

ExpoTime!

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In this issue:

Problems of time



Do museums professionals understand time?

Today's advertisements, always trying to make us enjoy consumption, are full with nonsense on time terms. Forget the past. Enjoy the Here and Now. Museum professionals ought to have known better. But do they?

While some newer museums of science, technology and natural sciences worldwide have deleted history of their sciences just to constrain themselves to today's knowledge as the one and only scientific approach (always looking for money from sponsors) and hide the historicity of their funds, many art museums worldwide still cut off history and context. Even such typical museums of historical context as ethnographical museums misunderstand their job and enjoy the public with strange concepts eliminating the reconstruction of past and present cultures: While some of them misuse their fundus of ethnographical objects as quarry for modern artists and leave interpretation to unscholarly epistemological interests, others seek salvation from anti-colonial criticism in the presentation of cultures under some more or less important "key-words", eliminating time and space, and, most of all, differences between cultures. But visitors visit museums for the explanations of the different. "Many cultures, many answers" is not an answer.

But also on other levels, museum professionals do not question time. In her inspiring article, Anette Rein refers to Einstein remembering us, that time and space are scientific models in order to structure our worlds. She continues: "Surprisingly, ... in the discussions I participated in the last years, it was never asked what museum people meant precisely with "the present". The hitherto average answer was: "There is no present – it is just an illusion. We can experience only past or future."

Are "contemporary artists" really dealing with contemporary (present) questions? Which concept of the present is common in museums, mostly dealing with historical objects? Is the present of the makers the present of the visitors?

Rein: "What does this imply for the scenography ... which employs historic objects to mediate knowledge of a coeval diversity? How can different concepts of time be performed? Which role can be identified for a present, without provoking an emotionally and intellectually confusion in time? How can the experience of the presentness (*Gegenwärtigkeit*) be enacted for the visitors?" Anette Rein seems to raise questions which neither museum professionals nor museologists dared to ask before.

Mixing present and even a very distant past is one of the methods of ideology. The putty most commonly are misunderstandings or a biased nationalistic picture of the past, in the case of "Persepolis" an undemocratic picturesque understanding of rulers of the ancient Orient and their historical propaganda. Persepolis would have deserved a more interpretive museum – the same must be said about the National Museum on Tehran. An exhibition or – better: a museum of the Persepolis excavations which corrects ideological approaches of the past and offers a sober interpretation of it would help to establish a better understanding of the Iranian history and nation.

With a glimpse on the Galileo case, on stolen and faked books, we are close to another misunderstanding not only in museums: the misinterpretation of forged recent objects as authentic historical sources. In this case, a younger scientist from the United States used classical (often unlearnt?) methods of the auxiliary sciences to proof a book as fake. The same would have been possible with a sample analysis of the paper which was modern and acid-baked in an oven.

I do not know if the year 2014 brings a turn in misconceptions of time, present and past. Just one thing is for certain: Due to its succes in museums worldwide, ExpoTime! will appear six times a year in 2014.

Enjoy the issue!

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Anette Rein

Contemporary issues in museums and aspects of participation: Experiences and fictions of Past and Present¹



*„Time and space are modes by which we think and not conditions in which we exist“
Albert Einstein²*

The internet exhibition “*Gesammelte Gegenwart - Eine virtuelle Ausstellung*”³ shows a heterogeneous collection of objects representing the present, chosen by a student group at the Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena. Objects such as a razor for women or waste containers in different colours were selected. The choice of the exhibited items followed two principles: they had to be from the daily life practice and the students were as individuals involved to decide which object would be the best representative of the present. But, this present could be in 2006, the time of the working group, or any other time. The chosen object just had to be explained as being representative for the particular chosen present.⁴

This digital exhibition has to be seen in the wider context of museums which are actually very much concerned with the question of how to document with objects of the present for the future.⁵

Surprisingly, in contrast to the above mentioned example, in the discussions I participated over the last years, it was never asked what museum people meant precisely with “the present”. The hitherto average answer was: “There is no present – it is just an illusion. We can experience only past or future.”

Going on in my analysis about concepts of present in museum collections and exhibitions, I doubted more and more that this last statement should be valid for tangible and intangible heritage likewise. Concerning the material objects it seemed to be very clear: according to the radiocarbon dating, the ‘present’ started in 1950.⁶ Insofar, coevalness in museum collections could be reduced “to physical simultaneity [presence] or material (co)-existence.”⁷

But what about a possible individual experience of a present or now?⁸ This is an aspect which refers especially to the volatile intangible heritage and to the museum exhibition as a space of experience (*Erfahrungsraum*⁹). With ‘experience’ I follow the definition of the

philosopher Sean Enda Power, “that experience is an awareness or consciousness of something ... any non-conscious occurrence is not an experience. There are two ... unproblematic kinds of experience: perception and episodic memory ...”¹⁰ In the following, perception is the main kind of experience I consider.



After an eight weeks contact, anthropologists from Portsmouth University started a press campaign stating the Amondawa, living in the Brazil Rainwood, do not use any concept of time measurement. The even do not talk about „time“. This picture appeared in many newspapers, magazines and blogs. This one here is from the Daily Mail online, 20.5.2011

As an anthropologist I am aware of the great variety of concepts of time worldwide. Each tradition communicates knowledge about the time bygone. At least, each (rudimentary) activity implies a planning which means available time of the future, and often it needs a coordination of people, living far away from each other, which makes an accepted measuring of time necessary. The impossibility to cancel the past, the uncertainty of the future, the experience from youth and old age, the awareness of time limitation – all these are universal attributes of the human existence and each culture developed its own specific institutions and belief systems, which impress each individual and the group a specific orientation in time.¹¹ The following discussion of time concepts, I will introduce with concepts of time meas-

uring¹² before I concentrate on aspects of the special experience of present.

The measuring of time

The following four models represent a reduction of all possible concepts and time experiences which are connected with gender, age and many different aspects and contexts of the people who are practising them.¹³ “...cultures and societies have fixed, and still do fix, the boundaries between the past, present and future

in quite different ways.”¹⁴

I. The first model structures time according to the daily necessities following nature and the life cycles of the members of a specific society. Time is not strictly measured but oscillates between the necessities of life¹⁵.

II. A cyclical concept of time is common, when the past is always repeated in the future - the former and the latter are embedded in a repetitive process. Both are structurally equal and differentiation is intended (as with the natural cycle between day and night).

III. In the late medieval period in the West, a linear time consciousness came to prevail. Then, the image of a time circle was replaced by a line which, like an arrow, moved from the past through the present into the future. According to this concept, moments that have passed did not return. Since then, the difference between past, present and future became the widely accepted concept of time. “For Christianity, time was basically biblical time, meaning that it had a clear beginning (God’s creation of the Earth) and a fixed end (Judgement Day). Time was basically ‘filled in’ by the creation plan of God. There was no time before nor any after.”¹⁶

IV. The last time concept was - according to the sociologist Hartmut Rosa - developed in the postmodern society (or second modernity). A severe change concerning the future took place. Since then, it is believed that we have a linear time system with an open future. The historical development is not extended towards a certain aim – but towards the results remaining uncertain



Ida Bagus: A traditional cockfight in Bali. A coconut-shell is being used as timing device. Berata Surya, Batuan 1997. Photo: Rein



Calendar from Bali in the Kamasan style. http://cache1.willhaben.apa.net/mmo/2/706/015/52_1596778517.jpg access 19.12.2013

and open. The experience of time is seen as a continuous movement and an increasing acceleration into an undefined no-where.

Various time concepts coexist in many societies but with different estimations and specific characteristics. Following Chris Lorenz (Professor of German Historical Culture) and Berber Beverage (Ass. Professor of Philosophy and Theory of History), “[i]t has been argued that cultures ... have different dominant orientations in time. ‘Traditional’ cultures are generally supposed to be characterized by a dominant (political, ethical, cultural, etc.) orientation to the past, while ‘modern’ cultures characteristically have a dominant future-orientation [within Western history around the end of the 18th cent.]¹⁷. ‘Postmodern’ cultures [around 1989]¹⁸, however, are supposedly characterised by a dominant orientation towards the present.”¹⁹

Living in a postmodern society, this last statement became very clear for me on the International Museum Day 2013, when I visited the temporary exhibition “Speed is now! Pacing the race against time”²⁰ in the Museum for Communication in Berlin. In the entrance area of the exhibition, I found the following surprising quote: “Speed is now! The present lasts just a matter of seconds. Two or three seconds are the upper limit at which our brain can combine different stimuli and sensations to form an entity. Anything longer and now is already the past!”²¹ When I read this quote, I was excited having found an apparently simple answer regarding a definition about the experience of present, relating to my own individual experience of an instant “now”. According to the former definition, there seemed to be an instant presentness (*Gegenwärtigkeit*) which, from a neurological point of view, should be possibly experienced beyond individuality and cross-cultural?

Robin Le Poidevin²², Professor of Metaphysics, distinguishes “between perceiving the present and perceiving something as present. We may perceive as present items that are past. Indeed, given the finite speed of the transmission of both light and sound (and the finite speed of transmission of information from receptors to brain), it seems that we only ever perceive what is past. However, this does not by itself tell us what it is to perceive something as present, rather than as past. Nor does it explain the most striking feature or our experience as-of the present: that is constantly changing.” As two temporal boundaries of time experience Le Poidevin mentions the human inability neither to perceive the future nor the distant past. According to him, “although we perceive the past, we do not perceive it as past, but as present.”²³ Concerning the perception of the distant past he refers to biological considerations: “To be effective agents in the world, we must represent accurately what is currently going on: to be constantly out of date in our beliefs while going about our activities would be to face pretty imme-

diately extinction... since the transmission of light and sound, though finite, is extremely rapid... Evolution has ensured that we do not experience anything other than the very recent past. ... To perceive something as present is simply to perceive it.... It is the experience of being located at a particular moment in time.”²⁴

With these concepts in my mind, I started to ask the question: What does this observation mean for museums, their collections, and their exhibitions? I asked myself when and where I would experience (my) present for example in an exhibition about contemporary or historical topics and objects? What does this imply for the scenography e.g. in an ethnographic museum which employs historic objects to mediate knowledge of a coeval diversity? How can different concepts of time be performed? Which role can be identified for a present, without provoking an emotionally and intellectually confusion in time? How can the experience of the presentness (*Gegenwärtigkeit*) be enacted for the visitors? For my further analysis I will refer to the time-models the anthropologist Johannes Fabian offers. He differentiates between coevalness and two other temporal relations which are, according to Beverage often mixed or confused. Beverage summarizes the concept of Fabian²⁵ as follows:

“1. First there is ‘synchronicity/simultaneity’ which refers to ‘events occurring at the same physical time’. [According to Fabian] this ‘physical time’ is often used as a ‘parameter’ or ‘vector’ in describing socio-cultural processes, but it is conventionally taken to be neutral in relation to these processes and that it is thus allegedly not subject to cultural variation.

2. Second there is ‘contemporaneity’ which [he] define[s] as ‘co-occurrence’ in ... typological time.’ This ‘typological’ or ‘mundane’ time ... ‘is measured, not as time elapsed, nor by reference to points on a (linear) scale, but in terms of socio-culturally meaningful events or, more precisely, intervals between such events... [The typological time] underlies such qualifications as preliterate vs. literate, traditional vs. modern, peasant vs. industrial, and a host of permutations which include pairs such as tribal vs. feudal, rural vs. urban. In this use, time may almost totally be divested of its vectorial, physical connotations.

3. Finally there is ‘coevalness’ which combines the meanings of both simultaneity and contemporaneity and which [Fabian] relate[s] to the German term *Gleichzeitigkeit*. ‘Beyond that’, [he adds] ‘it is to connote a common, active, ‘occupation,’ or sharing, of time’. Coevalness is closely related to ‘intersubjective time’ which has its philosophical sources in phenomenological thought and comments to the ‘communicative nature of human action and interaction.’”²⁶

Following these time concepts of Fabian, I was look-

ing for exhibitions in which I hoped to experience any form of coevalness or present – not only simultaneity or contemporaneity of objects and visitors.

Museums and present

In the spring of 2013, in search of ‘my experienced coevalness’, I visited several exhibitions and events in Munich²⁷, Berlin²⁸, and Frankfurt am Main²⁹, which proclaimed to concentrate on contemporary occurrences. Within these different presentations, like artistic interventions, participatory approaches, and documentation of contemporary political movements, I want to mention the two following examples as a starting point of my analysis about the different time experiences in museums.³⁰

1. Artistic temporary interventions in the City Museum of Munich³¹



Knitting as a street art in front of the museum's entrance.
Foto: Rein (8.5.2013)

Junior scientists and students of the Institute for European Ethnology at the LMU³² were invited to work in the permanent exhibition “*Typisch München* (Typical Munich)” in the City Museum. With 13 different, individual artistic interventions, they should respond to the existing exhibition under the title: “*Mein München. Interventionen im Münchner Stadtmuseum*” (16.11.2012-23.06.2013)³³. With their temporary art objects and

installations, the students of ethnology commented on typical historical objects, places and the official history presented by the museum in the new perspectives of the younger generation.

While watching the interventions and especially the knit-art³⁴, commenting inter alia the historic objects inside and the architecture of the museum outside, I could experience a moment of present-now. I felt touched and surprised by this museum which performed in a way I had never seen before. Provoking attentiveness – this could be one form of creating awareness of the present and for a specific topic. As long as the knitted comments remain part of the exhibition, they remain a vivid part of the actual discussions around the museum topics and therefore they are received in the functional memory³⁵ (*Funktionsgedächtnis*) as Aleida Assmann named it. Later, when the knit art is integrated into the collection, it moves into the “*Speichergedächtnis*” (storehouse memory³⁶).

2. The Historical Museum in Frankfurt am Main started to collect objects from the political movement called “*Occupy*”³⁷, which in 2012 was a very active development engaging not only the demonstrators and police but also the average citizen for months long in certain public spaces.

On the 15th of May 2013, the first objects were given to the museum by members of the Occupy community with their motto: “*Who owns the public space?*”

During the opening ceremony, the speeches of the participants brought up the conflict in how far the action of handing over objects of an actual political movement could initiate the danger of a musealization of the political movement and therefore the cause together with the end of the vibrancy and the openness of that movement. Being documented for a museum and then being part of a museum collection, meant the stagnancy and “*deadness*” of the objects? The collected pamphlets, booklets, notices, pictures and letters ceased to be part of the street movement and became transformed into the institutional past (*Speichergedächtnis*).

In this case, I got the impression that the handing over happened in coevalness, commonly experienced by the participants of the event. However at the same time, it was a separation of the tangible from the intangible heritage. While being integrated into the museum collection, the involved objects of the movement had become already part of the past and their ‘present’ had become institutionalized under a new frame of museum rules.

Analysing my personal experience regarding the conflicting times during the event which hindered me to experience the Occupy movement as part of my experience of presentness during the event I came to the fol-



The party of the Historical Museum Frankfurt. The text on the laying banner in front of the picture: “Wem gehört der öffentliche Raum?”, a central question of the Occupy movement. Foto: Rein (15.5.2013)

lowing conclusion. Their objects and I were in the same room simultaneously but I did not feel part of the event which happened in front of my eyes. In my experience there was contemporaneity, but, for me as a visitor, I did not feel included in coevalness.

The question remained, where could I find an example of my personal, real moving present which would touch me with all my senses and which would simultaneously represent the coevalness in its diverse content? As a visitor, I wanted to have the feeling not to be confronted with a fixed, produced image of present – like in exhibitions presenting contemporary topics – but I was looking for a moving, a vivid and openly changing experience within an exhibition, constituting coevalness. In conversations with colleagues and friends it became clear to me that the best chance to experience my personal present would be given in the actual confrontations between living human beings, having a direct, personal spoken dialogue with each other.³⁸ But, does this mean whenever people talk with each other that automatically they regard each other in coevalness? In the following, I will analyse two performances of living human beings in museum exhibitions under the aspects: How many time periods are presented in a chosen situation? And: What are the messages of an exhibition? In my first example I refer to the visit of the Namibian Damara Living Museum - during our ICME³⁹ post-conference tour in 2012.

I. The mix of times: Damara Living Museum in Namibia⁴⁰

In the Damara Living Museum we were heartily welcomed by a group of young and old people who explained and demonstrated to us how their forefathers had lived and worked in the 19th century. What we found was the constructed image of a historical time period being attacked by a contemporary habitus of the modern Damara working there. They performed “the ‘noble savage’ in a carefully and collaboratively constructed ethnographic present.”⁴¹ Through the mixture of their academic knowledge, via the usage of modern day technical equipment and administration tools⁴² - actors and visitors were collaborating in a jumbling of time⁴³ between past and present. Following Johannes Fabian⁴⁴ this was a typical example of the denial of coevalness (*Gleichzeitigkeit*). It was a contemporaneous event – two groups of people met at the same physical time. However, they did not regard each other as behaving in the same time in coevalness.

Just to mention two of the depicted inaccurate time references: most of the women had to wear a traditional loincloth – while using the English language and even Latin botanical terms to explain the usage of the herbs in the traditional cuisine and medicine. Furthermore, the main guide confided to me later that it took her some months to become accustomed to walk around topless with a relaxed feeling.



ICME visits the Damara Living Museum; Fotos: Rein 2012

In this example of the Damara Living Museum, we have a situation, where contemporary people played a role as living in a former century (from pre-contact-time) – and being “primitive” although their habitus correlated to the actual, present (coeval) time, together with the visitors, live as coequals. The Damara village people knew that it was their paid job. But for me as a visitor (together with others) to see a well educated lady vacillating between the false representations of a “primitive race” on the one hand – and on the other sharing with me the present – was very confusing. This continuous irritation provoked shame on the side of some visitors and was not conducive towards a coeval dialogue between coequals. It reminded me of the tricky situation when anthropologists claimed to have been in the Other’s presence during field research but “mistake their relations of physical simultaneity with the Other for a relation of coevalness”⁴⁵.

II. The Jew in the Box

The exhibition “The whole truth... everything you always wanted to know about Jews” in the Jewish Museum in Berlin (22.3-1.9.2013) was inspired by the many questions left in the museum’s visitors book since 2001. The curators concentrated upon the thirty most commonly asked questions. These varied from politically incorrect questions about common Jewish stereotypes to a simple matter of wanting to know how to become a Jew.”⁴⁶ In the exhibition there was a special live performance under the topic: “*Gibt es noch Juden in Deutschland?*” (Are there still Jews living in Germany?)⁴⁷

According to the curator Martina Lüdicke⁴⁹, two statements constituted the setting which were printed on the wall in the exhibition. The statement by Richard Schneider (2001) explained his feeling of being recognized as a Jew and for this automatically being regarded as an exotic being and specialist for each question belonging to Jewish / German history – besides offering psychological counselling to the people who are connected to the ones who inflicted the horror.⁵⁰ For the identification of being a “Jew” the sentence of David Ben Gurion (1951) was used: “I considered as Jewish anyone meshugge enough to call themselves Jewish.”⁵¹

Each afternoon, from 2pm to 4pm, one could meet a “Jew in a showcase” as a living exhibition object.⁵² Visitors could ask questions and the person in the box would answer based upon his/her individual experiences.⁵³ The exhibited Jews were not “prepared”⁵⁴ or accompanied for their role as a “living object” but were left alone with their encounters of the visitors. If any drastic situation would happen they could call on the security.⁵⁵

Live performances of Jewish people have a long tradition in the West. “Between 1851 and 1940 Jews represented themselves at international expositions in Europe and America in a wide range of ways. They defended such universals as religious freedom. They framed the presentation of Jewish subjects in terms of art and civilisation and secured for Judaism a central place in the history of religion... Each exhibition mediated on the unresolvable question on how Jews were to be defined and repre-



Manuel Disegni in the showcase; Foto: Rein 11.07.2013⁴⁸



Nir Tiomkin in the showcase. Foto: Rein (7.7.2013)

sented, not as an idle exercise, but with a larger social and political project in mind – religious tolerance, social justice, freedom of expression, group survival, and statehood... Jews negotiated how and where they would be seen in the world staged by these [world] fairs.”⁵⁶

During my four visits to the Jewish museum and having former ethnic shows (not the Jewish ones) in my mind, I was eager to find out how the Jews presented themselves while sitting in the box. The four representatives of Jews living in Germany, which I could accompany during my visits, were reacting in a very open and direct way to the visitors passing the front side of the box. Several times they started the conversation, asking the visitors something like “What do you want to know?” or “Do you want to talk with me?” As far as I could observe, both parties reacted to this implemented dialogical meeting very positively. Although most questions concentrated on the following two: “What is the most asked question by the visitors?” and “What would you like the most to be asked?”. One answer to this last question was: “I would like to be asked by a beautiful young girl to go out with me tonight.” Besides these superficial stereotypical questions with a humoristic touch, I could listen also to “endless” speaking visitors telling

their life stories with very intimate and concentrated conversations about religious details and personal attitudes concerning life. Some people remarked that it was strange to be considered as a specialist just because of one’s Jewish background for – let’s say German history. According to them, this could happen actually to anyone while meeting people from other countries with different identities.⁵⁷ Just one couple compared the situation with former ethnic shows – not relating to the above mentioned historical Jewish performances. All in all it was a peaceful and easy atmosphere with intensive and very personal dialogues, or conversations.

Under the two aspects of agency and coevalness, I will compare the two displays from Namibia and Berlin to look for consequences in museum work regarding concepts of participation and inclusion at the end.

In both case examples living people were shown in a constructed artificial environment. They were excluded from their daily life in order to represent something. The framework was defined by the respective responsible institution. The people having a job in the Damara Living Museum followed a strict program, defined by the management.⁵⁸ A big sign in the entrance area announced the

Living Museum with an interactive programme, Historic, Culture Life, Museum, and Craftshop. The “Damara” performed the reconstruction in “traditional clothing” surrounded with “traditional huts” reconstructed from an imaginary life praxis dating in the 19th century. In most situations during the presentation, the ICME-guests in the Damara village were sitting on prepared seats and the tour leader explained different topics while standing in an upright position. Concerning the Damara live performance no special motto was offered and the strict programme in the living museum did not provide “free time” for conversations in coevalness.⁵⁹

In the Jewish Museum however, the Jews who decided to sit voluntarily in the showcase were either searched for by the museum or they applied for the possibility themselves under the condition of being Jews and living in Germany⁶⁰. The setting was the showcase, which exoticized their position as Jews. The box made them something special in front of the visitors and separated them. Like the other (historical) museum objects, the Jews had also their label on the right side of the box: the name and the spoken language of the particular sitting Jew was mentioned there, and legitimated him/her at the same time as being an authentic Jew.⁶¹ Although the Jews were elevated in the box because of the higher seat, some of the standing tall visitors were looking down on the Jews while talking with them. In this way, it was not always a talk on an equal spatial level.

According to the curator, the showcase should be an irritation and provocation to the German public to confront them with their own images of “Jews” today. Although the showcase was setup on the background of German history its message written on the front part: “Are there still Jews living in Germany?” referred to the present with a link to the past. This question should have identified the sitting person as a living Jewish interview partner and should have offered the visitors an entry for an open conversation in coevalness. Through this way the Jews should be recognized by the Germans as German coequals – concerned with the same basic vital matters. Sitting in the box, the Jews were approached as Jews as well as coequals though not contextualized by the curators with the surrounding (historical) objects. The Showcase, created as an “interactive Diorama”, was the basis for a relational framework to talk about the “dialectic between assimilating and exoticizing”.⁶² The living object in this Diorama was the door to the living present for everybody, who wanted to speak simultaneously about cultural difference, identity and history. Because of the symbolic distance, difference was performed and multiple voices were heard in a dialogical way. As members of a Jewish heritage world community the Jews represented their social relations and could act as cross- and trans-cultural translators from the showcase. During an encounter with the exhibited Jews the visitors could oscillate with their questions between the past, present and future. The “exibited”Jews could interactively

choose the two hour time period in which they offered the visitor the chance to speak openly with them. There was no mediation or official censorship beside a possible personal one.⁶³ It was a vivid open experimental experience and everybody had the free choice to take the chance of configuring the dialogues with an open end. The visitors could encounter the exhibit from the standpoint of their own identities and experiences. My former search of performing and experiencing “present” in time and content as coequals seemed to be fulfilled in this face-to-face communication. In this live performance in Berlin happened “the creation of coevalness as the active sharing of experiences and expectations”.⁶⁴ However the phenomenon of creating coevalness is much more complicated and cannot be performed as an universal experience. The existing fundamental cultural, social and historical differences have to be taken into account while reflecting about coevalness. What happened in Berlin was my subjective experience of coevalness.⁶⁵ I felt included in the possibility to participate in the conversations with coequals. There are no systematic data available on the experience of other visitors.

Concerning museum exhibitions, there are some aspects I will mention in the following as a conclusion about time systems and participation in museum work in coevalness.

Display, agency and coevalness in museums

According to the archaeologist Rodney Harrison: “Exploring heritage as a production of the past in the present leads to a reassessment of who and what is involved in the process of ‘making’ heritage, and ‘where’ the production of heritage might be located within contemporary society. This directly invokes the question of agency... [I]t is becoming customary to consider agency not as an individual act of will, but as something that is distributed across collectives. Importantly, these collectives ... are considered to be composed of both humans and non-humans, and are seen to include plants, animals, the environment and the material world... [D]ifferent disciplines and authors draw on different versions of ways in which agency is manifested within them. Fundamental to this new notion of ‘the social’ is the dissolution of familiar, modernist dualism such as ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, ‘human’ and ‘non-human’, ‘social’ and ‘natural’ ... which are based on a Cartesian separation of matter and mind. Agency is thus contingent and emergent within social collectives, involving both human and non-human actors, and taking many different forms. The World Heritage List, for example, might constitute one of these forms, involving as it does a collective of people – bureaucrats, local stakeholders, NGOs, tourists; and ‘things’ – the heritage sites themselves, the varied visitor facilities and interpretative apparatuses, and so on.”⁶⁶

What does this mean for museum exhibitions? Concern-

ing the aspect of time experience all parties (tangible and intangible ones) have to be evaluated about their single agency. These agencies can never be regarded in an absolute way but they change depending on different combinations. While planning a display, the museum curators should be clear without ambiguity which time aspects they want to perform and how the visitors can position themselves within different time aspects. For example, if one mixes historical objects with contemporary ones – how will the possible individual experience be while watching or passing them? Are there possible time confusions – how will the visitor orientate him/herself? Only clear compositions of messages and time references enable a visitor the experience of coevalness. On the contrary, a display can provoke non-coevalness while performing only synchronicity as a conscious experience.

What does it mean to experience coevalness? According to my experience the face-to-face performances in museums are one basic method for the visitors to get into a topic also emotionally – in a here and now. Furthermore, the participative approaches in museums offer many chances to work as coequals. Heritage communities⁶⁷ are actively involved in working on museum subject and objects – together with the scientific assistance from the museum. Provoking attentiveness and the aesthetic experience⁶⁸ in the confrontation with the tangible and intangible heritage remain the moving adventures for each museum. Experiencing coevalness in museums together with the further research on all aspects of agency are the great challenges for the future.

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Endnotes

- 1 Revised form of a paper presented at the ICME conference in Rio de Janeiro (13.8.2013). Thanks to Corinne Kratz, Kerstin Volker-Saad, Christian Rittelmeyer and Patricia Riesenkampff for proof reading and for helping me to work on the theoretical approach.
- 2 <http://einstein.stanford.edu/content/relativity/q909.html> (access 19.12.2013)
- 3 "Collected Present - a virtual exhibition" (translation by the author). <http://margarete.meggle-freund.de/virtuelle-ausstellung/> (access 24.11.2013). „Unsere Internetausstellung entstand im Rahmen eines Seminars, mit dem Titel 'Samlungsstrategien zur Gegenwartskul-

- tur' an der Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, im Sommersemester 2006 unter Leitung von Frau Dr. Margarete Meggle-Freund.“ http://margarete.meggle-freund.de/virtuelle-ausstellung/?Museale_Sammlungsstrategien_zur_Gegenwartskultur:Einf%FChrung (access 5.12.2013)
- 4 „Zu Beginn des Seminars stellten wir uns die Frage: Welche Dinge sind bezeichnend für unsere Gegenwart? Jeder Seminarteilnehmer beantwortete diese Frage mit der Vorstellung eines Objekts, das ihm bezeichnend für die Gegenwart erschien. Das konnte die Gegenwart des Jahres 2006, der Jahre um die Jahrtausendwende, seiner persönlichen Gegenwart oder die Gegenwart der Stadt Jena sein.“ http://margarete.meggle-freund.de/virtuelle-ausstellung/?Museale_Sammlungsstrategien_zur_Gegenwartskultur:Einf%FChrung (access 5.12.2013)
- 5 These reflections are accompanied by conferences in which the focus concentrates on the challenge to decide about the distinguishing moment of objects to be representative of an actual everyday life and of culture/society. E.g. <http://wissenschaftliche-sammlungen.de/de/termine/sammeln-der-gegenwart-gestalten-fuer-die-zukunft> (access 24.11.2013; http://partizipatives-museum.de/files/2011/05/Flyer_x-positionen.pdf (access 26.11.2013); <http://www.portalkunstgeschichte.de/meldung/Symposium-Museum-Gegenwart-Jetzt-am-7-und-8-September-2012-in-Hamburg-5221.html> (access 26.11.2013)
- 6 <http://www.radiocarbon.com/deutsch/archaeologie.htm> (access 28.11.2013)
- 7 Bevernage 2013:12. Addition by the author
- 8 F.e. today, with the help of the Social Media, people try to be connected in the present, to be “Always on” (cp. Rein 2013b).
- 9 “It is one of Koselleck’s great merits to have recognized that historical time cannot be reduced to a physical phenomenon, but that it is in its turn subject to historical change. In order to explain changing notions of historical time Koselleck famously introduces the hermeneutical concepts of ‘space of experience (*Erfahrungsraum*) and ‘horizon of expectation’ (*Erwartungshorizont*). These concepts, borrowed from anthropological discourse, are perfectly fitting to analyze changing conceptions, of time because they have a ‘meta-historical’ status: all human beings have some experience or memory about what has happened and certain expectations or hope about what will happen.” Koselleck 1989; quoted in Bevernage 2013: 10
- 10 Power 2009:17 (accentuation in the original). For a deeper discussion about the experience of time see Power 2009
- 11 Kramer 2000:307; see also Götze 2004; Gingrich et al 2000
- 12 Because I am very much aware that “culture” (Lenz 2009) is a delicate topic (not only) in social anthropology since decades, therefore I avoid using the noun. Furthermore, practices of time measurement cannot be attached to one conceptual box named culture.
- 13 Many thanks to Corinne Kratz who reminded me of the complexity of this phenomenon, of the amount of publications on this topic, and who gave me the impulse to elaborate it.
- 14 Lorend & Bevernage 2013:9
- 15 Marshall 165ff. As we know, the people, living on the Indonesian Island of Nias in West-Sumatra they practice the experience of present in this manner during their daily life at least until the 1970ies
- 16 Lorenz & Beverage 2013:19
- 17 Hartog 2003; quoted in Bevernage 2013:23; addition by the author
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Lorenz and Beverage 2013:10; highlighting by the author
- 20 „Tempo Tempo! Im Wettlauf mit der Zeit!“ Exhibition from the 12 April 2013 to the 1 September 2013
- 21 Quoted from the label of the exhibition “Tempo - Tempo” in the *Museum für Kommunikation* in Berlin. Cp. <http://arbeitsblaetter.stangl-taller.at/GEHIRN/GehirnZeit.shtml> (access 5.8.2013)
- 22 Le Poidevin 2009
- 23 “Moreover, our experience does not only appear to be temporally limited, it is so: we do not perceive the future, and we do not continue to perceive transient events long after information from them reached our senses.” The reason is a causal one: “causes always precede their effects; perception is a causal process, in that to perceive something is to be causally affected by it; therefore we can only perceive earlier events, never later ones.”
- 24 We could talk “more widely of the experience of pastness: the experience we get, when something comes to an end....we need to postulate something else which alerts us to the fact that the event remembered is past. ... memories dispose us to form past-tensed beliefs, and is by virtue of this that they represent an event as past.” Poidevin 2009
- 25 Fabian 2002:23
- 26 Beverage 2013 7f. Addition by the author
- 27 *Deutsches Museum, Stadtmuseum München*
- 28 *Jüdisches Museum Berlin, Museum für Kommunikation*
- 29 *Historisches Museum Frankfurt*
- 30 To learn more about the different time concepts in museums I visited in 2013 different temporal exhibitions in museums in Munich, Berlin and Frankfurt am Main which had the ‘present’ as their focus of interest..
- 31 <http://www.muenchner-stadtmuseum.de/sonderausstellungen/archive/2013/meinmuenchen.html> (access 4.8.2013)
- 32 <http://www.volkskunde.uni-muenchen.de/index.html> (access 25.11.2013)
- 33 “My Munic. Interventions in the City Museum Munich” (Transl. by the author)
- 34 This temporary art form in public spaces originated from Houston Texas in 2005. From here it spread as a form of feminist movement throughout the World and arrived e.g.in London in 2009 (<http://knitthecity.com/about/> access 25.11.2013), in Frankfurt am Main in 2010, and in Vienna a group of women called themselves “Strickistinnen” in 2010: <http://strickistinnen.blogspot.de/> (access 25.11.2013). This art form is known under different names like “Guerilla Knitting”, “Urban Knitting”, “Knitted Graffiti” or Yarn Bombing” and is a form of street art. (https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerilla_Knitting access 25.11.2013)
- 35 Transl. by the author
- 36 Transl. by the author
- 37 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy_movement (access 9.11.2013)
- 38 They have to be at the same moment in the same place to be able to communicate. I exclude all technical forms of communication (like written letters, sms’s, e-mail, twitter, telephone etc.).
- 39 ICME - International Committee of Museums for Ethnography. <http://icme.icom.museum/> (access 13.12.2013)

40 <http://www.lcfn.info/en/damara/damara-home> (access 25.11.2013)

41 For an excellent analysis of a touristic Maasai performance see Bruner & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994:435; see Rein 2013a for an example from Oceania.

42 Like a calculator, a pencil or the administrative book for the shop at the entrances/exits.

43 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:10

44 Fabian 2002:31

45 Bevernage 2013:13

46 <http://newsfeed.time.com/2013/04/04/jew-in-a-box-exhibition-causes-a-stir-in-germany/#ixzz2Q5kTsorl> 26.7.2013

47 Transl. by the author

48 I would like to express my thanks to the exhibited Jews for their agreement for the publication of their pictures. I met Jane Hartmann together with her daughter (12.5.2013); Nir Tiomkin (7.7.2013), and Manuel Disegni (11.7.2013). With friendly generosity they allowed me to accompany their presentations.

49 Many thanks to Martina Lüdicke who answered all my questions about the exhibition.

50 "I am a living exhibition object. People...who in their contact with me are encountering a Jew for the first time in their lives, tend to react with irritation. For I hardly ever come up to their expectations, and their view of me is changed in an instant. Suddenly I am seen as in a showcase, as a rare example of a species under glass, which one does not actually know, but think one does...it also seems to be quite natural for the non-Jew I the Jew, must mutate into the expert, the specialist. I have to function as the religious philosopher, historian, psychologist, and cultural critic in one, for it is perfectly obvious that I know every detail of the history of the Third Reich as well as every detail of the Middle East conflict. Last, but not least, I have to pontificate and offer psychological counselling a propos the horrors inflicted upon the Jews 'in the Germany name' which my opposite number cannot comprehend and from which he suffers so terribly". Richard Chain Schneider in reaction to the opening of the Jewish Museum 2001.

51 Quote from the label of the exhibition.

52 Richard Cain Schneider 2001 quoted from the exhibition label. In this exhibit I was confronted with a live performance, commonly referred to as 'Jew in a Box' "Jews in a showcase" as called in the press information from the museum on the 20 March, 2013. http://www.jmberlin.de/main/EN/06-Press/01-Press-Releases/Press-Releases-2013/2013_03_20.php 26.7.2013

53 <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/04/10/jew-in-a-box-puts-tilda-swinton-to-shame.html> 26.7.2013

54 According to an email by Martina Lüdicke the Jews were invited with a letter beforehand and with some of them the curators had long conversations before the session in the box happened. However, this was differently remembered by the candidates. Unfortunately I was not allowed to see the internal paper of the museum for the preparation.

55 <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/04/10/jew-in-a-box-puts-tilda-swinton-to-shame.html> (access 26.7.2013). After the opening ceremony, in the first articles some of the critical comments compared the Jew in the showcase with the situation in a Zoo -the box "seems to suggest that Jewish people can be put on display like chimpanzees." Between May and July I visited the exhibition

to learn more about this live experience. People walked around in the exhibition and some of them approached the showcase. They started a conversation by themselves or were invited from the "Sitting Jew". It was an easy atmosphere and with interruptions a slowly coming and going.

56 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:79-80

57 No questions about the Palestine conflict nor the Jewish political situation or the holocaust were asked during my sessions. For documentation purposes the exhibited Jews were interviewed by the Publication Department of the museum about their experience to be published amongst others as twitter news. However, none of the visitors were interviewed about their impressions of the live performance. Comments could be given voluntarily on yellow post-it to be stuck on the wall at the end of the exhibition. Knowledge of the German language was not required. The spoken languages were actually announced at the front of the showcase together with the name of the person(s).

58 At night time they went back to their homes in a modern village - which could be visited by the tourists also.

59 While walking from one place to the next with the tour guide, one could ask on the way personal question. But this was not part of the official programme.

60 As I was told by Martina Lüdicke, the sitting data were nearly booked out already in the beginning of July.

61 One day, when the expected Jew did not arrive while I was waiting in front of the empty box, I decided to sit in the box. I wanted to know how I would feel sitting there. A few visitors passed me - nobody wanted to speak with me. After about ten minutes the guest service from the museum arrived and was not very amused that I was sitting there, obviously not being an authentic Jew.

62 Kratz 2013:12. Corinne A. Kratz presented a paper in the conference "The future of the ethnographic museum" in Oxford in July 2013. Thanks to Kratz sending me her manuscript after the conference. In her paper she discussed intensely the role of the Diorama and the different aspects which belong to any ethnographic exhibition.

63 At the end I realized that this was a very ethnographic exhibition in its mode of knowledge production.

64 Beverage 2013:13

65 S. Beverage 2013. "...one should conceive of coevalness as a reality that is politically 'constituted' or discursively 'articulated'. Similarly it should be recognized that hegemonic coevalness can never become universal. Coevalness is always constructed through a reference to a non-coeval Other. There is no coeval West without a non-coeval Rest" Beverage 2013

66 Harrison 2013:32f. Thanks to Heinz Felber for reminding me about the role of agency.

67 Rein 2013b

68 Christian Rittelmeyer reminded me of the possibility to experience an individual touching present (*Gegenwärtigkeit*) during an aesthetic experience for example in confrontation with historic museum objects. In our conversation the complexity of the phenomenon "the experience of time" became another time very obvious. (26.11.2013)