way into the ethnographic museum yet, at least not to an extent in which other cultural institutions have mobilized it.⁴³ To phrase it differently, anthropological research seemed to run against the grain of anthropological representation, seemingly trapped in Lidchi’s characterizations. And the question that I believe remains unanswered – as hinted at in Sharon Macdonald’s text on the Humboldt Lab Dahlem – is whether a future of anthropological representation, a ‘post-ethnological’ representation, was imaginable ‘within’ the institutional walls (Macdonald 2015)?

The ‘post-ethnological’ at ‘Otherwise’

An attempt to rethink the relation between anthropology and its museums was at the core of the panel on the **post-ethnological** during the Otherwise symposium. The invited speakers, **Dan Hicks** and **Clémentine Deliss**, addressed the relation by presenting their own practice and theoretical approaches. This also concerned their positioning and (non-)use of the term *post-ethnological*.

At first glance, their presentation and arguments differed or even opposed each other. Their styles of presentation were also very different, Hicks showing a detailed powerpoint with highlighted arguments and Deliss delivering a personal and analytical account of her experiences as director of Frankfurt’s Weltkulturenmuseum. Hicks, archaeologist and curator at the Pitt Rivers museum, Oxford, started the discussion by rejecting the term of post-ethnological as “retro”, stating that it was curious to “talk about something doesn’t exist”. For Hicks, the post-ethnological was understood as an “after anthropology” museum. He argued instead for the transformative nature of such museums – highlighting their ability to, first, respond to changes, and second, to affect transformation. He centred his presentation around anthropological knowledge-production in relation to material culture in ethnographic museums, employing the concept of a *reverse anthropology* by Roy Wagner (1975). Focussing on the Pitt Rivers and its collections, Hicks chronologically reviewed different conceptions of material culture in the museum: *materialism* (“the museum is full of things”), (*multi-*) *culturalism* (“the museum is full of people”),

relationalism (“the museum is full of social relations”), and most recently, *multinaturalism*, *perspectivism*, *relativism* and the *ontological turn* (“the museum is full of knowledge and ideas”). For him, these conceptions were not consecutive but layered. Suggesting that we rethink and “invert” the museum in the form of reverse anthropology, the museum’s potential consisted in the objects’ versatile “transformativity”.

Unlike Hicks, Deliss had used the notion of the post-ethnological in her own work. I had first encountered the term post-ethnographic when she introduced it as an integral part of Frankfurt’s Weltkulturenmuseum, which she directed from 2010 to 2015.⁴⁴ In her take on the term, she challenged what she framed as “the logos of ethnos” through Paul Rabinow’s term of remediation. For her,

“one can no longer be content to use earlier examples of material culture for the purpose of depicting ethnos, tribe, or an existing range of grand anthropological themes” (Deliss 2012, 63).

As she highlighted during the symposium, she used the notion above all to dissociate herself from former practices: the *post-ethnological* served as a simple “heuristic device to suspend”. Deliss took her own trajectory as an example to problematize current challenges facing ethnographic museums. She challenged the idea of “anthropology’s authority and sole right to the interpretation of the collections”, as well as anthropology’s right to

For an inversion of priorities: from representation to research

define access to them. In addition to the idea of the post-ethnological as “post-ethnos”, she suggested what one could frame as the post-anthropology museum, in which the question of different forms of interpretation, including anthropology’s, was at the core of the museum’s policies, paired with a deliberate opening up of access to the museum storage spaces.

However, ultimately, the arguments went in the same direction. When it came to the definition of what was at the core of the panel – the question of research – the two speakers seemed to agree, even though they framed it differently. Hicks’ subsuming of the current theory-making about material culture, translating as the museum being full of ideas and knowledge, where “the objects in the collections [are understood] as forms of knowledge as much as they are forms of culture or material or personhood”, was implicitly a call for research. Deliss explicitly argued for a multiplication of interpretation and approaches in research, incorporated in the idea of the museum-university, in reference to the French *musée laboratoire* suggested by Georges Henri Rivière (1968: 18). Both took the museum’s collections as their point of departure, arguing for object-based research within the museum. Their conception of object-hood in the museum was similar, thinking of objects as ‘provisional’ and ‘unfinished’, as ‘amputees’ and thus, as possessing the potential to be (re-)made. Referencing Claude Lévi-Strauss, Hicks described knowledge as partial, “in that it is not total, and [...] in that it is not impartial.”

The necessity of an undeveloped object definition and the call for research resonated with my own experience in Berlin’s Ethnological Museum. In Berlin, the Africa collection alone consists of 75 000 objects. I still remember working in the collections, being overwhelmed by the sheer number, beauty and histories of the objects, stowed away in shelves. One could imagine how it looked like around 1900 in the museum, when the collection became so large “it had begun”, as the museum’s director Adolf Bastian put it, “to escape all control” (Bastian in Zimmerman 2001: 190). In 2013, more than 100 years later, a post-doctoral student offered his help to do research on the objects to the collection’s curator during a visit of the storage spaces. Out of curiosity, he asked what the priorities for research were. The curator answered, laughing, stating that he could pick any object, given that all that stuff got collected, but no research had been done on them. Even though this was obviously exaggerated, it raises the question of what we ‘do’ actually know about those collections. In the press and public opinion, at least when it comes to the Humboldt Forum, this not-knowing is framed as an accusation, as wrong-doing, as mistake. However, it can also be seen as potential, as both Deliss and Hicks framed it.

Still, no one knows better than people working with those collections, that they can turn into burdens. But as Beverly Butler illustrated during the symposium’s **Translocality** panel, it is the paradox of heritage that makes it so interesting: burden and potential, cure and poison at the same time. If the post-ethnological consists in

the negotiation of anthropology's role within ethnographic museums, then my conclusion would be that there needs to be more of it. What ethnographic collections thus call for, what they demand, is a conversion, an inversion of priorities. An inversion of priorities would mean a turning away from an exclusive focus on exhibitions towards collection-based research: an inversion away from representation towards research.

However, current development tends to move in another direction, concentrating resources in favour of representation. The major cultural institutions in which I have done fieldwork, the Humboldt Forum in Berlin and the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren in Belgium, both spent the majority of their financial capacities, personnel and efforts in representation and exhibition-making. They did so, first, by renovating and rebuilding imperial buildings; and second, by installing costly permanent exhibitions that are, contrary to what is sometimes claimed, immobile, fixed and built to last; and third, by progressively closing their storages to wider access. In Berlin, as reported in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in November 2017, the Humboldt Forum Kultur GmbH, a company that is responsible for events, communication and management, will grow to 350 people in 2019, the Humboldt Forum's scheduled opening (Häntzschel 2017). In contrast to these numbers, as of today, the museum's 'Africa' department has two permanent curators (which is an exception in the museum, usually each department has one curator), as well as one storage manager, who is responsible for the collection's

several tens of thousands of objects. Berlin's collections are neither fully inventoried nor digitized. They are not safely stored.⁴⁵ The archives are currently due to be transferred to be centrally archived in Berlin's Central Archive, away from the museum staff who knows them best. These decisions are not questions of curatorial responsibility but of larger institutional priorities.

These developments need to be nuanced by rather recent developments. Projects that enable and foster research – the digitization of the museum's archives,⁴⁶ a research project in cooperation with the National Museums of Tanzania⁴⁷ – have been funded, but mainly as a result of individual curators' efforts to acquire funds. Projects such as the proposed Research Campus Dahlem (Parzinger 2017), or a Central Institute for Provenance Research (Parzinger 2018) have been publicly announced, but whether and how these will be realized is still unclear. For object-based research to take place, however, the collections and archives need to be accessible, which demands 'sustainable' funding, time and personnel.

Discussion of the post-ethnological seems, then, to prompt rethinking the museum by rethinking the role of research within its walls. One suggestion, that we actively pursue at CARMAH, is to work within museums as field sites, turning the behind-the-scenes into the front stage. Approaching the museum as a field includes taking it seriously as a place of knowledge-production – observing practices within those museums, institutional frameworks and makings, and

processes of meaning-making, today and in the past. However, this only partly answers the questions of what anthropology can do in the ethnographic museum today. Another focus in research has been the recently strongly requested provenance research on the collections (Savoy 2017), which has its origins in art history but takes another, possibly more holistic form in anthropology, as discussed in this volume by Larissa Förster. However, the possibilities of research on and with collections and museums don't stop here. International as well local research projects, artistic and curatorial research are just some of the ideas that emerge when the collections are made accessible, thus offering the potential to transgress the multiple boundaries between the university and the museum, and what is done and discussed in front and behind the scenes of the museum, as well as, across the boundary between the museum's inside and outside.

Endnotes

33 In this text, I will refer to the collections and museums as *ethnographic*, not as *ethnological*. In view of the debates surrounding the terms, I prefer the notion of *ethnographic*, more often used in the English-speaking world.

34 Transforming the Ethnographic is one of the four research areas constituting CARMAH's *Making Differences in Berlin* project. More information here: <http://www.carmah.berlin/making-differences-in-berlin/>

35 The museum has, since June 2016, been called Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac.

36 This development, as one could describe it, has been confirmed by the change of legal status of the ethnographic collections from scientific objects to objects of

'French heritage' during their relocation to the Musée du Quai Branly, which made them "indestructible, imprescriptible and inalienable" (Beltrame 2015: 109). The new legal status of the objects allowed the French state to officially decline the Republic of Benin's request for the restitution of objects from the Kingdom of Dahomey in 2017 (Buffenstein 2017).

37 Examples of these developments in German-speaking countries are the Weltkulturenmuseum Frankfurt am Main, the Museum der Fünf Kontinente, Munich, or the Weltmuseum Wien. For a discussion and more detail on the recent name changes and restructuring of European museums with ethnographic collections, see (Macdonald 2016: 10–12).

38 Jonathan Fine, appointed curator of the Africa collections at Berlin's Ethnological Museum in 2015, or Yvette Mutumba, curator of the Africa collections at Frankfurt's Weltkulturenmuseum from 2012 to 2016, are just two examples of this trend.

39 See for example the exhibition *Éclectique. Une collection du XXI^e siècle* (2016–2017), an exhibition of Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière's collection, <http://www.quaibranly.fr/fr/expositions-evenements/au-musee/expositions/details-de-levenement/e/eclectique-36838/>; https://www.lesechos.fr/21/11/2016/LesEchos/22322-092-ECH_marc-ladreit-de-lacharriere-expose-sa-collection-au-musee-du-quai-branly.htm

40 As the recent name change of the German Ethnological Society (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde, DGV) to the German Association for Social and Cultural Anthropology (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sozial- und Kulturanthropologie, DGSKA) shows, 'Völkerkunde', but also 'Ethnologie' are progressively dismissed in the German-speaking context. As Han F. Vermeulen argues in his discussion of the name change, terms referring to the Anglophone context are adopted despite the historic burden of the term 'Anthropologie' and more explicitly 'Sozialanthropologie' in Germany, in favour of an international alignment (Vermeulen 2018).

41 The travelling exhibition was accompanied by a seminal anthology: http://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2012/animismus/start_animismus.php

42 The project on the Anthropocene started in 2013 and has been continued in the HKW's current programme: http://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2014/anthropozoen/anthropozoen_2013_2014.php

43 Exceptions are exhibitions such as *Persona* (MQB Paris), which aimed at challenging the borders between subject and object. It successfully questioned several of the ethnographic exhibitions characteristics, making use of historic ethnographic collections whilst integrating contemporary anthropological thought and theory, as well as newly acquired collections and contemporary art.

44 Recently, she has rather referred to the 'post-ethnological' museum.

45 The West African collections are currently not accessible because they are not secured from fire.

46 The German Research Council (DFG) confirmed the project's funding in December 2017. More information here: <http://www.smb.museum/nachrichten/detail/deutsche-forschungsgemeinschaft-ermoeglicht-digitalisierung-des-historischen-archivs-im-ethnologische-museum>

47 At the point of writing, the project is still described as a pilot-project running until late 2018. More information here: <http://www.smb.museum/museen-und-einrichtungen/ethnologisches-museum/sammeln-forschen/forschung/tansania-deutschland-geteilte-objekt-geschichten.html>

Speaker bios and original paper titles

On the Treatment of Dead Enemies

Dan Hicks is Associate Professor in the School of Archaeology, University of Oxford, and Curator of Archaeology at the Pitt Rivers Museum, and (2017-2018) Visiting Professor at Musée de Quai Branly. He has published widely on material culture, historical archaeology, heritage, museums, and the history of anthropology. His Twitter handle is @ProfDanHicks.

Conceptualising a Museum-University: Repositories as sites for Transdisciplinary Research and Cultural Exchange

Clémentine Deliss is a curator, publisher, and cultural historian. She studied contemporary art and semantic anthropology and holds a PhD from the University of London. Her work addresses historical and contemporary iterations of global artists' networks, the remediation of ethnographic collections, and the articulation of artistic practice and interdisciplinary through publishing. She lives in Berlin.

Author and chair

Margareta von Oswald is a doctoral research fellow at CARMAH and at the EHESS Paris. Analyzing two major museum restructuration processes (Berlin's Humboldt Forum; Tervuren's Royal Museum for Central Africa), her research focuses on the negotiations around contested material legacies in the present. Recent publications include 'Objects/Subjects in Exile' (*L'Internationale*, 2017) and the special issue of *Museum Worlds* on 'Engaging Anthropological Legacies' (co-edited with Henrietta Lidchi and Sharon Macdonald).

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ENGAGEMENT

An essay based on a panel with Bonita Bennett, Ute Marxreiter, and Laura Peers

by Christine Gerbich

The English word ‘engagement’ has been teasing me for a while. My first encounter with it was during an international conference, *The Mediation of Art – The Art of Mediation*, held in Germany in 2010, that I attended as a novice to the museum field. Over the conference’s dinner, I got into a random conversation with a colleague from Britain who introduced herself as representative of an organization called *Engage*. I struggled to find an adequate translation. I only knew the term in the sense of formalizing a relationship before getting married, that is, in the sense of committing one to another. Did *Engage!* propose that people should fall in love with museums? The term certainly had to do with some kind of relating. So, was it used in the sense of ‘sich engagieren’, the German expression for getting involved into something? Or was it referring to political participation? As the conference was about art education in museums, the woman looked at me rather surprised, when I asked her for clarification. An experienced German colleague jumped in to explain that, in the British museum context engagement was used in the field of museum education, in the sense of helping the visitor to learn about the meanings that have been attached to objects. Our colleague immediately rectified this, by saying that what ‘they’ meant did even encompass more: increasing the accessibility of the collections for each individual, make them enjoyable, and to help them understand the visual arts⁴⁸. Obviously, the term engagement was not easy to grasp, and working for and reflecting about museums in countries as different as Germany, the United Kingdom, Yemen and Egypt, I experienced many similar situations.

Translating the meanings of engagement from on language and professional context into another always brought to light similarities and differences between museums, museumscares, professional practices and the networks they are entangled with. Translation always did its job as an “agent of difference” (Haverkamp 1997, 7).

My first humble attempt to trace the meaning of the term back then highlights an important aspect of *engagement* that makes it different to other, more abstract concepts discussed in this volume. Unlike **alterity**, **post-ethnographic**, or **translocality**, the term is used in theoretical discourses, but also in day-to-day museum practice and in quotidian language. The good thing about this is that everyone involved in a discussion about engagement in museums brings an initial understanding of what could (or should) be meant. The difficulty is that its mundanity runs the risk of obscuring its meanings and the complexities of professional engagement practice which rely on a deep theoretical knowledge and experience to be successful. These competences include: psychological and pedagogical knowledge, the ability to quickly dive into other experts’ ways of thinking, to critically reflect the relevance of the questions that they ask for non-experts, and social skills to connect, coordinate and negotiate meanings between communities of practitioners whose motivations to engage with museums differ from another. An example of a prominent, and very old, conflict is the ‘dumbing down’ issue. Those whose hearts have been devoted to research on a specific theme might fear oversimplification, while others

who want to engage people with expert knowledge are keen to distil the quintessence of a large body of knowledge to make it understandable to non-experts.

The range of possible theories at work becomes visible in the short dialogue between the two colleagues who referred to two very different ideas about museum learning. “Helping the visitor to learn” some kind of knowledge is rooted in a behaviourist understanding to learning, which considers it as the acquisition of expert knowledge by means of transmission through an expert (Watson 1913; Skinner 1972). Engagement in the sense of increasing accessibility of collections, making them enjoyable and helping visitors to understand, refers to constructivist ideas (Glaserfeld 1985), which consider learning to be a complex activity of self-motivated meaning-makers, who construct knowledge on the basis of and through their own experiences with an environment. Here, learning in museums is facilitated rather than transmitted, and includes not just cognitive, but also affective characteristics that are dependent on individual interests and motivations, attitudes, and emotions (Falk und Dierking 1992; Falk 2009; Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson 1995; Watson 2015). Contrasting, often only implicitly expressed, theoretical ideas may lead to very different modes of engagement, as Hohenstein and Moussouri (2017) argue with respect to concepts of museum learning.

Learning, however, is only one aspect of engagement in museums. In the late 1980s critical museology started to question museums’ innocent status as objective and

neutral hosts of mankind’s heritage (Vergo 1989; Mensch 1995; Macdonald 1998) and confronted museums around the world with the aftermaths of their imperialist and colonial practices, their politics of non- or mis- representation and their exclusionary engagement practices (O’Neill 2002; Sandell 2002; Dodd und Sandell 2001; Hooper-Greenhill 1992). This critique called for new methods to allow for a critical reflection of authorship, institutional ways of knowledge production and the contents derived out of it (Lindauer 2007; Mörsch 2009, 2014; Peers und Brown 2003). Museums around the world initiated or participated in a wide range of consultative, collaborative, co-productive projects with groups from the margins of the museum world that went beyond traditional ways of museum education. Rather, engagement was understood in the sense of building up and nurturing relations that reach outside institutional boundaries.

Most of the literature on engagement work in museums and on heritage sites reflects the theoretical discussions and experiences from museums and heritage institutions in the Anglophone Global North - Great Britain, the United States of America, Canada, and Australia. The stimulative character of the publicly funded institution our British colleague represented – *Engage!* – was telling, in that it revealed the political attention attributed to engagement work in the cultural sector. At the time of the conference, the concept had become one of the buzz words in many Anglophone liberal democracies. In the British case, museums had come under

Engagement Otherwise

scrutiny through the government in the early 1990s and called on to demonstrate public accountability (Macdonald 2002: 32). Making museums accessible to as many people as possible had become a necessity for museums' survival. It was not at least this need for accountability, e.g. with regard to the cultural sector's macroeconomic benefits,⁴⁹ which had led to changes in the field of professional engagement work in museums and heritage sites: an increased number of staff responsible for different aspects of engagement work (e.g. interpretation, education, outreach) in museums, a nation-wide advocacy and training network for gallery education practitioners (which our colleague was representing),⁵⁰ and an investment in academic research on museums and other heritage institutions. In comparison, the debates about the social responsibilities of cultural institutions had been rather silent in Germany. While engagement in the sense of participation had been promoted in the 1970s, e.g. through Hilmar Hoffmann's famous demand *Kultur für Alle!* (*Culture for All!*), its renaissance was in its beginnings.⁵¹ Funding for reflexive engagement work was limited and only slowly did new museological discourses spread in the field.

My reflections so far are in line with those of Onciul (2017: 1) who points to the fugitive, and sometimes even contradictory character of the concept. Engagement withstands a single, fixed definition. Its multiple meanings rather suggest that it be understood as a process during which humans and non-humans are being set into a relation with each other. The aim of the **Otherwise** panel, thus, was not to search for a final definition, but rather, to complicate things by contrasting experiences from very different institutional settings. With **Bonita Bennett**, director of District Six Museum in Cape Town in South Africa, **Ute Marxreiter**, research associate for education and mediation from the National Museums in Berlin who is involved in the planning of the future Humboldt Forum in Berlin, and **Laura Peers**, professor at Oxford University and curator for the Americas Collections at its Pitt Rivers Museum, three professionals joined the panel who are well aware of the theoretical debates around engagement work, and know what's going on on the ground. Their presentations revealed similarities, but also differences regarding institutional values, kinds of expertise mobilized, the ways of dealing with collections, the interconnections with wider networks, and also the 'feel' that was attached to each of the processes described.

Mindful and experienced, with some bruises and scars

The first example presented on the panel was engagement work conducted in Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, an institution founded in 1884. The museum hosts the university's collection of archaeological and ethnographic objects collected during the late 19th and early 20th century, in the context of colonial and imperialist political enterprises of the British Empire. Laura Peers, who, together with Alison Brown (2003), has produced inspiring discussion of work with source communities, referred to engagement's original meaning by characterizing it through "battles" over resources and power, "mutual obligations" between people, and "sometimes difficult relationships". A lot of the Pitt Rivers' engagement work, she said, was with "minority groups who have lost access to power and resources, either within the narrow nation state or geopolitically".

Peers departs from a critique of museums as spaces for "symbolic restitution" (Phillips 2003: 158). This, Peers argues,

goes back to the idea of the civilizing museum, as imparting culture, a one-way-model of communication. We engage them und they pop out of the other side transformed. It is a lot more complicated than that [...].

From her perspective, transformation through engagement work is not about changing the participants, but about institutional change. To illustrate an alternative approach, and the complexities that come with this she provides the example of the *Haida Project*. This collaborative project was

named after the Haida First Nation People in Canada who have established a Committee that is working to locate ancestral remains and material culture in Canada, Europe, and the United States and to initiate repatriation. In the *Haida Project*, representatives of the Haida Repatriation Committee and museum professionals from the UK are working together to build up relationships that are mutually beneficial (Krpmotich und Peers 2013). The engagement work she describes through this example has evolved out of long-standing co-creative work with people who brought contrasting motivations to the project. Institutional representatives felt responsible to deal with colonial collections and wished to share objects and negotiate knowledge, but were bound by institutional regulations and needs (something that Peers described as, "tick the box" for funding bodies). And the Haida people who requested to assert control over their material heritage, did so by "invas[ing] respectfully, without backing down". Peers emphasized the importance of time for the creation of solid engagement between stakeholders and how this process required patience to develop trustful relationships, ingenuity and diplomatic skills. She used the example of the renegotiation of institutional regulations for handling objects to emphasize her point:

Haida delegates asked just as they always do, to dance with treasures as a way to show respect to ancestors and reconnecting with them. This was something we had never done and we had to work the whole issue starting from the directors

The community member

office through conservation, collection management and then back up again, but we finally worked with respect, very slowly, patiently with Haida people and people around the museum to arrive at a way where this could happen, where there was a way of holding objects and physically moving with them that honoured both sets of concerns and we managed to do that.

This mindful process of engagement relied on reflexive practice, experience and expertise about Haida artifacts and traditions, as well as the contemporary struggles of collaboration partners. It managed to build up trustful relationships between parties involved. It did not spread out into the museum's surrounding community, but dug deep into institutional structures and values. This process may have caused bruises to the initial formal layout of the project. However, what evolved out of the long and intensive encounters, were robust and mature relationships.

What does engagement look like in an institution which does not have to deal with its own problematic histories? The District Six Museum in Cape Town resulted out of a movement of people who “understood the role of importance that memory could play in restitution and reclamation” as we learned from Bonita Bennett. Before establishing itself as the first anti-apartheid museum in South Africa, the privately funded museum existed in different places and formats in Cape Town. Its collections were assembled to commemorate District Six - as a cosmopolitan area in the city until 1966, when People of Colour were forcefully removed under the Apartheid-regime. Bennett points to the specifics of the collections, which she describes as having grown out of an absence that in itself tells a very interesting, and important story. In the early days of the museum, there was no traditional way of having a collection and then forming an exhibition or the story around the collection. The focus, as she remembers, was on the key features of this community that needed to be commemorated, a lot of it being located in the sphere of the intangible. Bennett provided two examples to illustrate how the museum engaged with its communities. The first one, an oral history project, started off as a storytelling around rituals of food, and food-making, and rituals of the home in District Six. The second project aimed at collecting memories of people from various backgrounds regarding a specific place in Cape Town, the *Peninsula maternity hospital*.

In the case of District Six Museum, engagement is an essential aspect of the institution's identity that draws on critical

pedagogical approaches like Paulo Freire's and constantly invests in close relationships. Reciprocity is a key aspect of the museum's daily work and very much needed in a situation of political conflict and instability. Bennett points to the need to create spaces that facilitate opportunities for people to really learn from each other, that encourage diverse voices to speak out, especially those from marginalized groups.

"What do they of museums know who only museums know?" - adopting writer's C.L.R. James' quote⁵² to the museum context, Bennett asked museum professionals with this question to acknowledge the political dimensions of their individual practices. Bennett's 'confessions' about her own disciplinary origin in sociolinguistics, and her holistic understanding of expertise being comprised of both, professional knowledge and personal experiences as activist, religious person, mother, provided food for thought about the powers attributed to disciplinary knowledge in museums. Rather than approaching the museum as a keeper of knowledge, her point of entry was to use the museum "as a vehicle for doing so much good." As for many people working in District Six, she is part of the community the museum has been created for. This shapes engagement work in a way different from other museums:

My formative years as an activist in the 80's has contributed greatly towards shaping how I engage with the world: consciously, holistically and intentionally present to the others in such engagement, especially

those who have been marginalized. Possibly because I'm not located in an academic context, the scholarly discipline is neither the first nor the only way in which I identify myself. So the question that I always ask myself in my daily life, particularly in my professional life is always about how does my work contribute towards supporting a culture of human rights, building a better humanity which includes a better me as well, which is ever more engaged, informed, and caring.

District Six, it became clear, has a very different purpose and comes out of a different origin than institutions organized around collections and disciplinary knowledge. "But", she says, referencing earlier discussions during the *Otherwise* conference on the challenges of decolonizing museums, "I offer it as an example of what is possible when one is freed from all of the other tensions."

Providing services and struggling with transformation

What do engagement processes look like in one of Germany's most prestigious museum projects? Ute Marxreiter started out by presenting the institutional architecture of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, which is going to open its doors to the public in autumn 2019. This massive project is led

by a *Gründungsintendanz*, a group of three founding directors who were appointed by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. Each of the institutions involved in this project, as Marxreiter exemplified by locating herself within the organizational structure of Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (SPK), is “supercomplex in themselves”: SPK unites five institutions under one roof, one of them being the National Museums of Berlin (SMB), which houses 15 museum collections and four institutes. Within SMB, professional engagement work is considered a service provided by a cross-sectional unit, the Department for Education, Mediation and Visitor Services. This is where Ute Marxreiter is located, being assigned responsibility for engagement work in the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art. Her daily work includes juggling with stakeholders from several institutional units. On the one hand, engagement is steered through a central service unit that aims to apply the same standards for each museum. These standards are based on constructivist ideas about learning, framed around the idea of a dialogue and put into practice through action-oriented projects. However, in contrast to District Six Museum, they are not inspired by ideas of critical pedagogy. Working within the rather strict hierarchies of a large national institution “limits your spaces of agencies and what you can do”. In this setting, new museological claims for *participation* – while valued by many colleagues – has a ‘bad taste’ as this would run counter the institution’s logics, which asks for services to be provided for as many people and groups as possible.

On the other hand, the collections of the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art are going to be represented within the future Humboldt Forum, and Marxreiter and her colleagues are busy developing and expanding the institution’s ways of engaging with publics. An example for this is the development of an exhibition project in the Humboldt-Box, a temporary exhibition space, which is used to experiment with ideas for the future Forum. As Marxreiter explains, the idea for the project was pushed forward by one of the founding directors who told the team to use objects from six collections to create an exhibition on the protection of children. Working together in a new multidisciplinary team that had been setup top down and not yet able to develop a common language and a concept to follow was challenging and time-consuming. However, drawing on existing networks set up by collection specialists with teachers in the Global South, a small co-creative project was set up which resulted in a “library on education”, in which pupils from Venezuela reflected critically about ideas of education and a movie about one of their core narratives of partners.

As much as Marxreiter was convinced by the transformative potential of the project for the future, she nevertheless reflected on it critically and with ambiguous feelings.

When I look at the pictures of the installation we did for the exhibition, I always have these kinds of mixed feelings, because I’m not

presenting this here as a means to say that I'm ticking the box. (...) I'm very much interested in building up relations, taking time, listening and doing something very discrete and slow and letting things emerge. But I'm very aware that these kinds of images, where experiences are turned into objects, or commodities, or spectacles, this can very easily be tokenized as a legitimization, saying 'we are doing the right thing at the Humboldt Forum'. I don't know how this will play out in the future.

Conclusion

We only had a little time to dive with our panellists into their museum worlds, but what came out of all contributions was that engagement work in museums has indeed to do with personal commitments to people, ideas, objects, and with being emotionally involved in different worlds at the same time. It is about experiencing the liberating, limiting, or brutal effects of museum work, and also battling over resources, rules, or structures. The term *engagement*, thus, describes well the ambivalence of daily practices.

As a theoretical concept, however, the term appears too spongy and requires specification. This applies not only to different theories and methods concerning learning and education, but what becomes obvious is that we need to develop a vocabulary that allows us to better grasp engagement's political and sociological dimensions, e.g.

the values and idea of (wo)man underlying it, which are deeply ingrained in the (cultural) political realities and institutional traditions of each museum. The panel clearly revealed the significance of national politics, but more so those of the specific institutions presented. The institutional action of the District Six Museum, described by Bennett, is aimed directly at overcoming racist structures in contemporary society and is committed to deliberative democratic values. Commitment in this context means to allow 'even the softest voices' to speak out, and leadership describes itself as peer among equals. The example from the Pitt Rivers Museum describes a representative-democratic process in which delegates of the institution and an indigenous group negotiate new rules of cooperation. It is noteworthy that in both examples, engagement is understood as a cross-sectional task that a range of professionals is involved in – "starting from the director's office through conservation, collection management and then back up again", as Peers describes it. Both examples show in an impressive way the fruits of long-term, respectful and mutual cooperation to overcome asymmetrical power relations. If museums are able to work this way, the insecurities and feelings of dissatisfaction that the last panelist mentioned may be resolved. In the Humboldt Forum example, the character of engagement work appears to be strongly determined by representatives of institutional elites, while comparatively little power, resources (e.g. in terms of time) and scope for action is being attributed to those working on the ground. This makes joint renegotiation of rules and social and epistemic privileges in the ways

Speaker bios and original paper titles

that, for example, Sternfeld (2012) suggests, rather unlikely, or at least, very difficult to manage.

It is challenging to think museums otherwise, but it is even harder to ‘make’ them otherwise. One way to understand exactly what the difficulties with this are, might be to develop a more comprehensive analytical vocabulary for these socio-political dimensions of engagement. This would need to reflect the fact that the concept, at its very core, is always about social relations, and thus, about how museums and the professionals who work in them relate to one another and the worlds with which they are connected.

Endnotes

48 For more information on engage, see: <https://www.engage.org/> (last accessed 18.4.2018).

49 See for example the report on *The contribution of arts and culture to national economy* (https://cebr.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/CEBR_economic_report_web_version_0513.pdf)

50 See <https://www.engage.org/advocacy>

51 <https://www.kubi-online.de/artikel/kultur-alle-kulturpolitik-sozialen-demokratischen-rechtsstaat>

52 In 1963, Trinidadian C.L.R. James, a cricket player, commentator and writer wrote *Beyond a Boundary*, a memoir on cricket in which he pointed to the political aspects of the sport, especially its impact on racial politics. Asking “whaWt do they of cricket know who only cricket know?” suggests to consider the political as an integral part of each social activity.

Building knowledge, building community in District Six (Cape Town, South Africa)

Bonita Bennett was appointed as director of the District Six Museum in 2008. Her professional training is as an educator with strong anti-apartheid activist roots. She completed her M.Phil in Applied Sociolinguistics at UCT in 2005, focusing on narratives of trauma of people who had been forcibly removed from various areas in the Western Cape.

Obligations, battles, relationships: museum anthropology and the praxis of engagement

Laura Peers is Curator for the Americas Collections, Pitt Rivers Museum, and Professor of Museum Anthropology, University of Oxford. Her research concerns historic Indigenous visual and material culture in North America and its roles within Indigenous societies today. Recent work has included: *The Great Box Project - Learning from the Masters: facilitating the carving of a new version of a masterpiece Haida box in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum*, by Gwaai and Jaalen Edenshaw. In 2016, this partnership project won the Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Public Engagement with Research. Laura Peers has published various books and articles about public engagement work, among them *Museums and Source Communities* (2003, together with Alison Brown) and *This is Our Life: Haida Material Heritage and Changing*

Museum Practice (2013; together with Cara Krmpotich).

Discussant

Ute Marxreiter received a training in Theater Studies, Art History and English Literature. Before working for several major museum institutions as curator of education (among them Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen and documenta 12), she was involved in several collaborative art projects. Since 2014 she has been working as an educational curator for the Ethnological Museum and the Museum of Asian Art in Berlin where she is responsible for the concept of the family-spaces of both museums in the Humboldt Forum.

Author and chair

Christine Gerbich completed her Master in Sociology at Mannheim University and is currently a doctoral researcher at CARMAH. She is part of a team which focuses on ways in which Islam is represented in museums and heritage, looking at the transformation of engagement strategies within the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin. Her publications include the volume *Neuzugänge – Migrationsgeschichten in Berliner Sammlungen* (2013, together with Laurraine Bluche, Susan Kamel, Susanne Lanwerd, and Frauke Miera), and *Experimentierfeld Museum. Internationale Perspektiven auf Museen, Islam und Inklusion* (2014, together with Susan Kamel).

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