

# ExpoTime!

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**ARE WE ALL  
AFRICANS?**

**HOW DID 17<sup>TH</sup>  
CENT. JAPAN  
LOOK LIKE?**

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THE MUSEUM,  
PART II**

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– RUPTURE, WAR,  
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VOYNICH  
MANUSCRIPT**

**and much more...**



## Are we all Africans?

A statement that is valid in a broader evolutionary perspective and has been taken for granted among researchers in palaeoanthropology and Pleistocene archaeology since decades. Even Charles Darwin assumed, already in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the origin of Man in Africa. And he was right. The origin of the genus *Homo* is in Africa, and anatomically modern humans started their 'career' in Africa as well.

This truism is suddenly challenged with respect to the actual political discussion in Europe and beyond. Ignorance of scientific research results is increasingly gaining ground. More than ever, scientists are called to intervene and stand against racist and xenophobic movements by providing further scientific evidence on global migrations since the Ice Age. The most recent genetic studies shed light on an extraordinary amount of migration events and mixing of populations over the last 50.000 years in Africa, Europe and Asia. These high resolution data on frequent prehistoric migrations and back-migrations were so far nearly invisible to previous paleoanthropological and archaeological research methods.

These are the reasons for the Neanderthal Museum to create, in close cooperation with the Collaborative Research Centre 806 "Our Way to Europe" at Cologne University, the touring exhibition "Two Million Years of Migration". The current political situation inspired the concept of the exhibition. It intends to link cutting edge ge archaeological research of the research centre to current societal issues. The terms and keywords of the political debate on migrants are the same as within the framework of the

research centre. Yet within the research centre and the exhibition they are used without any specific political connotation or emotional background. The basic idea of the exhibition is cool down a sometimes overheated public discussion. The key messages of the exhibition include:

1. Migration is an integral part of being human.
2. Since two million years, humans adapt to changing conditions, including mobility and changes of location.
3. Geoarchaeological research can make a valuable contribution to understanding universal human behavior both in the past and today.

A mixture of objects, different media and emotional encounters shows reasons, mechanisms and consequences of migration. Four big migration events are the backbone of the exhibition, each a milestone of prehistory: the so called "Out of Africa" event I and II, the Neolithic expansion of the first farmers from the Near East to Central Europe and the immigration of people at the beginning of the Metal Ages from Asia into Central Europe. Each setting has its specific conditions and environment. Three different strands of archaeological, palaeoenvironmental and palaeogenetic data are interwoven within the exhibition to tell the migration story of each event.

Using the same terms and keywords as in the current public discussions, the exhibition creates a space for knowledge transfer from science to citizens and encourages visitors to change perspective. Through the lens of the scientists and by providing scientific data in a comprehensible way, visitors are enabled to take up a position unaffected by current events. In addition, the exhibition offers a special approach for kids. Above all, they are one of the groups interacting the most with migrant peers, in kindergarden and school, and by doing so contribute the most to integration and tolerance.

Enjoy the issue.

Prof. Dr. Gerd-Christian Weniger  
Director Neanderthal Museum  
Coordinator Western Mediterranean, CRC 806



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Anette Rein

## Communicating the museum, part II: A “Communicating the museum” conference (Berlin, July 12-15, 2016)

Within two weeks, two international conferences about museums as important cultural institutions happened in July 2016. The first one was the General Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), which had its 24<sup>th</sup> conference together with the celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in Milan, Italy July 3-July 9, 2016. This conference was already reviewed for EXPOTIME! in December/January 2016/17 as part I of the comparison. <sup>1</sup> The second conference “Communicating the museum” (CTM), organized by a commercial agency for cultural communications, situated in Paris (founded in 1995 <sup>2</sup>), happened in Berlin for the 16<sup>th</sup> time July 12-July 15, 2016.

In this review, I will concentrate on comparing the different ways of the two conferences concerning methods of communicating a museum. The same three questions will be the frame of my second article too:

- Who are the different target groups of the two associations which are framing their different ways of mediating museum contents?
- How did the process of communicating with the media on an international level? <sup>3</sup>
- Which ‘key learnings’ from both conferences could the participants take home - or rather ‘hidden messages’?

### The target groups

In the ICOM general conference which happens every three years, all participants were members of this association or working together with museums closely. This general conference concentrated on issues concerning their museum work, on the birthday of the association (exhibition), on the new logo, and on important administrative topics of the international association ICOM (like the election of the new president). According to the official numbers, 3,433 members out of 129 countries and territories participated in Milan. Within the conference space, there was a museum fair, in which companies presented their products. This was the transparent commercial aspect of the ICOM conference. The conference fee for members was between 350,00 € and 550,00 €, for non-members 450,00 € – 650,00 € for the general conference. <sup>4</sup> The participation in pre- and post-conference tours, were organised by the 30 participating international committees (out of 119 national committees), or of-

fered by a commercial agency with their own specific rates. The General Conference was characterised, on the one hand, through some common meetings of all participants in the mornings, listening to five official keynote speakers, and during the receptions in the evenings. On the other hand, the conference time was divided in many different meetings in different places between the participants of the administrative discussions, the meetings of the international committees, and through various excursions visiting Italian cultural highlights.

As the ICOM conferences, the CTM conferences are organized in different cities, but annually. In 2016, the German capital Berlin, as a cultural landscape rife with art and innovation, and with its many refugees living there since 2015, was chosen as the place to be, with the suitable topic “Dialogue”. <sup>5</sup> Contrary to the ICOM General Conference, the conference in Berlin was offered by an independent, commercial agency. No membership was the criterion for participation. Everybody, who could pay the conference fees (about 1.080 US\$), was free to participate. <sup>6</sup>

Whereas ICOM concentrated on internal topics, the view of the CTM conference was a comparing one, as the founder of the agency Agenda, Corinne Estrada commented: “It’s about learning from outside, copy from what people do successfully in other industries”. <sup>7</sup> This implicates that museums are unable to develop criteria for their own development while other “industries” are the pacemakers of the future. One such discussion centered on the “Multaka” project of five Berlin museums. Arab native speaking trained guides facilitate visits for refugees from Arab speaking countries, to nurture connections between Germany’s history and cultural heritage and their own. A good example of inter- and transdisciplinary mode to initiate a cross-cultural engagement through communicative structures with different museums.

In Berlin, about 200 participants from 27 countries (mainly from Europe and USA) were counted, including the 50 invited local and international speakers. The main conference place happened in the *Schlüterhof* (courtyard) of the *Deutsches Historisches Museum* (DHM), and in different places within the museum – as for the fundraising day and the workshops on July 14, 2016.

The conference had three different parts, each one had a special header motto as an introduction and two other headlines to focus.<sup>8</sup> The first day was dedicated to fundraising (“Dialogue starts with raising money”) with 10 speakers and one interactive exercise with the plenum, to answer in small groups distributed questions. “To build up a transactional philanthropical, emotional relationship” was one important key learning by Tanja Roach (WWF Germany), which focuses on the exchange between museums and donors/sponsors. “We give you something – you give us something back”. The “Best Practice Training” covered digital media and storytelling. The main CTM conference started on July 13, 2016 in the afternoon. Until Friday midday topics were covered like: social media or classical media for an adequate dialogue, storytelling, building partnerships, communication strategies and emotional engagement, branding and digital media, paradox messages, protest and social engagement. The last one and a half days of the CTM conference ended on Saturday, after the “learning safari” and the excursions to different “opportunities everywhere”, throughout Berlin.

### The process of communicating the conference

As I had to state in the first part, the communication of ICOM before and during the conference was rather unprofessional, although ICOM had important topics to be published, like the new logo. CTM announced its conference in the internet since February 2016 regularly in different media. Journalists received free entrance for the daily programme (like ICOM) including the visit of the *Dom*, but were excluded from two seemingly spectacular invitations in the evening. ICOM excluded the press from the official excursion day too. There remains one big difference between the two institutions working with the press: after the conference, ICOM answered all my questions immediately and detailed. In contrast to ICOM, the last service by the Agency Agenda was the publication of the key learnings together with the power point presentations after the Berlin conference.<sup>9</sup> No further personal communication was offered, even not on request.

### The approach and the key learnings

The topic of the General conference of ICOM: “Museums and cultural landscapes” was presented for the plenum and during the excursions. The international committees were free to choose their own conference topics. Ways of presenting the papers were mainly in the traditional form of one person speaking and the rest listening. Following discussions were framed by the time table and correspondingly, only few possibilities were given for a discussion with all members attending the plenum. As far as I know, there is not a common agreement to collect key learnings from the papers and discussions and there is no accepted obligation, to produce results in a written form at the end. Usually, the international com-

mittees publish a report in English, to keep their members informed.

Compared with the sole front formats during the ICOM conference, the CTM conference had a different and mixed approach. It focused on pedagogical methods to implement an immediate learning success in the participants. In the *Schlüterhof* of the DHM, the special arrangement with the round table seatings, announced from the beginning special interactive and collaborative methods during the workshops in the conference. The participants stayed most of the time together. Regularly they were asked to move to another table for an exchange of ideas and to co-create in changing teams on a given topic. Each table had its own changing topics.

In the programme, the different parts were introduced with special illustrative titles as appetizers like: “Embrace the unexpected” or “How to survive in the digital jungle”. After each presentation in the front, the plenum or the speakers were asked for the specific key learnings to be kept in mind. Different methods during the workshop like: writing a story, construct a picture from a given text, exchange experiences and ideas with changing teams, a world café with its chocolate gratification at the end, should stimulate a vivid dialogic atmosphere.



CTM Session roundtable at Schlüterhof. Photo: Reiner Zapf

### Conclusion

The topic “museum” as a cultural institution was much more present in the ICOM conference. Here, a closeness to commercial interests could not be avoided always – like in the discussion after the presentation of the artist Christo or in the museums fair – but the cultural impetus and typical museum’s work were always in the focus of the General Conference.

Although the pedagogical concept of the CTM conference was dominating throughout the four days – according to the motto: what can we learn from it? – the com-

mercial aspect (“to make the greatest benefit out of it”) was in some presentations overwhelming and had nothing to do with museums nor with cultural institutions. This critical point became obviously, when the *Bundeswehr* (German Armed Forces) presented their advertisement campaign “*Mach, was wirklich zählt*”<sup>10</sup> (Do what really matters). With thought-provoking impulses about the meaning of life and prejudices in our society and working world, the *Bundeswehr* makes believe to offer new perspectives for sense-making as the focus, when being a member of the German army. However, in their campaign, which reminds more to advertisement campaigns of a fitness studio (“Test your limits”), words like „death“, „killing“ or „war“ were obviously avoided.<sup>11</sup>

When the campaign started in 2015, immediately it was intensely criticized in the public. This seemed to be not a surprise for the two presenters in the CTM conference. One of their key learnings was: “Use the power of our critics”. Despite that, after the presentation critical voices from the plenum were not welcomed. The *Bundeswehr* was presented as a “company” which needs “new blood” in any circumstance. Because museums do not attract young academics with such advertisement campaigns, it has to be questioned why those presentations got space in a CTM conference.

To sum up, in both conferences nobody was really interested in critical debates and both events were likewise framed by a strict timetable. The main positive aspect in the ICOM conference was the possibility to meet members of ICOM from all over the world and to exchange about future collaborations. Contrary to the ICOM style, the CTM conference offered more interactive opportunities for the participants. The firework of methods and ideas which crackled on the participants during the three days in Berlin, could not mask the fact that the composition of the participant group was so heterogeneous, that many of the questions being asked in the workshops could not have been answered by everybody. Usually, museums are very hierarchical organized, so not everybody is responsible for the creation of a new branding or to find sponsors. With these problems, mainly museum directors are confronted with, and usually, only they keep track of the different parts of the institution. But, as museum directors did not play a major part at the conference, I had the impression that it was the goal of the conference to offer knowledge of the rulers.

The very good interactive facilitation during the fundraising day, mainly by Fiona Menzies and Corinne Estrada, could not be continued during the next days with the whole group of participants. Networking together with the presentation of more or less provoking theses (most of them were old hats to experienced museum people), the possibility of meeting international colleagues, different methods of the workshops, together with the subsequent publication of key learnings, were the inspiring moments of the CTM conference.

## Notes

- 1 Rein 2016\_17
- 2 <http://culturebrands.de/corinne-estrada/> (visited September 2, 2016)
- 3 In both conferences I participated as a journalist writing for EXPOTIME!.
- 4 <http://network.icom.museum/icom-milan-2016/registration/how-to-register/> (visited August 1, 2017)
- 5 “We cultivate dialogue” was the motto on one pp slide. As dialogue partners were mentioned: museum professionals, business partners, digital experts, arts & travel journalists, city stakeholders, and cultural networks”.
- 6 They had two different fees for the two parts of the conferences. In Berlin the fundraising day was added for the first time with an own fee including the best practice training. One could choose only one part or pay for the complete programme. The website <https://culture-com-museum-berlin-germany/> (accessed 26 July, 2017) mentions the price for the regular conference ticket: 1.080,00 \$ (without the fundraising and best practice). For Quebec (November 16 until 19, 2016) I found the following rates: regular Early Bird Rate for Non Profit 950,00 €; Early Bird Rate for Business 1.700,00 €; Best Practice Training 15 November 2016 250,00 €. [https://www.wezevent.com/?c=sys\\_widget](https://www.wezevent.com/?c=sys_widget) (visited September 2, 2016)
- 7 <http://culturebrands.de/corinne-estrada/>; see also <http://www.agendacom.com/> (visited September 2, 2016).
- 8 The Programme of the conference: [http://www.agendacom.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2016/07/CTM16\\_Programme\\_5-July.pdf](http://www.agendacom.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2016/07/CTM16_Programme_5-July.pdf) (visited July 26, 2017)
- 9 <http://www.agendacom.com/communicating-the-museum-2016-berlin/> ; [http://www.agendacom.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2016/07/CTM16\\_Berlin\\_KeyLearnings.pdf](http://www.agendacom.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2016/07/CTM16_Berlin_KeyLearnings.pdf) (visited July 26, 2017)
- 10 [https://www.bundeswehrkarriere.de/?pk\\_campaign=Google%20AdWords%20Grundrauschen&pk\\_kwd=BundeswehrJobs](https://www.bundeswehrkarriere.de/?pk_campaign=Google%20AdWords%20Grundrauschen&pk_kwd=BundeswehrJobs) (visited August 8, 2017)
- 11 <https://www.taz.de/!5254884/> (visited August 8, 2017)

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