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‘Collaborative Projects as Means to Transcend Western Epistemologies’

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In the last three decades, museums and museological practices that are fundamentally based on Western knowledge systems have been strongly questioned by a collective that includes Indigenous Peoples, political activists, representatives of civil society and scholars. In the historiographic reconstructions promoted by the academy, one of the touchstones is the so-called ‘new’ museology of the mid-1980s (Vergo 1989).

The former called attention to the metonymic reduction of cultural complexity to one or two objects. Transforming the museum into an object of epistemological reflection, they claimed to move away from its conception as a static repository of cultural memory and redefine it as a place of social construction and change (Reca 2016). Interestingly, this ‘novel’ epistemological turn promoted by Western academia barely mentioned or omitted to refer to the experiences of the community museums that emerged in Latin America and Africa in the mid-1960s (Varine 1992). Nor did they account for resolutions arising from international meetings such as the Santiago de Chile Round Table (1972) or the first workshop on ‘Ecomuseums and New Museology’ in Quebec (1984), where objections were raised to the mode in which museological collections were exhibited, conserved and managed.

However, this critical turn, although having encouraged collaboration with Indigenous Peoples, occurred in a context of political, epistemological and cultural inequality (Ballestero and Rattunde 2021). The persistence of the asymmetries of coloniality was reflected in the exhibitions, which continued to be conceived for a largely non-native audience, not considering indigenous knowledge systems in their development or marginalizing them (Chandra 2015; Coronil 1996; Mignolo 2014; Muñiz-Reed 2019; Sauvage 2010; Soares and Leshchenko 2018).

In this way, critical voices outside the academy strongly objected the epistemological and ontological hegemony of museums, which separated the exhibited objects from the multiplicity of histories, knowledge and subjectivities that signified them to materialize and objectify the ordering of the global social system (Ballestero and Rattunde 2021).

Museums that became places of symbolic and political dispute, as well as of cross-cultural encounters and political negotiation, were objects and subjects of decolonial criticism (Peers and Brown 2003; Fabian 2004; Geismar 2018; Gonçalves 2009; Henare et al. 2007; Miller 2005; Pasztory 2005; Thomas 1991).

The struggle for epistemological and ontological sovereignty over the access, administration and exhibition of objects of material culture driven by individuals and/or communities outside institutionalized spaces went far beyond the claim to be given partial or total access to the objects. This struggle challenged the control of the discourses generated from the objects and the imposition of aphasia on a particular group by others (Ballestero and Rattunde 2021). This was one of the central axes of community museology experiences in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Brazil, where Indigenous Peoples demanded a power relationship of equality in the exchange of knowledge and resources (Barringer and Flynn 1998; Carr-Locke 2015; Clifford 1997; Haas et al. 2009; Hauenschild 1998; Horwood 2015; McCarthy and Cobley 2009; McCarthy 2011; Russi and Abreu 2019; Smith 2019).

The above elements were discussed at length in the panel on 'Collaborative curation as a means to transgress Western epistemologies' that the editors of this volume organized at the fifteenth Congress of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF) held online in 2021. One of the key points raised was the need to highlight the voices of the Global South, to strengthen transatlantic dialogues with colleagues and experiences developed in other latitudes, and especially to incorporate into the debate examples of the collective and collaborative production of anthropological knowledge.

By considering the fundamental role of material culture studies, the anthropology of art, the anthropology of objects and especially decolonial criticism, the contributions in this volume account for the importance of objects in the agency, mediation and materialization of discourses, social relations, knowledge, subjectivities and memories (Appadurai 1986; Gell 1998; Santos Granero 2009). But there is more: in recent decades, collaborative projects have come to be seen as capable not only of rethinking musealization processes, but also of creating knowledge through intercultural dialogues and proposing a critical approach to the scientific disciplines with which material culture is engaged, as well as to the humanities that aim to comprehend human behavior (Onciul 2015; Mignolo 2009; Mignolo and Vázquez 2013).

This means that the contributions to this volume not only discuss different forms of collaborative projects that do or do not deal with material culture, as well as the consequences of these partnerships for knowledge production, they primarily raise fundamental questions: What does 'collaboration' mean in fact? Are there different sets of significance and therefore of practices? Is this a sort of umbrella concept?

To deconstruct the concept of collaboration in the first place is precisely one of the axes of this special issue. In this sense, its contributions provide a series of critical perspectives on the epistemological and ontological deconstruction of museological practices, which include the epistemological meanings, practical limitations, ethical and political consequences of the concept of collaboration, the asymmetrical power

structures/relations of traditional museological practices and their plausible futures, the decolonizing potential of collaborative curation for museological agendas and praxis, the transcendence of local community agendas, the possibilities and limits of cooperation with stakeholders from the creator communities of the musealized objects, the need to consider the pluridiversity of the public involved in exhibitions, and, in a much broader sense, the possibilities of decolonizing anthropology itself through intellectual partnership with Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, the articles of this special issue complement and, mainly, respond to the omission or absence of several points in the literary production of Western academic and museum sectors.

With this special issue, we intend to establish a process of multi-sited, transatlantic and interdisciplinary dialogue between different experiences of collaborative projects. We want to contribute to the visibilization of knowledge systems, subjectivities and agencies that have been historically marginalized, silenced or denied by museological practices that are based almost exclusively on Western knowledge systems. Far from imposing a particular form of collaborative project, this special issue presents several examples that demonstrate the viability of pluriversal museological and academic practices, where all actors, knowledge systems, subjectivities and agencies are equal in their differences.

This special issue is divided into two sections. The first, 'Institutions and Collaborative Projects', focuses on the deconstruction and analysis of the concept of 'collaboration' itself, as well as on projects with so-called 'source' or 'production' communities. Through their case studies, the four articles which are part of this section demonstrate the complex boundaries and relations between the actors involved in collaborative projects, as well as providing anthropologists and museum staff with discussions about the decolonization of museum practices and the democratization of knowledge production. The second section, 'Collaborative Projects: Paths and Narratives', is very much in consonance with the first, not only because they both address discussions and themes that provide for theoretical as well as practical actions in order to change the relationship between museum and university staff and Indigenous Peoples, but also because they challenge the proper meaning of the concept of collaboration, which is one of the key-discussions in this special issue. Nevertheless, the three articles which constitute this section move away from the established relationship between the museums and source communities by arguing in favour of collaboration with other persons who are also central concerns of museums, by discussing collaborative practices from an inside point of view and by showing these practices beyond museums and material culture towards a decolonization of anthropology itself.

In the article that inaugurates the special issue and its first section, 'Institutions and Collaborative Projects', Julia Ferloni, Alina Maggiore and Florent Molle, based on the example of the Museum of Civilizations of Europe and the Mediterranean (Mucem) in Marseille (France), discuss the proper concept of 'collaboration' in its practical multiple meanings in the engagement with vulnerable communities, focusing on the questions of the recognition, durability and remuneration of the work of the latter's individuals.

As the authors point out, these elements show that, although there has been an important change in traditional museological practices, there are still material and symbolic inequalities within collaborative practices.

Following this, Marília Xavier Cury gives an account of the resonance and importance of curatorship and indigenous agency in the processes of decolonizing museums in Brazil. She gives space to indigenous voices, highlighting their experience in curating exhibitions that promote the indigenous right to musealization. Based on her long-term collaboration with the Guarani and Kaingang people, Cury remarks that the inclusion of indigenous voices is a necessary condition for the construction of a decolonial agenda and a new museological praxis.

The contribution of Susanne Boersma and Dachil Sado discusses the limitations of collaborative conservation through the example of the participatory project 'daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives' at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen (Berlin, Germany). In this way, they address the continuity of colonial epistemological structures in museological practices based on collaborative curation projects with forced migrants. Drawing on the first-person experiences of former participants, museum professionals and the authors themselves, the article suggests that the decolonization of current museological practices and structures cannot be achieved without profound structural change in personnel, collection-management systems and especially an anti-discriminatory agenda.

Following on, Ilja Labischinski, Barbara McKillip-Erixson, Wynema Morris and Elisabeth Seyerl-Langkamp analyse the possibilities and limits of cooperation with creator communities. They base this on a five-year collaborative project with the Nebraska Indian Community College for the creation of an exhibition on the Umo^{n}ho^{n} community for the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. By accounting for the embedded persistence of colonial contexts in the collections of ethnological museums, the article accounts for the potential of the latter as spaces of resistance against colonialism, as sites that intersect the community and connect them to the collective memory of their ancestors, and finally how this exhibit offers visitors a deeper insight into the world view of the Umo^{n}ho^{n} and the core issues of their past and current reality.

These case studies focus on the epistemological potential of collaborative projects involving material culture and show how the cross-cultural encounter of scholars and source communities' experts may contribute to the decolonization of anthropological knowledge and to the transcendence of Western epistemologies in museum practices. In this sense, they not only critically discuss the concept of collaboration itself but also follow its unfolding in and beyond ethnographic museums.

The following three articles discuss the theme of collaboration from another perspective and with a different engagement. They constitute the second section of the special issue on 'Collaborative Projects: Paths and Narratives' and address the possibilities, arrangements, tensions and cooperation within and around collaborative projects from another point of view.

Anna Szöke's piece recalls the experiences of the first Preproom project at the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde in the German city of Leipzig, which aims to be a safe space for residents, museum staff and the audience to create a process of dialogical curation. Through the democratic access to this working place, the museum intends to deconstruct the asymmetrical power relations between the different actors within this institution, as well as to discuss curatorial epistemic challenges and propose dialogues about differences of ontologies in the museums, political engagement and affective reactions to the exhibitions and storage rooms.

In the following article, Heba Abd el Gawad offers a deeply critical reflection on collaborative projects between Western researchers and institutions with indigenous communities. Based on her experience as an indigenous Egyptian heritage and museum researcher, she argues that the Eurocentric decolonization project is characterized by its strategic narcissism because it ignores the lived experience and the scientific contributions of Indigenous Peoples. While it is a moral project framed by Global North academic institutions, it is based upon an exploitative extraction of indigenous knowledge, which means that collaborative projects are an extension of the colonial matrix of power themselves. So much more than merely personal dissatisfaction, this article provides powerful insights into the moral and ethical normativies that are framed by academic institutions, as well as an invitation for self-reflection and a proposal for the decolonization of decolonization.

In the last contribution of this special issue, Wolfgang Kapfhammer and Luana Lila Orlandi Polinesio describe their experience of an introductory course on Amazonian life-worlds at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich with colleagues from the Núcleo de Estudos da Amazônia Indígena (NEAI) of the Brazilian Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM). The article is a multi-voiced report in which indigenous and German students share their insights regarding anthropology *with* and not *about* Indigenous Peoples. By filling the enormous gap existing in the bibliography on decolonizing methods of teaching anthropology, this article, which is rather a polyphonic experimental ethnographic piece than an analytic study, discusses the meanings of anthropology from the indigenous point of view and the possibilities of breaking 'through the wall of silence on the metropolitan "contact zone"'.

The contributions in this special issue show us a series of aspects that can contribute significantly to constructing alternatives that transcend Western epistemologies. Firstly, it shows that a collective and horizontal dialogue between researchers living and working in the Global South or the Global North is possible and, most importantly, necessary if we are to overcome the traditional structures and dynamics of knowledge production. At the same time, this dialogical process results in a knowledge profuse in its quality and pluridiverse in its content. Finally, the contributions to this special issue categorically expose the fallacy of the universalist pretensions of museology and curatorial practices based exclusively on Western-centric epistemes, demonstrating the

urgent imperative of a world where many forms of museology and curatorial practices can co-exist.

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Rewarding Citizen Participation in Exhibitions: A Questionnaire Surveying Museum Practices

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Abstract: The paper presents the results of a quantitative and qualitative study undertaken by a team of museum professionals and researchers based at the Museum of Civilizations of Europe and the Mediterranean (Mucem) in Marseilles, France, in 2020. The survey aimed to investigate the contemporary curation practices of European museums by asking in what ways collaboration enters into their scientific projects, curation and remuneration practices. The analysis draws on the survey responses of 118 French and international participants in their capacities as independent curators, representatives and professionals from European museums and patrimonial associations. In addition, two semi-structured interviews gave further insights into specific examples of collaborative or co-creative exhibitions, designed with vulnerable communities, that break with the norm of habitual power structures and dominant heritage production. The results indicate that, while the notion of 'participation' entails ambiguous categorizations ranging from academic to institutional to community actors, remuneration remains a desideratum, thus highlighting issues of acknowledgment, durability and, ultimately, the social legitimacy and justice of museal practices.
[collaboration, source communities, exhibitions, remuneration, survey]

Introduction

Since 2018, the Museum of Civilizations of Europe and the Mediterranean (Mucem) has been experimenting with new forms of collaborative work. This has included two exhibitions run by the museum in close collaboration with groups of people from socially vulnerable communities[1]. In arranging these exhibitions, the project teams were faced with the issue of remuneration for collaborative work: could the museum pay for this work and, if so, how, and how much? As members of the teams seeking answers

1 For more on socially vulnerable communities, see Cornwall (2008).

to these questions were considering wider practice, but were faced with a lack of answers both internally and in the scientific literature, we constructed a questionnaire to solicit the expertise of museum professionals working in France and abroad. This questionnaire data was enriched by interviews with two survey respondents who gave feedback and insights into specific examples of collaborative or co-creative exhibitions with vulnerable communities that break with the norm of habitual power structures and dominant heritage production[2].

This article reports on the results and responses obtained through the questionnaire and interviews, thereby providing a contemporary perspective on the design and use of participatory museological methods and principles. First, we will describe the background to the study, beginning with a brief introduction to the theory and terminology before turning to the specific museal context at the Mucem that inspired us to generate the questionnaire. In section 3, we cover the methodology and in section 4 we present and analyze the results obtained, including giving an overview of the forms of remuneration proposed by the responding museum institutions. The results indicate that, while the notion of 'participation' entails ambiguous categorizations ranging from academic to institutional to community actors, remuneration remains a desideratum, thus highlighting issues of acknowledgment, durability and, ultimately, the social legitimacy and justice of museal practices.

Background to the Study

The background to our study lies in the concepts of 'participation' and 'collaboration', terms which have become inescapable in recent developments in international ethnographic and society museums as institutions seeking to make the museum more inclusive and democratic. As noted above, the other key motivation for the study relates to specific projects at the Mucem that prompted our questionnaire. Both background aspects will be detailed below.

Theoretical Background: Participation and Collaboration

Participation in the museum has generated significant academic interest, with numerous publications and symposia having emerged over the last fifteen years (see, for example, McSweeney and Kavanagh 2016; Golding and Modest 2013; Simon 2010; Marstine 2008). Among these, French museologist Serge Chaumier's *Altermuséologie: manifeste expologique sur les tendances et le devenir de l'exposition* (2018) provides a key

2 The first interview was conducted with Fanny Wonu Veys, curator of the Oceania Department at the National Museum of World Cultures (Netherlands), and the second with Aurélie Samson, director, and Céline Salvetat, head of the audience department, at the Museon Arlaten (France).

background text which describes four expographic forms that have structured the phases of museology since the creation of the discipline. The last and most recent of these is the 'participatory exhibition', which Chaumier argues 'is not the result of a fashion, but of a profound mutation'[3] (2018:14).

Our second background concept, collaboration, has been given different names by different theorists. In using it, we mean a particular working method that aims to associate a curator from a museum institution with a group of specialists and people concerned with the subject of an exhibition. In doing so, we draw on the work of both the US-American Nina Simon, who developed her now-classic categorization of 'co-creation' in *The Participatory Museum* (2010), and that of Chaumier (2018), who writes of 'co-construction'. In his manifesto, referring to examples of community museums that have developed this practice for political reasons connected with the legitimacy of speech, he justifies co-creation/co-construction in these terms:

> This approach, which might seem demagogic at first sight, means above all that the word is shared, that the expert's knowledge can be debated, even negotiated, and even reconstructed on the basis of the contributions of others. It is especially important to note here what this means in terms of the relationship to knowledge and the way it is shared. What we are witnessing is a renewal of the traditional scheme.[4] (ibid. 2018:111)

Beyond these theoretical developments, participation and collaboration are also being addressed at the state level in some countries. In France, for instance, Jacqueline Eidelman (2017) submitted a voluminous report she had commissioned to the Minister of Culture and Communication on 'inventing museums for tomorrow'. The report emphasized the importance of participation by encouraging the museums of France to become even more 'ethical and civic', as well as 'inclusive and participatory'. Mucem, one of France's sixty-one national museums and one of the largest in terms of collections (with approximately one million artefacts), as it claims to be a museum of anthropology linked to communities, had to set an example.

The Background to the Project

As the heir to the Musée national des Arts et Traditions Populaires (MnATP), the Mucem, inaugurated in Marseilles in 2013, had already developed expertise in the field of participation (Chougnet and Girard 2022). Historically, society museums and ecomuseums have had a privileged link with participatory practices (Delarge 2018). According to Calafat and Viatte (2018), Georges Henri Rivière (1897–1985), founder of the MnATP, is one of the inventors of modern museology and a key theorist of the

3 Our translation from French.
4 Our translation from French.

ecomuseum, a concept he created with Hugues de Varine in the late 1960s to refer to institutions linked to a territory and its inhabitants[5].

While the Mucem had been familiar with questions of citizen collaboration since its opening, mainly in the form of the collection of information and the building of collections (on which, see Chevallier 2008), it consciously launched into participatory exhibitions in 2016. Most notably of all, it created the 'Young people make their museum' program, co-commissioning a 100-square-metre exhibition in the museum's Conservation and Resource Center with pupils from Marseilles' secondary schools. From 2017, two larger projects, *HIV/AIDS: The Epidemic Is Not Over!* and *Barvalo: Roms, Sinti, Manouches, Gitans, French Travelers…*, furthered the collaboration with citizens, working with 'source communities', following Peers and Brown's definition of them as 'the communities from which museum collections originate' (ibid. 2003:1).[6]

The first of these exhibitions, *HIV/AIDS*, was held in Marseilles from December 2021 to May 2022 and aimed to look back at the social history of this epidemic. Diversity of knowledge was at work in the exhibition's co-construction. It was prepared by a steering committee made up of a curator and a collections manager from the Mucem and researchers in the human sciences—sociologists and anthropologists of health and heritage—associated with a community committee made up of people concerned, in different capacities, with the epidemic (people living with HIV, carers, activists, etc.). For two years, the scientific committee organized study days, in which the members of the community committee were invited to participate, allowing the development of common knowledge. Subsequently, the scientific committee had the task of steering the writing and choice of *expôts*[7] with the community committee, while the latter was invited to identify the essential subjects to be dealt with in the exhibition, to suggest works and objects to be exhibited, to discuss and enrich the message of the exhibition and to endorse the choices of the steering committee (Molle 2019).

The second exhibition, *Barvalo*, held in Mucem from May to September 2023, is about the history of the Romani[8] people in Europe. The exhibition aims to show how

5 Ecomuseums were born in France in the early 1970s, under the leadership of these two figures. Rivière wanted to develop a model of museum that was closely associated with its natural and cultural environment, while for Varine, the ecomuseum was a museum at the service of community development (Varine 1978, 2006, 2018). The concept of the ecomuseum was established by the International Council of Museums in 1971, and a charter setting out its objectives and specific features was signed on March 4, 1981. In France, the term was gradually dropped in the early 1990s to give way to the notion of the 'Musée de société' (society museum), which is more encompassing because it values both the recipient and the object of its missions (Drouguet 2015:103).

6 In this case, the two programmed exhibitions were based on the Mucem's previous collections, which the work with the source communities helped to update (Dallemagne et al. 2023).

7 Marc-Olivier Gonseth defines *expôt* or *exponat* as 'a concept designating all objects in the broad sense, thus including visual, sound, tactile or olfactory materials, likely to carry meaning in the context of the exhibition' (Gonseth 2000:157).

8 We have chosen to use the word 'Romani' as a noun and adjective in order to characterize the Roma,

antigypsyism has been established in our societies for centuries by revisiting possible prejudices about Romani communities and by showing these communities as actors, not just as victims of history. To do this, a two-stage design process was conceived: a curatorial team of five synthesized and put into museological form the reflections of a committee of fourteen experts on the subject. These nineteen collaborators of Roma, Sinti, Gitano, French Traveler and non-Roma origin are of different nationalities and socio-cultural profiles, some with academic backgrounds, others with situated knowledge in Donna Haraway's sense (1988).

In society museums, situated knowledge is often of equal importance to academic knowledge, although the former is often perceived as subjective and is therefore not always used. However, holders of both academic and situated knowledge all have a qualified and legitimate point of view on the subject (Chaumier 2018:116). The joint use of situated and academic knowledge gives a wider spectrum of action to citizen participation. Therefore, in the case of *Barvalo*, the title 'expert committee' was chosen for the participants in the project design, as they have experience, in the sense of knowledge, of the subject.

In both cases, the two collectives were asked to develop the exhibition's purpose and its scientific, aesthetic and artistic content. They were also asked to contribute to the catalogue, think about the mediation and event programming, be field investigators, propose acquisitions to the museum, reflect on the heritage of their community, imagine the communication around the exhibition and give an opinion on the envisaged sponsorship, among other tasks. It is therefore a real consultancy job, if not more.

Faced with the magnitude of the tasks asked of the two exhibition collectives at the Mucem, the authors of this article were quickly confronted with the following questions: How can we recognize (i.e., salute, thank and acknowledge) contributions? What is the status of the 'source communities'? Should these source communities be paid as contributors, and if so how, when their profiles and professional statuses are so diverse? Indeed, although many affiliated researchers are already paid by their host institutions to participate in projects of this nature, how can we allow for the involvement of other experts who offer their time without it being understood as working time? In the case of *Barvalo*, for example, two of the members of the expert committee were fairground traders, and thus time spent on the project was time not spent earning at the markets. These questions were even more acute because they sometimes came from members of the collectives involved in these exhibitions, who were aware of their fragility and their desire for empowerment[9].

Sinti, and Gitano groups, as well as any person identifying as of Romani origin. In this we follow both recent Romani studies and the choice made collectively by *Barvalo*'s committee of experts.

9 We understand 'empowerment' in the sense defined by Andrea Cornwall (2008): as the process by which an individual or a group frees itself from the phenomena of domination of which it may be the victim.

To answer these many questions, we first contacted museologists renowned for their detailed knowledge of participatory practices. They confirmed that there was little academic literature on the subject, giving us answers on a case-by-case basis and showing that there was not one but several practices. It was then that the project of a questionnaire was born, allowing us to survey participatory museum practices around the world. This is the task we undertook in 2019[10], with the support of our host institutions and their networks.

Methodology

A Short Questionnaire

We designed a short questionnaire, using LimeSurvey software[11]. These were self-administered on a voluntary basis, with no compensation. The purpose of our study was set out in the email inviting recipients to complete the survey[12].

The questionnaire was structured as follows: after a text introducing the survey and briefly explaining its framework[13], there were standard questions aimed at identifying the respondent in terms of institution of origin, professional status, age, gender, etc. Next, eight questions were asked about collaborative exhibitions, some of which were closed questions with a limited choice of answers, while others were open, calling on the respondents to provide detailed content, generally induced by a positive answer to the previous closed question. The themes of these questions were as follows: the definition of the institutional framework for collaborative exhibitions and the methods for

10 The global COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting health and social upheaval took hold just as we had finished collecting the data. It slowed down the analysis by a year, which was presented in June 2021 at the 15th Congress of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore, Helsinki, and published in Ferloni et al. (2022).

11 LimeSurvey is an online survey tool whose data-processing complies with the German Data Protection Act (BDSG), the Telecommunications Act (TKG) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For more information, see https://www.limesurvey.org.

12 'The Mucem is experimenting with new ways of creating exhibitions. For the past two years, it has been working on collaborative projects. As these projects have progressed, we have realized that we lack concrete examples to draw on, examples that cannot necessarily be found in the specialized literature, particularly for French museums. We therefore seek your help and expertise. Would you be so kind as to answer the online questionnaire?'

13 'The Mucem is currently preparing two exhibitions in a collaborative manner with two distinct communities. [...] For the purposes of this questionnaire, by 'communities' we mean groups of people from civil society who are concerned in different ways with the subjects that interest the museum. We also think of collaboration as the collective construction of all or part of the exhibition and associated projects (communication, event programming, mediation, etc.). Collaboration ranges from consultation to co-curation.'

their implementation (inclusion in the institution's scientific and cultural project, presence of a community manager, contractualization of the collaboration, existence of an ethical charter); the definition of collaborators; and the offer of compensation (financial or otherwise) to the latter.

Once the questionnaire had been drawn up, it was tested by a few museum colleagues before being distributed between February and April 2020. We targeted the professional networks that we could reach in the museum world in France and abroad. For French museums, we sent the questionnaire to all French heritage curators listed in the alumni directory of the Institut National du Patrimoine[14]. Then we used the networks of the French section of the international council of museums (ICOM)[15], the Federation of Ecomuseums and Society Museums (FEMS)[16], the Office de Coopération et d'Information Muséales (Ocim)[17] and the Association Musées-Méditerranée[18]. In order to reach museums abroad, the questionnaire was distributed through the ICOM network[19] and through other networks of museums or heritage professionals that the authors of this article are linked with, such as the Smithsonian Institution's museum networks or the Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS)[20]. It was also sent to colleagues through contacts made in the past. Finally, it was shared on Twitter by the Mucem and one of the authors of this article to the accounts of several European museums[21].

14 The Institut National du Patrimoine (INP) is a higher education institution of the Ministry of Culture that trains all French heritage curators. For more on this, see: https://www.inp.fr/. The alumni directory is available here: https://www.inp.fr/Annuaires-des-anciens-eleves.

15 See: https://www.icom-musees.fr/

16 For more on this, see: https://fems.asso.fr/

17 See: https://ocim.fr/

18 This organization is part of the Association Générale des Conservateurs des Collections Publiques de France (AGCCPF), which is a national association open to heritage curators that brings together all the museums of France – as identified by the Ministry of Culture – whatever their specialty and other public heritage (historical monuments, archaeology, heritage libraries, inventory). For more on the Association Musées-Méditerranée, see: http://www.musees-mediterranee.org/. For more on AGCCPF, see: https://www.agccpf.com/.

19 We sent the questionnaire to all ICOM committees. Their e-mail addresses can be found in the Internet website of the ICOM: https://icom.museum/fr/reseau/repertoire-des-comites/.

20 For more on this, see: https://www.criticalheritagestudies.org/.

21 Details on the survey's recipients are given to underline the fact that there may still be a selection bias in the composition of the survey population because, despite the survey's wide distribution, not all museum professionals could be contacted. The selection criteria may seem subjective, as they are partly based on the professional networks of the authors of the article. Nevertheless, they do not seem any less illuminating, given the quantity and diversity of the sample.

Criteria for Constituting the Corpus

To constitute our sample, we established a quota method and selection criteria allowing us to retain a sample from our overall population. In total, 570 people responded to our questionnaire, but only 145 responded in full, thus restricting our data. Based on the data given in the introductory questions concerning the professional situation of the respondents, we excluded a further 27 questionnaires as not coming from people belonging to institutions that organize exhibitions, the target population of our survey. The questionnaires we retained were based on the following criteria: a) respondents who ticked the box 'museum professional' were included; b) those who declared themselves to be 'researchers' and 'professionals from non-museum cultural institutions' were added only when they specified they had produced exhibitions. Where respondents indicated that they had done so, we endeavored to include only those who belonged to the institution that had put on the exhibition, thus rejecting those who took part in these projects as participants.

Of this final group of 118 respondents, 32 identified as male, 84 as female[22]. Females therefore made up most respondents at 71.2%. Many respondents were French (62.7% or 74 respondents), followed by Belgians (11% or 13 respondents), Swiss and Canadians (3.4% or 4 respondents each), Dutch and Slovenians (2.5% or 3 respondents each) and Swedes, Germans and Austrians (1.7% or 2 respondents each). There was also one respondent each from Bulgaria, Cameroon, Estonia, Italy, Monaco, Morocco, New Zealand and South Africa (0.84% each), while one further respondent did not wish to specify a country of origin. Museum professionals (self-specified) made up 78.81% of the respondents, while 11.86% belonged to a non-museum cultural institution, 4.24% were researchers, 2.54% were independent curators and 2.54% did not fit into any of the proposed categories. As some of the respondents belonged to the same institution, it was interesting to note that sometimes their answers varied, reflecting the different perceptions of what collaboration means for different people within the same museum.

Constitution of the Analytical Grid

For the analysis, the responses were separated into two categories: quantitative questions (closed) and qualitative questions (open). Once this first stage of the study was completed, these two categories were cross-referenced. For the qualitative part and the analysis of question 3 concerning the modalities of participation, the authors chose to use two different but complementary analytical grids.

Museums in general, and social history museums in particular, often rely on a variation of Sherry Arnstein's (1969:217) scale of citizen participation to determine its different types and its levels of success. Arnstein, a pioneer of participatory thinking, established the following scale of participation, which reads from the top down:

22 Six respondents chose the answer 'other', which means that at least four of them chose two answers ('other' and 'male' or 'female').

Citizen power
- Citizen control
- Delegate power
- Partnership

Tokenism
- Placation
- Consultation
- Informing

Non-participation
- Therapy
- Manipulation

According to Arnstein, all practices below which she designated as 'partnership' are tokenism, a symbolic measure, or even an instrumentalization of the voice of individuals outside the institution if we take the last stage of her ladder (manipulation) as a non-participation step.

However, Arnstein developed her theory specifically in the context of the social and political sciences, and therefore it does not fit museum participatory practices very well (Ferloni and Sitzia 2022). We therefore decided to cross-reference it with a tool especially designed for museums. Although many definitions of participatory practices have been proposed by museologists, here we chose Simon's (2010) now classic definition, as adpated by McSweenney and Kavanagh (2016). Simon's model is broken down into four degrees of involvement in ascending order:

> **Consultation**: involves inviting specialists as well as non-specialists to help identify particular audiences' expectations and needs, thus informing the museum's practice.
> **Contribution**: involves asking for and receiving content from audiences.
> **Collaboration**: entails open-ended collaborative activity with participants, where the museum sets the concept and outline plan but then works with audience groups to develop the detail and make it happen.
> **Co-creation**: is defined as 'creating an output together', with ownership of the concept shared between the participants and the Museum.

However, it is difficult to encompass the many layers of a participatory exhibition in a single ladder or model, even when drawing on two, as we have here. As Bryony Onciul states regarding Arnstein's ladder, field experience can offer a complicating challenge:

> Despite echoing the model, the case studies do not completely reflect the hierarchy implied by their placement on Arnstein's ladder. Five factors can account for this: first, the realities of engagement are much more untidy and fluid than any model

> or category can account for. Second, during the process of engagement all the different kinds of participation listed in typologies such as Arnstein's may occur at different stages. Third, museums and communities do not enter into engagement with a predetermined or fixed amount of power, it is always open to negotiation, theft, gifting, and change. Fourth, influences beyond the engagement zone such as logistics and institutional requirements limit what is made possible by engagement. Finally, the top rung of the ladder, citizen control, does not solve the problem of representation or relations between individuals within a community or an institution such as a museum. (Onciul 2013:82–83)

This is an opinion that we fully share based on our own field experience as collaborative exhibition curators. Nevertheless, we needed a conceptual framework, and thus it is with full awareness of its limitations that we have adopted the cross-referenced model applied here.

Supplementary In-Depth Interviews

To refine the analysis, two respondents were selected from among those who had described the framework of their collaboration with source communities and had agreed to a more in-depth interview. They were interviewed during in-depth, semi-structured, one-to-one interviews, conducted by videoconference. Our aim was to collect the testimony of professionals who had been involved in an exhibition set up with the maximum degree of collaboration, including vulnerable communities. We also based our selection on geography, size and, in one case, the type of participants involved in the project: a group of Romani origin.

Ultimately, we chose to speak with two representatives of a French museum who, between 2010 and 2016, had worked with the Gitano population in its territory, in Provence, southern France, location of the Museon Arlaten[23]. The collaboration consisted of a collection of memories exhibited in 2013 as *A la gitane* ('Gitano style'). We then interviewed a representative from a European institution divided into four museums, the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (National Museum of World Cultures) in the Netherlands[24], focusing the interview on gender issues in the *What a Genderful World* exhibition, displayed in 2019.

23 Founded by Frédéric Mistral (1830-1914), folklorist, poet and Nobel Prize winner for literature, the Museon Arlaten ('Arlésian Museum' in Provençal) is one of the oldest ethnographic museums in France, created in 1899 in Arles, Provence, southern France. Today, it is a museum of society that explores and questions the Provençal society of today. There is evidence of the ancient presence of the Arles Gitano community in Provence, and they are represented in the collections of the Museon Arlaten.

24 The National Museum of World Cultures is a Dutch national museum of ethnography, grouping four sites: the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam; the Africa Museum in Berg en Dal; the Museum of Ethnology in Leiden and the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam.

Results and Analysis

Source Communities: A Notion with Blurred Boundaries

The answers to our survey show that 55% of respondents declared themselves to have already worked with source communities in the context of an exhibition. At the same time, almost all respondents said they had already collaborated with external partners, who were mostly identified as cultural institutions, artists, pupils from primary and secondary schools, or businesses. Researchers in general and those originating from source communities were equally defined as partners, as well as associative actors or activists.

The interview with Fanny Wonu Veys, curator at the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (the Netherlands), shows that some heritage professionals involve more general or less essentialist audiences, whom they refer to using terms such as 'stakeholders' instead of 'source community'.

> Every time we do an exhibition now, we try to see with – what they call here in the bureaucratic jargon – stakeholders. For example, we did an exhibition that just opened in Amsterdam on healing practices in the world. So, we worked with traditional healers from different worlds, different countries.
>
> Each time we try to find people who have an important voice, and even if this voice is not the voice we agree on, we still try to have this differentiation in the ideas we bring with us. And obviously if the ideas are really aggressive, racist, it's not a voice we represent in the museum. We are quite careful. It's not that people can't say it, but the museum won't represent that voice, won't vouch for that voice.[25] (04/03/2021)

Returning to the questionnaire, given we had particularly targeted society museums and ecomuseums,[26] whose mission it is to work on and with local populations, we expected that respondents would correlate external partners with 'source communities'; however, this was not the case. Our expectation was that respondents would identify source communities as privileged external partners, whereas in fact many mentioned more habitual types of publics with which museums collaborate. What is more, 43% of the respondents who indicated that their institution had collaborated with external partners did not consider themselves as having worked with source communities, establishing a clear-cut difference between the two categories. The responses indicate the

25 The quote is from an interview that the art historian and Mucem intern Emma Danet conducted online with Fanny Wonu Veys, curator of the Oceania Department at the National Museum of World Cultures, on 4 March 2021 (our translation from French).

26 That said, while privileging these types of institution, we have also opened our survey to art, history and science museums.

vague semantic benchmarking of source communities among museum professionals. Does this linguistic instability also translate into an instability concerning the conception and implementation of collaborative practices?

Collaboration: A Notion Used for Different Practices

In order to categorize the collaborative actions of the respondents, the poll invited them to situate their practices on a ladder of participation inspired, as already mentioned, by Simon (2010) and Arnstein (1969). Most of the answers included the concept of 'partnership' (78%), and to a lesser extent 'consultation' (8%), 'delegation' (6%), 'conciliation' (5%) and 'information' (3%).[27]

From qualitative analysis of some responses, it can be seen that the concept of 'collaboration' varies widely from one person to another, often depending on the type of institution in which they work, but also on their country of residence and sociopolitical context. The professionals from fine arts museums declared that they are just beginning to apply collaborative curatorial formats, while their counterparts in society museums state they have 'always' organized participatory projects. Based on these answers, we might assume that they understand 'collaborative exhibitions' as projects led in co-creation[28] with external partners, which comes closest to sharing the curatorial authority. However, the majority of those surveyed (mostly French) saw collaboration as a form of information and consultation with the partners, but where museums retained the ultimate authority over the content of the exhibition.

The responses from one of the interviewees at the Museon Arlaten illustrate this tendency. From 2010 to 2016, the Museon conducted an ethnographic study of Catalan Gitanos, a group that has been living in Arles for several generations. During the eleven years in which the museum was closed for renovations, the institution developed numerous external projects, including a mediation project entitled 'Sharing Gitano Memories'. This was aimed at children and gave them the ethnographic tools to collect the memories of their elders. This project evolved considerably. The Museon partnered with the mediation association 'Petit à Petit', which had connections with and the trust

27 Respondents who answered, 'yes' to the question 'Did your museum already collaborate with external partners originating from a community in the context of an exhibition (also called a 'source community')?' were asked to answer the question 'What was the level of participation?' and were asked to 'choose the appropriate response for each item': Non-participation / Information / Consultation / Conciliation / Partnership / Delegation / Autonomous control. This question model captures the respondent's degree of agreement or disagreement, according to a Likert scale, a tool for measuring attitude in individuals. The scale consists of one or more statements for which the respondent expresses his or her degree of agreement or disagreement with five response options, which cover the spectrum of opinions, from one extreme to the other: strongly agree, agree, neither disagree nor agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

28 According to Simon (2010:263ff.), co-creation is defined as 'creating a production together'. In this way, the ownership of the concept is shared between the participants and the museum.

of the source community after leading a previous project about housing. 'Petit à Petit' connected the museum with a Gitano mediator working in a school including Gitano children. He agreed to take part in the 'Gitano committee' that the Museon Arlaten set up.

The museum's staff was not integrated into the latter to allow the committee members to express themselves without staff interference.

The collected data originated from three different types of collector: the members of the source community (mostly Gitano women and children), the museum staff and the association 'Petit à Petit'. The museum was keen to be very transparent in the collection of data (both objects and testimonies) by inviting the families surveyed and the Gitano associations to listen to field reports and make comments once a year. This was intended to allow them to express their views on what had been collected during the six years of this survey project. The project thus resulted in the enrichment of the collections, educational workshops with Gitanos and non-Gitano schoolchildren, the publication of various testimonies on the daily lives of the families visited from 2010 to 2016 and an exhibition.

In 2013, as part of the event 'Marseilles, European Capital of Culture', this participatory work resulted in the exhibition *A la gitane*, which was presented in Marseilles in the J1, an emblematic metal port building created by the Eiffel Company in 1923 that had been transformed into an exhibition space for the European Capital of Culture season. It was displayed some months afterwards at the *Espace Van Gogh* in Arles.

The project was based on the premise that Gitano identity seems to be conceived in 'Gitano ways of doing things' rather than in identity markers that are visible at first glance. This exhibition was therefore based more on verbs than on concepts: to tell oneself, to know oneself, to live in a community, to inhabit, to express one's identity. In the making of the exhibition, the Museon Arlaten only consulted a little with Gitano communities when displaying the material collected during the 'Sharing Gitano Memories' project. According to its director, Aurélie Samson,

> It's our role to channel things and to lead the exhibition, always maintaining the link, the consultation meetings to identify the taboos, for example. We shared a great deal on a certain number of things. But on the other hand, for the scenography, the writing of the texts and the final selection of the objects to be presented, we played our role as experts[29]. (03/03/2021)

This 'Contribution' – according to Simon's analysis – can be established on 'practical' grounds, with Samson further testifying that:

29 The following quotes are from an interview that Alina Maggiore conducted online with Aurélie Samson, director, and Céline Salvetat, head of the audience department, at the Museon Arlaten on 3 March 2021 (our translation from French).

> We had six to eight months to put it together, to construct the speeches, to select the objects and contents, to choose a scenographer. It was quite short. I repositioned myself in the project by saying that, for the exhibition, the expert is the museum. (03/03/2021)

While the Arles Gitano community was consulted extensively on both aspects of the project –the collection of memories and the exhibition – the question of their remuneration was also raised, which Céline Salvetat, head of public services, says she had asked herself 'a lot':

> During the first focus groups, one of the acknowledged members of these communities said to me: 'What are we going to gain from participating? Will it help us get a family plot?' As a museum professional, I was not used to being told this. There was no particular desire for recognition on their part, and so he asked me what good it did him, which was completely understandable. And so, it's true that it's more in the cultural programming, given that there is this relay association, that we've been able to get women to participate in some way or other, for example. During the performances, they were the ones we could pay via the cultural program. (03/03/2021)

Salvetat's extended answer reflects the shorter responses we received to our questions on remuneration in the last part of our questionnaire.

What are the Contracting Policies and Remunerations for Collaboration?

The analysis of the answers given to the questions concerning remuneration indicates that most respondents agree with the importance of remunerating external partners[30] and that they are satisfied with the remunerative practices carried out by their institutions[31].

However, beyond statements of purpose, remuneration does not seem to be a practice that is adopted by all respondents. To the question that motivated our survey – 'Have you remunerated external partners with whom you have collaborated?' – 66% answered in the affirmative, while 34% answered in the negative. For the respondents who stated that they did remunerate external partners, they did so predominantly on a financial basis. Non-monetary compensations were also named and included entry tickets or exhibition catalogues. Tax exemptions were a possible option, but were only adopted in a few instances, as were other options that were not specified by the respondents.

30 When asked 'Is the remuneration of external partners important to you?', 38% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, while 29% fully agreed and 25% agreed.

31 When asked 'Are you satisfied with the remuneration of external partners?', 45% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, while 32% agreed and 13% fully agreed, and 7% did not agree.

In response to the question 'Did you issue contracts for this collaboration?', 54% answered in the affirmative. As we wanted to determine the methods involved in these, the participants were asked to select from among the following, with order placements (text writing, creating artworks, mediation, etc.) representing the preferred option at 41%, followed by curation contracts (25%), volunteering (20%), other types of compensation without further details (13%), non-remunerated work contracts (8%) and civil service (4%). It seems that the most popular method of working with external partners is the classic model of work contracts or orders.
One response is worth including here:

> I understand that the question concerns collaboration with participating citizens. In that case it was a question of volunteering. In fact, they never really posed the question since the project was presented as an opportunity to commit/express oneself actively in, for and with an institution, while at the same time developing a common objective inside a group. = citizen experience.[32]

This pint of view confirms that the issue is not in question from the perspective of the participants of collaborative exhibitions, which contrasts with our experience in our own projects. This view is further challenged by our experiences, where external collaborators have expressed a fear of seeing their knowledge and competences exploited by the museum, especially if they originate from vulnerable communities. It is usually the museum that needs the communities rather than the other way around (Lynch 2011). Even though we noted that several professions express real determination not to propose volunteering as the sole answer to involving source communities[33], acknowledging this collaboration as a contribution of expertise for which they are remunerated is still not obvious. Most of the given responses suggest that there is a lack of adequate procedures for these situations, which are in fact resolved case by case, without museums having well-defined policies on the matter.

Nevertheless, some questionnaire respondents reported more mindful remuneration practices. This was attested, for instance, in the following extract:

> Remuneration is considered when 1) the collaborating party is not employed by or engaged voluntarily as part of an NGO; 2) the collaborating party is expected to provide or deliver more than just a mutual sharing of ideas/resources; 3) the collaborating party represents a community/voice or expert that is particularly vulnerable and often misused without payment for their expertise knowledge. This could be experts from ethnic groups as well as artists.

The questionnaire responses were complemented by interviews, including the situation Samson underlined for the Museon Arlaten. Through the cultural program, an order

32 Our translation from French.
33 'We find it most important to remunerate people from source communities at the same rate as other people' (our translation from French).

for a giant paella was given to the Gitano women who participated in the collection of memories for which a financial counterpart was proposed, corresponding to a 'budget line' existing in the practices of the museum. And so, the Gitana group cooked a big festive meal for the museum's audience and were paid for this.

> But it was not directly a remuneration for their involvement in the project. In the end, it was a form of work that involved them in the project, but in return for payment because they were offering a service to the visitors. (03/03/2021)

The interview with Fanny Wonu Veys, curator of the exhibition *What a Genderful World* at the Museum of World Cultures in Amsterdam in 2019, also shed light on how participants from the source community were involved in the project and how they were compensated:

> In terms of collaboration, we worked with a group of about ten people, with people who questioned or dealt with gender issues but came from very different worlds: academics, people who were transgender and helped young people in their search for their identity. There were also people from the world of theatre who questioned gender in their plays. There was a stylist from the fashion world who also questioned these ideas of gender. They were people from very different worlds, but they helped us to formulate and structure the exhibition. … They were paid. I don't know exactly how much, but we had three or four meetings with them. … They were like ambassadors for the exhibition. Especially one person who is a journalist, who is used to the media, who writes a lot. This person took on a more important role. We also developed a whole program around mediation and the exhibition. Unfortunately, most of the things were not done because of the confinement[34]. But the intention was there. … There were guided tours given by these people, during which they gave their perspectives on the exhibition. They made their own choices. … They were paid according to activities, not according to profiles. If they didn't come to the meeting, they weren't paid. And if they chose to do a guided tour, they were paid for that. (04/03/2021)

We note, through the results of the questionnaire, but also through the details provided by the interviews, that there is a discrepancy between the desire to remunerate stakeholder participation and the reality. Museums are not accustomed to contracting outsiders who do not provide scientific, artistic or technical expertise or competence. Professionals therefore implement strategies to resolve this paradox that allow them to activate 'budget lines'. Stakeholders then take on the role of mediator or chef sometimes, in order to be paid.

Perhaps it is time for museums to change their habits. It seems quite normal today to give a voice to artists or external curators who build exhibitions from subjective and

34 The confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

sensitive narratives. Why shouldn't it be the same for members of socially vulnerable communities?

Quite certainly, the key to suitable remuneration and a better sharing of museal authority lies in taking into consideration the social vulnerability of certain groups. Acknowledging and taking into consideration the social domination that affects some groups allows for a consideration and valorization of their expertise per se. This would mean reconsidering the role of museum professionals, who, in addition to being responsible for the scientific truthfulness of what is said in the museum, could also strengthen their role as mediators between different types of knowledge.

Conclusion

The answers to our survey testify to the strategies developed in one hundred museums concerning the remuneration of source communities in the context of collaborative exhibitions. The analysis of our results suggests that, although all responding institutions declare that they establish collaboration on the level of partnership, in reality the practices that are put into action are more diverse. Most museums formed associations with external partners by informing them and consulting with them, without contracting policies, whereas other museums more easily apply collaboration by legally framing it. Some cases of co-creation originate in institutions that belong to nations in which minorities are very active politically, and often comprise Indigenous or native communities. Sharing authority, however, remained an exception among the surveyed museums. In many cases, the participants of our survey define collaboration as a commitment to the public with the objective to retrieve information for specific museal projects (collecting objects and/or documenting / exhibitions / mediation) which corresponds to a conception of collaboration as depending on the authority of the museum.

Since the 1980s and the emergence of the new museology, anthropological critiques of representation and political and cultural challenges issued by postcolonial movements, the move to make visible the processes and systems of domination has formed the backbone of museological reflection, as well as the formation and consolidation of identities. These theoretical and praxeological efforts are aligned with a hope for increased dialogue with the public and the populations that are present on the territory of each institution. Our study shows that, between the hope and the practice, there are still too many gaps that manifestly show the disparities in remunerating (or not) source communities.

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‘Indigenous Encyclopedias’: Displacements and the Repositioning of Logics, Voices and Narratives in the Relationship between Museums and Indigenous Groups (Brazil)

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Abstract: This article seeks to bring value to the claims of Indigenous Peoples in Brazil through ‘encyclopedias’, libraries or dictionaries, forms of expression that indicate respect for elders and ancestors. It is developed within the political context of a struggle for constitutional rights, where land rights are at the center of complex historical issues marked by violence and violations. It recognizes the role of museums as active agents, especially with respect to collaborative actions in which indigenous groups and their representative agencies directly participate in museum actions with their ancestors’ objects. A collaborative experience is described in relation to the exhibition *Resistência Já! Strengthening and Unity of Indigenous Cultures - Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena, MAE-USP*. Throughout the discussion, reflections on museal collaboration are raised and indigenous authors embedded with the aim of expanding the point of view of museums and their working methods with comprehensive and active indigenous participation. The position of indigenous actors on cultural knowledge transmission and the elders’ role results in an increased political appreciation of the ‘encyclopedias’.
[museum collaboration, indigenous agency in museums, ancestry, indigenous curatorship, decolonization in museums]

Introduction

Among the many indigenous claims, three can be highlighted: their current realities, their histories and their self-narratives (speaking for themselves). These issues are recurrent in museums that have been working in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples in Brazil (Cury and Bombonato 2022). Community-based actions are going further, with increased articulation in terms of their collections and the presence of legitimate heirs to take over irreversible positions within museal spaces as a means to (re)signify what they recognize as heritage. Since heritage is part of the disciplinary domain (archaeology, anthropology, museology, etc.), Indigenous Peoples in Brazil have increasingly been taking ownership of this term/concept as a strategy to demand their constitutional rights. With museal collaboration, dialogues between participating agents guide this work into a balance in relationships, repositioning the authorities (curators, museologists, etc.) as a result of indigenous participation.

This article addresses the displacement of museum authorities towards the repositioning of this authority in relation to other participations, above all the indigenous agency in the museum. The challenge lies in the creation of a multivocal text that places indigenous authors at the forefront of the argument, with identified names, and without the goal of revalidating theories and discussions within the academic environment (Makuxi 2022).

This text reflects a collaborative action that has been carried out since 2010. It involves a multilayered action which respects the yearnings to examine the current indigenous context as much as its past and future, understanding the realities in their localities and respecting their right to speak for themselves. In this scenario, museological collections are gaining in contemporary meaning, while museums are beginning to reassess themselves in the face of new challenges, both external (sociocultural, political, and global) and internal (self-transforming).

Collaboration involves joint actions with common goals, dialogue, respect and a relationship of trust among all parties. This is what Indigenous People refer to as a partnership. Partners are people or entities that are committed to indigenous rights, such as museums. Committed to the partnership, this article, written by a researcher at a university museum of archeology and ethnology, takes on a hybrid format which is based on the partnership position and that of the partner and is shaped throughout the collaboration. Among the three claims raised earlier (realities, histories and self-narratives), one aspect occurs repeatedly in indigenous speeches on events and other occasions: the elders, who are in fact knowledge-holders, akin to encyclopedias and/or libraries. In a hybrid format, indigenous speeches are brought into this article through recorded, transcribed, and published testimonies, which also value indigenous efforts to maintain a bibliographic production together with an academic production, highlighting national and international publications by indigenous curators, with their critical views on museums and exhibitions. The objectives therefore rely on collaborations as opportunities for listening and reading aiming at respecting indigenous efforts in terms of reclaiming their rights and valuing their 'elders' within the museum space.

The groups involved in the collaboration action referenced in this article are the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa, Terena and Krenak, who live in the Indigenous Lands (TI) Araribá, Icatu and Vanuíre, São Paulo, as well as others of equal relevance which contribute the idea of valuing the 'elders', the encyclopedias, with knowledge transmission as a political act in advocating land rights, especially after the many deaths resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. We understand Wanda Witoto's speech published on BBC News Brasil as a globalized political act:

> Education takes place in everyday life while observing the doings of the elders. From an early age, children are taken to the fields and learn how to care for and handle nature, which leaves, fruits and roots that they can eat or how to search for rivers, fish and make primary tools. … Therefore, we do not view the survival of

> Hitoto children in Colombia as a miracle. It was the strength of our people's spirituality, knowledge and ancestral wisdom that kept them alive. (Braun 2023)

Tensions and Repositioning

Since 1988, indigenous autonomy has overcome legal relief, and land rights are guaranteed by the constitution. The indigenous political organization, which was conceived before the 1988 Constitution, yet gained momentum after it (Krenak 2022), has progressed over the decades as a demonstration of the resistance of Brazil's Indigenous Peoples. Resistance and rights are key to the growing indigenous struggle in terms of actions and articulations, especially after recent policies carried out against indigenous lives, disrespect for land and territories, illegal mining, deforestation, invasions and reported killings. Within a context of violence and violations the *Marco Temporal* (Time Frame thesis) 'an anti-indigenous thesis which restricts the rights of peoples to demarcate their lands' (APIB Official 2023), becomes yet another threat, since it determines the year of the enactment of the Constitution as a reference for land occupation. It therefore removes the right to demarcate traditional territories, in addition to other risks such as mining and other forms of exploitation on indigenous lands.[1]

'The Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB) is an instance of the agglutination and national reference of the indigenous movement in Brazil' (APIB Official 2023). Since 2005 it has maintained the highly visible national mobilization work of Acampamento Terra Livre (ATL). The newly created Ministry of Indigenous Peoples reflects the recognition and promotion of indigenous rights in the current federal administration. Led by the minister whose last name refers to her people, Sonia

1 Indigenous Peoples defeat the Time Frame thesis! STF [Superior Tribunal Federal] overturn the ruralista thesis by majority vote. 'We have indeed emerged victorious from the Time Frame thesis, but there is still much to be done to ward off all the threats that are also pending in the Senate, through the law proposal 2903. We remain mobilized, we continue to fight because we need to ensure and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples.' Dinamam Tuxá. Apib's Executive Coordinator. (APIB Official 2023). The Senate Plenary approved, this Wednesday (September 27), the project that regulates indigenous rights over their lands (PL 2,903/2023. Source: Senado Agency). PL 2903 is a genocidal project sponsored by agribusiness and therefore Apib sent President Lula arguments for the proposal to be completely vetoed. This Friday (20), Lula partially vetoed the proposal, contrary to the indigenous movement's request.
Now, Lula's partial vetoes will be analyzed and voted on by the National Congress in a joint session between Deputies and Senators. Parliamentarians will decide whether to accept the vetoes or not. If the vetoes are maintained, the law will be approved removing the parts mentioned in the veto. If the vetoes are overturned, the previously vetoed sections will be disregarded and the law will be approved with all the threats to Indigenous Peoples. In other words, the National Congress can approve the law disregarding all the vetoes made by Lula. Apib reinforces the need for constant mobilization of the indigenous movement in villages, cities and networks to prevent this project from being transformed into the law of indigenous genocide. **The fight continues and tell the people to move forward!** (APIB Official 2023).

Guajajara[2], initially the Ministry rejected the derogatory designation of 'índio', replacing it with 'indigenous' (of the place), and it does not use the term 'ethnicity' on its website (Ministry of Indigenous People 2023). FUNAI has removed the word 'índio' from its past designation, becoming the National Foundation of Indigenous Peoples, and thus strengthening the political character of its peoples. In addition, the Instituto Socioambiental (ISA), an important civil society organization of public interest, which carries out actions for Indigenous Peoples, among other activities (ISA 2023) setting up the *Povos Indígenas no Brasil – PIB* website (Indigenous Peoples of Brazil) and the *Socioenvironmental Headlines*. Both the latter feature current news on Indigenous Peoples as a means to bring light to public opinion on the socio-environmental agenda, a paramount task given that opposing published information often places Indigenous Peoples in a misconceived, incorrect, or discriminatory position.

As pointed out by the APIB and the ISA, there are common issues in defense of the rights of Indigenous Peoples, such as land, traditional territory, the Marco Temporal (Time Frame thesis) and the right to exist; deforestation, livestock and agribusiness; illegal mining, with its environmental degradation and contamination; risks to human life, armed attacks, threats, and killings. All these issues and others are intertwined. The indigenous struggle and the support from organizations have multiple roles and actions across Brazil, depending on the risks involved.

Among increased political and social tensions, which Indigenous Peoples in Brazil have been experiencing for centuries and which has worsened in recent years, are museums and institutions that are marked by colonialism.

The intertwined relationships between sociocultural groups and museums places us – museum managers, researchers, and professionals – in a new position, one that has become progressively more and more aware of new museal horizons to be reached and disciplinary boundaries to be overcome. We are examining dialogic relationships which require different attitudes to groups that find inside museums part of their past heritage musealized, which they see as a place for creating collections for future generations. When they uncover how museums work, indigenous groups understand the benefit of musealization, based on their choices.

We have been practicing collaboration between knowledge fields, yet we also strive for collaboration between museums and groups related to the collections. Collaboration requires a close understanding of decolonial processes, recognizing old theories and practices which remain present in museums (Sadongei 2021). One example is collection studies, where 'original categories and [the] underlying values on which they rest often remain in place' (Harrison 2013:12) without deep changes generated from collaborative relations. Another occurs when actions constitute 'assimilative and neocolonial moves' (Phillips 2021:201) without underestimating the instrumental use of collaboration, such as the state's *modus operandi*, which in multiple ways continues

2 Sonia Guajajara took office on January 1, 2023.

to control (de)coloniality in favor of politically dominant discourses (Weber-Sinn and Ivanov 2020). As regards the term 'decolonization' itself, 'over-repetition is evacuating it of its meaning' (Phillips 2021:201).

The external political power is always greater than that of the museum. Yet, it does not mean that there are no social movements that are deeply articulated, as is the case in Brazil:

> These resistance phenomena are similar to springs of water, which, as demonstrated by geology, are outflows of a process that is highly comprehensive and complex. It is part of an intricate network that is created and maintained below ground, thus protected from exterminating action, and at some point, it discharges itself and emerges on to the surface. The idea of infiltrating an apparently solid structure is how decolonial practices consolidate. The crisis in our identity is something that one has to take on, and this entails acting out of one's own range of possibilities. The solid, insurmountable structure is our national identity, which every inhabitant shall take on by law.' (Makuxi 2022:18)

A crucial point for museums is the representation questioned by the potential for self-representation which the collaboration prompts (Cury and Bombonato 2022). In this sense, other epistemologies begin to integrate museum discourses, expanding references with other voices, previously mediated by, e.g., anthropologists, archaeologists, museologists and educators, and set in the third person (he, she, they). Knowledge holders of their own cultures create narratives for themselves and their groups (me, us), yet also do so for social recognition, a polysemic and dialogic process (Martín-Barbero 2009) for which the museum itself is an area of possibilities.

In indigenous epistemologies, knowledge transmission takes place between the oldest and the youngest throughout their lives. Each indigenous elder is recognized and respected by his group as an encyclopedia or library, which depicts their deep knowledge of traditions and the stories they hold. However, these processes enter museums in multiple ways. With collaboration, they gain additional weight and must be observed, respected and integrated into the institutional routine, prompting in-depth changes (even if fragmentary, discontinuous and slow). Among them is the integration of speeches, narratives and indigenous points of view in the records referring to collections. These follow indigenous logics, which require new structures in the document system, which remain saturated with the representation categories of others. This involves a professional exercise that requires a great deal of effort and investment, since doing things differently is not easy, such as giving up centralized practices. Relocating the museum authority and personnel involved requires valuing other authorities, such as those of the *pajés,*[3] *caciques,*[4] elders, teachers, and researchers of their own cultures with their own means.

3 Shaman, spiritual leader.
4 Cacique, political leader of indigenous land.

An article, depending on its elaboration, has a hybrid aspect between orality and written text (Martín-Barbero 2009). The article by indigenous activist and artist Jaider Esbell Makuxi (1979-2021), TI Raposa-Serra do Sol (Roraima), can shed further light on the necessity of a new format:

> The exercise of wandering through these memories, having in them my bibliographic reference, allows me to take advantage of other methods. It would be an extension of the practice of orality, although I have to strategically use the cultured language of the colonizer [Portuguese]. I do not feel indebted for not including names, dates and circumstances in the footnotes, yet I invite you to consider my signature as a representative of a people who still values the validity of what is narrated. If this text does not fit within editorial lines, we would in fact understand that the willingness to fulfill decolonial performance practices in academic environments and spaces would still not be a reality. (Makuxi 2022:24)

We must not disregard the indigenous agency in the relationship with museums, a topic of great complexity, when dealing with the methods of acquisition of objects in the museological collections of the past, when Indigenous People were often ignored or deprived 'of their agency as conscious and active subjects of the relationship with non-Indigenous People'[5] (Bottesi 2021:58). Nevertheless, 'At what point does indigenous agency become a matter of specific intentionality in relation to the museum? Under what circumstances can we speak of indigenous agency occurring, and in relation to what?' (Harrison 2013:7). We can look to the future based on the present, developing processes in which the indigenous agency expresses itself politically in the museum, beginning with requalified collections (resignified and recontextualized), exhibition curatorship, creating collections and by methodologies that strengthen indigenous authors. The objective of this is to shift the viewpoint and reposition it not as a dispute or substitution, which would be fruitless, but towards a triggered dialogue that includes diversity, deadlocks, controversies, conflicts, negotiations and hybridizations.

The hybridization can also take place through audiovisual and hypertext structures (Martín-Barbero 2009), so that indigenous resources are associated with others for the expression and preservation of indigenous knowledge:

> … with these journal records, I mean records of videos, we start to get into this digital age after almost a hundred years of Nimuendaju's journey, where he wrote down ethnographic records through the book he published,[6] a technology, and today we have digital technology. Thus, reflecting on this moment which we are experiencing, videos come from another recording format. (Oliveira et al. 2020:65)

The Nimuendaju journey mentioned above is that of Curt Unckel (1883-1945), born German, but baptized by the Guarani Nhandewa in 1906 and naturalized as a Brazil-

5 The author is referring to the Makuna of Brazilian Amazonia.
6 (Nimuendaju Unkel:1914).

ian in 1921, when he took on the name of Curt Nimuendaju. Through his baptism he joined this group and is remembered by all more than a century later. He is also recalled for his advocacy work, which culminated in the creation of the TI (Terra Indígena) Araribá (SP) in São Paulo in 1913. The book, which was published and translated into Portuguese, is a reference for teachers at the Aldeia Nimuendaju Indigenous State School and contained identified photos of Indigenous People.

According to Guarani Nhandewa Tiago de Oliveira, pedagogy coordinator at the Aldeia Nimuendaju School, the records are also a dialogic resource for non-Indigenous People, a diplomatic policy in which the indigenous museum takes part, with a hybrid format bringing together knowledge and memories of the group and dialogues with non-Indigenous People, along with the social technology for a cultural strengthening between museology and the indigenous museum:

> So, I believe we are going to create a selection of memories, which records we will pick, yet they shall reach an audience beyond our community, who will also have access to this space, the external audience, which comes from outside. So, the selection of this work, I believe that it considers all audiences. From memory to pedagogy activities and fun games. I think that this will be one of the contents which we will be exhibiting within this space [Museu Nhandé Manduá-rupá[7]]. (Oliveira et al. 2020:65)

A museological exhibition can be a form of hybridization, since it concentrates elements, languages and sensorialities, while it concurrently allows interpretations and resignification carried out by indigenous curators, based on unlimited expographic circuits within the museum space, with its pauses, leaps, detours and advances. The exhibition is also hybrid, and in its institutional materiality there is a way of telling a story to someone within the self-narrative of Indigenous Peoples.

For Élisabeth Kaine, Aboriginal curator at the Université du Québec in Chicoutimi (Canada):

Being involved in the work of developing an exhibition is a privileged tool for promoting the individual and their culture. The immersive character, the multiplicity of channels and means of communication and the presence of artistic languages combine to allow the exhibition to become a self-construction tool for people in a minority position, victims of colonialism, yet at certain times and within certain parameters. (Kaine 2021:116)

Associated with the museum's new issues and obligations, the collaboration involves a hybridization of thoughts and practices, a mix that is created through a back-and-forth reflexive interest that shifts and replaces authorities and relationships. In turn a new museum ethics is shaped through direct work with Indigenous Peoples involving the 'twin themes of identity assertion and the decolonization of exhibitionary com-

7 Aldeia Nimuendaju, TI Araribá.

plexes' (Adams 2020:68) and the 'twin tropes of "indigeneity" and "ethics"' (Adams 2020:69) in a process that involves rights and values. For Jessie Ryker-Crawford (2021), indigenous curator at the Institute of American Indian Arts – Santa Fe (USA), there is need for action by 'Re-Adjusting Museum Theoretics (and Hence, Practices) to Include Indigenous Community Needs and Values'

> … when research methodologies and curatorial theoretics are deeply ingrained with the ethics of careful and mindful methods of collaboration. That through these ethical methods, what is yet to be explored is how Native American culture is multi-faceted…. (Ryker-Crawford 2021:139)

New museum ethics are being designed, yet with continuous collaborative work that entails deep listening to indigenous speeches, a process which also includes written production.

The Collaboration Context

We have been speaking about an action related to museal collaboration with the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa, Terena and Krenak that has been carried out since 2010, research that is based on the relationship between Indigenous People and museums.[8] Throughout the collaborative work, three indigenous claims have been previously mentioned: Indigenous Peoples' current realities, their histories and their self-narratives (speaking for themselves). Yet it was over time that the idea of collaboration as a partnership was consolidated. We are partners as long as we are able to fulfill agreements, which are established orally and in work that offers concrete results, such as an exhibition or publication.

After years of interactions, many questions were raised, and the work advanced with new proposals. A few discussions are relevant, such as restitution, repatriation and human remains in museums, to mention a few examples which demonstrate that we need to address museal criticisms without restrictions. As stated by Kujá (Kaingang pajé) Dirce Jorge (TI Vanuíre): 'I know how the objects got here, but we can work together.' As stated by Susilene Elias de Melo, Kujá's assistant, about human remains: 'I know that it's here [within the visited museum]; you'd better show it to me.'

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8 Research funded by FAPESP: 'Ethnographic collections and collaboration with indigenous groups – past, present, and future: Knowledge production and innovations in museological management policy' (proc. 2022059972). Research funded by CNPq: 'The "things" and their owners – indigenous curatorship and collection management policies' (proc. 309622/2022-0); 'University museum and indigenous museum – uses and access to indigenous collections: new challenges for museums' (proc. 40759920185); 'The indigenization of the museum - Perspectives for indigenous collections' (proc. 30481020177); 'Museums – requalification of collections' (proc. 44368320158).

There is no intention of reconciliation or reparation, since this is a role to be performed by the government, yet that of creating dialogues which result in agreements put into practice at the museum. There is no intention to 'heal', which would be very arrogant from the standpoint of the museum, especially in the presence of *pajés*, who are indeed responsible for healing through spirituality, including of museum professionals. However, we can speak about careful curatorship, that is, caring for museological objects in their materiality and information, caring for people and their ethical integrity, caring for institutional discourses and narratives, and caring for communication formats through exhibitions and museal education based on collaboration. For Kaine, the relationship between museum and people will be decolonized when the institution considers Indigenous People as comprehensive and active actors. It is up to the institution to put into practice the deep changes which this new relationship requires, 'since an incomplete process will do more harm than good' (Kaine 2021:116).

In the partnership, the museum is a strategic place of struggle because of the visibility it offers in large urban centers and for its connections, such as those with universities. It is a place of indigenous activism, and it will increasingly be so. For Carlos José F. Santos, Casé Angatu, Tupinambá de Olivença (Bahia), 'An exhibition with Indigenous People in the leading role is more than an exhibition' (Santos 2020:119). It was because of its expected visibility that the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena agreed to participate in the exhibition *Resistência Já! Strengthening and Unity of Indigenous Cultures at the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology* of the University of São Paulo (MAE-USP). It is considered a political title as defined by the indigenous participants involved, after a discussion between them on WhatsApp.

With the following, we will try to answer the questions: 'At what point does indigenous agency become a matter of specific intentionality in relation to the museum? Under what circumstances can we speak of indigenous agency occurring, and in relation to what?' (Harrison 2013:7)

The work involved collections from three groups collected in the territory where they live. The oldest and most problematic is the Kaingang, formed between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, when the west of the state of São Paulo was colonized, a process involving extensive violence (Cury 2021). It also involved four anthropologists: Curt Nimuendaju, who defended the Guarani Nhandewa in the early twentieth century; and Herbert Baldus, Harald Schultz and Egon Schaden who formed the Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena collections in 1947, a crucial moment in the development of anthropology in Brazil, which involved the museum and its expansion into the university (Cury 2022).

For the exhibition, we followed the practice of reaching into the archives, as curator Paul Basu did for the exhibition '[Re:] Entanglements: Colonial Collections in Decolonial Times'[9] (Borgatti 2023). To do so, we outlined the trajectory of objects (Cury

9 Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA), University of Cambridge. June 22, 2021–April 17, 2022.

2021, Cury 2022). Unlike the exhibition by Paul Basu, which highlighted the activities of W. Thomas in southern Nigeria and Sierra Leone between 1909 and 1915 (Borgatti 2023:82), at MAE-USP anthropologists are briefly mentioned in the panel at the beginning. However, the exhibition was not based on them, but on indigenous narratives, except for the Guarani Nhandewa time-spiral which Vanderson Lourenço and his students recorded in the encounter of this group in the past with Curt Nimuendaju at the beginning of the twentieth century. Another aspect of the methodological strategy adopted is that, unlike Basu, we are all curators, professionals and Indigenous People, strengthening with this characteristic the ideal 'curatorial responsibility', 'which arises out of a nexus of interests' (Harrison 2013: 5), where, with collections that are closely related to the indigenous past, present and future, indigenous participation becomes paramount in the museal discourse.

In this way, we limit the risks taken, like those previously highlighted: '… even when I felt heard at the beginning of my mandate, their listening rarely materialized into the exhibition' (Kaine 2021:118). In spite of an agreement, the feedback provided may not match the expectations of the collaboration:

> Many decisions end up being taken internally, and at the first opportunity, the institution resumes compliance with its old reflexes: centralizing decisions, 'doing everything instead of doing it'. (Kaine 2021:118)

As one of their 'curatorial responsibilities', the three groups met with the objects of their ancestors at MAE-USP (Cury 2022). During these opportunities, which were continuously driven by a great deal of emotion, we were also moved, as the museum was able to show the curatorship working (caring for) the objects.

The people who participated in the work with the collections were selected by each group, approximately twenty of them, composed of the elders (and all they know) and the *pajés* (spiritual leaders, communication between enchanted entities and all they know) (Cury 2019). In addition, the *caciques* (political leaders who participate in the partnership, stressing the importance of reuniting with museum objects), indigenous teachers (researchers of their own culture through multiple resources, who bridge the gap between traditions, children and young people through the school and its resources), health professionals (who experience the issues faced daily on indigenous lands), and young people (with their expectations, restlessness, and dilemmas). Museum professionals got organized and structured the work, showing how they carry out the curatorial work and what was done by the museum with the objects over decades or a century in the Kaingang case. As an interdisciplinary team, each sector (conservation, documentation, exhibition, and education) had or has the challenge of rethinking itself through collaboration. All work sessions were filmed, so that these videos remain available in the museum for future generations of each group. They will make up a shared catalog, an agreement established with the groups, bringing together revised transcripts of the videos and other information from subsequent discussions on indigenous lands, territories where the objects were collected in the past,

a route which is very much supported by the expographic process and ethnographic information.

For Tiago de Oliveira,[10], one of the curators of the exhibition, actions with Indigenous People in the museum 'bring owners closer to their objects, thus diminishing the feeling of loss of something that was displaced from the place where it belonged. I could say that it is a form of repatriation of the cultural assets of that people' (Oliveira 2021:39).

> In these museums [such as MAE-USP], we were able to find many artifacts and objects from our ancestors. Several of them are from their collections or donations by researchers who were in our communities' decades or centuries ago collecting these pieces, as is the case of anthropologist Egon Schaden in 1947, when he was in the Araribá Indigenous Reserve among the Guarani Nhandewa. Some of the objects collected by these researchers are sacred and valuable to us. Seeing them again or getting to know them is like going back in time, when we establish a reconnection with our ancestors. (Oliveira 2021:38)

The museum had no intention to seek information with the groups involved, for example as a way to complete catalog data, although data were recorded at some point. There was also no direction in terms of controlling information, yet some information was presented or verified, and occasionally they were corrected when they did not match what the elders, *pajés* and teachers confirmed to us. Moreover, we did not perceive the Indigenous People having feelings of control over their history: on the contrary, we often heard the phrase repeated by *pajé* Terena of the TI Icatu Candido Mariano Elias and others: 'I only speak of what I recognize and what I know', which coincides with what Zimmerman (2010:34) narrates: 'If you work with Indians long enough, one of the most common phrases you'll hear is, ''I only speak for myself, not for anyone else in my tribe''.' In the works centered on indigenous contributions to the exhibition, there were exchanges of individual testimonies that were shared and listened to, always respecting others, but no indigenous person ever corrected or completed what the other was saying. It was the sum of overlapped speeches that resulted in three self-narratives for the exhibition, with the participants and the selection of objects and their labels created from their contributions. This is why there are occasionally two speeches by two different people on the same label. Since the work groups were hosted at the same place and in shared rooms, the conversations continued, without the presence of museum staff. That is, the discussions and exchanges continued at night and returned to MAE-USP the next day, and we were not aware of what was discussed. Indeed, it could hardly be any different from this scenario. Or could it have been? What is being noted here is what is private to them and the relationship of trust with us. Not everything we come to know should be revealed by the museum. An example happened with Cacique

10 Tiago de Oliveira has a Master's degree and is a doctoral student in Social Anthropology at USP.

Jazone de Camilo. We were reviewing a transcript of a video. The Cacique then asked to cut a section. When I asked why, he explained: 'I said that because you asked me, but it wasn't meant to be published.'

We are dealing with an exhibition divided into three parts. Interestingly enough, the expographic self-narratives followed different paths. The Kaingang (TI Icatu and Vanuíre) organized two sequences, one with ancient objects and the other with their current reality, manifesting continuity through knowledge transmission by the elders. Among the pieces presented are two dance outfits (male and female) used in group rituals led by Kujá Dirce, deliberate donations for the museum to keep for future generations. The Guarani Nhandewa (Aldeia Nimuendaju, TI Araribá) selected the objects and articulated them among themselves. They opted for the production of objects with their current uses as a means to strengthen cultural continuity. These objects, produced by teachers and students of Aldeia Nimuendaju School, were donated to the museum. The Terena (Aldeia Ekeruá, TI Araribá, and TI Icatu) preferred to organize themselves around tradition and the objects in the collection, reclassified with support from the elders and *pajés*. Rodrigues Pedro donated a belt which he got from his mother during his youth. When he handed it to me at TI Icatu, I told him to keep it for his grandson, and he replied, 'Keep it in the museum'. None of the groups manifested any intention to reveal the oppression they experienced and still experience: on the contrary, they deliberately preferred to show resistance, valuing the old, elders and happiness. Nor were they interested in exposing how anthropologists worked or how the collection took place or the damage they suffered as a result of coloniality, options which Paul Basu would question (Borgatti 2023). Possibly it is the museum's responsibility to understand and explain itself. And it is.

For Dirce Jorge, it is 'our exhibition' in the sense of a partnership. Using the first person – us – she refers to the indigenous groups and people who participated, as well as the MAE-USP team. That feeling doesn't explain everything, but it's a good summary of the process.

In a way, it may seem that the exhibition was consonant and unruffled work, yet it was not. Important as it is to deal with the principles of the process, it is also vital to deal with controversies, conflicts, contradictions, mistakes, successes and disputes which involve everyone, which have multiple transforming expectations as the collaboration. However, this is a project in a museum (MAE-USP) that has nineteen researchers on its staff, each with their own perspectives, to highlight that the metadiscourse is part of this university institution in a very complex way.

Our challenging problem relates to the museum and its relationship with Indigenous Peoples: throughout the process, the museum did not give up its authority, yet it did reposition relations. The Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena were treated in the process as comprehensive and active actors (Kaine 2021), and a consensus was reached among all those involved about the indigenous agency in the process and their demands regarding history, reality and self-narrative. Furthermore, one of the most emphasized and respected points which was brought up in the curatorial work of this

exhibition was the role of the elders in cultural knowledge transmission, which we highlight as the 'encyclopedias'.

Ancestors and Elders: The 'Encyclopedias'

> 'In 2016 we experienced a great loss.[11] Well, she was our dictionary. And we spent night after night until dawn, researching her, studying, while she taught us.' (Pereira, Melo and Marcolino 2020:85)

Encyclopedia, dictionary and library are ways in which Indigenous Peoples in Brazil refer to their elders. For Makuxi (2022) it is bibliographic reference and cultural knowledge transmission which uses just one method: orality. No wonder they use Western references to express the importance of the elderly to traditional cultures. Concurrently, as they show us, non-Indigenous People, the value of their in-depth references, they also explain the importance of indigenous knowledge, which begins with their knowledge of the past.

Research and cultural learning go hand in hand in the relationship with the elders, as in the strengthening of the Kaingang culture, or creating ritual clothing for the group led by Kujá Dirce Jorge:

> … during the day we were going to do research with our older women, and one was Candire, so that we would know what instrument we would be able to use in our culture. So, we had to know [make] the clothes, the material for the instruments, for the dance, we had necklaces, so we were gathering everything, we were learning. (Melo and Pereira 2021:23)

Candire, an important Kaingang (TI Vanuíre) who lived through the twentieth century, left an heir, José da Silva Barbosa de Campos. According to him, his grandmother told him:

> You must hold on strong through the fight. Because I'm leaving. Yet this doesn't end. I want you to go on and take charge. That is, join the Kaingang peoples. Take it on, gather those who want to follow along with you. Who believe in you. Tell them what I left behind, I passed it on to you. (Campos 2016:61)

A similar message was given by Kujá Jandira Umbelino to her daughter Dirce Jorge, concerned about cultural knowledge transmission: 'I'm leaving, but don't cry, work.' (Pereira, Melo and Marcolino 2020:85).

11 The loss refers to the death of Jandira Umbelino.

For the Guarani Nhandewa Tiago de Oliveira, all knowledge is stored and transmitted by 'living libraries',

> … the *Nhaneramõi kwery* – these subjects are the elderly and the elders within an indigenous community. When we need to consult them about a specific subject or knowledge, they are the ones we look for, to teach us and pass on that ancestral knowledge. (Oliveira 2021:35)

Guarani Nhandewa, then director of the Aldeia Nimuendaju School, Creiles Marcolino, recalls his grandmother Maria Luciana, known as vó Pipoca, who died at the age of 125. She experienced the journeys of this group in the state of São Paulo, Itaporanga, Barão de Antonina, Rio Feio and the Rio Verde, until they reached what is now TI Araribá, the history of the Marcolino Honório family. Grandmother Maria Luciana

> … is our mother, … she is the one who started everything, she is my father's mother, my grandmother on my father's side, Francisco's mother, Calaí, … they are not among us today, we miss them very much, wonderful memories of the time we lived with them, we lived only a few years with them, let's say by their side, yet everything that we lived is kept inside us. (Oliveira et al. 2020:59)

The elders are living libraries and are greatly responsible for cultural knowledge transmission. What youngsters and children know they learn from the elders, even if this takes place through indigenous schools, with other resources such as publications and videos, or in museums. When they pass, their descendants take over the continuity of what they know and what they learned from them.

> Well, I have a lot to be thankful for, for all I know. She [Jandira Umbelino] is not in flesh today, yet she is in spirit. Yes, she is with us. She is overlooking our work. Because she passed, we sought for a great deal of strength to be able to keep up this work. (Pereira, Melo and Marcolino 2020:85)

When the elders pass, there is a blow, as these are 'irreparable losses. In the same way that we learn to be strong, this is taught to younger people with the passing of a relative: '… we have to pass it on to our children that they have to be strong, to be stronger' (Pereira, Melo and Marcolino 2020:86), and experiencing the culture is the best way to do that. Therefore, a passing means the loss of an encyclopedia that was continuously consulted and no longer is, hence the questioning of Susilene Kaingang:

> … if you lose your elder, what will it be like if you didn't learn from him? What are you going to do if you haven't learned how to sing, dance, speak, cook? (Pereira, Melo and Marcolino 2020:86–87)

Living together with the family is a reason for learning about many intertwined issues, where they were also taught to be active in indigenous causes and where they have examples of women leaders, such as Letícia Yawanawá (TI Rio Gregório, Tarauacá, Acre):

'I am the daughter and granddaughter of leaders, my father was a *pajé*, and I carry inside of me a few of the examples of my father, who was a leader' (Yawanawá 2022:121).

It is the lack of consultation of encyclopedias that is a cause for great concern, as it is pointed out by Letícia Yawanawá, who is concerned about indigenous health. For the latter to be distinguished, it needs traditional knowledge related to health.

> They are missing out on a great deal when they don't listen to our cries to 'acknowledge it'. I do this because my father has passed. My father used to say: 'My daughter, if you know the plants, at least some of them, you will save your family, your children, your grandchildren.' The elderly are here among us, and no one cares. They are all worried about bringing in more medication, yet not with this knowledge which our relatives have. (Yawanawá 2022:130)

The living encyclopedias will pass. Yet, for Indigenous People who live with their spirituality the passing of a relative is not the end, since these relationships are maintained through spiritual communication.

> It's like my grandmother [Candire] is speaking to me now. … We talk to several people. … Everything comes from people who have passed away and are with us spiritually. (Campos 2016:61)

No one chooses to be a *pajé*. 'The Creator is who will name them, he will direct and point out who will be a *pajé* and who will not be one' (Babosa et al. 2020:43), according to the explanations of Gleidson Alves Marcolino, professor at Aldeia Nimuendaju School and assistant to *pajé* Guarani Nhandewa Gleizer Alves Macolino (TI Araribá). Tiramoi 'has a huge load of knowledge and can pass it on, teach many people, especially the children' (Babosa et al. 2020:44).

The *pajé* still 'releases his body so that the forces of heaven can come in', like angels or guides, says Gleidson:

> We say *Ywyraidjá*, who comes to teach us, to tell us things that we can't even think of, which only relates to what happened back then. They come and tell us in person. The spiritual leader releases his body to the person who has passed and left this land, to offer their knowledge which has gone with them. (Babosa et al. 2020:43)

Kujá Dirce Jorge continuously values the role of parents and grandparents, yet she never forgets her responsibility for cultural and spiritual education:

> How are we going to pass it on [the culture] to our children? Let's start with our cultural night. So that we can gather in circle and start to explain it to them. Because we already have our culture. We have already taught our language, we sing, we dance. However, we can strengthen it all through our cultural night. To be able to further strengthen. … Have more strength. So, that is it: we must strengthen our children.' (Pereira 2016:55–56)

Everything is connected at home and in the family, including traditional culture and spirituality in Dirce Jorge's statement, with which Cledinilson Alves Marcolino agrees. Cledinilson (teacher at Aldeia Nimuendaju School and assistant to *pajé* Gleizer Alves Marcolino) advises us that, where he lives (TI Araribá), the community works through the indigenous school on the relationship between parents and children to strengthen children and youngsters and protect them from non-indigenous influences, whether they come from technology or from living outside the indigenous land which allows contact with other values.

> Outside, the world is different, the view is different. His vision will depend on, he will follow his own path; the direction he will take will depend on what he has as a foundation. If he doesn't have a basis that is ready and prepared, he'll simply go astray and learn everything he wants to know. And the spiritual part or spirituality, in general his contact with what is sacred, makes reference to this system. It also provides support, treatment, as long as it is introduced from the basis, from when they are born. … So, they go out to the city, often to study or to work, they distance themselves from this cultural system and end up not forgetting but setting it aside, the act of evoking – if I may use this word – their spiritual sense. Or they can rather look for that spiritual feeling that they have inside and know how to use it from a young age. (Babosa et al. 2020:44–45)

It is out of this process that comes respect for the encyclopedias, libraries and dictionaries that indigenous museums reveal, supporting the processes of cultural strengthening.

Indigenous museums have their own characteristics. They differ from other museums due to their self-management and the fact that they relate to a sacred territory (Oliveira 2021). They are museums beyond four walls:

> Many museums are open air, they can be in a forest, in a house of prayer, in a school or in a building which we now also denominate indigenous museum. These museums are in constant motion, where the material and immaterial merge to complement the message that the objects or artifacts on display are conveying. (Oliveira 2021:39)

Kujá Jandira Umbelino did not know why she was keeping objects. Before passing away, she participated in a meeting (15 August 2015) among the Kaingang to speak about the Worikg Museum (TI Vanuíre). On 9 February 2016, she passed away. Yet it was only on 9 November 2017, that the Museum exhibited the Jandira Umbelino collection for the first time, on the twentieth anniversary celebration of the Kaingang cultural group. According to Susilene Kaingang:

> It involved a great deal of suffering for me and my mother, because my grandmother's pieces were all tied up, wrapped in cloth, with a bag, cotton cloth, there were pieces that belonged to my grandmother that were placed inside four bags plus a

> tied piece of cloth. And I looked at it and said, 'Wow, grandma tied it all up so well, grandma kept it all so well'. And when she kept it away, when we took it, we didn't know what to do with it. And I always say that it will all be enlightened, and it points to the direction of what we should do, and we unwrapped all the pieces, then we cleaned all of them … I didn't know how we were going to set up our exhibition. So, with the help of Professor Marília, we went on and built the exhibition, we cleaned the pieces, and put everything on display. (Melo and Pereira 2021:27–28)

For Dirce Jorge and Susilene Kaingang, managers and curators of the Worikg Museum, '… the heart of the village [*aldeia*] is the Museum, it is where our memories are kept, it is where the memory of my grandmother is kept, and that of my great-grandmother …' (Melo and Pereira 2021:28). Looking at the present and the future, 'to show it to my children, for my children to show it to my grandchildren, to show it to my great-grandchildren, it is very important' (Melo and Pereira 2021:28).

At the Worikg Museum, 'we have to know the story to tell it' (Melo and Pereira 2021:29) to the community and non-indigenous visitors.

> That's why, when we talk about a museum, we have to go back there to come forward. The museum is particularly important for that. Because often the story ends up being erased, the person ends up not being interested. Now, having a museum, we have to know the story so that we can tell it. (Melo and Pereira 2021:29)

At the Worikg Museum, the narratives are in the exhibition of the Jandira Umbelino collection, yet they are in the territory, on the Tonha track, 'to listen to the birds singing, so people can explain the leaves and trees and what they are used for. And there are *tutó* leaves in which we roast fish, so we can explain everything' (Melo and Pereira 2021:24). It is a different museum, with other sensibilities and sensorialities: '… it is a Museum you can enter barefoot, with your feet on the ground, it is all about the ground, the earth, the thatch, the bamboo, it is not made out of [other] material.' (Melo and Pereira 2021:24)

Mestre Cacique Sotero is a collector of his own culture. It was because of his concern for the present and future of the Kanindé People (Aldeia Fernandes, Aratuba, Ceará) that he understood the potential of a museum and the collection that he has been building for decades. Since its creation in 1995, the Museum has become 'an essential element of indigenous identity of the people within a perspective of collective construction, by showing Kanindé's own vision of their version of history' (Santos 2021:54). The Kanindé Museum, according to its managers and curators, constitutes a:

> … living space, which gathers prayers, *pajés*, *benzedores*, midwives, leaders and ancestors, becoming the place where the old trunks narrate their memories to new generations, having an intimate relationship with the territory, since their activities are not restricted only to physical spaces, but to sacred places, ecosystems, cultural heritage and archaeological sites which exist in the territory. The museum

> for the Kanindé speaks of their stories not only in the past, but also in the present, highlighting the struggles and resistance undertaken. Because of this, it becomes a privileged place for recording the memory of old trunks.' (Santos 2021:58)

Lidiane Damaceno, teacher at the Índia Vanuíre State Indigenous School and Krenak leader, highlights the creation of the Akãm Orãm Krenak Museum (Novo Olhar Krenak, TI Vanuíre): 'This museum aims to integrate the oldest with the youngest through the exchange of cultural knowledge' (Afonso, Oliveira, Damaceno 2020:66). The museum wished to 'further disseminate the culture, seeking greater recognition and appreciation of Indigenous People in the territory of western São Paulo'. This was to be a means

> … to shift paradigms relating to the stereotype of indigenous people in the media. indigenous people portrayed by the media are only those from the Amazon. Only the ones from Xingu. The indigenous people in the media have straight hair and slanted eyes. And so, indigenous people have to walk around naked and with a feather on their heads. (Afonso, Oliveira, Damaceno 2020:66–67)

The manager and curator of the Akãm Orãm Krenak Museum, Helena Cecílio Damaceno (Tomiák), mother of Lidiane, is creating the basis of the museum with her husband, João Batista Oliveira (Burum rím). Thus, Helena summarizes their proposal:

> … the tiny door of our tiny museum is open, and children are always going in and seeing things we make and keep there, and I'm sure that it will stay in their memory for a long, long time … and whenever someone needs a bow, an arrow, a *borduna* [handmade needle-shaped wooden weapon], something that we make and leave there, the day we don't have it here anymore, they'll take that piece and they'll make it, they won't need to run to other museums, we already have one there … they can go over there and get those pieces and make one just like it. So, it wasn't difficult for us to create that tiny museum. It's not a fancy museum like the ones they have in other places, it's a simple museum, but it's ours, and it was made with a great deal of love, a great deal of affection while thinking about the future of our children. This is what I want to say. (Afonso, Oliveira, Damaceno 2020:70)

Indigenous museums are a reference intricately linked to indigenous groups that experience them, often with the collaboration of universities (Cury 2020). However, it is this process that respects intergenerational relations, as well as the cultural knowledge transmission and exchanges that museological institutions can carry out to strengthen their culture, especially when they are linked to a broader social struggle. Yet in fact nothing can be achieved without indigenous prominence being at the center of museal management concerns, which entails new cultural policies that recognize indigenous rights to musealization.

> Our cultures and our histories are there, in a relationship with time that is not only that of the past, but that of the present as well, it is a relationship of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. It is a paradigm shift, because now these are 'living museums', since indigenous presence is actually present within it, no longer in pieces or images, but physically and spiritually through our presence, that has become increasingly current and active in this space. (Oliveira 2021:38)

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A Donkey for the *White* Visitor: Practices of Collecting (with) Forced Migrants

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Abstract: At a time when public and political opinion towards forced migration is negatively inclined, many museums in Europe are applying a collaborative approach to address the stories of forced migrants (Boersma 2023; Sergi 2021). Through participatory projects, museum practitioners are attempting to put forward an alternative to the 'authorized heritage discourse' (Smith 2006), yet their practices rarely accommodate a shift towards a more inclusive discourse. Aiming to shed light on the experienced limitations of collaborative curation, this paper scrutinizes what lies in the wake of a participatory project. Assuming a focus on collection practices as a result of participatory work, this paper looks at one project in particular: 'daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives', which was organized at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen in Berlin. Through interviews with former participants and museum practitioners, combined with one of the author's lived experience of the project and its aftermaths, this paper unpacks the persistence of hierarchies within collaborative practices and the ways in which these feed into the discourse that is developed as a result. The paper starts from the process of collecting the potential outcomes of a participatory project within an inherently *white* institution, and it draws parallels between practices of care for people, as well as for their objects and artworks.

[museum collections, forced migrants, stereotypes, participation, colonial collecting practices]

Introduction

In response to the refugee protection crisis of 2015, many museums in Europe attempted to counter the ensuing polarizing public discourse (Bock and Macdonald 2019) through participatory projects with forced migrants.[1] These projects took many forms and produced a broad range of outputs, often augmenting exhibition spaces and museum collections with objects, works and stories from the migrants themselves. Many studies have reflected on the unequal power relations in these participatory process-

1 This paper addresses museum work that specifically engages forced migrants, differentiating between this 'category' of migrants and those who migrated for alternative reasons. The term 'forced migrants' is used here to include asylum-seekers, refugees and illegal immigrants who have been forced to leave their home countries. It does not imply their functioning as a group or so-called 'community'.

es (Whitehead et al. 2015; Lynch 2017; Vlachou 2019), and yet the effects of these hierarchies on the projects' discursive outputs remain largely unexplored. Although the aim is to develop an alternative to the 'authorized heritage discourse' as described by Laurajane Smith (2006), museum practices often continue to support this prominent discourse. Despite the good intentions behind their work, many museums, especially those established from ethnographic collections, tend to reproduce stereotypes, label artworks as ethnographic objects, and omit information about authorship in their publicly available databases. Confronting just one aspect of these participatory projects, namely what is preserved to remain part of the museum-constructed discourse, we ask how do the collecting practices construct a discourse, and to what extent does this reflect the museum's *white* gaze?

Based on these questions, the study sets out to emphasize the importance of integrating participatory practices into collecting practices, as well as assessing how these practices contribute to the discourses put forward by the museum. We focus solely on one museum project to allow for a detailed description and include personal reflections. The artworks created and collected as part of 'daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives' at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen (MEK) in Berlin serve as examples of the wider problem of how museums approach the objects and art of those who are constructed as 'others' in public discourses. Despite our focus on one museum based in Western Europe, the case thus presents widely applicable concerns about museums' work with and representation of forced migrants. First, we build on the existing literature to define the 'authorized heritage discourse' and show how it is embedded in the (post)colonial structures and practices of the museum. Second, we refer to previous studies, empirical data and our own experiences to reflect on the ways migrant experiences are materialized and categorized for preservation as part of the museum's collection. Our assessment is a product of collaborative thinking and writing, in that it brings together the first-hand perspective of Dachil Sado, artist and former participant in the project, with the insights of Susanne Boersma, researcher and curator based within the institution under scrutiny (though not directly involved in the project at the time). Finally, we address the shifts required to decolonize (participatory) collection practices, especially with the aim of including perspectives and representations that are currently not part of the authorized heritage discourse.

Reconstructing the Authorized Heritage Discourse

In 2015, many people arrived in Germany seeking asylum, leading to a socio-political situation that came to be described as the 'refugee crisis'[2] (Bock and Macdonald 2019:2). Regardless of the attempts to reverse this phrasing to reflect the fact that the crisis was not caused by the incoming migrants but by the destination countries' inability to facilitate their arrival (Bock and Macdonald 2019), a polarizing narrative continues to impact how forced migrants, and predominantly Black and Brown people, are perceived within Europe today (Whitehead and Lanz 2019:2–3). Incidents such as the attacks in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015–2016 were highly mediatized, while political decisions to keep migrants out in the future (e.g., the EU-Turkey Deal and the Law of Orderly Return) were given minimal attention by the press. This 'economic and political crisis of Europe is also a crisis of values and identities: it is a cultural crisis in which constructs of otherness take centre-stage' (Whitehead and Lanz 2019:22). The divisive rhetoric and selective representation of related events have strengthened austerity politics, leading museums to question their role within this debate (Vlachou 2019:48). Museum directors and practitioners suggested that their exhibitions and projects might positively contribute to the discussion, providing alternative narratives and historicizing the phenomenon of forced migration (interviews 2018–2021[3]; Baur and Bluche 2017:17).

The authorized heritage discourse, as defined by Smith,

> promotes a certain set of Western elite cultural values as being universally applicable. Consequently, this discourse validates a set of practices and performances, which populates both popular and expert constructions of 'heritage' and undermines alternative and subaltern ideas about 'heritage' (ibid. 2006:11).

Edward Said examines Orientalism as a discourse, as this is the only way to

> understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, socially, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively (ibid. 2003:3).

It is through this discourse that 'the West' dominated, restructured and exerted authority over the 'other' (ibid.). Museums, in their role as repositories of heritage and as

2 The term 'refugee crisis' was most frequently used to describe the situation at the time, but in this paper, we will refer to it as the 'refugee protection crisis', thus shifting the responsibility for it from the migrants to the countries involved and their lack of organization.

3 As part of her PhD project, 'The Aftermaths of Participation', Susanne Boersma conducted a series of interviews with museum practitioners and former participants of museum projects. The museum practitioners were at the time of the interviews based in institutions in Germany, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The thesis in which these interviews and the conclusions drawn from them appear has since been published as a book (Boersma 2023).

'manifestations of national identity and cultural achievement' (Smith 2006:18), are in a position to challenge the discourse by changing what they collect and include in exhibitions. However, within their context and through their practice, they often end up reproducing exclusive narratives that favour a 'Western' (in this paper, described rather as *white*) way of knowing (Lynch and Alberti 2010:14). The historically constructed power differential is deeply embedded in museums' infrastructures and practices (see Bennett 1995; Clifford 1997), and it is therefore likely to remain prominent in any discourse put forward through practice.

With the goal of contradicting or challenging the authorized heritage discourse (Smith 2006), museums increasingly employ participatory methods as a means to an alternative discourse. To address stories of migration, museums initiated participatory projects with migrants themselves in an attempt not to speak *for* them. Participation, ranging from consultation to co-curation (see Simon 2010) but excluding interactives in exhibitions, is seen as a way for museums to 'give voice' to marginalized groups and individuals. Such approaches continue to be essential as long as those who are being marginalized are not represented within the museum's curatorial team. However, this discourse was reproduced rather than challenged in different participatory museum projects, as migrants were approached, 'collected' (Lynch 2017:232) and portrayed as the 'other' (Meza Torres 2014; Boersma 2023). Despite participatory practices informing some of the content presented in exhibitions and in further outputs, it is rare for participants to control the project outcomes, resulting in the discourse remaining in the hands of the museum (Lynch 2017:230). This can be problematic, as

> those who staff museums and galleries have been trained and socialized to think and know in those ways, and museums are not set apart from global economic injustice and the reality of racial conflict and prejudice (Lynch and Alberti 2010:14).

With this in mind, it is important to take a closer look at the outputs and outcomes of participatory projects, including what is collected in the process (Macdonald and Morgan 2019; Boersma 2023).

Museums' collections and the objects of perceived 'others', as well as the practices through which objects were obtained, form the subject of this study, providing insight into the discourse that was constructed by and around them. Collected works or objects and their interpretations become part of cultural heritage, yet collecting practices often take place behind the scenes, and little information is publicly accessible afterwards (Brusius and Singh 2018:12). A study of these practices of collecting the heritages of forced migrants will demonstrate how they are aligned with some of the colonial aspects of museum work that have been extensively critiqued (Schorch 2017; Weber-Sinn and Ivanov 2020).

Methodology

Participatory museum projects are rarely able to eliminate racial and situational marginalization in practice, yet the museum's work is rarely assessed in collaboration with the participants. To achieve a fair evaluation of such practices, those who participate in a project should especially be asked about their experiences and their understanding of the appropriate terminologies and representative stories (Boersma 2023). Rather than repeating exclusive practices when it comes to the evaluation of participatory work, this paper is based on a collaborative approach combining the research of one author (Boersma) with the reflections of a former participant (Sado) on a participatory project. Boersma was not involved in the project at the time, but has researched the project and worked as a curator at the MEK since 2018. Sado was invited to be part of the project as a co-curator, which positioned him between the artist leading the project 'daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives' and other forced migrants who were also engaged as participants in it.[4] Alma-Elisa Kittner suggests that questions of ownership (addressed in more detail below) also apply to research on migration and with (forced) migrants (2021:9). In putting together this paper, we have worked collaboratively to challenge the normalized and exclusive academic practices that Kittner describes. The preliminary conversations were written up by Boersma, edited and checked by Sado, and thoroughly discussed by both.

The materials gathered and used for analysis in this paper were part of ethnographic fieldwork by Boersma as part of her PhD research, bringing together interviews, informal dialogue about the project and personal experiences from after the project, as well as available information on the collected objects in the museum's database. For our reflections on this case study, we draw predominantly on our interviews with former participants and practitioners[5], as well as on our own personal experience. The discussion of the materials and the process of revisiting previous experiences was paramount in our evaluations, yet it often turned out to be emotionally taxing: the conversations brought up traumatic experiences of the collaboration and aftermaths of the participatory project. This makes for an inevitably subjective analysis, pointing to aspects and experiences that should be central to participatory museum work. The study focuses on the perspectives of participants and the impact of these types of projects on the people involved that should no longer be overlooked. Where possible, names have been omitted and gender-neutral pronouns are used to impede direct connections being made to the interview partners affiliated with this particular case. Following Hall et al.'s (2003) iterative process of collaborative analysis, we established a timeline and analytical framework for the selected examples. We considered the various possible foci

4 Although over a hundred people were involved in the project, a much smaller group worked on the exhibition consistently from beginning to end.

5 All interviews that were conducted in German have been translated into English by the authors of this paper.

of the paper: the experiences of participatory processes, the exhibition as an output, the (informal) working conditions, or the discourse developed through the collected objects. Despite these all being options that could have supported a similar argument, we found the examples from the collecting processes most illustrative, with evident parallels between contemporary and historical approaches.

Through a critical discourse analysis of the collected objects and their descriptions, we will outline some of the ways in which museums perpetuate unequal power relations. According to Gillian Rose, discourse analysis allows a 'detailed consideration of how the effects of dominant power relations work through the details of an institution's practice' (2012:258). Rather than focusing on the power relations that were part of the process as a whole, we prioritize how they played into the outcomes of the museum's collecting practices. Discourse, according to Teun van Dijk, is the 'main interface between the social and the cognitive dimensions of racism' (2012:16). The discourse, whether created by the museum or introduced by the press, actively connects social experiences with knowledge systems. A study of the discourse produced by the museum in response to the refugee protection crisis thus helps us understand the difficulties of challenging the 'authorized heritage discourse' (Smith 2006) and reveals some of the implications for those represented through this discourse. However, this study goes beyond the narratives constructed within the museum's publicly accessible spaces, reflecting on the processes behind a proposed 'alternative' discourse. It is not merely about the discourse itself, but just as much about the inclusion of participants in the development of said discourse.

To understand how the collection contributes to the discourse, this article points to both the process and the narrative presented through the collected items and their descriptions. Building on several of the works that were added to the museum's collection as a result of the project 'daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives', we describe three aspects of collecting practices that contribute to the constructed discourse: stereotypical categorizations; defining artworks and objects; and acknowledging authorship and ownership. These aspects reveal some of the processes that perpetuate colonial structures rather than challenge them, making them central to our analysis. Before more focused sections on each of the aspects, we describe the project and the collection process that followed in more detail.

From the Project to the Collection Process

Like many museums after 2015, the MEK invited an artist to bring a project into the museum which engaged forced migrants in the development of an exhibition. The project 'daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives' was hosted by the MEK in 2016 but had been initiated several months earlier by a Berlin-based German-speaking artist, who had become interested in forced migration as a focus of their work and had begun

working collaboratively in a refugee shelter in Berlin-Spandau. Together with those based in this temporary home, the artist initiated 'KUNSTASYL' (Art Asylum), which was later used as the name of the foundation established during their 'take-over' of the museum. The recently arrived migrants were either artists and performers before taking part or became artists and performers in the process of doing so.

The collaboration with the MEK started with several meetings between the museum staff and the KUNSTASYL artists, after which the project took over part of the museum for a so-called 'friendly occupation'. Described by the museum as a participatory workshop, and by the leading artist as a long-term performance (interview with the artist initiator 2020), the collaborative artistic process set out to address questions about people's realities of forced migration. The project gained a public-facing aspect when the members of KUNSTASYL started working in the exhibition spaces of the museum's west wing, where they developed an exhibition over a period of four months, after which it was on display for another eight months. Unlike many other participatory museum projects, where participants are asked for a specific contribution through a workshop or short-term collaboration, the museum took on a 'hosting' role, meaning it made its resources available to participants, who could use the museum's spaces to present something to the wider public (see Simon 2010). Through this practice, a museum can distance itself from politically complex topics and refrain from taking responsibility for the potential use of the 'incorrect' terminologies or harmful representations. However, the MEK was sufficiently involved in the project to formulate its desired outcomes (rather than the participants being able to focus on their own goals; cf. Simon ibid.). The museum facilitated the process, provided the materials, promoted the project and exhibition, curated an additional narrative contextualizing migration as a historical phenomenon (to be included in the temporary exhibition), and collected some of the outputs after the exhibition had been taken down. Though the collaboration did not have a predetermined outcome, early documentation of the project shows that the museum intended to collect some works that were created as part of it.[6] The participatory project should make available materials – objects, works, and information – to be collected by the museum as keepsakes representing this sociopolitically turbulent time. The importance of this aspect of the long-term impact of the project became clear in an interview with the director of the MEK, who pointed out that objects that have become part of the museum's collection are more likely to be available for posterity than photographs or exhibition texts that are kept as documentation. The director highlighted that the objects ensure that we will know about the 'refugee protection crisis' a hundred years from now (interview with museum director 2021).

The collection of the works is aligned with the museum's role as a cultural heritage institution. The role for the museum practitioners in this scenario was clear, yet the

6 Documents that were compiled in preparation for the project were made available for this research.

participants were no longer involved in the collection process, which was only initiated after the exhibition ended. Selecting the works after the exhibition closed was a quick process: the curator and project facilitator decided what could be kept and what not, available storage space being an important factor in the selection process. In addressing the works, the curator mentioned that their role as objects – reflecting on the process, as well as the political context – was more important than their artistic value (interview with a museum curator 2020). The selection process took place in 2016, after which they were catalogued and photographed by museum staff to make the works publicly accessible in the online database.

The works in the collection were meant as reminders of the refugee protection crisis of 2015 and the impact this had on those who had to leave their home countries. Led by the question about what forced migration actually means for those who experience it (interview with the artist initiator 2020), the works in the exhibition, some of which were collected afterwards, were constructed using objects that are a part of this experience. Bed frames that came from the refugee shelters and routes drawn on the museum walls became symbols of the participants' personal stories. The framing of the project as a 'friendly occupation' stressed the passive role of the museum. Yet the museum – now containing the beds and bodies of Black People and People of Colour – became a reconstruction of the refugee shelter, open to the predominantly *white* visitors to come in and have a look. Both the forced migrants and the objects that symbolized their journey turned into 'objects of ethnography' (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1991:387). 'Artworks create and reflect discourses. Discourses determine actions, which ultimately have very real consequences for people of colour and *white* people' (Micossé-Aikins 2011:420). Likewise, the works collected by the MEK, their context and interpretations construct a discourse on forced migrants.

Many recent publications about provenance research refer to community engagement as a way of enhancing the information available in museums (Förster et al. 2018; Weber-Sinn and Ivanov 2020; Morse 2021) and of building connections for the future restitution of some of the objects. However, when museums were already working with these so-called 'communities' to create objects or artworks for the collection, it has been easy to dismiss the potential of involving them when entering the information about these objects or artworks into the database. Curatorial staff members often hang on to a fixed format, and their decisions are steered by their professional accountability (Morse 2021:108), making the active involvement of the participants in certain aspects of museum work more difficult. Yet, the practices they hold on to, discarding the relevance of participatory practice across the board, are framed by and build on the colonial structures that define the institution.

Contemporary (Post)colonial Collecting Practices

Von Oswald describes the 'impossibility of *not* reproducing colonial epistemologies from within the institution' (ibid. 2020:107, emphasis added). The museum and its practices continue to be shaped by colonial relations, despite this very same institution claiming to have been decolonized, to be working towards decolonizing itself or being painstakingly decolonized by external partners (Schorch et al. 2019; Brücke-Museum et al. 2022). This has also been highlighted by Wendy Miriam Kural Shaw, who states: 'The persistent coloniality intrinsic to the post-colonial museum, whether located in imperial centres or post-colonial nation-states, emerges not simply in the ownership of the objects or the location of the exhibitions, but in the procedures that give objects order' (2021:35). The procedures described by Kural Shaw (2021) include the organization, care and categorization of collected items, processes that continue to be intrinsically colonial, as the museum's database perpetuates a '*past* conceptualisation of difference via its *present* structure' (von Oswald 2020:115). Within the context of the MEK, the collecting practices of ordering, valuing and acknowledging authorship are defined by present structures as well as present conceptualizations of the migrant as the 'other'. We assess how these practices perpetuate colonial relations, as well as the ways in which this can contribute to an affirmation of the *white* 'authorized heritage discourse'.

Categories and Stereotypes

Von Oswald points towards the existing knowledge categories in museum databases that maintain discriminatory stereotypes and colonial differences (2020:109). Her chapter describes the perpetuation of Western epistemologies through the information recorded about collected objects. Within museums, the works and objects of the 'other' serve as means to study and relate to this 'other' (Whitehead et al. 2015; Boersma 2023). This section addresses how the categorization of newly collected items is aligned with stereotypical imaginations of this 'other', proposing a narrative that coincides with the 'authorized heritage discourse'.

The work in the museum ended several years before Sado (co-author of this paper) looked at the works in the museum's online accessible database. At this point, Sado was no longer involved in the work of the KUNSTASYL foundation, nor was he involved with any work at the museum; the accession of the works into the database had taken place in the meantime, without further involvement by the former participants. Upon finding these items online, it was clear to him that some of the information about them was wrong, and that the interpretations provided online were limited, often only pointing out the project that had led to the work. Once he informed the museum of these mistakes, they made changes to the descriptions.

The museum director referred to the process as a mistake on the museum's part. 'That shouldn't have happened like that', they said, pointing to the incorrect documen-

Objektbezeichnung
Sportjacke mit Kapuze

Identifikations-Nr.
N (25 K) 4/2018

Titel
Idomeni-Jacke

Datierung
2015

Geographischer Bezug
Gebrauchsort: Irak, Syrien, u.a.

Personen/Körperschaften
[redacted]/ Kunstasyl, Sammler

Maßangaben
Größe: 52 (Etikett zeigt XL, Asian Size)

Material/Technik
Ausgabe: Kunststoff mit Elasthan

Zustand
3. teilweise instabil/ schlecht

Kurze Beschreibung
Schwarz-graue Adidas Herren- Sportjacke mit Kapuze, Vorderseiten durch grau-dunkelblaue Stoffflächen sowie weißen Aufdruck: F 50 gestaltet; mit Reißverschluß zu schließen, zwei seitliche Eingrifftaschen, auch mit Reißverschluß zu schließen; Gummibündchen am Saum der Jacke und an den Ärmeln; Kapuze mit Meshfutter innen; Jacke hat die deutlichen Symbole von Adidas: Aufnäher-Symbol und Schulter-Armstreifen weiß;
[redacted] sammelte bei ihrem Aufenthalt im Idomeni-Lager etliche Kleidungsstücke ein. Die Jacke war teil der Ausstellung DaHEIM. Einsichten in flüchtige Leben, da darin symbolisch ein Grenzzaun aufgestellt war.

Fig. 1 Section from a PDF exported from the museum's collection management system on the object 'Sportjacke mit Kapuze' in 2018

tation of the items, as well as to the fact that they needed to be made aware of this by a former participant in the project (interview with the museum director 2021). Sado had made the museum aware that some of the information was incorrect and that the stories behind the works (from the exhibition or conversations with the artist) had not been included either (ibid.). The latest version of the descriptions in the database[7] includes more accurate information: the artists of several works have been updated, and the new description of a work formerly entitled 'Lampedusa: Sportjacke mit Kapuze' (sports jacket with hood) no longer refers to presumptive geographical locations. The jacket was part of an art installation that was featured in the exhibition. The original description, entered into the database immediately after acquisition, referred to the object's former place of use (Gebrauchsort) as 'Iraq, Syria, amongst others' (see Fig. 1). As the jacket had been found in a refugee camp, its initial description suggested it had formerly been used in Iraq and Syria, the two countries from which most forced migrants were coming to Germany at the time. The former place of use, however, is unknown, meaning that this information was merely based on an assumption by the

7 SMB Collection Management System. Last accessed by the authors on 3 July 2023.

museum's *white* staff. A later description of the work no longer included this reference. Instead, the work was now defined as a piece formerly used on the boat to cross the Mediterranean Sea ('Mittelmeerüberfahrt/ Fundstück aus Boot an der Küste Lampedusas'). Despite this being a possibility, once again it is based on an assumption rather than a testimony from the previous owner of this item of clothing. The problem here lies in the museum's very decision to include a place of use at all. The work could refer to the problematic situation faced by forced migrants today equally well without the uninformed and possibly false documentation about its former place of use.

This is not the only example of a stereotypical description that correspond with the ideas of a *white* staff and a predominantly *white* audience. According to Sandrine Micossé-Aikins, BPoC (Black, People of Colour) artists in Germany work in a restrictive space that only allows artists' statements or activities that correspond with the ideas of a largely *white* audience (2011:426–7). Likewise, one of the works in the MEK's collection clearly assumes a *white* gaze (see Kassim 2017). This notion puts *whiteness* and the ideas and privileges of a *white* person who lacks an understanding of the prevalence of structural racism at the centre (Kassim 2017; Wekker 2016; Yancy 2017). This is especially clear in the case of the work entitled 'Eselkarren' ('donkey cart', quotation marks are part of the title in the database). This small work (Fig. 2) did not feature in the exhibition but was selected for inclusion in the museum's collection. It does not reflect or document the project's output, yet it was deemed relevant for the collection as means to represent the 'crisis', or the museum's response to it. Despite the title of the work and description reading 'small donkey, or horse cart', the work features a plastic unicorn figurine. The reference to a donkey is based on a stereotypical idea of daily life in Middle Eastern countries. It features another assumption made by the museum's staff, and caters to the expectations of the *white* museum audience.

In his research on participatory work with forced migrants (2021), Sergi reflects on the effect of using and reproducing presumptions about people through museum work. He states, '[i]n the context of contemporary forced displacement, this methodological approach [of formulating hypotheses about the owners or users of objects] might reinforce, rather than contest stereotypes around refugees' (Sergi 2021:74). It is not exceptional for works and objects in museum databases to contain information that reproduce stereotypes, sometimes by alluding to ideas about the lives or experiences of 'others', or sometimes by using and therefore promoting specific words or phrases. 'Recording the many traditions of naming and categorizing museum objects, collection databases often contain words and phrases that express stereotypes about, are disrespectful to, or are outright offensive toward the people and cultures they try to document' (Kunst 2021:29). The same goes for the museum's interpretation of this work (see Fig. 2).

The use of stereotypical cultural references provides the work with a context that presents a limited set of experiences matching the (online) visitors' expectations. Rather than these descriptions being provided by the artists themselves, the curator wrote the texts for the database, and it was only after the publication of Boersma's thesis that this likely false information was taken offline. This information is what is available on the

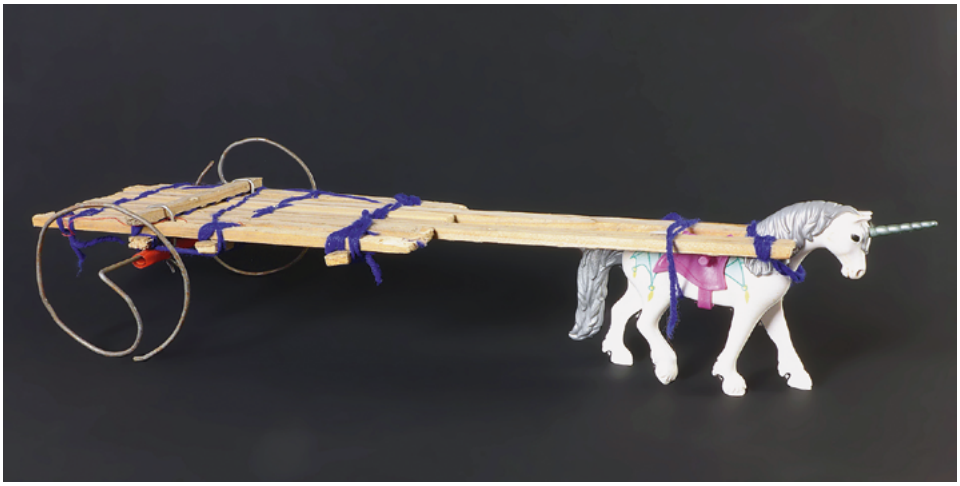

Fig. 2 The work 'Eselkarren' taken for the museum's database. © Picture: Museum Europäischer Kulturen / Michael Mohr

work at present.[8] Besides the definitions used to describe the works, more importantly they have come to stand for the 'refugee crisis' at large. This problem becomes evident upon studying these and further outputs of the participatory project at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen. The artworks have become synecdoches, not of their cultural backgrounds, as suggested by Mieke Bal (1996:78), but of the socio-political implications of forced migration. The works served as 'objects of ethnography' in the exhibition, and they continue to do so in the museum's collection. According to Azoulay, '[p]eople and artifacts have become objects of observation and study, conversion and care, charge and control by two seemingly unrelated set of disciplines, institutions, and their scholars and experts' (2019:20). This goes for the works collected as part of 'daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives' as well.

An Artwork or an Object?

During the interview with the museum director, they seemed unsure whether to refer to the items collected after the project as artworks or objects. This reflects a common process in ethnographic museums, which, both historically and today, either understand works of art made by 'others' as objects for ethnographic study, or alternatively label things as 'art' when these actually fulfil a different function for their original

8 The museum has asked Boersma to initiate a project with the participants to review the documentation on and interpretation of the works in the MEK collection. This project has not yet started, but the false descriptions have been taken offline and are now only accessible through the Collection Management System for staff.

owners or creators. According to researcher Guno Jones, 'The so-called migrant artist … is presumed to create art based on a select set of experiences, often informed by their origins, and knowing their background is somehow seen as a prerequisite for appreciating their work' (2021:59). Though this does not have to imply a derogatory view of what is produced by BPoC, it does reveal that the museum was not interested in the artistic value of the work but rather chose to collect it to represent the current socio-political situation of migrants and the post-migrant society.

As pointed out in the previous section, the works collected after the daHEIM project came to stand for the so-called 'crisis', as well as for the museum's response to it. This is further evidenced by what is added as a 'note' to each of the works:

The object is part of the art and exhibition project 'daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives', shown at the MEK from July 2016 to July 2017 on 550 m^2 . . . The idea behind the exhibition was not to make an exhibition about refugees, both topically and historically, but to let the people themselves have their say, to let them tell their stories, and to let their design ideas shape the project. (SMB Collection Management System, last accessed by the authors on July 3, 2023)

Despite this text describing the project as an artistic one, stressing the importance of putting 'their design ideas' at the forefront of the exhibition, the text starts by referring to the work as 'the object'. For works such as 'Lampedusa: Sportjacke mit Kapuze' or the 'Plastikflasche aus Lampedusa' (a plastic bottle retrieved from Lampedusa) this description seems appropriate; the works are re-appropriated objects that can be recognized from our own day-to-day lives. The jacket, however, was not a stand-alone object but, as mentioned earlier, part of an installation in the exhibition. The work was neither perceived nor collected as an artwork; the museum deconstructed it to allow for the preservation of an object rather than the work as a representation of the situation at the time. Even works that are clearly the product of artistic practice – such as a set of drawings or a mosaic in the collection – have been collected, interpreted and understood by the museum as ethnographic objects instead of works of art.

Sandrine Micossé-Aikins addresses this differentiation as an example, using a project in which objects from the ethnographic museum in Berlin were newly contextualized as part of an exhibition in the Gropius Bau modern art museum. Despite the works' presentation alongside contemporary artworks, they continued to be shown as anonymous objects from a marginalized group, whose individual authorship was deemed unimportant (2011: 428). This practice is underlined by Rassool, who claims that '[e]thnographic museums and museums with anthropology collections, for example, have their own history of object labelling, characterized by the practice of attributing the work to a group or tradition or 'tribe' rather than to an individual' (2021:21). As part of the exhibition described by Micossé-Aikins, the works were displayed as artworks rather than ethnographic objects, yet the interpretation was limited and did not acknowledge the creators of the works. Even in projects like the 'daHEIM' project at the MEK, where works were described and authorship was recognized as part of the exhibition, the documentation of the items in the database did not reflect this. This

Fig. 3 The work 'Mosaik' was documented as a work by KUNSTASYL instead of listing the individual artists. © Picture: Museum Europäischer Kulturen / Christian Krug

collecting practice of labelling highlights the discrepancy between the perceived value of an artwork and that of an ethnographic object. Berlin-based curator and researcher Soh Bejeng Ndikung calls for a more rapid change in practices and perceptions: 'Understanding these so-called objects as subjects necessitates a radical shift from Western understandings of subjecthood, personhood and community, as well as a drastic shift from a Western understanding of art, authorship and society, and subsequently a profound reconfiguration of what it means to be human' (2021). Museums, and the people working in and shaping these institutions, need to acknowledge their *white* gaze and their prejudice actively (Lynch 2017) and to challenge this in their practices.

Authorship and Ownership

Whether an artwork or an ethnographic object, the museum should be required to document authorship and address questions of ownership of what is collected. As mentioned in the description of the project, the museum collected the artworks that were developed and created as part of the project after it ended. At this point, the participants were no longer involved in the process, meaning not only selecting the works, but also their entries in the museum database. The disposal of works that were ultimately not collected was carried out by the museum's curator in conversation with the initiating artist. Though individuals in the group had created different works, the museum did not necessarily document or recognize their authorship.

According to Kittner, collecting objects or works by forced migrants can be problematic, as the 'Western-dominated art field, despite the prevalence of deconstructionist approaches, still relies heavily on the idea of a pronounced authorship' (2021:392). Artworks and their value rely on authorship, yet the ownership is often assigned to the person(s) that collected an object or work (Kittner 2021:390–391). In her examples of displayed objects of forced migration, the original or rightful owners are often unknown; it is when their object becomes part of an installation or archive that ownership is assigned to the person who collected or assembled it. In the case of 'daHEIM', however, the artists were known to the museum. Initially, right after the works were entered into the database, the descriptions did not contain any information about the authors; they were listed in the database with reference to the artist who initiated the project and the KUNSTASYL foundation, rather than the individual artists.

In an interview with one of the artists involved, they referred to a work they had created for the project: a mosaic that represented the warfare they had experienced in their home country (see Fig. 3). Currently, the work is listed in the database as 'Mosaik' collected by the artist and KUNSTASYL. One of the artists described how they did most of the work but were excluded from the project and the related processes after the work was completed; they had bought the ceramics and decided on the colours and the image, yet their input was not acknowledged at the time, nor is the artist listed in the online description. They pointed to the language barrier and described the hierarchical structure in place, both of which made it impossible for them to intervene and claim ownership of their work. On the website of the KUNSTASYL foundation, the artist is recognized as one of the creators of this work. Conversely, the museum has excluded the artists, even though they are acknowledged for their work by the foundation. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly how this discrepancy between the available information came about, but it is evident that the museum did not reach out to the artist to ask them about the work and find out whether they wanted their name to be recorded in the database.

For another collected work, the jacket mentioned above, the museum subtly left out one of the artists when the description was changed. By changing the title of the work from 'Idomeni-Jacke' (Idomeni jacket) to 'Lampedusa: Sportjacke mit Kapuze', a new location was connected to the object. The suggestion that this used jacket was found on

Lampedusa supports the idea that the artist initiator collected and repurposed this item themselves; as such, this artist takes ownership of this work, which, according to Sado, had been a collaboration. In the case of this jacket, Sado had joined the artist on the trip to Idomeni at the time and worked on the installation that later became part of the exhibition. By changing the title of the work and the 'location of use', sole authorship of the work was ascribed to the artist who led the project. The description of the work is made inaccessible as a result of Boersma's research, as it still includes the place that was originally listed as part of the title:

> [The artist] collected several items of clothing during her stay in the Idomeni camp. The jacket was part of the exhibition 'DaHEIM. Glances into Fugitive Lives', where it was symbolically displayed on a border fence. (SMB digital, last accessed on 27 October 2021)

Though not visible to the visitors of the online database, the changed information erases one of the artists of the work. Also excluded from the database's description is a reference to the previous owner of the jacket. The jacket was left behind in a camp and, as suggested by Kittner, the collector is accredited for taking, showing and preserving this emblem of forced migration.

These practices are similar to common practices documenting the objects of colonized peoples. Von Oswald states that, 'in lacking other kinds of indications, the object is above all defined by the person who had *collected* it, not the person who had *produced*, *owned*, or *used* it' (von Oswald 2020:117). Building on this argument, it is important to note that the names of the artists who made this work are known to the foundation and to the museum, yet their details are left out *despite* the availability of precisely this information.

Collecting is Caring

At the beginning of this paper, we addressed the institution's role and discussed how practitioners understand the collection as prominent for their work in the museum. Nuala Morse states that '[c]are for objects is the very foundation of museum work' (2021:1). Drawing on some examples from the MEK, it has become evident that little care went into what happened after the items had been collected. The behind the scenes work of collecting and preservation is relatively unknown; museums write collection strategies and annual reports on what was collected, and technical and operational guidelines are written, updated and applied, yet what actually happens on the ground remains a mystery for those based outside the institution. The act of preservation requires systematic work as well as careful handling. This means 'intimate knowledge of individual objects, their materials and their vulnerabilities. Prevention of harm or damage, keeping objects safe, is the basis of care. Objects are treasured and gently handled, displayed and carefully stored away' (Morse 2021:1). In describing objects as treasured, Morse points to the value ascribed to what is preserved as part of museum collections. The understanding of care in museums often refers to caring for museum

objects rather than caring for people (De Roemer 2016; Morse 2021). The care for objects could, however, be dependent on caring for their (previous) owners or creators. In the studied project, we found that the museum was not quite careful enough.

Whereas evaluation was not part of the project while it was ongoing, the interpretations of the works, the collaboration and the outcomes were repeatedly reflected upon even years after the project had ended. Revisiting the database once more, Sado found that some of the works that were said to have been collected by the museum did not appear to be there. No record was kept of the drawings of one of the artists, nor was the cabinet that contained two personal stories of participants of the project catalogued. When this observation reached the museum, it became clear that no one knew where these works were kept, or if they were still there at all. A former staff member had to return to the museum to look through the storage rooms, and even Boersma, as a researcher on this project who had started working in the museum in 2018, was asked whether she knew anything about the whereabouts of the works. Eventually, several weeks later, the museum reported to Sado and the artist of the drawings that the works had been found: after being collected they had been wrapped up and kept in storage, but no information had been entered into the museum's database.

In light of this situation, the museum has offered to pay for the works that had been kept in its storage rooms all that time. No other works in the collection were paid for. They were all considered a product of the project that they supported financially, yet in this case the museum proposed compensation for their rather careless practices. The suggestion is familiar, as it reminds us of the handling of colonial heritage and looted art, for which museums are being recommended to offer financial compensation in addition to or instead of repatriation by the German Museums Association (Deutscher Museumsbund e.V.).[9] Recently, the newly found cabinet was entered into the database, but the presence of the drawings remains undocumented to this day. The museum, in its handling of the works and with its offer of compensation, clumsily continues to enact the power relations at play.

A Discourse Through Collecting

In this paper, we have proposed several ways in which museums reproduce narratives of the migrant as the 'other' through their collection practices. The studied examples draw parallels between historical and contemporary approaches to reveal that formerly colonial aspects of museum practices remain part of today's museum work. The examples range from problematic interpretations and a lack of acknowledgement of the

9 Museumsbund Leitfaden: https://www.museumsbund.de/publikationen/leitfaden-zum-umgang-mit-sammlungsgut-aus-kolonialen-kontexten/ https://www.museumsbund.de/publikationen/leitfaden-zum-umgang-mit-sammlungsgut-aus-kolonialen-kontexten/

work of Black people and People of Colour, revealing that the produced discourse on forced migration perpetuates the colonial practices and structures within museums that are continuously criticized. The objects and forced migrants that are part of this project often come to stand for the socio-political context, especially due to the ways in which museums collect and preserve objects, artworks and stories.

A lack of involvement in the different collecting processes, such as interpretation, categorization, valuing and acknowledging authorship, inevitably continues and promotes colonial attitudes. The 'daHEIM' project serves as evidence that a participatory approach does not necessarily eliminate the problematic power relations that define these processes. Museums should be aware of these relations and think carefully about how to approach and represent a discourse on forced migration or of forced migrants. The institution cannot do this without structural changes in staff, collection management systems and active engagement with anti-discriminatory work. Without these necessary shifts, museums will continue to produce stereotypical representations based on a limited set of perspectives that serve the *white* gaze. When working in participatory ways, participation should encompass the entire set of processes that are involved in the project, including its outcomes. Museums are likely to continue to build hierarchies rather than breaking them down. In their attempts to challenge the authorized heritage discourse, museums often perpetuate a Eurocentric narrative.

Drawing on a case study that the authors are both very familiar with, this paper provides a new angle on participatory work with forced migrants, putting the perspectives of and consequences for the participants at the forefront of the research on collecting practices. By addressing these difficult issues, it might seem that we are being particularly critical of the MEK for their approach to this work. However, the museum has provided us with the resources to do this research: it continues to reflect on its practices and has been open to feedback and critique by ourselves and others. As some of the issues between the artist, the participants and the museum remain unresolved, the museum director and staff remain keen to find solutions. With the help of the authors of this article, the MEK is seeking to put false interpretations and misinformed documentation right, and in addition, the museum has invested more time and resources into assessing categories and discriminatory language in the database. The institution acknowledges its responsibility, even if it did not take on quite enough responsibility at the time of the project. This attitude is necessary to move forward and change the institution, making a postcolonial museum a true possibility in the future.

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‘We Don’t Want Another White Guy to Tell our Story!’ Reflections on a Collaborative Exhibition Project about the ‘Francis La Flesche Collection’ at the Humboldt Forum

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Abstract: Collaboration with creator communities has become a new paradigm for ethnological museums. In this article, we discuss the possibilities and limits of cooperation with stakeholders from creator communities based on our experience of the last five years, during which we created an exhibition together with the Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) for the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. In 1894, the Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde commissioned Francis La Flesche, who is today considered the first Indigenous ethnologist, to assemble a collection of his own culture, the Umo^{n}ho^{n}. ‘We don’t want another white guy to tell our story!’, Wynema Morris, Professor at the NICC, made clear when we told her about our plans to do an exhibition together with the college. The historical collection became the starting point for a collaborative project that was developed from 2017 to 2022. The experiences of racism, violence and loss of land still influence the living conditions of the Umo^{n}ho^{n} community today. In this context, the Berlin collection is of particular importance, because it bears witness to the resistance against colonization. It offers the Umo^{n}ho^{n} the opportunity to reconnect with their ancestors and present their own history to a German public. The project also made clear how deeply inscribed colonial contexts are in the collections of ethnological museums.

[collaboration, Omaha, Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, Humboldt Forum, provenance research]

Introduction

'We don't want another white guy to tell our story!' is how Wynema Morris, Professor at the Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) in Macy, Nebraska, reacted when she was first told about the plans to do an exhibition on a collection of Umoⁿhoⁿ[1] cultural belongings[2] assembled by Francis La Flesche, today part of the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin. Her reaction is quite understandable since for a very long time Native Americans[3], like other Indigenous[4] nations, have been talked about in museums instead of being able to talk for themselves and hence tell their own story.

The Cultural Belongings assembled by Francis La Flesche between 1894 and 1898 are the starting point for a collaborative exhibition project at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin involving the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin and the NICC. The collection is of particular interest because the Ethnologisches Museum commissioned Francis La Flesche to assemble a collection giving a comprehensive picture of his culture, the Umoⁿhoⁿ. The collection is therefore considered to be the first self-representation of a Native nation from North America in a museum. Today, Francis La Flesche is also described as the first Indigenous ethnologist from North America (Mark 1982; Mark 1988).[5] Besides cultural belongings, La Flesche sent a comprehensive catalogue to Berlin that allows one to understand his perspective, that of an Indigenous ethnologist in the nineteenth century. For the Umoⁿhoⁿ today the collection in Berlin has a special meaning, as it is evidence of their resistance to colonialism. It also provides an opportunity to reconnect with their ancestors, as well as tell their own history.

Cooperation or collaboration with so-called creator communities[6] has become a new paradigm for the Humboldt Forum. The collaborative project around the La

1 The Umoⁿhoⁿ (also: Omaha) are an Indigenous Nation and a federally recognized tribe who reside on the Omaha Reservation in northeastern Nebraska and western Iowa.

2 Cultural belongings (also called objects or exhibition items) are not to be reduced to mere things or artefacts, but to be understood as relationships between people, localities, and cultural and artistic practices relating to the past, present and future.

3 The term 'Native American' is a designation for the descendants of those who lived in the area of the present-day USA before its colonization by Europeans. The term is used for over 500 different indigenous nations, each with their own name. Wherever possible we use the specific names of the people.

4 We capitalize 'Indigenous', as it articulates and identifies a group of political and historical communities and indicates the plurality of diverse, sovereign communities who were living in specific regions when Europeans first attempted to name, categorize and colonize them (Weeber 2020).

5 Even though Francis La Flesche never studied ethnology, he was employed as an ethnologist in 1910 by the Bureau of American Ethnology and was already working and publishing on ethnological topics in the nineteenth century.

6 Like the terms 'source communities' or 'communities or origin', we use the term 'creator communities' to describe various groups of previous owners, custodians or users both in the past, when these Cultural Belongings were brought to museums, and to their descendants today (Brown and Peers 2005; Christidis et al. 2008; Golding and Modest 2013).

Flesche collection shows the significance of historical museum collections for stakeholders from Indigenous communities today and the potential that can be found in jointly conceived exhibitions. At the same time, the work on this project has raised some questions concerning collaborative museum work at the Humboldt Forum: to what extent do collaborative museum projects fundamentally and sustainably change museums? Have collaborations become an integral part of everyday museum life? To what extent do collaborative projects with partners from societies of origin run the risk of re-legitimizing the colonial institutions called museums? Furthermore, this project has encouraged us to reflect our own working methods, as well as the organizational structures of the Ethnologisches Museum and Stiftung Humboldt Forum. In many ways the existing working methods, structures and power relations in museums present obstacles to such collaborations.

The goal of this article is to provide insights into this collaborative exhibition and to critically reflect on the possibilities and limits of cooperation with stakeholders from creator communities. Before we reflect critically on the process of the collaborative exhibition project, we will provide an overview on of the history of Francis La Flesche's collection and the time it was assembled. To do so we first must understand who Francis La Flesche was and where he came from.

Francis La Flesche

Francis La Flesche was born in 1857 to Tainne and Joseph La Flesche on the Umo^{n}ho^{n} reservation, which today lies in the US states of Nebraska and Iowa. Francis was his mother's first child. His father already had three children with his first wife, Mary (Mark 1988).

Joseph La Flesche (also Estamahza or Iron Eyes) was the son of a Ponca woman (a neighboring Indigenous Nation of the Umo^{n}ho^{n}) and a French fur trader. After his father's death, Joseph was adopted by Big Elk, a chief of the Umo^{n}ho^{n}. When Big Elk died, Joseph himself became one of the most influential yet controversial chiefs of the Umo^{n}ho^{n}. Along with his first wife Mary, he was part of a small group who converted to Christianity and lived in an area of the reservation disparagingly called the 'Make-Believe White-Men Village' (Swetland 1994). Joseph sent his children to the mission school, where on the one hand they learned to read and write English but on the other hand were forced to abandon their Umo^{n}ho^{n} language and way of life. However, the mission school also provided educational opportunities for the children, which certainly contributed to the fact that two of Francis' sisters are still important figures in Native North America today. While his half-sister Susette La Flesche became an important activist for Native American civil rights (Rhea 2016), his sister Susan La Flesche was the first Indigenous woman in the U.S. to study medicine. Subsequently she founded the first hospital on a reservation (Starita 2016).

At the age of eight, Francis La Flesche was sent to the Presbyterian Boarding School close to the Umoⁿhoⁿ reservation. Years later Francis La Flesche wrote about his experiences there in the book *The Middle Five* (La Flesche 1978). In many of the mission schools for Indigenous children in North America at that time, violence and systematic psychological and physical abuse of the children was very common (Adams 2020). The largest of these mission schools, the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, incidentally had the motto 'Kill the Indian, Save the Man' (Fear-Segal and Rose 2016). The experiences at the schools traumatized several generations of Native Americans to this day. Francis La Flesche does not describe experiencing systematic violence and abuse in his book. Nevertheless, the boarding-school experience caused generational trauma among the Umoⁿhoⁿ that can still be felt today.

After the Presbyterian Boarding School that Francis La Flesche attended had to close in 1869, he returned to the Umoⁿhoⁿ reservation. Once there, he participated in important Umoⁿhoⁿ social and religious events. Unlike many other Native Americans of his generation who spent their entire childhood at a boarding school, he thus learned to live the Umoⁿhoⁿ culture from an early age on.

In 1879 La Flesche and his half-sister Susette decided to accompany and support Standing Bear, chief of the Ponca, on his journey across the United States in the fight for Native American civil rights (Tibbles 1995). Standing Bear's sixteen-year-old son had died as a result of the violent relocation of the Ponca to a new reservation in 1878. While attempting to bury his son in the original Ponca settlement area, Standing Bear was arrested and subsequently taken back to the Ponca's new reservation in Nebraska. In the ensuing court case, Standing Bear was acquitted with the historically significant ruling that Native Americans are also entitled to the fundamental rights of the U.S. Constitution. After the trial, Standing Bear, Francis and Susette La Flesche went on a tour of the eastern United States to advocate the enforcement of civil rights for all Native Americans.

During this trip, Francis La Flesche met the Senator from Iowa, who got him a job as a clerk at the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington DC. After a few years of living in Washington DC, Francis La Flesche began studying law in the evenings, earning his bachelor's degree in 1891 and his master's degree in law just one year later. It was during this time that he met Alice C. Fletcher, who became a central figure in his professional and personal life. Francis La Flesche accompanied Fletcher on her assignment to enforce the Allotment Act on the Umoⁿhoⁿ as her scribe, translator and informant (Mark 1988). Together they studied and recorded Umoⁿhoⁿ ceremonies and sent Cultural Belongings to the Peabody Museum at Yale University in Connecticut. Upon their return to Washington DC, Fletcher and La Flesche were employed in various capacities in the Office of Indian Affairs. Together they processed their rich research material. Fletcher published initial findings under the title *A Study of Omaha Indian Music* (Fletcher 1893), which acknowledged La Flesche's role on the book's cover. Finally, in 1910, they jointly published their entire research in the 27th Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology under the title 'The Omaha Tribe' (Fletcher and

La Flesche 1911). It is the most comprehensive and complete work on the Umoⁿhoⁿ culture to date.

The 'La Flesche Collection' in Berlin and its Historical Context

In 1894, the *Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde* in Berlin (today's Ethnologisches Museum) commissioned Francis La Flesche to assemble a collection of Cultural Belongings from 'his own culture', the Umoⁿhoⁿ (*SMB-EM, I/MV 565, E 1050/1895)*.

The museum, which has its roots in the *Brandenburgisch-Preußische Kunstkammer*, was founded in 1873 as an institute for research and a repository for the safekeeping of Cultural Belongings from the Americas, Africa, Asia, Oceania and Europe. As a product of the European appropriation and colonization of the world, the museum embodied an attitude that set Europeans apart from the perceived 'exotic other' (Heller 2017; Ethnologisches Museum n.d.; Kuster et al. 2013; Penny 2002, 2019; von Oswald 2022; Zimmerman 2001). Colonization, the appropriation of Cultural Belongings, and the accumulation of museum collections in Berlin went hand in hand. In 1889, the German Bundesrat stipulated that all items appropriated by civil servants, military personnel and participants in state-sponsored research trips to the German colonies should be sent to the *Königliches Museum für Völkerkunde*. In 1896, this resolution was extended to include German military campaigns explicitly. The museum staff were essentially given 'first pick', and after inspecting the Cultural Belongings were free to decide to include them in their collections or pass them on to other ethnological museums in Germany (Binter et al. 2021). During this time the collections grew enormously, from around 40,000 Cultural Belongings in 1880 up to nearly half a million at the end of the First World War in 1918 (Ethnologisches Museum n.d.). Large parts of the material and immaterial collections from all over the world that are now in in the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin were compiled under colonial conditions, often with violence (Ethnologisches Museum 2021).

The collection brought together by Francis La Flesche was a different case. Together with Fletcher, La Flesche visited Berlin in 1894 and met, among others, Adolf Bastian, the director of the museum, and Eduard Seler, the curator of the collections from the Americas (Bolz and Sanner 2000; *SMB-EM, I/MV 544, E 1205/1898*). It was Alice Fletcher who convinced the museum to commission La Flesche to assemble a collection that would best represent his own people, the Umoⁿhoⁿ.

Four years later, the collection arrived in Berlin with around sixty Cultural Belongings and an accompanying catalogue.[7] The collection of Francis La Flesche in Berlin is different from his other collections in North American museums. Not only was he commissioned to assemble it specifically for the museum in Berlin, but he also had a

7 La Flesche's catalogue is included in the publication 'Against the Current. The Omaha. Francis La Flesche and His Collection', Labischinski et al., 2023.

large number of the items newly made, as they no longer existed or were no longer in use. It was La Flesche's self-proclaimed goal to show as comprehensive a picture of his culture as possible (La Flesche 1898; *SMB-EM, I/MV 565, E 1195/1895)*. The collection consists of Cultural Belongings representing various aspects of Umoⁿhoⁿ culture, including ceremonial items, a war shirt, tools, games and musical instruments. While we now know that the Cultural Belongings were collected by Francis La Flesche, the producers of the pieces and their former owners are unknown.

Francis La Flesche assembled the Cultural Belongings at a time when the Umoⁿhoⁿ way of life was radically changing. Several decades before La Flesche gathered the collection for Berlin, the Umoⁿhoⁿ had moved on to the reservation and had been forced to abandon the traditional buffalo hunt. Like other Indigenous nations of North America, the Umoⁿhoⁿ faced the choice between resisting the United States government or leaving their traditional way of life behind and integrating into the new nation of the United States.

With the end of the American Civil War in 1865, the colonization of the Midwest gathered momentum. Numerous states were founded, and the *white*[8] population grew rapidly. Simultaneously the Indigenous population declined. While at the beginning of colonization diseases were primarily responsible, in later years it was violent conflicts, reservation policies and economic dependence that were the reason. Overall, the situation for the Indigenous population was characterized by land loss, racism and violence (Colwell 2017; Mattioli 2018; Yenne 2008).

With the construction of the Pacific Railroad from 1865 onwards, hundreds of miles of track were laid between Omaha and Sacramento. The railroad connected the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean and changed the region forever (White 2012). With the railroad came a massive settlement project that gave railroad employees land that was previously owned by Indigenous nations in the Great Plains (Belich 2009). By 1890 millions of new settlers had reached the region, and land the size of France was privatized (Mattioli 2018). The railroad disrupted bison migration routes and cut up the hunting grounds of Indigenous nations. Soon, endless grasslands were replaced by cultivated corn and wheat fields, and the roaming herds of bison had to make room for fenced-in herds of cattle (White 2012).

The near extinction of bison represents the colonization of the Great Plains more than anything else. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it was estimated that the bison population of the Midwest numbered 27 to 30 million animals, of which only 800 survived in 1881 (Isenberg 2020). A single herd of bison survived colonization of

8 We put the word *white* in italics intentionally to raise awareness of these power relations, and to encourage readers to reflect on their own identities. The terms 'Indigenous' and 'Black' constitute a political concept of identity. We also use this word to draw attention to unequal power relations with systemic historical roots. At the same time, the word serves as a self-designation for People of Colour who seek not only to express shared experiences of discrimination and exclusion, but also to draw attention to the potential for resistance against white power structures.

the Great Plains. In a few years, an entire animal population was nearly wiped out. Responsible for this was the global demand for bison leather, which fuelled unprecedented massacres of bison by profit-hungry hunters. The extinction of the bison made it impossible for Indigenous nations to maintain their traditional ways of life (Taylor 2011). Collective land ownership by Indigenous nations in the Midwest also conflicted with the colonization by white settlers. The U.S. government therefore attempted to prohibit it through legislation, thereby facilitating the expropriation of land. The Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1851 was the beginning of the reservation policy, establishing precisely defined tribal lands for Indigenous nations. The lands were again significantly reduced by the second Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868 (Mattioli 2018).

The U.S. government sought to enforce reservation policies largely peacefully. In cases where Indigenous nations resisted this policy, the government resorted to military means. In the second half of the nineteenth century many people died in bloody conflicts and colonial massacres in the Midwest. Many of the early conflicts were won by Indigenous nations, but the introduction of the repeating rifle shifted the balance of power in favour of the U.S. Army. While the Sioux, Cheyenne Arapaho, and Comanche went to war with *white* settlers and the U.S. Army, the Umo^{n}ho^{n} chose not to rebel against the reservation.

Reservation policy not only served to reduce the land of Indigenous nations to just a fraction of the area they had previously claimed, it also placed them in a dependency of the U.S. government, and it created the social and cultural opportunities to integrate Native Americans into white American society against their will. Thus, model farms, schools and mission churches were established on reservations. Inhabitants of the reservation were not allowed to leave it without permission. The goal was to completely eradicate their traditional way of life. Of course, this meant the total eradication of whole cultures, including their social and political organization, economic systems, cultural belief systems and in particular tribal languages. The assault launched through federal policy was not only brutal but had long-lasting negative impacts that resonate until today.

The reservation era was also characterized by extreme poverty. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was the economic situation rather than the military one that threatened Indigenous nations. Native Americans were deprived of their livelihoods, the reservation policy had significantly reduced their lands, the bison were nearly extinct. They became dependent on federal aid in the form of food and clothing. This new dependence was often used as leverage against Native American resistance.

To this day, settler colonialism and the experience of racism and violence continue to shape the lives of the Umo^{n}ho^{n}. This political-historical context is important to understand the genesis of the Berlin collection and the reason why it's still so important for the Umo^{n}ho^{n} today.

Process of the Exhibition: 'Against the Current'

Francis La Flesche's collection has become a link between the past and the present and the starting point for a new chapter in the relationship between Berlin and Nebraska. It is a connection that began at the end of the nineteenth century with Francis La Flesche and was continued with several members of the Umo^{n}ho^{n} Nation for a temporary exhibition that opened at the Humboldt Forum in September 2022.

The Humboldt Forum is located in the centre of Berlin and brings together exhibitions and programs by four cultural institutions: the State Museums of Berlin – more specifically the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst; the Stadtmuseum Berlin; the Humboldt University; and the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss. The Humboldt Forum is highly disputed and has been much discussed by the German public and press (Coalition of Cultural Workers Against the Humboldt Forum, n.d.; Decolonize M21, n.d.; Häntzschel 2019; Starzmann 2019). One reason for this is the architecture: the building is a reconstruction of the former Berlin palace, which was demolished after World War II. In the GDR the so-called Palace of the Republic was erected in its place. This became an important cultural centre for East Berlin, but in 1990 it was closed and later torn down. Some say the Palace of the Republic has been 'replaced' by the Humboldt Forum. The architecture of the Humboldt Forum certainly draws a strong connection to the historic baroque Hohenzollern palace. Critics argue that the reconstruction ignores the history of the Palace of the Republic: for them the new building represents a symbolic erasure of the GDR's cultural contributions and a return to Germany's pre-war and pre-divided history. As a result, it symbolizes the desire to restore a German national identity based on its imperial roots. Critics argue that the building perpetuates a narrative that romanticizes and glorifies Germany's imperial past. The Hohenzollern dynasty, associated with the original palace, was closely linked to Germany's history of colonialism and expansionism. It is therefore criticized as a celebration of past imperial power and a reminder of Germany's colonial aspirations. The inclusion of a cross on top of the reconstructed Berlin Palace adds to the perception of the Humboldt Forum as a symbol of Christian superiority.

Another reason for strong criticism was the decision to present the collections of the Ethnologisches Museum in the reconstructed palace. Already in 2013 various postcolonial and diasporic organizations started the campaign 'No Humboldt 21' and demanded a stop to the construction of the building. They issued a statement saying that 'the current concept violates the dignity and property rights of communities in all parts of the world. It is Eurocentric and restorative. The establishment of the Humboldt Forum is in direct contradiction to the aim of promoting equality in a migration society' (No Humboldt 21 2013).

The exhibition 'Against the Current: The Omaha, Francis La Flesche and his collection' is one of several temporary exhibitions at the Humboldt Forum. These are spaces within the exhibitions of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin and the Museum

für Asiatische Kunst on the second and third floors of the building. These temporary exhibition spaces were created by the founding directorate under the chair of Neil MacGregor, who was appointed by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Monika Grütters, in the context of the so-called 'optimization process'. This optimization process meant that the original exhibition concepts developed by the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst were revised by the founding directorate, and some of the planned projects were put on hold. Some of the exhibition rooms used by the Ethnologisches Museum and the Museum für Asiatische Kunst were then handed over to the general director. The goal was to create a more flexible exhibition design in these spaces and to use them for projects with interdisciplinary curatorial teams. More specifically collaborative projects with international partners were to be shown there.

We began working on the project 'Against the Current: The Omaha, Francis La Flesche and his collection' in 2017. There had been some research and publications done on the collection by former curators from the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin (Bolz and Sanner 2000; Hartmann 1973, 1985) but the items had not been on view before, at least not as a whole collection. For us the La Flesche collection was interesting for several reasons, but most importantly because it was collected by an Umoⁿhoⁿ who at the same time was an established ethnologist.[9] The accompanying catalogue also gives very interesting insights into the collector's intentions. Further, the collection is not too big and is nearly complete, only a few pieces having been lost over the course of time.[10]

Our proposal to do an exhibition on the La Flesche collection was welcomed by the founding directorate. The acquisition process of the La Flesche collection is well documented, and there is no doubt that the collection was rightfully acquired by the museum. In times of questioning the rightful ownership of museum collections, the desire to establish 'unproblematic' provenances was great on the management level of the Humboldt Forum.

From the beginning, we wanted to create this exhibition in collaboration with the Umoⁿhoⁿ community. Therefore, one of the first steps was to get in touch with community representatives. We contacted Umoⁿhoⁿ authors and some museums and archives in Nebraska to ask if they knew anyone from the Umoⁿhoⁿ community who would be willing to work on such a project. Someone recommended the NICC as a contact point. There we found Wynema Morris' contact information. We emailed her, introduced the La Flesche collection in Berlin and explained that we were hoping to develop a collaborative project with the Umoⁿhoⁿ community. Luckily Wynema

9 Even though Francis La Flesche was hired by the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1910, already in the 19th century he had worked and published on ethnological topics and presented at the AAAS, the predecessor of the American Anthropological Association, in 1884.

10 It seems that the following four items from the 'La Flesche collection' in Berlin are missing: a whistle, a bunch of stiff grass, an eagle feather and one of the arrows.

Fig. 1 Viewing the collection in storage at the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin in 2018
© Stiftung Humboldt Forum

Morris replied soon afterwards and was interested to find out more. After several emails and video calls, we were able to present the proposed project in person at the NICC in April 2018. We met with some of the community elders, descendants of La Flesche and visited the Tribal Government, soliciting support from various Umoⁿhoⁿ stakeholders. Following this trip, we managed to contract Wynema Morris as the coordinator for the project at the NICC. We set up a Memorandum of Understanding that officially gave the NICC extensive input into the exhibit and all activities and publications surrounding the project.

In October 2018 and May 2019, two delegations from the NICC came to Berlin. The first group in 2018 consisted of Wynema Morris, the NICC's grant writer Michael Berger, the two students Tracy Mitchell and Isha Morris, and Pierre Merrick, a descendant of Francis La Flesche. The main goal of the trip was to view the collection, meet with the German exhibition team and see the exhibition venue, which was still a building site at this point. Furthermore, the team from the NICC was introduced to the German institutions involved in the project. The German exhibition team aimed to be as transparent as possible regarding the project's working methods and financial resources, the responsibilities the exhibition team had towards the museum and the General Director of the Humboldt Forum, and the organizational process of the German institutions involved.

The exhibition concept was still rather vague at this point, and there was plenty of room to discuss ideas. The Umoⁿhoⁿ delegation made it quite clear from the beginning, during the ride from the airport, that this exhibition could not just be about the historical La Flesche collection, but that it had to speak about the social and political

Fig. 2 The curatorial team visits the future exhibition space at the Humboldt Forum in 2018
© Stiftung Humboldt Forum

issues that are relevant to today's Umo^{n}ho^{n} people. Following this first visit and numerous discussions within the Umo^{n}ho^{n} community and the NICC, it became clear that an important pre-condition for the collaborative project was that the Umo^{n}ho^{n} would be able to represent themselves in the exhibition.

The question of restitution never played a major role in the project. At an early stage the topic was addressed by the German curatorial team in one of the discussions held during the visits to Berlin. At that point, Wynema Morris and the group of Umo^{n}ho^{n} representatives stated that giving back the Cultural Belongings was not an option since the community did not have any facilities to house the items. Furthermore, they explained that restitution could cause problems, for example, in deciding who should take care of the pieces. During the public events surrounding the exhibition opening in September 2022 the topic was again addressed. Currently, the standpoint of the Umo^{n}ho^{n} team is that neither the community nor the NICC has suitable facilities to house the collection. Nevertheless, many Umo^{n}ho^{n} want the Cultural Belongings to return home. As an alternative to restitution, we are therefore thinking of arranging a long-term loan to a museum in Nebraska close to the Umo^{n}ho^{n} reservation. That way, many more members of the community can have access to their Cultural Belongings.

As our coordinator on the Umo^{n}ho^{n} side, Wynema Morris has the very challenging task of mediating among the various interests within the Umo^{n}ho^{n} community, including the Tribal Government, the La Flesche descendants and the NICC. The opinions of the various persons and institutions involved differ in some points. For example, at the beginning of the project some of the La Flesche descendants demanded to be the main contact persons for the German museums, whereas some community

elders opposed the collaboration or criticized the NICC's role in the project. According to Wynema Morris, many Umoⁿhoⁿ were not aware of the importance of the collection in Berlin when the German exhibition team reached out to the community in 2017. That is because the Umoⁿhoⁿ Nation has lost a large number of its possessions and has traditionally paid little attention to its own history. Therefore, in some cases the value of the historical Cultural Belongings was not immediately recognized by the community members. After news about the German La Flesche collection reached the Umoⁿhoⁿ they had to ask themselves some important questions: how should they deal with what is considered sacred knowledge? Is it possible to impart one's own knowledge to a German museum audience with a different cultural background? Who controls the knowledge and owns the knowledge? Who is allowed to make decisions about it? Once it was decided that the community would participate and it was agreed that the NICC as an institution could speak on behalf of the Umoⁿhoⁿ, additional challenges arose. For example, how should orally transmitted knowledge be put in writing, and how should one deal with the short attention span a museum audience has? The most important question was: are we perpetuating stereotypes with this exhibition? For the Umoⁿhoⁿ exhibition team, this was important because the goal was to revive, vitalize and strengthen the Umoⁿhoⁿ nation. Many colleagues were consulted in the process, and in the end the conclusion was that this project would be the first time that the Umoⁿhoⁿ would be able to provide their own voice in a museum exhibition.

In May 2019 the second visit by the Umoⁿhoⁿ delegation took place. The delegation again included Wynema Morris, Michael Berger and Pierre Merrick, as well as Barbara McKillip-Erixson, an educator and student at the NICC, and Vanessa Hamilton, member of staff at the NICC. The time was used to develop the design together with the designers and architects of the exhibition from the company The Green Eyl. The goal was to transfer some of the central cosmological ideas of the Umoⁿhoⁿ into the design. The most obvious is the circular arrangement of the exhibition. The circle (or circularity) is sacred and holy to the Umoⁿhoⁿ. Another example is the Umoⁿhoⁿ way of storytelling, which is mirrored in the video installation. A story has no end and no beginning but instead rotates around a common centre. The arrangement of the Cultural Belongings within the exhibition follows the structure in La Flesche's catalogue. Some items are not shown in the exhibition at all, either because they had been lost, are too fragile or are sacred. The selection was made by the Umoⁿhoⁿ team.

The visits to Berlin by the Umoⁿhoⁿ delegations naturally raised different expectations towards the project among the Umoⁿhoⁿ involved. The collection in Berlin was unknown to them before the Berlin team reached out to the NICC. Hence, their first encounter with the Cultural Belongings was marked by great emotionality. The pieces provide an opportunity for them to reconnect with their ancestors and past ways of life, and to look back on and present their own history with pride. Pierre Merrick, a descendant of Francis La Flesche who is part of the team, said that it filled him with special pride to be one of the first Umoⁿhoⁿ to touch these belongings in over a hundred years. He hopes that one day his grandchildren will be able to come to Berlin too.

Fig. 3 ThThe historical La Flesche collection in the exhibition at the Humboldt Forum. Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, Foto Alexander Schippel

Fig. 4 A view of the exhibition during the opening week in September 2022. The portraits of La Flesche are mirrored in the glass of the showcase. Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, Foto David von Becker

Fig. 5 The video inFstallation as a circle of stories around the showcase. Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum, Foto Alexander Schippel

It was of particular importance to Wynema Morris that some of the items had been in use before they were given to the museum and that the Umoⁿhoⁿ had left their mark on the pieces. In particular, La Flesche's catalogue is important to her and is even used in her classes at the college today. In general, for the Umoⁿhoⁿ delegation the project is of particular importance because, as they describe it, it puts the Umoⁿhoⁿ on the world stage. In the exhibition, they have the opportunity to tell their own story and represent their culture.

Possibilities and Limits: A Critical Reflection on Collaboration in the Humboldt Forum

Collaboration with so-called societies of origin has become a new paradigm for ethnological museums. But has it become an integral part of everyday museum life, or, as Andrea Scholz from the Ethnological Museum Berlin asks, are collaborative projects primarily an object of academic discourse or cultural-political relations (Scholz 2019)?

In 2019, a group of 26 German museums signed the so-called Heidelberg Statement, agreeing to put relationships at the centre of their work, be it collaborative provenance research or partnerships with institutions in the societies of origin. The document states that 'relations have been established between humans through these Cultural Belongings, which have been – and continue to be – important for those who once created them, for their descendants as well as for all societies in general. These relations stand – similar to diaspora relations – in the foreground of our attention' (Directors of Ethnographic Museums in German Speaking Countries, 2019). Among the signatories was the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin and its director Lars-Christian Koch. The importance of cooperation is also stated in a position paper on the website of the museum: 'Cooperating with the descendants of the producers, users, and previous owners in what are referred to as the societies of origin of the objects, with the present-day nation states, and with members of the diasporas is of great importance for the museum staff. This form of cooperation has been part of the everyday work of the curators at the Ethnologisches Museum for decades' (Ethnologisches Museum, 2021). In a text entitled 'Colonialism and Coloniality' on the website, collaboration has also been mentioned as a central element in the work of the Humboldt Forum. 'An essential feature of this policy is the involvement of, and exchange with, representatives of the source communities of non-European objects. Their knowledge will be incorporated into the work with the objects, enabling them to be processed and presented from a variety of perspectives. In addition, the source communities' entitlement to appropriate handling of the objects will be taken into consideration' (Humboldt Forum 2021).

In these statements, the Ethnologisches Museum and the Humboldt Forum have put collaboration at the centre of their work. And in fact, a number of collaborative projects were set up in the last few years. But are the two institutions adequately equipped for such projects? What should the staff involved be made aware of before starting such a project? How can partners from creator communities best be involved? We would like to reflect on our experience of the last few years and address some issues related to collaborative work that we think need to be considered when doing such projects.

One of the first and most important steps in a collaborative project is to find partners from the creator communities. However, the term 'creator community' may be confusing because a society or community is not a homogenous group and therefore the perspectives presented in an exhibition are still those of individuals and not of an

entire community. Within a project team, there may also be different opinions on certain subjects. It is a challenge for a collaborative project to convey this complexity to the museum public.

In our case, the Umo^{n}ho^{n} team was eager to speak with one voice and not show any internal conflicts. As already mentioned, it was Wynema Morris' difficult task to give a voice to the various interests within the Umo^{n}ho^{n} community, and it was important for her to act not as a private person but as a representative of the NICC. The decision who should be part of the exhibition team was also not made by Wynema Morris alone but was a joint decision together with her colleagues and director. The NICC not only supported the work of Wynema Morris, but the NICC has a good standing within the Umo^{n}ho^{n} community and therefore has the authority to speak for an Indigenous nation without being completely bound by the decisions of the tribal government. As an institution dedicated to education, the NICC can represent the cultural interests of the Umo^{n}ho^{n} in a distinct manner that transcends the scope of elected political decision-makers and can bridge the gap to a museum, a related institution. This made the cooperation on the part of the German team a lot easier: instead of having to learn 'the language of the Umo^{n}ho^{n}' themselves, they could fall back on a contact person who speaks both languages, so to speak.

Once project partners are found, the next step is to build up trust, which is a key element in any collaborative project. For a project such as ours to work, it is essential to build up a high degree of trust amongst the team members, especially between the museum and the partners from the creator community. And as we all know, building up trust takes time. In a museum setting where one is dealing with collections that in many cases stem from a colonial or violent context, building up a trustful relationship can be a huge challenge. It requires respect, time and a great deal of personal commitment that often goes beyond the daily working hours of the staff involved. But what if not all the staff members involved can or want to invest extra time and energy in this process? One thing a museum can do is give extra support to their staff to do so, for example, offer compensation for extra hours that are worked at weekends or in the evenings when hosting international guests. One option could be to involve extra staff to take care of some smaller jobs and free up the time for the core exhibition team, for example, a travel organization or pick-ups from airports. In general, a museum should prepare their staff for such projects and sensitize them to the relationship work it may involve. Especially if collaborative projects are to be a common element in a museum's profile, it is important for the staff to receive a briefing beforehand.

Once a project kicks off, decisions will have to be made. But how does one make decisions in a collaborative project involving several institutions and persons who live in different parts of the world? For us in the curatorial team it was clear that we wanted to make all decisions on an equal footing. But is this even possible in such a complex exhibition project? The spatial distances between the persons and institutions involved are often large, and decisions sometimes need to be made quickly, so there may not be time to coordinate with everyone involved. We established a regular online meeting for

the German and Umo^{n}ho^{n} curatorial teams to discuss relevant topics and questions. Besides this we tried to solve urgent matters by, for example, getting a press release approved via email. On the German side, we repeatedly reminded our colleagues from the other departments that it was necessary to wait for approval from the Umo^{n}ho^{n} partners. If the latter live in places with bad phone and internet service, staying in touch may be more difficult, especially if something unexpected happens and input is needed from the partners at short notice. Also, unlike a staff member in a German museum institution, most international partners have other jobs and responsibilities to attend to. All these things need to be taken into consideration, and the museum staff involved need to be made aware that things may take longer.

An issue that can arise in a collaborative project is that the international partners from the creator communities have a problem with the hosting museum institution. Or, in other words: how openly can partners in collaborative projects criticize the hosting museum institution? Sumaya Kassim describes her experience at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery with the following words: 'Although we were allowed creative freedom within the exhibition and were encouraged to be candid, it often felt like the price of our honesty was any future chance to work with the museum' (Kassim 2017). Due to great economic inequalities, collaborative projects can lead to a certain dependence between the museum and the partners, which makes criticism difficult on the side of the community partners. Are there still ways to provide a platform for criticism? Constructive criticism can be especially helpful for a project. And should collaborative projects not be open to criticism and a change of plans that may result from this criticism?

A collaboration with a large German institution such as the Humboldt Forum and the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin may also create certain expectations amongst international partners. This includes financial expectations, which should be discussed and clarified beforehand. Due to the political importance of the Humboldt Forum project, we were in the privileged situation of having substantial financial means to compensate for the work of all the Umo^{n}ho^{n} partners who contributed to the project, as well as covering the costs of the trips to Berlin. In our case, it was other expectations that we felt the Humboldt Forum needed to meet. For the individual partners, it may be the first museum project and the first opportunity to present their story to a wider public. In our case the project also offered the opportunity to travel abroad for the first time. And of course, getting to see the historical object collection was a very special moment for our Umo^{n}ho^{n} team. For partners such as the Umo^{n}ho^{n} the project is a unique experience, but for the two German museum institutions, cooperation with them is one of several projects taking place at the same time. How can the high expectations of the partners be dealt with when a project is just one of many for a museum? In our case, the German exhibition team was quite open about the fact that our installation was one of several that would be shown at the Humboldt Forum. In the end our project received quite a bit of attention during the opening in September 2022, but what if it doesn't work out that way? We don't have answers to the above questions, but from our

experience the most important thing is that the museum staff involved are committed and show the partners that their project is meaningful to them and the institution. A project should above all be of benefit to the persons involved, especially the partners from the creator communities. The relationships that are established among a project team and the institutions involved are hopefully more meaningful than press reviews.

So how do the involved institutions profit from collaborative projects? Ethnological museums as institutions benefit in many ways: through the exchange of information and knowledge collaborations, it is made possible to reconstruct the former meanings and functions of cultural belongings. Current interpretations and perspectives can be incorporated into the museum database, exhibitions or publications, and a re-contextualization and re-organization of the collection is possible. In our project, another benefit for the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin has been that a collection that was not well known has received much attention and care, for example, in terms of object conservation, and has also been able to be presented to the public. Furthermore, the museum can list the NICC as an international partner institution, which is beneficial for its reputation within the museum world. For the NICC itself the cooperation with two large German museum institutions has been beneficial in various aspects, for example, when applying for grants. The college depends on grants for most of its activities. Getting a copy of the historical catalogue accompanying the items has also extended the teaching materials available to the teachers and students at NICC. The catalogue is now used in classes to teach about Francis La Flesche and his work, as well as the historical items he gave to Berlin. The project has also resulted in a kind of training in museum work for those involved, for example, in archival work. Another outcome of the collaboration is that the NICC is currently working on a small-scale La Flesche exhibition for the college. For the Humboldt Forum, our project has brought some positive press reviews and most importantly valuable relationships with the Umo^{n}ho^{n} community, which can be used as a basis for future projects. Which brings us to a very important topic: once a collaborative project has been finalized, how can it be made sustainable? How can the relationships that have been established be kept alive? What happens after an exhibition has opened? What expectations do project partners have concerning long-lasting relationships? These questions were raised by around eighty international partners of the Ethnological Museum Berlin and the Humboldt Forum, including our project partners from the Umo^{n}ho^{n} community, in September 2022 during the opening week. The days before the official opening were spent in four workshops, the outcome being a statement signed by most of the international partners that were present during those days. This is entitled 'Dignity - Continuity - Transparency' and asks right at the beginning for 'the Humboldt Forum to recognize its role and responsibility in facilitating and fostering international and intercultural collaboration. In doing so the Humboldt Forum is committing itself to act continuously as a reliable partner in building trust across different regions and communities' (Humboldt Forum, 2022).

As for the project on La Flesche, we have also been speaking about what happens next. We as a team have several ideas on how to continue this relationship, but of course

we are dependent on the institutions we work for. The Memorandum of Understanding between the NICC and the two German institutions is to be extended, which is an important step. But can it guarantee that there will be the financial support to do something? It will probably be easier to keep up the relationship on a personal level. But the question remains: how can a museum provide the resources for a long-term relationship?

Conclusion

In the catalogue accompanying the Berlin collection, Francis La Flesche explains: 'The break up of the Omaha's native organization, the overthrow of their religious rites, of the authority of their chiefs and of tribal order, and the confusion of mind resulting from this sudden overwhelming of ideals, pursuits and all familiar forms of social life, although a story full of pathos and instruction, must be omitted here as it forms no part of my present duty' (Labischinski et al. 2023). The exhibition has been the first step in telling the missing story behind the collection. Up until today, the lives of the Umo^{n}ho^{n} are shaped by the experiences of racism, violence and land loss. The personal stories presented in the video installation in the exhibition vividly show that the past still shapes the present and future of the Umo^{n}ho^{n} people. The collection in Berlin has a special meaning in this context, as it is evidence of their resistance against colonialism. For the community the collection also provides the opportunity to reconnect with their ancestors and their ways of life and to present their history with pride. Museum visitors gain insight into the world views espoused by the Umo^{n}ho^{n} and into key themes from their past and present-day realities. Key ideas such as circularity or the circle of stories are reflected in the architecture and design of the exhibition.

In the nineteenth century, it was a common assumption that Native Americans would soon die out, both culturally as well as physically. Therefore, the scholars and museums of the time rushed to collect and document the culture of the various indigenous nations of North America. It was during this time, and with this idea in mind, that the Francis La Flesche collection was commissioned. Francis himself was convinced that Native life and traditions would soon no longer exist and therefore tried to do everything possible to preserve Umo^{n}ho^{n} culture for future generations. Against all the predictions, the Umo^{n}ho^{n} did not die out or disappear. Even though the people and their culture suffered under colonialism, political discrimination and violence, they managed to hold on to their Umo^{n}ho^{n} identity. In order to tackle common stereotypes, which place Indigenous cultures in the past, the exhibition tells the story of Francis La Flesche and his collection from the personal perspective of today's Umo^{n}ho^{n}.

The collaboration with the NICC demonstrates the contemporary importance of historical collections and the potential of jointly curated exhibitions. These projects enable the exchange of information and knowledge by reconstructing the meaning and function of cultural belongings and integrating contemporary perspectives and inter-

pretations, thus re-contextualizing historical collections. The exhibition at the Humboldt Forum provides a platform for the Umo^{n}ho^{n} key message: 'We are still here!'.

We consider the involvement and participation of diverse stakeholders in relation to Cultural Belongings, especially from regions of origin, in work with ethnological collections necessary for today's museum work. But even though our collaborative project ran quite smoothly, we think there is still some room for improvement when it comes to the German museums involved. 'The white walls signified the choices of white people, their agency, their museum collections, and the endeavours of colonialists', Sumaya Kassim states in her essay 'The museum will not be decolonised' (Kassim 2017). To a certain degree this seems true in the context of the Humboldt Forum and the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin.

Cooperating with creator communities must not be allowed to become an empty slogan and a 'cure' for museums. Individual exhibition projects with representatives from societies of origin are not enough because they can, whether intentionally or unintentionally, become a cover-up. If that is the case, cooperation with indigenous stakeholders will just appropriate the criticism of the institution and leave existing power relations untouched (Bose 2016; Sternfeld 2009).

As we have explained above, existing working methods, structures and power relations in the two institutions still present some obstacles to transcultural collaboration. The staff and management of both institutions are aware of the fact that some things need to change. In the context of the opening of the exhibitions in September 2022, the over eighty invited international partners demanded change and action from the Humboldt Forum, hence their statement is entitled 'Dignity – Continuity – Transparency' (Humboldt Forum 2022). The question is: will the Humboldt Forum be able to live up to the expectations of the international partners?

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A Room for Reaching in at the Heart of the Museum: Rethinking Dialogical Curating

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Abstract: Museums often prioritize connecting with their audiences, but they may neglect the importance of providing internal spaces for staff to communicate openly. This article thinks through the first Prep Room project at the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde in Leipzig, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, whose invited residents were brought together in a process of dialogical curating museums staff. The goal was to transcend classic notions of curating by focusing on the processual aspects of co-creating multilayered transdisciplinary methodologies to foster an informal space for reflection and exchange. During these in-depth discussions, the participants explored the practical implications of having diverse ontologies in their collections and had an opportunity to reflect on their everyday practices.
[museology, curating collaboration, decolonizing, museum collections]

> *'A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.'* [1]

After a series of controversial debates among its members, the General Assembly of ICOM approved the proposal for a new museum definition on 24th August 2022.

This decision was long overdue, since Peter Virgo's 'The new museology' (1989) had been published, and the public and artistic criticism of museums had been steadily growing since the 1990s, back when Fred Willson opened his influential exhibition project 'Mining the Museum' at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore in 1992. While there has been a strong push towards participation, inclusion, decoloniality and dialogue, it had been more than thirty years since these historic events, and scholars, and museums professionals are still facing similar challenges today.

Today, ethnological museums are exposed to a different kind of public scrutiny than other institutions due to their particular kind of enmeshment with colonial his-

1 https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/ accessed November 28, 2022.

tory and imperialism, as well as a certain historical opaqueness in dealing with outside researchers and with the public, whose positions and expertise they did not always take into account.

As part of these broader social and political developments, some ethnological museums in Germany embarked on a clear path of shaking up their institutions to align them more with the ideals presented by the International Council of Musems (ICOM), and in the hope of making them more inclusive and critical spaces. At this point, I want to acknowledge the work of colleagues inside museums, museum staff and community members, who had comparable agendas for decades and had fought for such a change before this. Museums are still hierarchical institutions, and as such the public and media focus is directed towards their directors. Those who work under them, advocating changing museum practices and implementing them, often disappear from view.

Under its Director, Léontine Meijer-van Mensch, and aspiring to change the inner structure of the museum and understand it as part of a larger community, rather than maintaining dichotomous structures of 'us and them' or 'center/periphery', the GRASSI Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, embarked on the project *REINVENTING GRASSI*, funded by the German Federal Cultural Foundation's 'Initiative for Ethnological Collections'.[2] The goal of the project was to transform the Museum 'into a Network Museum in which different voices have the opportunity to speak and different regions have the ability to connect with each other.'[3]

Part of this process was the creation of the section Backstage, with its three spaces on conservation, repatriation and experimental curating, whose aim is to include the audience and connect it with the ongoing debates and challenges, both material or theoretical, that the museum's staff encounters, rather than presenting a static exhibition. There the museum takes up its duties as defined by ICOM and displays 'its primary fields of work on a long-time basis,'[4] which it shares with its visitors.

This article presents the first project of the Prep Room, the room for experimental curating in Backstage, which I co-curated with Franka Schneider, Curator at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen, Berlin. It then focuses on object ontologies, which were a main topic of discussion between us as project curators and the museum staff. It then reveals what ontologies actually mean for classifying objects inside the museum and their broader taxonomies, concluding with the importance of holding a space for emotions and discomfort when doing this kind of work. This text aims to provide museum practitioners with the tools to engage with and present the institution's inner

2 The German Federal Cultural Foundation's 'Initiative for Ethnological Collections' funded the Linden Museum, Stuttgart *LindenLab* as the MARKK's *Zwischenraum.*

3 https://grassi-voelkerkunde.skd.museum/en/exhibitions/reinventing-grassiskd/ accessed November 29, 2022.

4 https://grassi-voelkerkunde.skd.museum/en/exhibitions/reinventing-grassiskd/backstage/ accessed November 29,2022.

workings to the public and to position this practice as a method so as to continuously reconfigure the interface between the museum and its visitors.

From Backstage to Prep Room

The Care Room, located at the entrance to Backstage, is a space dedicated to conservation. It has a showcase area containing two vitrines and an information video addressing current questions regarding the treatment of the collections for long-term safeguarding and the effects of past conservation on specific objects. There is also a closed work room with transparent walls and a door to the right of the showcase area. Within this space, storage custodians and conservationists collaborate with visiting guests on objects and themes. In particular, the glass door carries information and extends a warm invitation to the public to engage with staff members and ask questions while they work. As such, the door remains open during these times. This initiative emphasizes that the displayed objects are merely a small fraction of the collection, most of which is stored away. It also reshapes the visibility of the museum spaces, shedding light on the storage rooms, which often remain unseen and hidden, and on the conservation labs that are often regarded as spaces where objects are made ready for display and not where the objects operate in the world.

The room is followed by the Room of Remembrance, which addresses the important topics of repatriation and restitution. A unique arrangement in the German museum world gives these issues a permanent presence in the exhibition spaces. It is also a multilayered communication room, offering a room for dialogue and encounter, but also for withdrawing from the visitors' eyes, offering the communities involved a quiet space to meet with their ancestors and spirits. Therefore, this room highlights the fact that the museum and its objects belong to various communities beyond the one it serves locally, which also necessitates a room of their own that should be part of the institution's total architecture on a long-term basis, instead of being made possible every now and then.

Inspired by the ICOM award-winning Prep Room[5] at the museum of the National University of Singapore, which is conceived as a space where audiences go to observe and engage with exhibition-making processes. Friedrich von Bose, head of research and exhibitions at the GRASSI Museum, introduced the third space for experimental curating and collaboration, the Prep Room. Here, artists, curators and scholars are invited to take up a residency. The Prep Room is simultaneously their working and exhibition space, where 'things may or may not happen'. Situated at the heart of the museum, the Prep Room offers a permanent space for residents and visitors to engage actively with the museum's themes.

5 https://museum.nus.edu.sg/explore/about/prep-room/ accessed November 11, 2022.

Taken together, these three rooms offer various ways of approaching museum objects, first as vehicles of our care, attention and conservation, second as embedded in a larger community, and third as motivators for inner reflections in how the Prep Room is approached.

Rethinking the Dialogical: Expanding the Contact Zone

Parallel to the debates on transforming museums into reflexive, more democratic spaces, ethnographic museums are especially under pressure to face their colonial pasts and become more inclusive. Often seen as carrying a more substantial historical responsibility towards the communities of implication (Lehrer 2021) than any other public institution, in recent years public discussions in Germany about the colonial past have been perpetuated thanks to the work of NGOs such as Berlin Postcolonial, Initiative Schwarzer Mensch in Deutschland, Decolonize Berlin, no Humboldt 21, activists like Mnyaka Sururu Mboro and Israel Kaunatjike, and the increasingly interested civil society. New funding bodies, like the German Lost Art Foundation's program on 'Cultural Goods and Collections from Colonial Contexts' were established to support projects investigating the provenance of objects in museum and university collections with a thematic focus on colonialism. An increased number of collaborations, research and exhibitions on the topic were conceived: 'Koloniale Spuren im Übersee-Museum Bremen: Afrika-Sammlungen als Gegenstand der Provenienzforschung', Übersee-Museum, Bremen and 'Confronting Colonial Pasts, Envisioning Creative Futures', Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, to name just a few examples.

After years of strong advocacy by Black, Indigenous People and People of Colour, as well as marginalized actors, a critical, expanded idea of the contact zone (Clifford 1997, Boast 2011) seems to be materializing within ethnological museum spaces, defined as a 'contact zone'. Boast has pointed out the inherent asymmetry of any contact zone as a space for collaboration between museums and Indigenous or First Nations peoples. Yet, the newly established spaces make possible collaborations between local publics and seem to expand the contact zone in its very meaning towards participation and democratizing the museum, away from its ivory tower and towards an attempt to create a symmetrical dialogue despite the asymmetrical shared history. This follows the first wave of renaming ethnological and anthropological museums, such as Weltmuseum (Museum of the world), Vienna, Museum of Five Continents, München, Museum of World Cultures, Frankfurt. This involves moving away from geographical and disciplinary references to align the institution more with notions of 'world heritage' and 'global history', notions deemed to have more contemporary relevance. Some museums have established new spaces for dialogue with the public. The Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt set up a 'Zwischenraum', the Linden Museum offers the LindenLAB, and the Museum for European Cultures is planning its Objekt

Labor (Working Title), to name just some examples. They are all attempting to position themselves as museums with a space in which not only is discourse produced, but also a form of empirical knowledge which can hopefully find its way back into its ecosystem and change it.

Within this context of a wave of renewal in the practice and self-presentation of ethnological museums, at the GRASSI, the Prep Room opened its door for continual dialogue and encounters in 2022.

Following a critical workshop on 'The reflexive handling of problematic categories and expressions in the Daphne and Online Collection', Franka and I were invited to be the first residents of the Prep Room. We contribute different positionalities, shaped by our respective life experiences in the former GDR and Hungary. For the initial workshop session, the museum staff selected several examples from the GRASSI museum's online database. The purpose of this activity was to actively involve the museum's colleagues by discussing and analysing cultural artefacts from their own collections and to work on concrete examples. It also allowed us to work out the challenges these databases still imply: how to deal with racist terminology and categorizations? What is practicable, and what examples of best practice exist?[6]

Understanding the Prep Room as an opportunity to foster dialogue between the museum personnel and ourselves, two connected matters were central to our project. One was the need to make creative, new contributions to 'curatorial dreaming' (Butler and Lehrer 2016) and practices, arguing that exhibitions are simultaneously ongoing processes and finished products (Karp and Kratz 2014), two positions that are not mutually exclusive. This is in line with the theme of REINVENTING GRASSI and the director's understanding of museums as places for 'processualism', – as in a place where the process of thinking about and through objects can be revealed to the public, instead of remaining behind the scenes. The second matter follows the decolonial turn and ongoing debates on coloniality (Maldonado-Torres 2017).

Observing many participatory, critical exhibitions at the GRASSI museum, we proposed to centre our conversations inward, instead of focusing on an outreach project. It was our curatorial position that contributing to change in museums – understood as systems of asymmetric power structures and as persistent creators of racist knowledge – has to come from within. What this means is that outreach projects, which aim to include Black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOCs) in the public and members of the diaspora in the process of making an exhibition are not enough to achieve authentic change. Therefore, as our Prep Room, we proposed a curatorial project to invite the staff of the GRASSI museum to a curatorial experiment. What Franka and I initially thought of was to determine dialogically the main topic for the room through a continuous process of discussion. In doing so, we continuously developed new questions and

6 Like the Reciprocal Research Network: https://www.rrncommunity.org, accessed December 20, 2022.

themes *for* the room. As I will argue later, the curation process was more than dialogical and included multilayered transdisciplinary methodologies as well.

For the concept of dialogical curating, I reference two main scholarly works. First, Grant Kester, in his book *Conversation Pieces*, gives examples of various artists who are using dialogue as an artistic method. Integral to this practice is an 'extended process of listening and documentation' (Kester 2004:7). The artistic outcome is not necessarily the traditional notion of an 'object' or exhibition, but rather the conversation and/or an engagement that affects people. Kester therefore also coined the term 'dialogical art'. Moreover, contemporary artists like Martin Krenn argue that dialogue adds its own aesthetic quality to art, so that dialogical art moves fluidly between social engagement, aesthetic autonomy and social change (Krenn 2019). Following these ideas, Franka and I wanted to focus entirely on the process – creating and perpetuating discussions and ideas – instead of focusing on an end product, an exhibition. This proved more challenging, as generally museum spaces are thought of as places of transfer, where themes are contextualized and explained, rather than left open and questioned.

As a second reference point, I used Bakhtinian dialogism, referring to the philosophy of language and a social theory that was developed by Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975). Significant were his thoughts on the 'open-ended dialogue', in the sense of creating structures of open-ended connections, rather than in isolating boundaries. Bakhtin argues that in dialogue 'no singular word relates to its object in a singular way and an elastic environment of other words about the same object…it is precisely in the process of living interaction with this specific environment that the word may be individualized and given stylistic shape' (Bakhtin 1981:276). He also mentions 'the utterance-in-dialogue' (Bakhtin 1981:276–277), a piece of the ongoing exchange between speakers and listeners, who jointly shape everything that is said in all social situations. A corollary for Bakhtin is what he calls 'heteroglossia'. Here he underlines the importance of realizing that there is no such thing as a generic language. Instead, each language is composed of many different variations and nuances. Different social classes, generations and occupations speak differently, adding various values and degrees of social prestige (Bakhtin 1981).

Informed by these approaches, during the project at GRASSI I defined dialogical curating as developing a participatory and collaborative process, in the sense of open-ended dialogue, that seeks to include a multitude of voices. It highlights what themes and challenges are essential to those involved. It fosters informal spaces of reflection and exchange, which it then presents to the public through formats that go beyond a classically finished exhibition.

Ontologies: Subject, Object and In-between

Museum practitioners have acquired experience in categorizing and naming objects over the last two centuries. Material culture worldwide became data in museum storage

in Germany and elsewhere. Indigenous Peoples from around the globe were mined for 'scientific' knowledge. These classifications and categorizations and their organization hardened into accepted practices of naming and categories throughout collecting institutions (Turner 2022). These names were often considered wrong by the Indigenous Peoples to whom they had belonged, but viewed as acceptable by museum personnel and as a genuine part of Western knowledge.

In the archive and museum storage, different ontologies confront each other. When cultural belongings (*Kulturzeugnisse*) are named as (museum) objects, they are assigned to this category. Following colonial knowledge production, colonial categories were grouped so as to reflect the subjects' or objects' essential and general characteristics and contexts. Categories are mostly based on one-dimensional use. Sometimes an assignment is difficult or not possible at all. This century is characterized by unlearning and relearning the use of words and the consequences of classification for understanding how cultural belonging operates in museum contexts. The participating staff felt it necessary to be self-critical about the types of words, categorizations and narratives they came up with.

The call for a broadening of one's perspective was seen as necessary. But for this, terms are needed that can adequately describe material culture. How to deal with the terms and names that are increasingly missing due to the contexts of colonial acquisition, which already capture the multi-layered contexts in their original living conditions?

How do we address the ontological difference between understanding material cultures? Some cultural belongings are not matter but also subjects, spiritual manifestations. What is called a sculpture in a museum might be, in its being and original use, an ancestor and thus part of the family. Our discussions with the staff pointed out that the vital reflexivity and resulting change in practice caused discomfort for museum visitors and tension inside the museum – discomfort in a different mode, which I will address further below.

As a first step, to determine relevant discussion questions for the Prep Room, we wanted to give the museum's staff the time and space to examine their experiences and challenges in their current working day. Was there a significant difference between handling contemporary issues and exhibiting them? We invited the museum's employees (educators, conservators, storage managers and curators) for initial conversations. Franka and I decided to meet each person separately, or if they wished, together with their team members. All were very open to meeting. Some participants stayed proactive throughout the entire project, while others only attended a few meetings. After the first fruitful set of personal meetings, we analysed the responses and our conversations. We chose not to record our sessions but to rely on note-taking. By taking this decision, we also wanted to build up trust and underline the fact that we are looking for an exchange at eye-level. Interestingly, all colleagues struggled with similar issues and a significant ontological question about objects. Therefore, the topic for a common basis was fixed, being ready to be reflected back on the participants. For our next meeting,

we sent out the following email, including a section for thinking about some concrete examples from their work:

A common denominator has emerged from the discussions. This is the question of the object itself. What is understood by 'object'? How does the museum deal with 'objects' that are understood in their original context as subjects or spiritual beings? How do we deal with this in everyday museum work?

How does the critical examination of historical designations change today's museum systems of order? Where do other world views find their place?

Over the course of the following weeks and months, enthusiastic museum staff suggested diverse examples and subtopics that would be worth discussing. It should be stressed that the staff's participation was completely voluntary. They invested their time between reopening the GRASSI museum's new exhibition spaces as part of the 'REINVENTING' project and their daily business. Through the course of an intensive seven months (November 2021 to May 2022), I received more than 70 emails from one of the participants. Naturally, not everybody was as enthusiastic, but it shows how we met the need for conversation. Various answers to our email regarding the 'museum object' question reached us, which we can boil down into two general questions.

First, how should museum staff deal with categorizations and names that are a) racist and inherit colonial naming and grammar; b) translations that have no equivalent meaning in German; c) subject and objects in the same temporality for different people; and d) names for cultural belonging which are spirited and whose communities of origin have not yet been contacted?

Second, how should we deal with everyday challenges in the storage facility that make museum staff uncomfortable? Examples here were racist and problematic cabinet titles, keywords, titles, subject groups and regions. Specifically, the category of region as a geographical location posed an ethical dilemma. This historical, colonial terminology may be crucial information for provenance research.

Also, there was uncertainty about how to decide whether some of the cultural belongings can be placed next to one another before we contact the community of origin.

Out of these umbrella questions, we agreed on six questions that were made visible in the Prep Room on large glass screens, with answers gradually being added during Prep Room meetings. These would take place in the space itself, with open doors, for museum visitors to either listen or join in the conversations.

The following questions were chosen as necessary to the work of our museum colleagues:

- What do we (museum staff) mean by object? What is 'Western' about it?
- Here the term 'Western' posed a challenge, but no adequate alternative words were found.
- Why is the discussion about dealing with words, categories and objects important?
- What do we (museum staff) make visible in exhibitions, and what not?
- How do we avoid reproducing stereotypes?

- Where does our knowledge come from, and what is missing? How do we exhibit missing knowledge?
- How can we find ways of working together with the communities involved? How can we ensure knowledge transfer?

Slowly, the Prep Room was filled with more questions than answers. Showcasing the process meant occupying a room which was an ongoing construction site and gradually layering its content. We added a timeline that tracked linearly the discussed themes, questions and cultural belongings. We left the working material, literature and images in the room for visitors to look at.

Throughout the entire process, Franka and I tried to tie our debates to specific examples to allow museum visitors to connect seemingly abstract questions to the actual cultural belongings kept in the museum. The goal was to select two or three objects of material culture for a presentation in the room, highlighting some of our considerations.

Keris Tangguh Mataram dapur Singa Barong, a manufacturer unknown to the museum from Java, Mataram, probably active at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, was displayed in a glass case in the room. The curator, Petra Martin proposed the *keris*, as it made possible multilayered discussions.

The elaborately crafted *keris* had a high value in their culture of origin in Java. They were simultaneously a weapon, clothing accessory, status symbol and talisman. Because of their spiritual power and meaning, they were always treated with great respect, which included careful storage, attentive handling, regular cleaning ceremonies and offerings. Possessing a precious *keris* that had been inherited could legitimize a claim to power. The divine power of a *keris* rests in the blade. Many have elaborate surface decoration, which harmonizes with the owner's character.

This example shows how entangled cultural belonging and subject categories are. At what point is cultural belonging considered a subject? When it is attributed spiritual powers? Because of their spirituality, *keris* should be presented with the blade pointing upward. This contradicts the common depiction of daggers and swords in German museums, where the blade points downwards. Therefore, it is necessary to break with habits to assume certain perspectives to seemingly similar material cultures.

With their transfer to European culture, the *keris* underwent new contextualization. The inventories, places of presentation and the changes made to some objects reflect the process of European appropriation. To underline the practice of extraction and transfer of context, the *keris's* biography on the wall showed them in different colours.
Ohiniko Mawussé Toffa chose the second cultural belonging to highlight the questions on naming categories. At this point he was working on a provenance research project on colonial collections from Togo.[7] He chose from a currently unknown manufacturer

7 https://forschung.skd.museum/en/projects/detail/provenienz-von-kolonialzeitlichen-sammlungen-aus-togo/ accessed August 30, 2023.

a piece of headgear or warrior's cap classified as cultural belonging from present-day Ghana. Toffa stressed that the museum system named it as 'headgear' (*Kopfbedeckung*), which is a difficult term because *Kopfbedeckung* in German means something to cover the head with. However, the presented piece is not simply headgear, but rather a status symbol, which empowers its owner. As comparison, he brought in the hats of Catholic bishops or 'mitres', which carry meanings and associations within them: they are not simply called headgear. Furthermore, Toffa underlined the importance of finding a word for each cultural belonging. Naming is something we must care about because, depending on the context, the given name represents a different reality, a different special reality, that also connects back to discussions on heteroglossia.

The questions and examples we presented do not have easy answers. They certainly provide more than a look behind the curtain or a peak into the museum's backstage, delving more deeply into questions of how the museum functions. Our aim was not to provide simple solutions but to discuss collectively the named key issues and to foster awareness within the museum so that when mediating between the objects and the public, the choices made about the presented classifications and exhibitions are more informed and conscious than haphazard. Museums are so concentrated on reaching their audiences that they sometimes overlook the need for spaces within the institution that enable their staff to communicate openly. This was one of the purposes of the Prep Room. By inviting museum colleagues, the Prep Room became a safe space in the process of dialogical curating. Franka and I were more than curators or residents, but in those meetings, we overcame the classical notions of curating as producing products and decision-makers. We were border-crossers in the Hooper-Greenhill way, and were defined by the author as such:

> Museums may be seen as cultural borderlands, where a range of practices are possible […], and where diverse groups and subgroups, cultures and subcultures may push against and permeate the allegedly unproblematic and homogeneous borders of hegemonial cultural practices. By viewing museums as a form of cultural politics, museum workers can bring together the concepts of narrative, difference, identity and interpretative strategies in such a way as to create strategies for negotiating these practices. In the post-museum, multiple subjectivities and identities can exist as part of a cultural practice that provides the potential to expand the politics of democratic community and solidarity. By being able to listen critically, museum workers can become border-crossers by making different narratives available, by bridging between disciplines, by working in the liminal spaces that modernist museum practices have produced. (Hooper-Greenhill 2007:140)

Reflecting on our curating method in retrospect, I associate it with methods of participatory action research. Perhaps it is a participatory multilayered curatorial work that emphasizes participation and action by the staff in cyclically constant reflection sessions with and by us, similar to a counselling session. It seeks to provide an opportunity to reflect on one's one practice, encourages dialogue, and helps target the spe-

cific challenges that the participating members raise. What is also unique about our work in the Prep Room is the desire and willingness to share these reflections, which are vulnerable to the people communicating them with the audience, highlighting the fact that, even after working at GRASSI for decades, foundational questions are being re-asked and definitive answers do not stay definitive forever. They are repeatedly being put on the table to be renegotiated, so that the thoughts around which the museum is organized are continually being updated.

Mixed Feelings: The Emotional Work of Reflexivity

For some years now, emotions in museums have become a research focus, what Andrea Witcomb calls 'Toward a pedagogy of feeling' (Witcomb 2015). Engaging in a collaborative process anywhere can be emotional simply because people invest themselves to some degree or another in the work. In an ethnological museum, emotiveness is inherent. What is presented in exhibitions may influence visitors in all kinds of ways, but it is mostly a matter of how it makes them feel while experiencing the place.

Dealing with decolonization and difficult heritage is emotional labour. Regularly, international researchers or involved community members visit the museum as guests to engage with the collection or their ancestors. Coming face to face with increasing emotions is something staff may not have anticipated or are prepared to moderate, but they still have to make a space for any collaborative project. I stress the uneasiness staff members felt regarding their own emotions and the consequences of them.

This is something not unknown in environments where decolonial practices have been driven by First Nations and Natives/Indigenous Peoples. Rewriting settler colonial narratives is a daily challenge.

In preparation for our Prep Room meetings, and in search for examples of best practice for decolonial workshops, I came across the work of Dr Carol A. Cornelius, an oral scholar, with Prof. Margo Lukens at the Abbe Museum, Main USA. I was interested in finding out how museum staff in other settler societies reacted to reflexive questions of institutional and local history.

Lukens recounts her collaboration with Dr Cornelius, who had facilitated cross-cultural reading groups, describing what happens when one encounters other people's versions of histories, one goes through a process, similar to the five stages of facing grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance (Kübler-Ross 1969).

Facing the institution's historical wrongdoings and one's own entanglement and positionality entails a stage of loss – loss of the privilege of being comfortable and being implicated instead (Rothberg 2022). Here Rothberg suggests the category of the 'implicated subject' and the related notion of 'implication'. Derived from the Latin stem *implicāre*, meaning to entangle, involve, or connect closely, 'implication,' like the proximate but not identical term 'complicity,' draws attention to how we are 'folded

into' (implicated in) events that at first seem beyond our agency as individual subjects. This is uncomfortable, but a productive place to be in, as it opens up spaces for new encounters.

Although there have been many visitors to the Prep Room, two particular encounters highlight the potential for a) active visitor engagement: during my time of regular visits to the room, I used to converse with visitors; and b) for conversations with the museum's personnel. I will share short excerpts from these. One day a visitor approached me while I was working at the table in the room. It was her first visit to the museum. She had come especially to see the Benin bronzes, which she expected to be exhibited in the museum. She knew from the museum's website that they had some in the collection and wanted to see them 'before they are given back and it is too late', as she said to me. She must have been wandering the exhibition space for a while before entering the Prep Room, as she seemed to expect me to point her in the right direction. As I informed her, there was a new work 'At the Threshold' from Emeka Ogboh, a series of portraits of the Benin bronzes. She seemed interested, but the disappointment was written all over her face. I instantly picked up on her feeling and invited her to play a game with me I developed focusing on 'mixed feelings', which involves choosing a card with a feeling named and drawn on a square piece of paper. She chose the card 'pity' to represent her momentary state of mind. 'What a pity that there are no Benin Bronzes on display', she reputedly said, and made a drawing on the other card. I asked her if she could imagine why we were playing a card game in the middle of a museum and exhibition space. She had not considered it before, 'as many museums are now trying to offer different types of interaction.' I explained to her in my own words the idea of Backstage and how the Prep Room was connected to all this. Establishing an open space in the middle of the museum that allows internal conversations to be seen is an experiment in making the museum transparent and inclusive to its public. It also emphasizes that breaking with the notion of the museum as a superior place of knowledge production and thus making the public and ourselves, the museum staff, aware of how and why changes occur is an important step in decolonizing. After an intense but exciting talk, she pointed out that she had recently seen a 'critical film' on German television about the looting of the Oba palace in Benin, and how important it is to think about 'where these objects in the museum came from.' I agreed with her. She went on to see the exhibition by Emeka Ogboh.

In one of our final meetings with some of the museum personnel, we reflected on the museum's opening and some of the criticisms it has received by letting the artist group PARA repurpose one of the museum's stone plinths for a participatory restitution project. This stone plinth housed the bust of Karl Weule (1864-1926), ethnologist and director of the GRASSI museum. The action was critically seen by some of the staff members too. It was not the destruction of the 'Weule Säule' (Weule's plinth), as I used to call it, that was a symbol of 'getting rid of the old', but more the violence of the act itself. Questioning where the anger came from, it emerged that there was a general feeling of being left alone in difficult situations when, for example, watching the plinth

being destroyed, while at the same time trying to do the right thing by the artists' collective. During curatorial depot management studies or museology, one doesn't learn how to encounter situations with colleagues who see their ancestors or spiritual 'objects' in the storage spaces or for whom museum objects stem from a violent personal history. Often, some label such viewpoints as 'too emotional/not objective', whereas one's uneasiness is more readily accepted.

Our Prep Room project had truly become a safe space for discussions on curatorial epistemic challenges and showed the importance of such enabling spaces. As a future goal, I suggested implementing coaching sessions with the staff of the museum, which was well received.

Conclusion

My work with Franka Schneider on the Prep Room involved more than 640 emails, countless conversations in person, via Zoom or on the phone, around 50 visits to the museum and numerous organized events, all serving to create a safe space for museum personnel to engage with questions about objects they feel strongly about. This process of creating an open-ended dialogue, which is then made visible to the public and to which the public was in turn invited to participate, was informed by theoretical positions regarding dialogical curating and the significance of open-ended discussions. The collaboration with the GRASSI team proved fruitful because it shed light on the questions that needed to be re-asked and reconfigured to ensure the museum does the right thing by the communities of implication it wishes to work with and whose history it is still shaping. A key aspect of this project is the importance of making a space for emotions about an object, a question, or a certain curatorial practice and creating a space safe enough for people to doubt their view of the world and themselves. In opening a room for doubt and the possibility of change on the most fundamental level of museum practice, as in the definition and understanding of what an object 'is' and how it operates in the world, the public was invited to reconsider what the museum can do for them. It is no longer a temple for knowledge fixed in time, which only the curators possess, but rather a space where everyone is invited to ask questions and to suggest answers for sharing.

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Strategic Narcissism: A Lived Experience of 'Decolonising', Inclusion of and 'Collaborations' with Indigenous Researchers

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Abstract: Based on my lived experience, the current decolonizing turn towards increasing the inclusion of and collaborations with indigenous researchers is characterized by strategic narcissism. Collaborations are shaped by wishful thinking, ignoring our lived experience and realities on the ground. While decolonizing is framed by Global North academic institutions as a moral project, it could be seen as empty, exploitative and extractive by indigenous researchers. In this short commentary, I reflect on recent 'decolonial' attempts to reform the practices and policies of inclusions of and collaborations with indigenous researchers based on my lived experience as an indigenous Egyptian heritage and museums researcher. I argue that the current promotion of Eurocentric perceptions of equity and ethics as universal is rooted in strategic narcissism. It serves the Global North in clearing its consciousness while forcing indigenous researchers into colonial assimilation and violence. I call for a shift towards empathy as an indigenous-centred approach to dismantling current recolonizing decolonial framing honouring the emotional tax and lived experience of indigenous researchers. Global North institutions and researchers are invited to self-reflect and question for whom are they doing this decolonizing work?
[decolonisation, indigenous knowledge, indigenous methodologies, cultural heritage, indigenous collaborations]

Introduction: Framing Positionality

This brief reflection is triggered by my frustration with how the current decolonization of indigenous collaborations is rooted in strategic narcissism, a tendency to define the world only in relation to the West. On the one hand, inclusion, equity and ethics and their subsequent collaboration practices are promoted as a moral project being gifted to the Global Majority. However, in being presented as universal norms, they ignore how their meaning and applicability vary from one culture to another. Perceived as universal, these values can only perpetuate existing imbalanced power relations. On the other hand, panels, workshops and conferences, usually based in the Global North, debate introducing new decolonial theoretical frameworks and methods. In doing so, they ignore centuries of the Global Majority's indigenous researchers' anticolonial activism and knowledge produced on the basis of their first-hand lived experience. However, entire careers and research grants are currently being built off writing about inequalities and the victims of colonialism by the privileged dominant voices who have never experienced any of them (Musila 2019). Privilege is invisible to the privileged.

How can we speak of ethical collaborations if partners and landscapes of knowledge are unequal? To what extent are the voices of indigenous researchers being heard and acted upon beyond boosting collaborations through co-authorship? Is the emotional tax experienced by indigenous researchers being acknowledged? And if so, are they being invited to disclose their emotional battles openly and transparently in protected safe spaces? What is the duty of care and protection afforded to indigenous researchers, given that they are exposed to and seek to dismantle colonial institutions and mind-sets? Who should be carrying the heavier weight of confronting colonial practices within academic research fields?

While these questions seem obvious, they remain unanswered, even though they are central to any attempt to build meaningful collaborations between indigenous and non-indigenous researchers. Two contributing problems could be identified here. First, non-indigenous researchers could be unconscious of how colonizing mind-sets can exist within themselves and not just the institutions within which they operate (Krusz et al. 2020). An example from the field of Middle East and North African (MENA) heritage and museum studies is denying MENA communities indigenous status. This demonstrates how research practices and policies still operate through colonial typologies of race and ethnicity. MENA communities are not considered indigenous, as colonial genealogical descent remain the sole legitimator of community relationships with heritage (Abd el Gawad forthcoming). MENA communities are thus labelled as locals. They are perceived as a contemporary community settled within local proximity to the tangible heritage. The connection between them and ancient communities is one of shared geography rather than a shared spatial, emotional or socio-political lived experience.

While I self-identify as indigenous, I am not classified as such by the rigid disciplinary typologies rooted in colonialism. This continued use of colonial racial labelling perpetuates racism and denies MENA communities the right to colonial reconciliation and repair. This is evident in the exclusion of MENA heritage and its contemporary indigenous communities from current repatriation and decolonization debates, the omission of North African collections from the applauded Sarr-Savoy repatriation report being a case in point (Sarr and Savoy 2018).

Second, indigenous communities are still seen as a homogenous collective. This is particularly harming for indigenous communities of practice, as their professional privilege and responsibilities afford them a closer and purposefully different status and attitude towards researching their culture (Weber-Pillwax 2001). Although the challenges of inequality and discrimination are shared, their effects may be felt differently between different indigenous sub-groups. Indigenous researchers who act as mediators between Global North research culture and their indigenous communities are usually at the receiving end of indigenous and non-indigenous passive micro-aggressions. They battle on the research field and internally as they struggle to maintain a balance between safeguarding their communities from extraction and exploitation and having to

deliver impact indicators to Eurocentric research grants (Abd el Gawad forthcoming). Indigenous researchers pay the highest emotional tax within the frameworks of these collaboration projects.

This is not to suggest that we need to establish a struggle barometer among indigenous communities to measure who suffers the most, but to highlight the varying positioning within indigenous communities. Some individual groups, given their specialization and role within the indigenous collective, are assigned a more line-of-fire position than others within current Global North and indigenous researchers' collaboration frameworks. Yet rarely are indigenous researchers' first-hand experiences of the violence of current collaboration structures heard or taken into consideration (Kalinga 2019). Their voices only seem to matter when the need arises to tick the indigenous box, whether on a research grant or on a faculty ethics, diversity and inclusion strategy.

In this piece, I reflect on my frustrations and fatigue with the current decolonial turn by using my lived experience as an indigenous researcher in heritage and museum studies. In writing this, I recognize and build on the activism conducted over the past five years in the field of museums and heritage studies by fellow indigenous and people of colour (PoC) collectives such as the PoC Museum Network Museum detox in the UK, and writers, curators, artists and activists such as Mirjam Brusius, Sara N. Ahmed, Sumaya Kassim, Sylvie Njobati, Mahret Ifeoma Kupka, or Nana Oforiatta Ayim (2023).

I attempt to challenge the Eurocentric perceptions of academic objectivity and rigour by asserting the subjectivity of how I see current decolonial efforts towards indigenous collaborations. Objectivity establishes a distance between the researcher and the researched based on the notion of how neutrality on a subject is the most balanced way to determine its facts. Within these collaborations, however, I am both the researcher and the researched. Academic research has never been neutral towards me, my culture, or community. I cannot and should not separate what I do from who I am. My lived experience is a first-hand testimony to the colonial violence and marginalization of indigenous researchers and its traumatizing scars. My daily face-to-face encounters with colonialism in the research field, digital and physical lecture theatres, academic publications, museums, or border controls are not intellectual concepts which can be framed or theorized: they are discriminatory injustices that require corrective action and reconciliation.

Over past few years, I have developed 'decolonial fatigue'. It is exhausting to witness how everyone seems to have an opinion on who we are, what should happen to us and what can bring us justice as indigenous researchers without meaningfully including us. I have been to digital and physical rooms where far more non-indigenous researchers were present discussing indigenous collaborations and its best practices. This is a form of colonial violence. This piece attempts to challenge these practices by countering the biases of the current decolonial turn by centring my own lived experience as indigenous.

I will openly, yet sensitively, share what I think and how I feel regarding current decolonial approaches to collaborations with indigenous researchers. Arguments raised here cannot usually be cited, as they reflect my personal emotional, socio-political and cultural sentiments and professional observations as an indigenous researcher. My first-hand experience of the failures, challenges, but also opportunities of indigenous collaborations entail them as evidence.

I specialize in the colonial history of Egyptian heritage and museum studies and the amplification of Egyptian voices, views and validity in these histories. Over the past five years, I have been coordinating community and institutional collaborations funded by the Global North. I make this disclosure not to justify my positionality but to assert my deep knowledge of the roots of the current colonial system and how it impacted on the indigenous community. This knowledge, while empowering, is self-defeating, as I witness colonial racism being replicated in the name of universal ethics and equity. I equally acknowledge that I am a single member of a diverse indigenous community of practice within the wider indigenous Egyptian community. My gender, social status, socio-political and cultural biases shape how I see myself and the world around me. Opinions shared here are not neutral and should not be seen as representative of the lived experiences of all my fellow indigenous community of practice. While individual, my lived experience equally matters.

The Strategic Narcissism of the Current Decolonizing Turn

For me as an indigenous heritage and museums researcher, the current decolonizing turn is characterized by what the field of International Relations and Foreign Affairs defines as 'Strategic Narcissism' (McMaster 2021). Strategic Narcissism means 'defining the world through and only in relation to Western eyes', and then to assume that courses of actions taken, based on these views, will lead to favourable outcomes. The current decolonial turn is, I argue, disconnected from realities on the ground, particularly when forging collaborations with indigenous researchers. It approaches indigenous communities and circumstances as homogenous, seeking 'universal decolonial' methodologies and theoretical frameworks to solve all colonial problems. This is done by passing off the Eurocentric values of equity and ethics as universal, thereby ignoring indigenous structures and psychologies of what society is and how it operates. It fails equally to distinguish the small groups and minorities that make up the collective indigenous community.

I will try and be specific and exemplify my argument based on my own field of museum and heritage studies. I am Egyptian; I self-define as indigenous. Yet, the authenticity and validity of my indigenous identity is contested by my immediate academic and research field and museum practices (Abd el Gawad and Stevenson 2023). These perceptions have their colonial roots but are also the product of inherited and persistent (un)consciously biased perceptions of race and ethnicity. Despite recent improvements

to the right to self-identification as indigenous (Shrinkal 2021), these remain framed by how the Global North divides communities and nation states. Within such a division, the region of the Middle East and North Africa is denied the right to indignity regarding the land on which it lives. It remains the imagined space of the Orient, as the museum galleries' panels across the Global North attest. Even today, as active calls to decolonize are sweeping Africa-related research fields, for example, North African archaeological practices and museum galleries remain immune from the current decolonial turn, given their colonial alienation as the Orient.

Repatriation is another current decolonizing museum hot spot where strategic narcissism is crystallized. Despite years of indigenous anticolonial activism, it is only now that the Global North has decided it is time to confront the colonial atrocities behind museums' collections, occasionally taking seriously requests made by indigenous communities (Abd el Gawad and Stevenson 2021). However, repatriation policies and practices are set by biased Eurocentric dominant organizations such as UNESCO (Reyes 2014). They are object-centred and might not always lead to bringing long overdue social justice to indigenous communities. In many nation states, and Egypt is a case in point, communities have no access to discussions and decisions over which objects should be repatriated, why, and what should happen after their return. Repatriation, as practised today, runs the risk of becoming a consciousness-clearing exercise through which the Global North can claim the moral high ground rather than an act of reparation. On the other hand, incorporating the views and voices of indigenous communities in the interpretation, management and decision-making process of their own heritage is still at the discretion of the museum.

For these reasons, I find the current decolonial turn an example of strategic narcissism in action. It is a preoccupation with the Global North's moral good project associated with neglect of the influence that the Global Majority should have over the future course of events. It still serves and is centred on Western institutions. This is particularly true for current approaches to collaborations with indigenous researchers and how they are increasingly becoming alienating as they fail to recognize the positionality and the emotional tax through and within which indigenous research operates.

To me, decolonizing and indigenous collaborations are increasingly becoming hot keywords, which feature heavily in academic and public discussion panels, editorials and journals across Global Majority-related studies linked to career advancement and securing research grants (Coetzee 2019). But keywords are not neutral. They are, in today's academic culture, an essential part of unlocking opportunities, building reputations and attracting funding. The open databases and search engines create a false sense of equal landscapes where choosing the hot keywords can guarantee equal visibility to all scholars and wider public accessibility contributing to inclusivity and open discussions. Yet, these keywords only map discussions taking place in rooms where discussants and attendees have no visa restrictions and excellent broadband. Moreover, search engines will only feature editorials and scholarship published in journals that are included in metrics. These are usually Global North-based, meaning that any

knowledge produced outside the time and place assigned by these Eurocentric metrics is irrelevant (Vanclay 2009). Access to these journals is also dependent on being able to cross the paywall boundary, a privilege that most Global Majority institutions and researchers cannot afford. These inequalities of accessibility make 'keywords' as a term and concept a suppressive tool ingraining injustices, rather than providing a solution to academic queries. A key can unlock a door, but this door between the North and the South is safeguarded through a paywall and metrics.

In this respect, most recent improvements remain superficial and encourage colonial assimilation. Growing calls to increase the representation of indigenous researchers in academic journals are a case in point. Increasing indigenous representation within Eurocentric frameworks of knowledge dissemination, rather than reforming structures of academic publication to be more open to indigenous modes of knowledge dissemination and languages, is colonial assimilation (cf. Egypt Exploration Society, n.d.). This conflict between intent and effect could be attributed to how, in my view, the current decolonial turn seeks feel-good, short-term fixes, rather than challenging the persistence of institutional and academic colonial violence and injustice through long-term indigenous-centred structural changes. Conducted superficially, decolonization becomes an exercise in tokenism. Discussions and decision-making surrounding these topics is, to a great extent, led and developed in Global North institutions and only heard when voiced by Western academics, given the current socio-political economy of academic enquiries. While the dominance of Global North institutions forms a direct correlation with the socio-political research economy, indigenous alternatives and the framing of these very same funds and resources are present.

In the same vein, heritage and museum studies' subject field journals do not support Egyptian Arabic typesetting. On most occasions, I am forced to make two choices: either omit any Egyptian Arabic wording from my academic publications or transliterate Egyptian Arabic into Roman script. But even when I accept the Romanization of Egyptian Arabic words, editors and reviewers are strict in asking me to conform to the Classical Arabic transliteration system, devised by nineteenth-century Orientalist academia (Elmgrab 2011). I am therefore denied the right to transliterate my own Egyptian Arabic dialect and forced to find a Classical Arabic alternative. Classical Arabic is a formal academic form of Arabic which I only use in formal settings and is alien to my perception of identity and self. Being forced to use alternatives to confirm to academic publications' typesetting rules, which are usually set in the Global North and made universal, is another act of epistemic violence.

We, indigenous researchers, are then forced to conform to the traditional western mode of academic writing, which discriminates against our languages and ways of being. This is yet again another form of colonial assimilation. Decolonizing academic publishing should instead be concentrated on calling for openness to indigenous forms of the dissemination of knowledge.

Similarly, the recruitment processes of indigenous academics need to abandon the traditional western evaluation tools of publication lists and teaching statements as per-

formance markers and adopt indigenous evaluation frameworks, which are grounded in the caretaking of knowledge, community, or family and relational interactions and responsibilities regarding all things in nature, the spirit world and each other (Waapalaneexkweew 2018). Not only will this deconstruct the biased power dynamic between the Western evaluator and the indigenous subject of evaluation, but it also has the potential to resolve discrepancies in the recruitment processes of marginalized groups within Euro-Western spheres, namely women.

For these reasons, decolonizing acts conducted within academic and research spaces today are, in my view, strategically narcissist, being rooted in epistemic vice with a self-referential view of the challenges and the solutions to be sought. Strategic narcissism produces policies and strategies based on flawed assumptions, wishful thinking and short-term approaches to long-term problems: 'Wishful thinking is thinking in which one's desires are more influential than logical or evidential considerations' (Cassam 2021). Most current collaborative projects with indigenous researchers can be characterized as 'wishful thinking'. While for Global North institutions collaborations with indigenous researchers are seen as a noble project fulfilling moral and ethical obligations, in most of these projects, which are funded by Western-European research councils, indigenous researchers are forced to conform to and comply with the institutional guidelines and laws of their colonisers (Sukarieh and Tannock 2019). The guidelines for the call for funding for the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council's partnerships with indigenous researchers encapsulates the wishful thinking of current decolonization turn (UKRI 2022).

While it offers a fluid self-identification to the indigenous, it strictly seeks indigenous co-investigators to be affiliated to an institution. This is due to the adoption of a Eurocentric definition of a researcher. A researcher within indigenous knowledge can be a fisherman, a hunter, a mudbrick builder, or a land surveyor. To put it simply, they are experts – within their own knowledge systems – in any form of inquiry related to their tangible and intangible surroundings and environment. They could have gained this knowledge through their elders, the land, the water or the classroom, and they can belong to any age group, including the young.

This example reveals how some current decolonial attempts to collaborate with indigenous researchers have more of wishful thinking about them than being meaningful. The failure here to use indigenous definitions of research(er) is the result of wishful thinking, in the form of the assumption that the flexible definition of indigenous used is, by itself, a corrective act. This ignores how eschewing the term to fit within Eurocentric categorizations of what counts as research defies the intention behind the inclusion. This could be attributed to how some current decolonial efforts are more a preoccupation of Western-European institutions themselves to perform a moral act rather than reflecting a meaningful desire to repair or reconcile. This is yet another trait of strategic narcissism.

This essential requirement, then, disqualifies most indigenous researchers in all fields. For example, based on these guidelines, none of the Egyptian archaeological excavators

who are the keepers of knowledge about the archaeological landscape are eligible to apply, despite the current risk of losing this indigenous knowledge forever, given the lack of local funds and the disinterest of the Egyptian state in documenting these practices.

On the other hand, the main suggested decolonizing foundation of collaborations with indigenous researchers is achieving equity. Despite being a highly moral value, within this setting equity is a 'brick wall' in respect of the rigid Western ways of knowing and relating to the world. Seeking equity within these collaborations is a form of strategic narcissism and delusional thinking. The inequalities between indigenous and non-indigenous researchers operate and intersect through all social, economic, political and cultural levels, rendering equity impossible. Most indigenous communities live in poor socio-economic conditions lacking infrastructure and access to health and public services. Moreover, stigmatized and discriminated against minorities lack the mobility and freedom of movement between international border controls (Maadad and Tight 2014). Some even lack the right to be issued with identity papers, thus denying them access to public services and confining them to a single territory. This is all in addition to the unequal distribution of wealth between North and South and the drastic difference in individuals' average incomes. To aim for equity with these ingrained inequalities is to discriminate against indigenous researchers' suffering and to discredit the injustices exercised upon them. Any claim of equity denies them the right to reparation and social justice.

Global North research grants are usually based upon deliverables and impact. A focus on deliverables denies indigenous communities their right to refuse (Simpson 2007; Simpson 2016). While indigenous researchers and communities may choose to participate in a certain research project, they should still retain the right to refuse to engage or expose certain topics that they do not want known or misrepresented by outsiders or that might cause harm. Research grants are usually short-term, with a rigid budget expenditure timeframe and the need to 'show' impact, both designed with the assumption that the parties are in agreement. While a failure to deliver is factored in, it will result in institutional and principal investigators being marked down, which risks their chances of securing future funds (Kalinga 2019). These time constraints in contracts and budget expenditure can make non-indigenous partners impatient to understand the various socio-political and cultural codes that govern indigenous communities.

Research grants are usually framed without meaningful (in)formal consultations with the multivocality of indigenous communities. International research grants usually operate backwards, as a group of researchers puts forward a proposal which has been designed without consulting with communities. Once awarded a grant, the project is taken to the Global Majority to be implemented without checking with local partners whether the project is in their interest or fulfils their needs. What is the intention behind these collaborations, then, if they do not recognize indigenous needs, local conditions and framings? Whom are these collaborations meant to serve?

The Emotional Tax and the Invisible Labour of Indigenous Researchers

'Emotional tax' is the combination of feeling different from peers at work because of gender, race and/or ethnicity (Brassel et al. 2022) and being 'on one's guard' to protect against bias or unfair treatment, as well as the effect this has on an individual's health, well-being and ability to thrive at work (Travis and Thorpe-Moscoon 2018). An important aspect of 'emotional tax' is when indigenous researchers feel that they must be 'on their guard' to protect against racial and ethnic bias, as well as against extraction and exploitation (Brassel et al. 2022). When being part of a Global North-funded and -led research project within our indigenous communities, we are seen as the face of the Global North institution, which has to protect its interests and reputation, and equally, as the back support for our community, they have primarily to work in and for their interest. This adds its emotional toll to us, as well as an invisible workload in maintaining the community's trust and the hosting institution's reputation control.

Empathy Framing for Collaborations with Indigenous Researchers

Current decolonial attempts to collaborate with indigenous researchers can thus be described as having the mind-set of 'seeing others as we see ourselves'. This mind-set corresponds to the act of understanding others as deserving of the same understanding and tolerance that we give to ourselves. In this respect, the values of equity and ethics are seen as integral to attempting collaborations with indigenous researchers by assuming they are universal. These assumptions of the universality of perceptions and values are problematic, as they fail to recognize Global North privileges and indigenous cultural, emotional and socio-political differences and inequalities. They put into stark light the wide gap between the often Eurocentric theoretical sophistication of scholarly calls for decolonization and the realities on the ground.

Empathy, on the other hand, taken to mean 'the ability to understand and share the feelings of another' and 'the ability to interpret signals of distress or pleasure with effortful control' (Boyer 2010:13), can help us recentre indigenous world views and lived experience in collaborative projects. The achievement of social justice and the dismantling of oppressive relations have often been linked in part with the development of empathy (Wain et al. 2016). Empathy can then be both a cognitive process – a conscious and deliberate attempt to understand how others experience the world – and an affective response to another, a feeling of connection with another's experience and an alignment of feelings (Yorke 2022).

The power of empathy lies in how it fosters connection, and its capacity to elicit emotions within audiences and to indicate to them that their interests and feelings

are considered. On the other hand, it can compel others to take decisive action and show their commitment, provoking emotional reactions and helping messages resonate (Yorke 2022:1).

Institutions and the academy are usually after quick fixes. They issue a call for consultations, usually short-term, and publish a report with a set of rigid and blunt inclusivity and diversity guidelines, which do not recognize differences or respond to individual needs and perceptions of the self. Rarely are such consultations run by a wider indigenous community group that extends beyond the academic sphere. Rather than a set of blunt institutional serving and protecting guidelines, a formula, empathy should be adopted as an ethos. In this respect, institutional and academic knowledge language, tone, mood and performance become vehicles with which to communicate empathy and build connections with people, signalling shared experiences, understandings and common purposes:

> Through communications and actions, empathy offers a means by which to confer respect and dignity on others, showing a willingness to listen and understand, despite intense disagreement and animosity, thus creating opportunities and space for change and transformation. Expressions of empathy signal to domestic and foreign audiences a change in approach, and a desire to understand another (Yorke 2022:2).

How do you convince a population that has suffered extreme violence and conflict that they should try to understand their aggressor? Advocating empathy in such circumstances can sound naïve or callous. Intense emotions and trauma can make empathy hard to countenance, thus limiting people's willingness or capacity to use it. People may prefer direct action or retribution, rather than a cognitive process of exploring different perspectives. It therefore has to be managed with cultural sensitivity (Yorke 2022).

The ethics currently governing collaborative research projects involving indigenous academics are one-sided and remain set within a Eurocentric view of what ethics is and how it can be pursued (Coetzee 2019). This is because conditions set for partnerships are usually dictated by funding bodies and host institutions, which are mostly Global North-based given the current misdistribution of research funding.

For example, ethics as defined and practised within the current decolonizing turn remains Eurocentric. It assumes a homogenous world view of values and morals. For an interaction between two entities to be ethical, rejecting human suffering and exploitation, it must confront the world views and intentions of both entities. These world views and intentions are usually guided by the memories, values and interests of the past. When these sets of views and intentions transparently confront each other, an ethical space is constructed (Poole 1972:5). This ethical space offers an opportunity to be reflective about personal convictions and intentions regarding the 'other'. This confrontation of world views sets up the necessary conditions through which negotiations can take place to arrive at ethical interaction.

On the other hand, empathy has a stronger potential to develop meaningful partnerships with indigenous researchers that are grounded in social justice and inclusion

than what current Eurocentric ethical framing affords. Empathy demonstrates care, concern and understanding for indigenous researchers' life circumstances. There are three aspects to empathy: cognitive empathy, or engaging with the indigenous to understand their thoughts, emotions and perspectives; affective empathy, or sharing in or showing similarity to indigenous researchers' emotional states; and behavioural empathy, or actions that communicate and demonstrate a sense of empathy for employees. Below are some suggestions based on my lived experience of how empathy could be actively practised in collaborations with indigenous researchers.

From Equity to Duty of Care

Rather than aiming for imagined equity, Global North institutions and researchers should be legally and morally bound to a duty of care towards indigenous researchers and communities. A duty of care is a legal and professional obligation to safeguard others while they are in your care, are using your services, or are exposed to your activities (Carroll et al. 2021). This means always acting in their best interests, not acting in a way that causes harm, and acting within your abilities without taking on anything that lies outside of your competence. While rooted in health-care services, the notion of a duty of care offers a resolution to recognizing and responding to the imbalanced power relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous researchers when entering collaborations.

A duty of care entails safeguarding indigenous researchers by responding to their needs, promoting their well-being in its wider sense, and ensuring they are kept safe from abuse. This can be achieved by adopting a holistic approach focused on emotional, physical, financial and social well-being, and therefore demonstrating a meaningful commitment to responding to the diverse needs of indigenous researchers. Emotional well-being could be met by ensuring indigenous researchers are receiving support for their well-being and mental health. Access to well-being and mental health within the Global Majority remain limited and expensive, in addition to the persistent cultural stigmas associated with seeking psychotherapy and mental health support. Similarly, health services in many Global Majority countries suffer from inadequate health insurance, unaffordable and unreliable private health services (cf. Rafeh et al. 2016). This could be mitigated by budgeting for indigenous researchers' health insurance and well-being support in funding applications, or it could be offered through the project's Global North host institutions. For financial well-being, non-indigenous researchers must guarantee indigenous researchers receive a dignified stipend, per diem, and have their service invoices redeemed in timely fashion. In many indigenous cultures, asking for or chasing money owed is culturally inappropriate. Indigenous calendar of festivities and events also need to be taken in consideration when designing projects' timeline and deliverables. Many indigenous researchers might have family-care responsibilities,

which involve them taking long-term leave. Flexibility in working hours should be afforded to indigenous researchers, given differences in work culture and infrastructure. For example, many Global Majority countries lack a digital infrastructure, which means that administration must operate through face-to-face visits to public offices, which are usually busy and understaffed. Long extra hours spent in fulfilling administrative tasks should be factored into indigenous researchers' stipends.

From Radical to Sensitive Transparency

A central value for change within Western academia is radical transparency, through which practitioners reflect on their practices and their institutional history and its current practices. While radical transparency is effective within a Global North setting, with indigenous collaborations, sensitive transparency might be more culturally appropriate and empathetic. Sensitive transparency means being open and honest in a reflective process, while being sensitive to the cultural difference and acknowledging that these differences have an impact on practices and policies. This entails that non-indigenous researchers are self-aware regarding their own culture and positional power, including colonial contexts, that can serve to police or restrict the cultural norms or values of certain groups (Papps et al. 1996). An important example is decision-making within indigenous communities. Many indigenous cultures reach agreements by consensus rather than vote; the idea is to continue discussions until an agreement among all is reached. The right to vote or veto is culturally insensitive. Thus, a sensitive transparency research model will have to acknowledge this cultural difference and assign time and measures that can facilitate culturally sensitive discussions between the members of the indigenous group.

From Academic Peer-review to Community Peer-review

Academic peer-review has been placed under critical lens recently, being labelled as flawed, slow, exploitive, and lacking in transparency (Hazen et al. 2016). Most importantly, it is seen as biased towards indigenous researchers, who struggle to make it through the review process in what are perceived to be internationally acclaimed journals. Yet, attempts to reform the review process need primarily to reflect on the need to devise and formalize community peer-review as an integral part of the review process (Liboiron et al. 2016). Communities affected by research need to be able to determine whether research may cause them harm. Communities have the right to both consent and refusal. Community peer-review could be achieved by having community conversations and sharing drafts in community meetings and analysing feedback for consent

and refusal. Community peer-review is premised on the idea that research can cause harm, and that those best able to judge this are the community members themselves rather than the researchers.

From Research to Service

A core difference between indigenous and non-indigenous researchers is their calling, and not just their positionality. Most indigenous researchers engage in indigenous research for the explicit purpose of bringing benefits to their communities and their people, and they are usually prepared for such challenges. Yet, the challenges that some of us may not be well prepared to face are those associated with what seems to be recognized in the academy as 'acceptable' scholarly research, including definitions and descriptions from within a specific discipline. Community participatory research in some fields, such as Middle Eastern and North African archaeology, is still perceived as an add on process of 'engagement' rather than as acceptable research. Thus, our work will not translate into Research Excellence Frameworks, thus hampering our career progression opportunities. Indigenous intellectual work happens across multiple spaces and in multiple modes beyond North American and European peer-reviewed journals and monographs (Macharia 2015). Indigenous community work is as cutting edge and urgent as any research visible in the metrics and keyword measures of worth. It should count equally as research excellence.

Final Reflections

Think of Others (Darwish and Shahin 2009)

> As you fix your breakfast, think of others. Don't forget to feed the pigeons.
> As you fight in your wars, think of others. Don't forget those who desperately demand peace.
> As you pay your water bill, think of others who drink the clouds' rain.
> As you return home, your home, think of others. Don't forget those who live in tents.
> As you sleep and count planets, think of others. There are people without any shelter to sleep.
> As you express yourself using all metaphorical expressions, think of others who lost their rights to speak.
> As you think of others who are distant, think of yourself and say 'I wish I was a candle to fade away the darkness'.

This is a poem by indigenous Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941–2008). I grew up reading his anticolonial poetry to heal my feelings of inferiority and self-defeat. His powerful plea to think of others is an indigenous reminder of how we should be doing this decolonizing work and for whom. It is a reminder of our positionality and power as researchers of indigenous cultures and what we should be using them for.

Fig. 1 Returning the soul to the Egyptian character. A work in progress… Artwork by Hanaa el Degham 2013. Hanaa el Degham is an Egyptian activist, visual artist, and researcher in the history of art and societies and their relation to the present

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Abstract: This article is a multi-voiced report on an innovative method of teaching an introductory course on Amazonian ethnology at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. This course foregrounds the voices of indigenous colleagues of the postgraduate program of social anthropology (PPGAS) of the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM). Indigenous interlocutors open up (via videoconference) a panorama of contemporary lifeworlds in Amazonia and reflect on it with their different approach of an *Antropologia Indígena*. This seminar amounts to a modest, albeit effective decolonizing method of teaching anthropology.
[teaching anthropology, decoloniality, indigenous anthropology, Amazonia]

'Lost in Translation' – A Joint Seminar on Amazonia between Munich and Manaus

Once during one of our conversations via Skype, which we regularly held as part of an introductory course on Amazonian ethnography at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich with colleagues from the Núcleo de Estudos da Amazônia Indígena (NEAI) of the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM) in Manaus, I [Wolfgang Kapfhammer/WK] was concentrating heavily on the screen of my laptop to catch the words of my interlocutor. In the midst of the conversation, I turned around to translate and explain to others in German, only to catch sight of a group of first-year students closely huddled together, arms around each other, eyes and mouths agape. The students were listening as if 'lost in translation' to the words of an elderly Tuyuka shaman practicing at the *Bahserikowi* or Centro de Medicina Indígena, an indigenous-run center for treating clients using traditional

healing methods in the Upper Rio Negro in Manaus. *Kumu*[1] Madu, then shaman working at the center, spoke Tuyuka, which his Tukano-speaking nephew João Paulo Lima Barretto translated into Portuguese, which I finally translated into German for the students in Munich. However, the students seemed to be 'lost' not in the sense 'at a loss to communicate', but rather 'rapt', fascinated by the opportunity to communicate with a venerable representative of indigenous wisdom of the northwestern Amazon.

By broad agreement, nowadays practicing anthropology can only be carried out when it is based on common interests between the two parties involved: during their fieldwork, anthropologists feel obliged to engage with their interlocutors and their concerns, while anthropological museums invite representatives of source communities to lend legitimacy to the exhibition of material objects hoarded in their archives. As it seems, largely left out of this wave of the decolonizing self-assurance of anthropological institutions is the nonetheless essential field of teaching. None of the current introductory works to anthropology dedicate a single paragraph to teaching, much less to decolonizing methods of doing it.

What follows is a multi-voiced report on an interactive introductory course on Amazonian lifeworlds at the Institut für Ethnologie, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, which allows the inhabitants of this very region have their say. The cooperation partner is the postgraduate program of social anthropology (PPGAS) and the working group, the Núcleo de Estudos da Amazônia Indígena (NEAI) of the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM) in Manaus. This working group takes a decisive step further as their indigenous students and graduates are working on an 'Antropologia Indígena', i.e. an anthropology not *about*, but *by* indigenous persons. The cutting-edge moment of the seminar is not so much the fact that members of marginalized indigenous minorities have their say rather than academic persons with an exclusive epistemic sovereignty, but that our interlocutors have themselves conquered this academic position and by so doing are submitting our discipline to an inspiring change of perspective. Without getting lost in what too often amounts to labyrinthine theory, first-year students are able to practice the demand for a decolonization of anthropology.

What follows is not a deeply analytical study, but a report on what can be done and how participants talk about it.

History of the Seminar

When I [WK] was confronted with a demand for a regional course in the curriculum of the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich, I opted for an introduction into the ethnology of Amazonia

1 A *kumu* is a religious specialist or shaman on the Upper Rio Negro. It can be glossed as 'master of words'.

due to my longstanding anthropological engagement with the region.[2] To make the course more lively, I came up with the actually simple idea of including my contacts from the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM) in Manaus, which had grown during many years of fieldwork among the Sateré-Mawé on the Lower Amazon. Manaus has become the geographical and intellectual springboard to the field in the Terra Indigena Andirá-Marau to the south of the city of Parintins. The intellectual 'scene' in Manaus manifested above all in the working group, Núcleo de Estudos da Amazônia Indígena (NEAI), where I encountered a self-assured, urban and academic indigeneity, represented by indigenous students in their majority from the Upper Rio Negro. In order to discuss the contemporary lifeworlds of the Amazon, the ideas was that we would first and foremost let local people have their say. By using internet technology, we would converse in Portuguese, which would be translated by me into German for the students in Munich.

Methodologically, the proceedings of the seminar are quite simple. In every other session we connect with an interlocutor, usually an indigenous colleague from Manaus (more recently also from the UFOPA in Santarem) or interlocutors of the Sateré-Mawé living in Parintins, which I know from my fieldwork. Also included are non-indigenous teachers and students from the NEAI talking about their research with indigenous groups in the Brazilian Amazon. Mostly we start the interview by asking the partner to tell us about their life trajectory. This initial talk on individual experiences within Amazonian lifeworlds almost always sets the agenda of the talk. Thus, it is not an interview with prepared questions, but a lively talk springing from the reflections of the interlocutor. Every now and then I have to interrupt in order to translate into German for the students. These translations also provide an opportunity to ask for further ethnographic explanations if necessary. The students are asked to produce a short discussion paper after each talk, which shows that the bulk of the message did get across but also to leave room for their own reflections (see below). Parallel to the talks, the seminar conducts a conventional syllabus on Amazonian ethnography. For the first-year students in Munich, this class is an opportunity to bridge, at least virtually, the distance between metropolitan universities in Europe and peripherical areas of research interest in the Global South, which usually characterizes the teaching of anthropology in its initial phase.

> We started this idea of the Interactive Seminars when we met Wolfgang Kapfhammer here in Manaus through our colleague, Professor Luiza Garnelo. Wolfgang was very interested in the things we were starting to do at NEAI, which was welcoming and

2 I do research and have collaborated with the Sateré-Mawé of the Lower Amazon since 1998, where I have done several prolonged periods of fieldwork and visited the region almost yearly since 2009. The point of entry to the region is always the city of Manaus, where I was fortunate to establish long-standing ties of collegiality and friendship with many members of the Postgraduate Program of Social Anthropology (PPGAS) of the Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM).

> brought indigenous students into the Research Center, NEAI, to think with them of strategies to promote their participation in postgraduate studies in anthropology. At that time, Wolfgang had collected a series of articles published by [Estadão] about the indigenous realities in urban contexts, and, based on the interest he brought us, we started talking to the indigenous members of NEAI, who also live in urban context, and little by little the idea of doing seminar activities was born.
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> In the beginning, things were more internal to NEAI. Then Wolfgang started to teach a course in Munich, and we started to think about the possibility of Indigenous People from here [Manaus] talking online with students there [Munich], and that was something that stimulated both groups. It was very interesting because there was a real exchange of feelings and interests between the indigenous students and the students from Munich, so it worked out very well, and over time we improved. Each year, Wolfgang's discipline incorporated in the seminars the participation of indigenous students from NEAI who were carrying out their research. It was an idea that worked very well.
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> In time we reached the format we use today, and this initiative, started back there, had very important consequences beyond the virtual dialogue between indigenous students and the students in Munich. So, to conclude, I think it was one of the most assertive activities that we had at NEAI in terms of the internationalization of the program, involving the indigenous perspectives, giving recognition to our program, which has been highlighted for this visibility of Indigenous Peoples, and that too is somehow situated back there when we started having these conversations with Wolfgang that led to these seminars (Prof. Dr. Carlos Machado Dias, 2022).[3]

For our first seminar in summer 2016, I [WK] was intrigued by a multimedia piece published by the conservative newspaper *Estadão*. I was impressed that the features of this publication took up issues which I knew very well from my own field experience, but which have hardly ever been taken up in recent ethnographic work on Amazônia. The so called *etnologia indígena* had become ever more cutting edge as regards anthropological theory, but it is strangely oblivious of the everyday lived reality of Indigenous Peoples such as urban migration, demographic crises in indigenous areas, the concomitant loss of food sovereignty, pauperization and increasing dependence on welfare transfers, inadequate health services and so on.[4] Unfortunately, the title

3 Citations from indigenous and non-indigenous interlocutors from Manaus were solicited especially for this article. Because they are explicitly personal statements, we opted not to anonymize them.

4 Cf. Graeber's critique of the political implications of the so-called ‚ontological turn' (2015:31n46). See also bibliography for Wolfgang Kapfhammer's works on topics like evangelicalism, dependency on governmental transfer programs, and engagement with Western Fair-Trade markets among the Sateré-Mawé.

of the multimedia piece, '*Favela Amazônia*', which I had thoughtlessly copied for our seminar, did not go down too well with our interlocutors. Luckily, instead of expressing ill feelings, given our pessimistic perspective on Amazonian lifeworlds, right from the start our indigenous interlocutors insisted all the more on their own perspectives and agendas.

'*Nossos Proprios Conceitos*' – The Indigenous Perspective

Although our interlocutors, mostly those from the Upper Rio Negro, were keen to present their own theoretical approach to an *Antropologia Indígena*, the knack of opening up our interviews to reflections on our interlocutors' various life trajectories opened up a space to relate to multiple and diverse aspects of Amazonian lifeworlds.

The choice of our interlocutors from many different social and cultural backgrounds and contexts provided a broad panorama of indigeneity in contemporary Amazônia. The core group of participants all have their cultural backgrounds in the Upper Rio Negro region: *Dr. João Paulo Lima Barretto* (Tukano), Padre *Dr. Justino Sarmento Rezende* (Tuyuka), *Dr. Dagoberto Lima Azevedo* (Tukano), *Silvio Sanches Barreto* (Bará), and *Jaime Diakara*, anthropologist, artist, and shaman, as well as traditional shamans active in the *Centro de Medicina Indígena Bahserikowi* in Manaus as *kumu* Madu (Tuyuka) and *kumu* Ovidio (Tukano), and neo-shaman[5] *Bu'u Kennedy* (Tukano). Younger indigenous students of anthropology were *Walter* and *Roque Waiwai* as guests from the UFOPA in Santarem, the latter doing ethno-musicologist work, *Alexandre Waiwai,* focusing on evangelical missions and the ethnogenesis of his group, *José Mura*, political activist and anthropologist of a group struggling to regain ethnic identity, *Jonilda Houwer Gouveia*, Tariana, doing ethno-entomologist work, *Rosijane Tukano,* concentrating on a female perspective on Tukanoan cosmology, *Regina Vilacio* and her daughter, the highly visible indigenous influencer *Sâmela Sateré,* from the Sateré-Mawé Women's association (AMISM) working out of Manaus and reconnecting with their female comrades in the far away *Terra Indígena Andirá-Marau* on the Lower Amazon, *Mariazinha Baré*, *Josi Tikuna*, *Clarinda Ramos*, working on Sateré-Mawé song traditions and now chef of the indigenous restaurant *Biatüwi* in Manaus, *Nilva Borarí*, another guest from the UFOPA and member of a group of so-called '*índiosemergentes*', striving to reconstruct and affirmate their indigenous identity, and *Elaíze Farias*, Sateré-Mawé and journalist for the distinguished online-magazine *Amazônia Real*. Finally, there are collaborators from the Sateré-Mawé residing in Parintins, such as members of the *Consórcio dos Produtores Sateré-Mawé* (CPSM) associated with the Sateré-Mawé Tribal Council (CGTSM), *Obadias Batista Garcia*, *Sergio Garcia* and

5 This is Bu'u Kennedy's self-declaration, a reference to the personal fusion of traditionally indigenous and non-indigenous elements, mostly from the esoteric scene.

Eliaque Oliveira running an indigenous enterprise which processes and commercializes forest garden products (such as *guaraná*) to European Fair-Trade companies, advocate Dr. *Tito Menezes* and his father *Lucio Menezes*, and *Josias Sateré*, teacher and author of various works on Sateré-Mawé culture.

At least for the core group of our regular contributors from the Upper Rio Negro, the Interactive Seminar served as an outlet to get across the basics of their own project of an *Antropologia Indígena*, an anthropology done *by* Indigenous People, not about them. As the scenarios of Amazonian lifeworlds laid out in the reports of the protagonists themselves show, the decision to enrol at the university was never made without taking into account the experiences the individual has made before in her/his life: in this sense one can speak of a 'return from a homecoming' (*retorno da viagem de volta*), as Prof. Gilton Mendes dos Santos does. This is not an oxymoron, as the students, MAs and PhDs of the NEAI have become disconnected from their cultural homesteads due to neo-colonial circumstances and then returned more often than not by a traumatic reshuffling of their lifeways, before they opted for a transformational intellectual process which again could only function according to their own conditions.

> Our entire effort (at NEAI) is, first, to try to understand what an 'other anthropology' would be, decolonized: that is, what is the contribution of an indigenous perspective to the anthropological discipline, and what is new in the academic production of an indigenous person that is not just a matter of learning the theories and methods of anthropological science? At the same time that this question is raised, we seek to put into practice an exercise we call 'indigenous reflexivity', that is, the attempt to find native categories that better explain the ways of life, discursive and practical, of Amerindians, fleeing to the maximum of the categories already constructed by science in general and by anthropology in particular.
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> This search is far from trivial, as it requires an extraordinary effort on the part of indigenous researchers because it presupposes, first, deconstructing the 'colonizing categories' of science, and then rebuilding in its place new conceptual buildings in a way that is to be understood outside traditional indigenous contexts in the world of science. This movement is a kind of 'return trip', since indigenous students interested in this exercise leave their traditional contexts, come to the Western academic world, return to seek new categories with their native interlocutors and then return again to translate them to the general public, academic or not.
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> It is in this context that the Interactive Seminars are presented as a privileged moment of interlocution, allowing this 'indigenous reflexivity' to promote concerns within the classical European sciences, in a center of academic production far from the indigenous reality (Gilton Mendes 2022; see also Mendes Santos and Machado Dias Jr. 2009).

Dr João Paulo Lima Barretto, a Tukano and a frequent collaborator in our seminar, took pains to expound to us his and his colleagues' concept of an Indigenous anthro-

pology of the Upper Rio Negro based on 'our own concepts' (*nossos proprios conceitos*).[6] This kind of ethnography rests on an arduous process of reflexivity, not in the sense of a (potentially) narcistic self-communion, but by doing fieldwork with one's own relatives.

> It is difficult to take this reflexivity on indigenous anthropology to another part of the world because the researcher from the Alto Rio Negro has a different research model: it is research on his own thinking, his own reflections. For the university of the 'Old World', it must be different to see the Indigenous People speaking about their epistemologies. When I was reflecting about the Interactive Seminars, I remembered the first foreign ethnographers who accompanied the missionaries or a delegation, recording and filming. In the past, when anthropologists and missionaries traveled to distant places, they were already gathering knowledge from our parents and ancestors, but over time this was forgotten, ignored. Historically, indigenous knowledge was not considered science, it was considered popular knowledge or indigenous common sense.
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> So, for the universities of the Old World like Munich, my participation in the seminars is not a retribution, it is not a contribution of scientific production by the university to the world, nor is it an ontological turn. It is, yes, an indigenous anthropological exercise for the epistemological circulation of knowledge on other levels. I, as an indigenous researcher, who sat next to my parents, also made the same journey as the previous researchers, traveling, going through difficulties, without gasoline, without food. It is not a counterpart, it's a willingness to socialize the knowledge of our ancestors, the ancestral knowledge of the unknown world. If humanity had knowledge of this unknown world, it would not be in the way it is now, in this form of fragmented concepts.
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> We are protagonists of our own stories, we are ethnographic authorities, we are taking back our knowledge from oral to written form, going beyond our territories and reaching new epistemological territories, to be understood, recognized and valued through the university. We Indigenous Peoples also have our own knowledge, our own epistemology, research methodology, language, production technique. Taking this knowledge to a university in Europe, showing that we are masters of our knowledge, using our methodology according to our local customs, a transmission of knowledge from father to son and from mother to the formation and transformation of the son. From the son, with all these tangible and intangible assets of his ancestors, emerges a new construction in indigenous science, in north-

6 In the case of the Upper Rio Negro, this indigenous ethnography rests on the conceptual 'tripod' (João Paulo) of north west Amazonian understanding of the foundational effect of mythic narratives (*kihti*), a poetic force of healing based on the former (*bahsese*), and the ritual organization of these primordial powers (*bahsamori*). These anthropologists from the Upper Rio Negro mostly come from dynasties of religious specialists, where esoteric knowledge has been passed on over generations. Sometimes they refer to themselves jokingly as *paperakumuã*, 'paper-shamans' (see bibliography for the recently published works of indigenous NEAI alumni).

> west Amazon, from listening to the speeches of the elders. It is not just a science of common sense, it is a cultural, linguistic richness, a way of thinking cosmophilosophical management.
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> All areas of human sciences think that Indigenous Peoples don't have their science. So, given this historical context, because we are within universities, for me, as a researcher it is an opportunity to take indigenous knowledge from Amazon, Brazil, to another university. Take our knowledge to this new generation that is not aware of the indigenous culture. It is interesting to see how others, from an entirely different culture, listen intently about this complex knowledge. For us indigenous researchers, theory-practice is difficult: the two totally different worlds want to connect and form a single science. In general, science is unique: what is different are ways of conceptualizing cultural elements. When the Old World opens up, through the teacher, he is showing to his students, who are new scientists, that this unknown world of the lowlands also has its science. The proof of this is the native himself speaking of his knowledge. It is no longer the foreign researcher, it is no longer the traveler, it is the indigenous speaking about its own history with its own oral language to writing (we are using some words in the eastern Tukano language, one of the languages accepted as official by the municipality of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, in Amazonas). Our difficulty in understanding Portuguese and foreign languages are conflicts, but also convergences of a science that we are building together (Silvio Sanches Barreto, Bará, 2022).

Justino Sarmento Rezende, Tuyuka, catholic priest and with a PhD in anthropology (in his own words: 'I try to be a good Padre and a good Tuyuka') sees the Interactive Seminar with Munich as an opportunity to 'globalize' the epistemologies they are working on.

> When I arrived at the Post-Graduate Program in Social Anthropology at UFAM, I participated in the Nucleus of Indigenous Amazon Studies, NEAI, and there was this project of classes with students from Germany. I saw the interest from the German students, intermediated by Professor Wolfgang Kapfhammer, as something very good. The interest in Amazonian issues, in indigenous issues, caught my attention. As a member of NEAI, I participated following what the [indigenous] students before me were doing, and then I also had a conversation with the [Munich] students. I was [in the seminar] with Bu'u Kennedy, who works with shamanism.
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> Each [Indigenous] People has its own knowledge, its mythological narratives, its narratives about festivals, ceremonies, rites, this represents many things, they are cultural variables, so, as we were from different ethnic groups, each of us also tried to share with students from Germany what we knew, what we were working on, what our parents, grandparents said. That was important because, when there is a group that wants to know more, it encourages us, it motivates us to organize our knowledge, to seek more, to expand our knowledge, that is why the exchange we

had was very valuable. And due to the NEAI partnership with Germany, the professors Carlos, Gilton, were encouraging us to participate in these moments, which was also important in the sense of making knowledge visible, in the perspective of the internationalization of indigenous knowledge, that is, that our knowledge was known outside Manaus, outside Brazil, in Europe, in this case Germany, so we saw that this partnership was important because of that, important to, let's say, 'globalize' our knowledge.

The students in Germany, with Professor Kapfhammer, serve as bridges for our knowledge to reach further away from us, to go beyond regional borders, national borders. Of course, I also thought that students came to Brazil to know our realities, from what place we are talking about, so it would be very important for us to pass on our knowledge to them not only unilaterally, but for them to also bring their knowledge to our research center, to anthropology students in the Amazon. Those are my observations (Justino Sarmento Rezende, Tuyuka, 2022).

In a similar vein, Dagoberto Lima Azevedo, a Tukano, looks at the seminar as an opportunity to gain German students as 'multipliers' of indigenous knowledge.

This Interactive Seminar for me is a welcome by Professor Wolfgang's students, they are attentive students, who want to hear and listen to the experiences of the indigenous anthropologists, our research, our trajectory. It is a very good welcome, capable of approaching the knowledge of the Indigenous Peoples of the Upper Rio Negro, specifically of the Tukano people, in my case. I find it very important for them to know, hear and listen to our own language, our concepts, how we understand and explain our knowledge, which we call 'indigenous theories'. I felt a great openness from them to welcome our knowledge, with Professor Wolfgang translating from Portuguese into German.

After hearing and listening to our research experiences, Professor Wolfgang's students will in the future be multipliers of our indigenous theories. Each one of us who participates in the Interactive Seminars, as indigenous anthropologists, presents our experiences to them. I believe this helps them to listen to the sons of the land, the Indigenous Peoples ourselves speaking to the German students. Before, it was the non-indigenous who carried our voices, the knowledge of the peoples from our region. They would spend a few months or years doing research here, and then they would take everything they saw and were able to understand to Europe, where they would present it. In a certain way, they were spokespersons of our knowledge.

Wolfgang opens this door to us, this opportunity that the sons of this region ourselves take the knowledge to show that we Indigenous Peoples ourselves have our indigenous theory, our epistemology, our own science, with its own specificity. This provides mutual understanding and the opportunity for us indigenous anthropologists to take our research to other spaces. Our indigenous theory is gradually being known and welcomed in the spaces of other universities.

> I think the German students had an opportunity to listen to our experience, our thinking, they made a 'trip' to us, listening to our experiences. (Dagoberto Lima Azevedo, 2022).

Jaime Diakara, Desana, artist, anthropologist, author and shaman, who had the opportunity to appear in person in the 2022 edition of the Interactive Seminar, stresses the 'travelling' dynamics of epistemologies (and bodies), referring to the Amazonian buzzword of '*atravessar*', to ferry across a river, in German: '*übersetzen*', which also means to 'translate':

> I'm Jaime Diakara, from the Desana ethnic group, research member of NEAI-UFAM. When NEAI started this partnership with the University of Munich, I participated in the Interactive Seminars before and after the presentation of my Master's degree work. It was very important for me to share with the students and the professor. In this trajectory of exchanging experiences focused on our concepts, our anthropological reading, based on our theory of knowledge, the epistemology of indigenous knowledge, there was a long journey of taking information to the other side of the world, through the [internet], discussing, bringing our languages, our expression, my wild dialogue (*diálogo selvagem*) to the students. I presented my work on *ayahuasca*, a way of expressing myself through drawings. I realized that the students were very interested in seeing my work through drawing, how I was bringing a new anthropology into the anthropological field, through drawings, through colors, graphics, through rites, through expressions, and how to activate all this. In this respect it was very important for them to hear how the indigenous are building an anthropology in contemporary times, this new anthropological perspective, and that was what I saw from their view, the journey of the students of the University of Munich. …
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> After traveling on the [internet] without being present [physically], I was invited by the professor to travel to Munich and personally get to know this anthropological body-to-body [situation]. I took a trip crossing from Manaus to Munich, to Germany. This experience was also very important for me. Getting to know personally, experiencing another culture and presenting my work in the forum:[7] how do Indigenous People see the environment, how do Indigenous People express an anthropology, how do Indigenous People think of this world not only as a theory, but also experience it in practice?
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> After the forum, I made a presentation [in the seminar] about how we are developing our perspectives at the university [in Manaus] within the UFAM community. After that, we presented a small art and drawing workshop, on body drawing, the meaning of drawing, the practice of drawing art, the use of graphics at the time of rituals, differentiating them from basketry graphics, pottery, musical instruments

7 An event organized by the International Office of the LMU.

and malocas, what is the meaning that each graphic brings to society, which brings these potentialities of identification of each people, as of the Desana people. For me it was very valuable to share with the Munich undergraduate anthropology students within these cultural exchange seminars.

It was in this context of exchanging with the teachers, the dialogue with them, that anthropology approached the indigenous culture. Anthropology wanted to reveal indigenous knowledge through research, so that it understands indigenous culture, but it did not fully understand indigenous anthropology in the way of thinking the philosophy of the Indigenous People, in the way of managing the world, in the way of managing things, of dealing with nature and the phenomenon of nature. My participation in this exchange was very important, a more anthropological, more physical journey, this trip I took. This trip was already during my PhD studies. I am very grateful for the partnership that NEAI formed with the professor and the University of Munich, where we … are taking our anthropological canoe across the sea to Germany (Jaime Diakara, 2022).

Last but not least, two short comments by two of the younger students of the NEAI, the first one by Rosijane Fernandes Moura, a Tukano, whose concern is to add the female perspective to Upper Rio Negro cosmology.

Together with the growth of Indigenous Peoples' participation in conferences, assemblies and seminars, indigenous women are gaining more and more space. In the academic field, this participation is still timid, though despite the small number of women, their works are gradually gaining ground among the works developed by indigenous men. In that sense, the Manaus/Munich Interactive Seminars, in which I had the pleasure to participate, contributes to opening the space to the reflexions of indigenous women.

In addition to enabling the knowledge exchange, the Interactive Seminars were an opportunity to affirm the female presence to the Coordinators, due to the fact that participating in the event was only possible because of my position within the Postgraduate Program, PPGAS/UFAM, as deputy representative of the Indigenous Collegiate, as well as one of, if not the only indigenous woman within the Núcleo de Estudos da Amazônia Indígena in the year 2021/2022. Our participation was an opportunity for indigenous researchers, especially indigenous women, to bring our traditional knowledge, transmitted from generation to generation with our unique perspectives and our experiences inside and outside the community, reinforcing the wide range of knowledge that women possess, and making them authors of their speeches.

However, I should point out that the short time of participation and the need for translation (from Portuguese to German) made it impossible to have a complete interaction between the parties, which is a detail that can be solved and that does not diminish the importance of these seminars that are a great instrument for sharing knowledge (*grande instrumento de partilha*) (Rosijane Fernandes Moura, 2022).

It may be a truism, but Amazonian lifeworlds are of course not exclusively indigenous, nor are the members of the NEAI, and, maybe not even the new *Antropologia Indígena*. So we asked Taynara Sanches da Silva to summarize this particular Amazonian perspective on the Interactive Seminar:[8]

> The Manaus–Munich 2022 seminar promoted a direct connection between researchers and students from different continents. Through virtual and face-to-face dialogue about the different forms of world conceptions, there was an exchange of knowledge between the ontologies of the Amerindian world of the northwest Amazon and the non-indigenous world of young Europeans.
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> The event promoted the possibility of meeting and exchanging experiences between the academic community of different universities, from different realities. Through indigenous knowledge that understands the universe in its integral form as a complex network of relationships that integrate all beings, whether natural or supernatural, the dialogues of indigenous researchers with younger people contributed to the construction of young thinkers on the European continent, giving them a perspective of how multiple the world is and its lived realities in the Amazon.
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> The knowledge propagated by indigenous researchers in the seminar sessions reaffirms their ethnic identities, language, customs, culture and ancestral knowledge, using access to information on the technical and academic knowledge of non-indigenous society, and planting a seed of knowledge for the construction of a new vision of the world by younger people (Taynara Sanchez da Silva, 2022).

The Perspective of the German Students

While the Brazilian counterparts of our Interactive Seminar were actively standing up for their own agenda for an *Antropologia Indígena*[9] and what it meant to get there, the German students in Munich, most of them only in their second semester, were largely unprepared for the Amazonian realities of life. This was not merely because of an informational gap, but due to the structural problem of teaching anthropology in Western Europe, the geographical, social, economic and political distance from these

8 Besides the fact that many members of the NEAI provided as welcome technical and organizational backup, the seminar was also an opportunity for non-indigenous members to present their research. To name but a few: Guilherme Soares on multiethnic quarters in Manaus, Mario Rique Fernandes on the music of the Apurinã, and Luiz Davi Vieira Gonçalves' immersive work on Yanomami shamanism.

9 As Prof. Gilton Mendes (cited above) has put it, the seminar presented 'a privileged moment of interlocution, allowing this 'indigenous reflexivity' to promote concerns within the classical European sciences, *in a center of academic production far from the indigenous reality*' (Gilton Mendes 2022, my emphasis).

realities of life with which anthropology usually deals. The Interactive Seminar not only transported ethnographic facts and data on Amazonian living realities, but provided the opportunity for an 'encounter' for the students, moments more powerful than the mere transmission of knowledge that set in motion the affects of impugning one's own cultural embeddings.

What follows is a string of statements by the Munich students which show the transition from being initially startled by 'other' ways of thinking and talking to first attempts to integrate this differentiality into one's own realities of thinking and living.[10]

> For me, the conversation with Dagoberto and João Paulo was my first anthropological contact, a first tiny little ethnographic research. I found the talk and the narratives very interesting, and I think this contact with the Tukano has been an excellent idea (Minna W., 2017).
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> Everything we have discussed with João Paulo … so far, was highly interesting, but admittedly it was not always easy to retrace it with our Western notion/thinking because it is a question of completely different worldviews and perspectives – more precisely, Amazonian lifeworlds (Lisa H., 2018).
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> Many thanks to *kumu* Madu, who let us participate in a complex cosmology with its notion of the *Wai-mahsã*. *Kumu* Madu will be remembered as a fascinating and impressive personality, though very alien to me (Eva N., 2017).
>
> Personally, I think it is important to see the contact between systems of knowledge as complementary and not mutually exclusive. To make it comparable makes this contact often easier and facilitates a logical approach. This could counter the image or feeling of radical absurdity that one possibly initially feels. The cosmologies in question may be basically different, but the mere fact that they are in themselves logical makes them relevant to me. Because why should something different, which makes sense in itself, be wrong in the first place, only because it contradicts one's own notions of this world? You have to abstain from assessing these systems and treat them as equivalent in order to make the insight into another system possible at all. I think you can understand other systems of knowledge, but maybe you will never really 'believe' in them or be convinced by them, because the logic of our lifeworld radically contradicts the other one. Everybody grows up in her/his own lifeworld and can only acquire knowledge within that one. May be … indigenous students prove that you can live and think within both systems of knowledge after all without feeling a permanent conflict? (Anna D., 2019, after a talk with *kumu* Ovidio).
>
> I find the Tukano worldview very interesting. … *Kumu* Ovidio explained that everything is out of balance for quite some time. People take without giving, and

10 We opted for the anonymization of students' statements, because since 2016, the year of the first Interactive Seminar, many may have already left the university. The statements are excerpts from the papers written by the students, which mostly always included (self-)reflections.

instead of interfering [only slightly] with the world of the spirits, it is largely destroyed. He said that people need not be surprised that more and more people get sick … the *Wai-mahsã*[11] are so mad there is hardly any escape. The Tukano notion of a unity of body and soul is a good impulse to see ourselves a little bit more as an unity because bodily symptoms of illnesses can have psychic causes. Especially one point has made me think: for me it was clear that there is something like karma, but I never could get used to the idea of being punished for your bad doings. But the belief of the Tukano ('if I do something bad, something bad can also happen to somebody else, and if somebody else does something bad, something negative can happen to me') in my opinion is something that can boost the whole community, because everybody strives to keep a balance and not be the one person guilty for the bad luck of others (Miriam W., 2019).

It was an important step by Clarinda to give up this practice[12] and break with the gender stereotypes of her culture by studying anthropology and research the Sateré-Mawé from her own perspective. I hope in this way it may be easier to give an insight into the alternative lifeways of a foreign culture. Clarinda Ramos can be a role model for many. It is time that we learn from indigenous cultures how to live sustainably and to give them back what has been taken away from them (Miriam W., 2019).

… In the subsequent discussion we debated whether these tendencies[13] eventually destroy indigenous culture or not, if these tendencies were to be valorized positively or negatively or how their negative consequences could possibly be avoided. I agree with my colleagues' notion of culture as a process rather than a static construct. I think it is impossible to preserve a culture within a condition that probably hasn't existed in the first place. Indigenous groups always have changed and influenced each other and have been influenced from outside by colonization, evangelical priests, African slaves and capitalist lifeways, and they still are. The longing for consumer goods that make life easier is understandable, and can be observed the world over, not only in Amazonia. Yet I think the tendencies among the Indigenous Peoples of Amazonia towards a capitalist lifestyle are rapid and drastic, whereas precious knowledge about nature and with it its valorization in the cities may be lost in the future. At this point, to work on a system which would enable Indigenous People to acquire the desired goods, education etc. without having to leave their home and live in the cities under precarious conditions should be the core of development work. This presupposes the social and political equality of

11 'Spirits', but actually human beings existing under differential conditions, as our interlocutors from the Upper Rio Negro explained.

12 To make a living from manufacturing handicraft.

13 The talk was about the practice of the CMI – *Bahserikowi* to offer traditional indigenous healing methods in a non-indigenous urban context, as well as increasing the urban migration of Indigenous People in general.

treatment of Indigenous Peoples that is possibly difficult given the current political situation in Brazil (Linda N., 2018).

In this seminar, we had the opportunity to get in touch with many aspects of modern indigenous live in the Amazon region. A broad focus ranging from the history of several ethnic groups since the first contact with European culture, difficulties in modern indigenous life, the different mythologies of certain ethnic groups, as well as different rituals and everyday lives gave us a view of how complex and very interesting these regions of the world are and have been. I personally was really fascinated with the relationship between man and nature and how it is mythologically regulated to maintain sustainable access to our environment. Concepts like ‚Buen Vivir' should have a great impact on global discussions concerning the future of our planet and human society (Elias F., 2017).

Furthermore, the interactivity with indigenous stakeholders within a teaching context was clearly identified as a decolonizing step by the students. Interestingly it was seen not so much as an educational method, but as an encounter that triggered a 'decolonizating' overhaul of one's own mindset.

This attitude[14] represents a kind of decolonizing of one's own thinking … João Paulo's aim is to integrate indigenous thinking and logic into the science of anthropology. He reclaims a differential thinking also with a view to the future: that is, breaking out of one's own thinking and making us aware of the fact that our thinking is just one possibility among many equivalent others, would count as a success. General openness must be maintained to meet this claim and open up possibilities for it. In my opinion, this consciousness should be conveyed more (e.g., in schools), in order to be able to scrutinize one's own thinking and be reflective. … Yet, to perceive this arbitrariness and diversity can lead to new insights and exchanges of knowledge, experiences with other systems of knowledge and therefore should be encouraged. I think that with his work João Paulo creates awareness for thinking in different categories and sensitizing us to what from our perspective are 'alien' systems of knowledge. He creates a new perspective on our own system of knowledge (Anna D., 2019).

The two systems of knowledge are therefore not compatible because the indigenous schema of classification differs fundamentally from the Western system. Especially because of socially pre-structured categorizations, anthropologist have a hard time analyzing a culture without thinking within their own logics and structures. The thinking of field researchers has to be decolonized in order to find access to new patterns of thinking and categorizing so that anthropologists finally succeed in representing the researched according to their own categorizations. The anthropologist João Paulo considers this change to be an ontological turn: 'wrong'

14 To consider differential epistemologies as equal in principle.

> statements by [non-indigenous] researchers should be set right. … In order to raise tolerance of indigenous groups, indigenous thinking and logic must be integrated into anthropology. Western thinking is too entrenched, which is why it is necessary to break up one's own classifications. It is probably not possible to abstain totally from one's own patterns of thinking, but this should be the concern of anthropologists researching other cultures as far as possible. The highest priority should be to research at eye level, that is, the systems of reference should not be hierarchized only because they seem to be more 'logical' to us (Lena R., 2019).
>
> When João Paulo now writes a book about indigenous knowledge, it could be seen an appropriation of a Western concept, but also as a powerful way of representation and participation. Indigenous representatives must conquer epistemological power back from anthropologists. It is not our job to interpret others, but to learn to understand them. That should not involve elevating one's own over another system (Sebastian R. Ch., 2019).
>
> João Paul asks for greater openness towards indigenous concepts. For Barreto the opening to alternative understandings and experiences of the world is at the same time a liberation from intellectual restraints within science, which creates possibilities for an alternative future, alternative paths. To overcome Western path dependencies seems to me highly relevant in the face of allegedly intractable global heating and the often ineffective top-down approaches in order to cope with the climate crisis. We have the duty to find conditions for an opening up of science and should always reflect on which of our preconceived notions conflicts with this opening. Anthropology should shift its focus on knowledge *about* others towards a reflection on the conditions and the method of a transcultural open exchange. Instead of isolated and one-sided translations, anthropology should become a science of mediation or … of interpreting (Sebastian R. Ch., 2019).

Conclusion

When talking about Indigenous People in the metropolis, the predominant narrative tends to reify indigeneity as a success story of global players raising their voices the world over. Once fragmented indigenous societies coalesce into 'singularities acting together', as Hardt and Negri define their notion of 'multitude', often heralded by Western counter-culture as if they were the ferment for an alternative design to the hegemony of the capitalist mode of living. However, this perception once again opens the door to the political, ecological and spiritual projections of our own qualms, fears and utopias in the face of the planetary crisis.

When I [WK] inadvertently chose the moniker '*Favela Amazônia?*' (after all, with a question mark) as a title for our first Interactive Seminar in 2016, our indigenous interlocutors reacted by showing me my error. It was not the moral precept of a 'de-

victimization' of indigenous societies (like the 'strategic essentialism' of non-indigenous stakeholders with their own political agenda) that our indigenous interlocutors insisted on, but the fact that they have found new resilience in the midst of often grueling neo-colonial conditions, not the least by developing their very own version of a reflective anthropology. Perhaps the most important lesson of the seminar is that indigenous creativity is always preceded by the thorny path of having to cope with the adverse conditions of neo-colonial structures.

The Interactive Seminar is not so much dialogical but rather functions through assertive and affirmative conversations, albeit from a perspective which turns around the hitherto 'irreversible' vector of the anthropological acquisition of knowledge: in the Global South the person invested with the position of the 'anthropologist' has nowadays changed and has become more diverse.

For our indigenous interlocutors, the Interactive Seminar is not only a platform for negotiating their version of an '*Antropologia Indígena*', but is part of a person's struggle to reconstruct individual cultural embeddings. It is a moment to break through the wall of silence on the metropolitan 'contact zone', a silence which still hovers over the peripheral contact zone (Kapfhammer 2015). Fortunately, indigenous talk has never died down to complete silence, but survived even under most adverse conditions. Rosijane Tukano, who herself had literally lost her voice as a schoolgirl when her Desana was ridiculed and she still did not master Portuguese, told us how her mother practiced her mother tongue in the Salesian mission's boarding school under threat of punishment:

Sitting at the table, I listened to my mother, Elza Maria Desana, as she told me how it was as an inmate in the Salesian mission, and the hard routine the children and young people were subjected to. She not only brought to mind the daily physical hardships, but also that it meant that their own language was forbidden, how they whispered like the wind when they conversed, and soon broke out into hilarious laughter, which had to be immediately subdued again, so they wouldn't be punished, beaten, and isolated (Fernandes Moura 2023).

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Back to the Future of Humboldtian Museums[1]

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On September 2, 2018, the importance of collections originating from present-day Brazil and currently housed in European museums dramatically increased when the Brazilian National Museum in Rio de Janeiro went up in flames. Most of the twenty million items were destroyed. Many, stemming from South American Indigenous societies, which had accumulated in the museum since its founding in 1818, were lost forever. The information that anthropologists (ethnologists) and other scholars had collected about and with these groups were, in many cases, unique records of societies that have been subjected for centuries, and in some cases until today, to unspeakable violence and devastation.

The destruction of the world's largest archive of Brazil's Indigenous cultures and histories was not only a devastating blow to the Indigenous groups who had been using these materials to obtain information about their ancestors and revitalize their cultures: it was also a tremendous loss for the world and what is often called 'world cultural heritage.' As a result of this calamity, it has not only become more difficult to preserve and understand these groups' histories and cultural practices, but a critical means of reconstructing the history of many Brazilian and global interconnections was also lost.

What should be done with the collections that remain in Europe? In Germany, recent debates about ethnographic museums have led to fundamental shifts in public attention to these institutions. Ever-more heated discussions about German colonial history, the provenance of ethnographic collections and the possible restitution of material things and human remains have brought these long-neglected issues to the fore. At the same time, however, this important and productive debate about the power dynamics within museums has also led to a polarization in which it has been easy to lose sight of the original purpose of ethnographic collections and museums, what has

1 This article is an extended version in English of an editorial by the authors with the title 'Zurückgeben ist nicht die einzige Option' appearing in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* on January 9, 2022: https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/ethnologie-museen-restitution-ethnologische-museen-1.5503600?reduced=true

already been achieved and institutionalized in these museums outside of Europe, and the importance the collections housed in Europe might hold for the future.

It is worth reflecting on the history of these museums' origins while moving into the future. It is worth remembering, for example, that the ethnologists who followed in Alexander von Humboldt's footsteps regarded museums as workshops: places where they could engage in a vast, comparative analysis of the material culture produced by people from all over the world. They believed that these material products, from the most magnificent monuments to everyday items, provided information about their makers' and users' relationships to their environments, as well as about their world views. They regarded these material things as sources, not unlike books, and their aim was to harness them for the production of knowledge about human history. In that sense, their museums were never intended to be places where things only served as illustrations for narratives and debates. Yet most became just that.

It does not have to be that way. The collections in these museums can be excavated much like archaeological sites, and the individual items within them can reveal a multitude of insights into human cultures and histories, especially when they are juxtaposed with others in ways that allow them to affect each other as well as viewers, ranging from scholars to laypeople. Moreover, as many anthropologists and cultural activists have been arguing for years, the interactions of material entities with people from their places of origin – with the descendants of the people who produced them – are often different from their interactions with Germans or other Europeans. Such encounters can generate multiple forms of knowledge, a process by which the understanding of human history becomes more complex and complete. This is no longer a question for debate. It is simply a basis for moving forward.

A great deal of success has already been achieved in bringing Indigenous groups into dialogue with historic collections inside and outside Europe. That move, in fact, has already become integral to the very character of institutions such as the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) in Wellington and the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. At the MOA, for instance, 'Multiversity Galleries' were developed together with representatives of the societies of origin, creating a symbiosis of storage and display. This action, however, was not simply a curatorial re-configuration or an end in itself. Rather, the aim has been to provide access to the multiple realities and forms of knowledge embedded in the objects. In keeping with this ethos, the Reciprocal Research Network, an online platform for reciprocal research, digitally transcends the museum's walls, decentering and distributing the power to engage with its collections.

At Te Papa, Māori knowledge has become an independent curatorial area – alongside art, history, natural history and Pacific cultures – which led to the formation of a specific Māori museology and co-leadership through a kaihautū (English translation). Here, Māori material cultural heritage is not understood as a collection of objects: rather, the objects are recognized as living beings. The goal of the institution is thus to reconnect people with their tribal treasures and to support the recovery of Māori

knowledge, language and customs. In this setting, an object is not just an object, a bone is not just a bone, a mountain is not just a mountain. As living entities, they house forms of knowing and being that require curatorial care. This potential also exists for the millions of items stored in European museums.

Moreover, these museological reconfigurations have also shown that the journeys of things do not end with their inclusion in one or another collection—a point lost in our current debates. Even in a European museum, however, these things continue to impact people; even in Europe, they can be used in new ways through museological innovations, from collaborative exhibition concepts, to digital access to collections, to the revitalization of cultural practices. Even from Europe, these things can play active roles in cultural lives in other places while they continue to have an impact on the production and circulation of knowledge in local and global contexts. Indeed, even long-hidden things, those packed away in boxes and storages for decades or more, can be 'resurrected' and reactivated. Yet none of this can happen unless their future potential is included in our ongoing debates about their origins. Consequently, instead of only asking where those things in German ethnographic museums came from, how they got to Germany and what they have been doing there, one also needs to ask where their journeys may lead them, and what they can achieve in Europe and elsewhere.

In addition, while engaging with these material realities, one should not only think of their physical presence, but also of the knowledge that they contain, which has been waiting for generations to be uncovered and disseminated. For if museum collections are comparable to library collections, they are also much more. A material presence – or what we often simply call an 'object,' an 'artifact,' or a 'work of art' – is not a book. Despite many postmodern arguments to the contrary, they are not just other kinds of texts that can be read. Rather, they may also enable a different kind of profound investigation and experience. Much more than written texts, for example, material things cause us to ask, 'What is this?' They arouse viewers' immediate curiosity, activating empathy and a willingness to act. Even the smallest item offers access to different worlds, to relationships between people and their environment. Consequently, as nineteenth-century German ethnologists already understood as they began filling the world's largest collecting museums, these material records are unique sources of knowledge that can be used while facing the enormous challenges of the present and future.

So, what should be done? First and foremost, one must enable the objects that are kept in European collections to be more than European intellectual frameworks generally allow. That means leaving behind limited conceptualizations, in which they merely serve to illustrate museum narratives or punctuate political or scientific debates. It also means rethinking the spatiality in museums: as meeting spaces in which people can engage in dialogue with, and be puzzled over, material expressions; as spaces for juxtapositions, rooms for discovery, and settings that encourage scholars and laypeople alike to think forwards, not just backwards, with and about these material entities. Juxtapositions transcending disciplinary, regional and taxonomic frameworks encourage us to ask new questions.

Museums, in other words, should be workshops for the production of knowledge and places where things, which have never been merely 'ethnographic objects', can be encountered and questioned in order to reveal their comprehensive qualities – as living beings, as testimonies of creative expression, and as components of material archives. There is no question that German ethnographic museums deserve recognition for the preservation of their extensive collections. Yet they can do much more. Now is the moment to join those who are putting into practice what others have been arguing about, often in the German sense of '*streiten*' rather than '*argumentieren*'. Now is the time to invest in a collaborative and outward-looking production and dissemination of 'world knowledge' that has been hidden in backrooms and storages. The original idea that drove the creation of German ethnographic museums as well as recent museological reinventions – from Aotearoa New Zealand to Canada – are pointing the way back to the future of Humboldtian museums.[2]

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2 Being written in the *shortcut* format, this article cannot exhaustively review the relevant literature. Instead, our goal was to allude to two key limitations in the 'German debate': an insufficient awareness of the history of German ethnographic museums, and an equally insufficient engagement with museological reinventions beyond Germany, as through Indigenous museologies. The reader is invited to engage with our work on both topics and, through this, the relevant literature: https://uncpress.org/book/9780807854303/objects-of-culture/ and https://www.chbeck.de/penny-glenn-humboldts-schatten/product/27784851 as well as https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/title/refocusing-ethnographic-museums-through-oceanic-lenses/ and https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526147974/

Elke Mader Obituary (1954–2021)

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After Elke Mader was appointed to the Chair of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna in 2006, she declared that she had not ultimately expected to obtain a permanent position in academia. Two decades of precarious work and temporary jobs left her unsure about her future as an anthropologist. Thirteen years later and six months before her planned retirement, Elke was diagnosed with cancer. After two years fighting the illness, she passed away on 8 August 2021 at the age of 67. This obituary touches on a selection of Elke's research, teaching and academic achievements. It does not pretend to be exhaustive in any way but rather aims to showcase aspects and pieces of Elke's academic interests that the authors shared with her at particular moments in time.

Elke was closely associated with the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Vienna since her undergraduate studies in sociocultural anthropology (*Völkerkunde*). In 1986, she completed her doctorate with a thesis on subsistence and the organization of work among the Achuar of the Peruvian Amazon. With a study on personhood, vision and power among the Shuar and Achuar in Ecuador and Peru, Elke became one of the first women to defend a post-doctoral thesis (*Habilitation*) at the Department in 1997. Both theses resulted from intensive fieldwork. She spent a total of 38 months in Peru, most of the time together with the late Richard Gippelhauser, and she conducted another 18 months of research in Ecuador.

From 1986 to 2004, Elke was an adjunct lecturer with temporary contracts at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology in Vienna, and a lecturer and visiting professor at other institutions, such as the Austrian Latin America Institute and the

Gender College of the University of Vienna. After a two-year substitute professorship, in 2006 she was appointed to be the first female full professor at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Vienna. Elke also held several administrative positions in the University: vice dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences (2008–2012), deputy director of the Study Programme for Social and Cultural Anthropology (2012–2014), director of the Interdisciplinary Programme for Higher Latin American Studies (2013–2017), and head (2014–2016) and deputy head (2016–2018) of the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology.

Besides her teaching and administrative duties, Elke developed her research and publication record. Her fields of interest included Amazonian anthropology, the anthropological study of myth, ritual and religion, the anthropology of tourism, globalization and media as well as visual anthropology. Later in her career, she became particularly interested in globalization processes in relation to Indian cinema and film, as well as in ritual dynamics in rural Austria. Elke also pioneered the development and implementation of e-learning and blended or hybrid learning and teaching in sociocultural anthropology and the social sciences in general. Besides running her own projects, she supervised and co-supervised more than 300 academic theses, which addressed a diversity of research topics.

In her own research among Indigenous communities in the Amazon rainforests of Peru and Ecuador, she became increasingly interested in questions about personhood, cosmologies, ontologies, world views, globalization, mythologies and rituals. The phrase 'once upon a time' was central to Elke's theoretical and empirical work on myth and ritual (Mader 2008). She understood any type of narrative performance – oral traditions, legends, fairy tales and storytelling in general – as a means of making sense of the world and its polyphonic discourses. Elke was particularly interested in the relationships between myth and ritual, narration and action. Looking at this dynamic relationship also means investigating how knowledge is being transmitted and transferred, and how this constitutes a space of reflection, evaluation and critique (Mader 2018).

Elke's first major contribution to the anthropology of myth was her work on personhood and vision-quest among the Shuar and Achuar in Ecuador and Peru (Mader 1999). She developed a theoretical and methodological approach to the very notion of the 'person' by exploring how identity, self-awareness and social roles and behaviour are tightly interconnected with a person's vision-quest. This interconnectedness eventually results in the transfer of myth to social reality. Through her work with Indigenous People from the Amazonian region, Elke became increasingly interested in the legacy and consequences of colonialism in Latin America, such as political and economic instability, social inequality, classism, discrimination and racism. Social inequalities, and in particular the discrimination against Indigenous People, led her to learn more about the Indigenous world, culture, language and ontology.

Elke aimed at also utilising her research to contribute to a more equal, just and intercultural society. For this reason, for instance, she decided to publish her post-doctoral

thesis in Spanish (Mader 1999). Even today, this book is widely used among students and teachers in Ecuador and beyond. Elke's research and academic practices contributed to what has been termed 'knowledge dialogue' in Ecuador. This dialogue is a result of Indigenous activism and projects of intercultural education and aims to contribute to the formation of a more equal and just society by reducing discriminatory practices. In particular, higher education has been called upon to promote the sharing of knowledge, to strengthen, advance and motivate the dialogue between scientific and traditional knowledge systems, to contribute to the production of diverse knowledge that emerges in the Global South and to train professionals accordingly.

By building further on her long-term ethnographic research in Latin America, Elke also provided new perspectives on analyzing ritualized practices and mythical language. In doing so, she was eager to transfer her insights to other thematic and regional fields (Mader 2008). Elke published widely on shamanism and the issue of power in different contexts (e.g. Mader 2007, 2018; Rubenstein and Mader 2006). She wrote about the magical discourse of love and questions of sex and gender (Mader 2004). Furthermore, she developed a passion for cinema and explored myth and ritual in this context, taking particular pleasure in exploring the universal trickster in many different forms and appearances (Davis-Sulikowski and Mader 2007). Bollywood and Hindi film became another major interest of hers. Elke explored this media phenomenon and its connection to other digitally mediated social spaces and environments, such as online communities, by focusing in particular on one of the major stars of this global mythscape: the actor, director and producer Shah Rukh Khan (Dudrah et al. 2015; Mader 2011).

This research led Elke to understand the internet as a proper anthropological fieldsite that needs to be explored in depth. What is it that people create when they communicate and interact online, in internet forums, via mobile apps and on social media platforms? Questioning the conceptualization of 'digital togetherness' has been at the very centre of the interdisciplinary project of internet studies, as well as of anthropology's growing interest in 'the digital'. While doing research on Bollywood fans and their various digital practices, Elke did not shy away from deploying seemingly far-fetched concepts to describe and analyse different forms of digital sociality. In doing so, she fell back on Turner's concepts of 'communitas' and 'liminality' and on Overing's conceptualization of 'conviviality' (Mader 2011).

Conviviality accentuates the affective side of sociality and the virtues of sharing and generosity, as opposed to the structural functioning of society. It thus allows us to contribute to the understanding of distinct ways of living, experiencing and feeling sociality, including in a digital context. Elke demonstrated that digital fan practices, such as the creation and circulation of Bollywood fan art, co-constitute a space for experiencing various dimensions of conviviality (Mader 2015). By building on her extensive knowledge of anthropological theories and social life in Amazonia, and by connecting that with her interest in digital media and technologies, she contributed to the emerging fields of the anthropological study of fans and digital anthropology alike (Mader 2019).

Despite spending most of her academic career in precarious positions, and despite a less than ideal student-teacher ratio at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology in the University of Vienna, Elke was always keen to teach, supervise and support students and junior colleagues alike. Building on this passion for teaching and sharing knowledge, and her genuine interest in digital media, new technologies and didactic developments, she initiated and led various teaching and learning projects. Elke formed a team of anthropologists with a common interest in technology and teaching to pioneer in the creation and implementation of technology-enhanced learning and teaching in sociocultural anthropology and in the social sciences in general.

From 2001 to 2004, Elke led an interdisciplinary project at the Austrian Latin America Institute to produce digital learning material for the physically non-existent Latin American Studies in Austria ('Latin American Studies Online/LASON'). This material was made openly available and has been used by a variety of institutions and individuals in and beyond the university context (Mader et.al. 2004). The follow-up project 'OEKU-Online' (2004–2006) continued to produce open and interdisciplinary learning content, though now with a focus on the relationships between economy, culture and environment. Furthermore, a team of teachers and researchers collaboratively developed and implemented hybrid learning scenarios and environments by blending e-learning with face-to-face learning (Mader et al. 2006).

As a full professor, Elke took further technology-enhanced learning projects to the University of Vienna. This time, however, these projects not only produced learning and teaching material, they also continued to develop learning environments, scenarios and related methodological tools to be included strategically in different curricula at the University of Vienna. First, these scenarios and strategies were included in the social and cultural anthropology study programme within the project 'Strategies for Networked Learning' (2006–2008) (Mader et.al. 2008). When Elke was vice dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences between 2008 and 2012, these learning and teaching scenarios and strategies also became key elements in the then newly developed interdisciplinary introduction phase for students at the Faculty of Social Sciences ('eSOWI-STEP', 'SOWI-STEOP' and 'Content Creation for SOWI-STEOP') (e.g., Budka et al. 2011).

All of Elke's projects – research and teaching alike – built upon her ability to cooperate, motivate and share knowledge, as well as on her unpretentiousness and fairness. She ensured, for example, that the achievements of project partners and participants were always properly acknowledged and recognized. In addition, she promoted junior academics and supported colleagues throughout her career, for instance by encouraging joint publications or by initiating series of lectures.

Throughout her academic life, Elke was a role model in many ways. In the 1980s she was a fearless ethnographer who ventured into the unknown. In the 1990s she was an academic who had to fight professional precarity. In the 2000s and at the height of her academic career, she was a full professor who stood for integrity, cohesion and especially for the uncompromising support of students. We will remember Elke as a

sensitive, respectful and curious anthropologist. She always raised questions and did not pretend to know all the answers. She loved fieldwork and was genuinely interested in people. She enjoyed looking at the world 'with stars in her eyes' while attempting to get a better understanding of the world's complexity.

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Buchbesprechungen/Reviews

Delgado Rosa, Frederico and Han F. Vermeulen (eds.): Ethnographers Before Malinowski. Pioneers of Anthropological Fieldwork, 1870–1922. EASA Book Series, 44.
xviii + 522 pp. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2022.
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The publication of this book comes at a time when anthropology is reconsidering its own imperial and colonial past, with all the caveats involved. It also coincides with the centenary of the publication of Malinowski's important work, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Malinowski 1922). In the contemporary anthropological imaginary, Malinowski serves as a symbolic marker, as someone who (according to popular stories) established ethnographic fieldwork as we know it today, a true symbol of what it means to do 'proper' anthropology. As expressed by an important contributor to contemporary anthropological history, 'a good case can be made that Malinowski established the distinctive modern apprenticeship for social anthropologists – intensive and long-term participant-observation by a trained scholar in an exotic community' (Kuper 2015:1). Of course, this same author (Kuper) immediately mentions some of Malinowski's predecessors, and today it is widely accepted that critical anthropological research began long before 1922.

The editors of *Ethnographers Before Malinowski* have brought together twelve scholars, mostly associated with the History of Anthropology Network. One of the editors (Vermeulen) was the founder of this network within EASA, and the other (Rosa) was its Chair at the time of the publication of this volume. The book has twelve chapters divided in four parts, together with a Foreword, Introduction and Conclusion. There is also a Select Bibliography of Ethnographic Accounts published between 1870 and 1922 in an Appendix. Most of the chapters include important information about the contribution of indigenous scholars, and this is an added value of this work.

In his Foreword, Thomas Hylland Eriksen sets the tone for the book by introducing one of anthropology's forgotten ancestors, W. H. R. Rivers. Eriksen also mentions the work of some other important ancestors, like Morgan and Haddon, and goes back to remind us of the neglected contributions of Fison and Howitt, and of Spencer and Gillen. In their Introduction, the editors outline the scope of the volume, with important emphasis on the work of indigenous scholars (like Hewitt and La Flesche), who were hired by the Bureau of American Ethnology (p. 20). They also draw attention to the important aspect of the present volume: the fact that the contributors focus on the

monographs of individual scholars. This makes their analyses more focused and historically more contextualized.

The first part of the book, 'In Search of the Native's Point of View', consists of contributions by Herbert Lewis, Barbara Chambers Dawson and David Shankland. Lewis, one of the foremost authorities on the work on Franz Boas, focuses on Boas's monograph on the Central Eskimo from 1888 – the first attempt to present indigenous accounts 'from the natives' point of view.' Dawson presents the work of an Australian woman, Katie Langloh Parker, and her accounts of the people in the area where she lived. Her contribution to what Dawson calls 'the ongoing High God or All Father debate' was supported by Andrew Lang, and Parker was referred to by Émile Durkheim, as well as by the historian of religions E. O. James (p. 96). In his chapter, Shankland continues his work on the great Finnish sociologist Edward Westermarck, Professor at the LSE, and a great influence on Malinowski, with the emphasis on his monograph on *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (1926). This is already a mature Westermarck, a well-established and well-respected scholar, and it is important to see his work re-evaluated and given proper acknowledgement. As Shankland puts it, 'when Westermarck's work is studied closely, the theoretical preoccupations that he developed in his fieldwork are surprisingly modern and much more sophisticated than his critics appreciate' (p. 142).

Part two of the book, 'The Indigenous Ethnographer's Magic', presents chapters written by David Chidester, Jeffrey Paparoa Holman and Joanna Cohan Scherer. Chidester writes about one of the first chroniclers of indigenous South African religions, Henry Callaway. Callaway compiled an impressive account of Zulu religious beliefs, *The Religious System of the Amazulu*. This book was published in three volumes, 1868–1870, and in two columns, one in English and the other in Zulu, therefore given Indigenous People a voice. Chidester presents a key role that native collaborator, Mpengula Mbande, played in the formulation of some basic concepts, and how they might have influenced E. B. Tylor. Holman writes about Elsdon Best, a New Zealand adventurer who inspired generations of anthropologists, beginning with Mauss, and who was, among other things, responsible for the introduction of a key concept in the anthropological research of the Oceanic societies, *hau*. Scherer presents a story about one of the first American anthropologists, Alice Fletcher, her close collaborator Francis La Flesche (who was to become the first Native American with a PhD degree in anthropology) and their monograph about the Omaha, published in 1911, which in many respects is still unsurpassed. The chapter presents different episodes from the work on this magnificent volume, primarily through the perspective of Fletcher's relations with La Flesche and his family.

The third part of the book, 'Colonial Ethnography from Invasion to Empathy', includes contributions by Ronald L. Grimes, André Mary and Montgomery McFate. Grimes writes about John Gregory Bourke, a US cavalry officer and military ethnologist, and his amazing journey into the world of the rituals and prohibitions of the Hopis. Bourke's 1884 book is mostly forgotten today, despite its obvious qualities, and even though his work proved crucially important for several nineteenth-century

researchers, from Frank Hamilton Cushing and Jesse Fewkes to Matilda Coxe Stevenson. In his chapter, Mary focuses on French missionary Henri Trille and his travel accounts from the 'French Congo'. Trille was also interested in totemism, and the interest in the definition of key religious concepts seems to be one of the most pervasive characteristics of this whole volume. Finally, in the third essay in this part of the book, McFate writes about Robert Sutherland Rattray and his 1923 book *Ashanti*. Rattray undertook long-term participant observation after he 'was appointed as the first and only head of the newly created Gold Coast Anthropological Department in 1921' (p. 308). One of the important aspects of his monograph is that it presents a very vivid and 'surprisingly harsh view of the British colonial enterprise' (p. 309), which is even more interesting since he was a colonial officer. It also provides an example of a resolution of 'a potentially violent political dispute between the Ashanti and the British government, which provides an early example of anthropology being applied to ameliorate and resolve conflict' (p. 309).

The final part of the book, 'Expeditionary Ethnography as Intensive Fieldwork', contains contributions by Frederico Delgado Rosa, Grażyna Kubica and Michael Kraus. Rosa wrote about the explorations of the Portuguese officer Henrique de Carvalho, who lived in Lunda (today parts of Angola) between December 1884 and October 1887. De Carvalho's account of the indigenous population, their social organization and their culture in many ways contradicts the accepted anthropological canons, as Rosa clearly shows. It also displays a lot of sympathy for the indigenous population, something that does not square with the stereotypes that one has about the colonial administrations. Kubica focuses on the reception of the research in Siberia by Maria Czaplicka, an extraordinary scholar and a pioneer of Siberian studies in anthropology. The emphasis is also on the practical aspects of the researcher's relationship with her Tungus assistant, which was marked by respect, as well as irony (pp. 404–405). In the final chapter of the book, Kraus writes about the debates between German ethnographers of Lowland South America between 1884 and 1928, focusing on the work of Karl von den Steinen and Theodor Koch-Grünberg. His discussion includes an important outline of the development of ethnography in Germany and the scholarly methodology that was used by some of its key figures (like Bastian).

In their Conclusion, the editors of this volume point to the founders of anthropology, as well as to some overlooked scholars or theories. It is interesting that they also mention divergencies in the approaches of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, two figures usually regarded as the 'founding fathers' of social anthropology. They rightly point to the fact that 'Malinowski was not the inventor of intensive fieldwork' (p. 463) and list other researchers, some of whose works are discussed in the volume under consideration. The work of some others, like the Scottish Semitist William Robertson Smith, has also been recognized as important for early anthropology (Bošković 2021). It is a pity that the work of missionaries and explorers in Mexico and Central America and beyond, like Bernardino de Sahagún, is not mentioned, but perhaps this is an invitation for another project.

Taken as a whole, this is a valuable and important book, a timely and important addition to the growing field of literature in both anthropology and the history of ideas. It is also an important reminder of the valuable heritage that some learned women and men have left for us, leaving us with important lessons that can serve us well in navigating through the complexities of contemporary debates.

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Eckert, Julia M. (ed.): The Bureaucratic Production of Difference: Ethos and Ethics in Migration Administration.
182 S. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2020. ISBN 978-3-8376-5104-1

In this edited volume, Julia Eckert and six other social and cultural anthropologists endeavor to address the question, 'What do bureaucrats think they're doing?' Their focus is on diverse migration administrations, their aim being to shed light on the underlying factors influencing bureaucrats' actions. The authors share the fundamental assumption that what bureaucrats think they're doing shapes what they *actually* do, leading them to explore bureaucrats' emic perspectives concerning their own work. Contrary to the widespread claim of bureaucratic indifference, the authors challenge this notion by identifying a common ethical concern for the common good that underlies bureaucratic practices. However, they also recognize that visions of this common good are often contentious and contradictory. Within the context of migration bureaucracies, these visions play a central role in negotiations regarding access to the common good or exclusion from it. Michael Lipsky's seminal work showed the discretion street-level bureaucrats have. The authors of this edited volume set out to investigate the often ethical factors that influence the exercise of this discretion, alongside other aspects of bureaucratic practice.

In her introduction, Julia Eckert provides a comprehensive elucidation of the core concepts and theories employed throughout the edited volume, with a particular em-

phasis on the titular terms 'ethics' and 'ethos', both of which have Weberian origins. Bureaucratic ethics revolve around notions of a good society. On the other hand, 'ethos' refers to the values that govern bureaucratic procedures, encompassing aspects such as rule orientation, consistency and depersonalization. Importantly, the authors do not perceive ethics as external influences acting upon bureaucracies' ethos; instead, ethics are considered intrinsic to the very essence of bureaucracies. The entire volume revolves around the intricate interplay between ethics and ethos within bureaucratic systems. For Eckert, this exploration has significant value, as it can offer insights into the phenomenon of institutional change, which she views as the outcome of a dynamic process, where the prioritization of ethos over ethics and vice versa occurs in an alternating manner.

Laura Affolter's contribution to the volume is an ethnographic study of a Swiss asylum administration, focusing on the efforts of migration bureaucrats to keep numbers of successful asylum applications low in the pursuit of fairness. Laura Affolter identifies the norm of fairness as particularly important to case workers in Swiss asylum administrations who want to protect the asylum system by excluding everyone who, in their estimate, does not rightfully deserve asylum. Laura Affolter delves into the practical implementation of this ideal of fairness, particularly in how it influences decision-making processes. For instance, she examines how case workers employ strategic questioning techniques to create indicators of 'non-credibility' in asylum claims. The underlying rationale behind such actions is that the system can only function effectively if asylum is granted exclusively to those deemed 'deserving' by the case workers. Consequently, the ethical mandate of protecting the asylum system influences the ethos of the office, resulting in the establishment of 'fair' procedural values. By exploring this intricate interplay between ethics and ethos, Affolter sheds light on the dynamics of decision-making within the Swiss asylum administration.

The subsequent contribution, authored by Simon Affolter, offers a distinct perspective by examining the work of field inspectors employed by the Swiss association for labor market inspections. These inspectors are tasked with improving working conditions and combating informal labor, yet surprisingly they often fail to generate data to achieve these official objectives. Instead, the data they collect tends to obscure precarious agricultural labor conditions, effectively legitimizing the prevailing status quo. In a compelling argument, Simon Affolter contends that this apparent contradiction should not be seen as unintentional but rather as a consequence of the different yet interconnected hegemonic projects at play. The economic goals of the Swiss agricultural sector (ethics) take precedence over the pursuit of better labor conditions (ethos). This hierarchical prioritization is driven by the ingrained assumption that Swiss agriculture necessitates inexpensive labor to sustain itself. Simon Affolter posits that the mismatch between the declared goals and the actual effects of bureaucratic practice is not necessarily accidental: it can be attributed to an intentional hierarchization of conflicting ethics and ethos. What makes this case intriguing is that, unlike the other contributions in this volume, the individual ethics of inspectors, rather than the over-

arching ethics of the office, significantly influence their performance of their duties. However, the author does not delve into the reasons behind this observation. It might have been worth investigating whether the fact that inspectors often work outside a traditional office setting contributes to this difference.

In his contribution, Werner Schiffauer investigates the 'Verfassungsschutz,' the German domestic intelligence agency, and its knowledge production. Unlike the police, the Verfassungsschutz lacks executive power but plays a crucial role in providing intelligence about perceived 'enemies of the constitution' to both the police and the broader public. Knowledge production within the Verfassungsschutz primarily involves creating fixed categories of 'extremists' who are seen as threats to the common good. However, the process of categorization inherently oversimplifies and rigidifies the complex and fluid realities of society, resulting in the production of a categorical fiction. Moreover, Schiffauer identifies an issue in the division of labor between the police (exercising executive power) and the Verfassungsschutz (engaged in knowledge production). Once categorical information is disseminated to external actors beyond the Verfassungsschutz, it becomes naturalized, obscuring its reductionist nature. This is especially the case because the Verfassungsschutz's evidence production is conducted in secret. Schiffauer states that the ethical framework of the bureaucracy must rationalize the decision-making that is based on these bureaucratic categories, as otherwise its arbitrariness would contradict the principles of rational legal governance (ethos). This creates a delicate balance between ethical considerations and the need to uphold a sense of rationality and legitimacy in bureaucratic actions.

In her inquiry, Chowra Makaremi delves into the epistemologies employed by French airport border-detention procedures. She identifies two significant axes that influence the decision-making of protection officers in determining the 'truth' of asylum seekers' narratives. The first axis revolves around the question of whether the narration is true, while the second axis concerns whether the narrative places the subject in need of protection. The officers judge asylum-seekers' narratives based on criteria such as clarity, sincerity, accuracy and likelihood. Makaremi draws attention to the subjectivity of sincerity assessments, which can be influenced by individual perceptions and biases. On the other hand, evaluations of likelihood and emotionality appear to be more culturally determined in her findings. The increasing importance of verification, or the need for proof of the narrative, is evident in this process. Makaremi's relativistic proposition is that individual experiences may contain a deeper truth that is not easily translated into a narrative form. The current epistemological approach within the French airport protection officers' framework tends to undermine the truth of individual experiences by adhering to a universalized perspective. By shedding light on these epistemological nuances, Makaremi invites us to critically examine how the current system may overlook or diminish the authenticity of asylum-seekers' experiences, underscoring the need for a more nuanced and culturally sensitive approach to understanding and validating their individual experiences.

In his contribution, Nicholas De Genova offers significant theoretical insights into the increasing deportability and detainability of migrants. He interprets detention as an enactment of sovereign state power, driven not by any legal wrong-doing but by the perceived undesirability of individuals. Despite depriving individuals of their liberties, detention surprisingly does not provoke much outcry; instead, it appears mundane and bureaucratic in its implementation. De Genova's chapter sheds light on how those deemed outside the scope of the common good are subjected to discipline and uncertainty. In these 'everyday states of exception,' ethics once again take precedence over ethos. Street-level bureaucrats become pivotal in making case-by-case decisions concerning this state of exception. The law is, in essence, suspended to defend against perceived threats to the legal order.

In his examination of so-called assisted voluntary return migration, David Loher draws attention to the conflicts that arise between rule-orientation, efficiency and humanitarian considerations. Loher departs from Max Weber's traditional analytical distinction between ethos and ethics. Instead, he views rule-orientation and efficiency not exclusively as matters of either ethos or ethics. He argues that rule-orientation is not just a means to an end but an ethical objective in itself in the self-representation of counselors involved in voluntary return programs. Furthermore, Loher highlights the migration bureaucracy's prime directive, which is to assess and determine an individual's qualification for being entitled to be a part of the common good. If someone receives a negative asylum decision, the counselors perceive it as their duty to enforce a deportation. Interestingly, in this setting, bureaucrats often anticipate negative asylum decisions and act proactively, not waiting for an official verdict. This anticipatory approach allows them to curtail lengthy and potentially unsuccessful asylum cases by bypassing the rule of waiting for a formal decision. Here, efficiency takes precedence over strict rule-following in the counselors' decision-making process.

This edited volume offers valuable insights into the intricate interplay of ethics and ethos within migration administration. Having engaged with these compelling case studies, two questions arise. First, while the volume illuminates how ethics often take precedence over ethos in decision-making, it would also be intriguing to explore instances where ethos surpasses ethics. Understanding such occurrences could help identify trends in institutional change and shed light on the dynamics of decision-making when different values come into play. Moreover, contextualizing the findings within the debate on 'New Public Management Reforms' could be a fruitful endeavor, since it is, in essence, a debate about the economy of bureaucratic values over time.

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Beek, Jan, Thomas Bierschenk, Annalena Kolloch, and Bernd Meyer (eds.): Policing Race, Ethnicity and Culture. Ethnographic Perspectives Across Europe.
352 pp. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023. ISBN 978-1-5261-6558-9.

Der Sammelband der vier Wissenschaftler:innen der Universität Mainz (drei Ethnolog:innen sowie ein Linguist) beschäftigt sich in den einzelnen Beiträgen mit Polizei, Ethnizität, Identität, der Kategorisierung von Menschen (und Gruppen von Menschen). Die Beiträge berichten aus neun verschiedenen Ländern, manche komparativ, wobei auf Deutschland sehr wohl die meisten Beiträge fallen. Dennoch wird beim Lesen klar, dass immer eine größere, europäische, bisweilen globale Perspektive angestrebt wird (in Kapitel 5 wird diese Perspektive im Titel sogar hervorgehoben), die sich im Detail mit den Praktiken von Polizei beschäftigt und wie in jenen, insbesondere in der Interaktion mit den jeweiligen Anderen die Kategorien *Race*, Ethnizität und Kultur verhandelt werden. Aus diesen Kategorien und dem repressiven, ausschnitthaften, bewertenden Umgang damit speist sich letztlich auch das Phänomen Rassismus. Und auch wenn einige der Beiträge den Begriff *racist* im Titel führen und als Fokus der Analyse haben, ist dieser Sammelband doch keine weitere Rassismus-bei-der-Polizei-Analyse.

Diese Beitragssammlung macht etwas anderes: Sie legt zunächst einmal die Grundlagen zum Verstehen, wie die Race, Ethnizität und Kultur im polizeilichen Alltag verwendet werden. Weiterhin wird in verschiedenen Beiträgen herausgearbeitet, wie diese Kategorien für rassistische Ideen genutzt werden können und unter welchen (Vor- und Arbeits-)Bedingungen das passiert. Und schließlich gehen die Artikel auch deshalb über eine wie auch immer gestaltete Rassismus-Analyse hinaus, indem sie polizeiliche Praktiken im Kontext nationaler Politiken betrachten, die Polizei zwar berühren, aber nicht grundlegend für ihr Verhalten sind. Die Zusammenstellung von internationalen Perspektiven hilft dabei Ähnlichkeiten zu erkennen, aber auch zu verstehen, warum vermeintlich gleiche Dinge in einem anderen Kontext sich ganz anders entwickeln können. Das ist vor allem deshalb wichtig, weil Polizeiforschung sehr häufig (nicht immer) in einem nationalen Container agiert und international vergleichende Arbeiten eher selten sind (vgl. z.B. Nogala 2023). Das gilt vornehmlich für nicht-anthropologische Arbeiten zu dem Thema. Doch auch ethnologische Fallstudien konzentrieren sich häufig auf ein Land oder Kontext. Im ersteren Fall hat das nicht zuletzt mit den doch sehr unterschiedlichen Bedingungen zu tun, in denen Polizei agiert und existiert. Das Besondere hier ist zudem, dass sich das Thema Polizei im Alltag konsequent durch alle Beiträge zieht. Ähnliche Sammlungen wie etwas Maguire et al. (2014 und 2018) oder Schwell & Eisch-Angus (2018) behandeln Polizei als ein Unterthema von Sicherheit, und Überwachung. Bei Fassin et al. (2013) ist Polizei eine staatliche Institution unter anderen. Der Zugang über Praktiken der Differenzierung in der Polizeiarbeit ist dabei ein kluger Zugang, die Arbeit anders vergleichend zu machen, ohne in die normativen Hindernisse zu stolpern, die Polizei als Apparat häufig schwer vergleichbar macht. Eine anthropologische Perspektive ist hier genau der Zugang, der anderer (soziologischer, politikwissenschaftlicher) Forschung dabei häufig fehlt. Die Konzentration auf Poli-

zei hebt es darüber hinaus auch von anderer anthropologischer Forschung ab bzw. ist eine sinnvolle Ergänzung einer bestehenden Anthropologie der Polizei (vgl. u.a. Fassin 2013; Garriot 2013).

Beek et al. ermöglichen mit ihrer anthropologischen Perspektive auf die Polizei der Forschung neue, und vor allem andere Einblicke sowohl in die differenzierende und kategorisierende Arbeit von Polizei, aber eben auch Erkenntnisse weit über das Objekt der Analyse hinaus. Dabei geht es vor allem darum zu erkennen, dass diskriminierende, bisweilen rassifizierende Qualitäten von Praktiken keinem (bösen) Masterplan folgen müssen, nicht grundlegend sind, sondern im (unreflektierten) Tun selbst entstehen und sich verfestigen können. Deswegen ist ein wichtiger Aspekt des Sammelbandes die über alle Beiträge hinweg angelegte Diskussion und Rekonstruktion der Phänomene und Begriffe von Rassismus, race (Anm. d. A.: ich bleibe bei diesem englischen Begriff, da er übersetzt eine andere Bedeutung bekommt, die so von den Herausgeber:innen nicht beabsichtigt scheint), Ethnizität oder Kultur. Indem alle Autor:innen sich darauf konzentrieren, wie die mit den Begriffen und Konzepten verbundenen Differenzierungen, Ausschlüsse und Sortierungen in der Praxis produziert werden, ermöglichen sie eine Diskussion, die eng an den empirischen Daten ist und so die theoretischen Betrachtungen auf ein solides Fundament stellt – weit entfernt von jeglicher Skandalisierung. In ihren eigenen Worten verstehen die Herausgeber:innen dergestaltige Differenzen *‚…not as a determining factor but as a possible, dynamic result of these interactions and the differentiations taking place within them'* (S. 3). In ihrem Verständnis ist Polizeiarbeit vor allem eine Arbeit der Differenzierung (S. 3ff.), aber auch eine Arbeit der Übersetzung – im übertragenden (als Übersetzung von Handlungsrationalitäten oder Kontexten) als auch sehr buchstäblichen Sinne als Sprachübersetzung (S. 10ff.). Alltagshandlungen gegenwärtiger Polizeiarbeit sind demnach immer Übersetzungen irgendeiner Art – so die Prämisse der Herausgeber:innen und demnach auch der Faden, dem die Beiträge folgen (S. 11). Damit allein gibt es neben der Polizei weitere Akteur:innen, die Anderen der Polizei, welche damit auch als aktiv Handelnde auftreten können – auch wenn die Herausgeber:innen zu bedenken geben, dass es rein forschungspraktisch hier blinde Flecke geben kann und zumeist die Polizei und ihre Vertreter:innen als Akteur:innen in der Forschung und den Studien auftreten.

Der Sammelband geht zurück auf eine Tagung, die die Beiträger:innen bereits 2020 an der Universität Mainz unter dem Titel „Police - translations and the construction of cultural difference in European police work" zusammenbrachte. Mit dem Thema der Übersetzung als Klammer eröffnet der Band der Leser:in Einblicke in die Polizeiarbeit in Schweden, Dänemark, den Niederlanden, Albanien, Russland, Deutschland, Frankreich oder Portugal. Gleich der erste Beitrag vergleicht polizeilichen Rassismus in Frankreich und Deutschland und fokussiert dabei auf die beruflichen Sozialisationen sowie die institutionellen Leitlinien beider Systeme. Der Kern der Erkenntnis der vergleichenden Studie ist, dass, *‚…racialisation, both in terms of description and qualification, proceeds from occupational routine. What we have dubbed the temptation of racism is to be understood in light of this 'daily grind' of policing and is inseparable from the frus-*

tration generated when performing ordinary assignments' (S. 49). Ähnliches gilt auch in anderen Kontexten. So vergleicht Rebecca Pates statistische Praktiken der Ethnisierung in Großbritannien und Deutschland und wie hiermit der bürokratische Nationalstaat ethnische oder ‚para-ethnische' Kategorien erschafft. Sie zeigt dabei vor allem, wie die jeweiligen Nationalitäten und Zugehörigkeiten mit einer Kombination aus nationalen Narrativen und bürokratischen, statistischen Werkzeugen konstruiert werden und worin die Unterschiede liegen. Das soll allerdings nicht hießen, dass die Beiträge theoretisch und analytisch bloß Varianten desgleichen in unterschiedlichen Untersuchungsgebieten sind. Vielmehr zeigen sie die verschiedenen Varianten, Ebenen und Möglichkeiten, die in der Verbindung von Bürokratie, polizeilichem Alltagshandeln, Narrativen des Nationalen entstehen können und zu sehr diversen Praktiken und dann letztendlich auch Kategorien führen können. Diese Kategorien sind dann wiederum die Basis für die Bewertung von Menschen und die Möglichkeiten wie Differenz wahrgenommen werden kann – und sie wären andererseits auch die Ansatzpunkte, wenn man die mit diesen Kategorien verbundenen negativen Diskriminierungen bearbeiten möchte.

Für mich hervorzuheben sind in dem Band die Beiträge 8–11, die sich konkret mit ‚policing as translation', im weitesten Sinn also mit Sprache und den Interaktionen im direkten Kontakt und vor Ort beschäftigen. Hier wird das Tun, die Praxis, sehr konkret und anschaulich, vor allem weil Sprache etwas ist, mit dem man vertraut ist und woran sich eben nicht nur abstrakt zeigen lässt, wie Praxis aussieht und wo die Probleme und Fallstricke lauern können. Nicht nur ethnografisch forschende Polizeiwissenschaftler:innen werden viele der Situationen wiedererkennen, die hier beschrieben werden. Vor allem geht es dabei um die beschriebene Unbeholfenheit im Umgang mit ‚Fremden', insbesondere wenn diese Gegenstand von Maßnahmen sind, die erklärt werden müssen oder die Polizei versucht Informationen zu erlangen. Was hier deutlich wird, lässt sich auf andere Kontexte, in denen in offiziellen Machtverhältnissen kommuniziert werden muss und wo die konkrete Sprache eine zentrale Rolle spielt, Gewinn-bringend übertragen. Untersucht werden Interaktionen polizeilicher Alltagspraxis (auf der Straße, in der Wache) sowie eine Trainingssituation. (Kapitel 9: *'Inclusive and non- inclusive modes of communication in multilingual operational police training'*). Die Autor:innen des Kapitels schreiben darin den wunderschönen und für die Polizeiarbeit essentiellen Satz: *‚However, in this chapter, we want to point out the necessity of successful communication for successful police work.'* Auch wenn das zunächst wie eine These klingt, kann nicht genug betont werden, dass in der Banalität der Erkenntnis der Schlüssel (kein Geheimnis) liegt, wie auch in angespannten, schwierigen und für alle Anwesenden polizeilicher Arbeit stressigen Situationen am Ende ein für alle Seiten zufriedenstellendes Ergebnis herauskommen kann. Ein Ergebnis, bei dem es nicht um rassistische Vorwürfe, provozierte Widerstände, schlechte Vorurteile und billige Stereotypen geht, sondern um Recht und Verantwortung auf allen Seiten. Aus eigener Erfahrung und Forschung kann ich dem Satz nur beipflichten, sehe aber genau hier auch das größte Manko, wenn es zu Vorfällen in der polizeilichen Praxis kommt,

nicht nur mit den jeweils als migrantisch, ausländisch, fremd oder sonst wie konnotierten Anderen, sondern generell mit der Bürger:in als ‚polizeilichem Gegenüber'. Allein diese Unterscheidung stellt schon eine begriffliche Kategorisierung dar, die im Alltag bedeutsam, jedoch eine willkürliche, wenn nicht falsche Unterscheidung ist – hier die Bürger, dort die anderen? Deshalb ist dem ersten Satz im Nachwort uneingeschränkt zuzustimmen, dass die Polizei eine Institution der sozialen Sortierung sei (S. 314), die dazu da ist, gleichzeitig Grenzen zu hüten und zu produzieren sowie die Frage nach Zugehörigkeit zu verhandeln. In diesem Sinn könnte man von der Polizei als einer strukturell rassistischen Institution sprechen. Das aber wäre eine verkürzte Sicht auf den Begriff des Rassismus und würde den Ergebnissen der vielfältigen Forschungen, die in dem Band präsentiert werden, nicht gerecht. Racial profiling findet statt – die Bedingungen und Voraussetzungen dafür zu verstehen, ist aber wichtiger als den Vorwurf bei jeder Gelegenheit zu konstatieren. Und das geht nicht nur die Polizeiforschung etwas an. Indem die Autor:innen ihre Foci auf Differenzkategorien, Übersetzungen und deren Entstehungen im Alltag (hier der Polizei) legen, produzieren Sie auch Erkenntnisse, die generell für die ethnologische Forschung von hohem Interesse sind. Speziell denke ich hier an Forschung zu und in (nicht nur bürokratischen) Institutionen, wo Normen produziert und verhandelt werden, wo im Alltag Differenzen geschaffen und möglicherweise problematisch verwendet werden. Nimmt man die Polizei hier vor allem als ein Beispielsfeld für die Diskussion rund um Differenzkategorien, Rasse, Diskriminierung, aber auch die Kommunikation darüber und die Möglichkeiten der Verständigung, dann kann man diese Beiträge mit Gewinn auch über das gewählte Beispiel lesen und Erkenntnisse daraus ziehen.

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Dippel, Anne und Martin Warnke: Tiefen der Täuschung: Computersimulation und Wirklichkeitserzeugung.
173 S. Berlin: Matthes & Seitz, 2022. ISBN 978-3-7518-0334-2

Während die Physik im Bereich der Quantenmechanik Experimente in hochkomplexen Apparaten stattfinden lässt, Unvorstellbares berechnet und sich in theoretischen Konstrukten bewegt, die weit entfernt von der menschlichen Erlebniswelt scheinen, stellt sich die Frage nach Wirklichkeit und ihrer sozialen Verankerung neu. Diese Frage spitzt sich zu, wenn Physiker:innen sich zunehmend auf computergenerierte Simulationen stützen, um Theorien anhand von algorithmisch erzeugten Daten zu testen. Und diese Frage spitzt sich noch weiter zu, wenn computergenerierte Simulationen theoriebildend eingesetzt werden. Wo bleibt der Bezug zur realen Welt und welche Wirklichkeit wird dabei sozial ausgehandelt? In ihrem Buch ‚Tiefen der Täuschung' spüren Anne Dippel und Martin Warnke diesem Fragenkomplex nach und lassen sich auf die metaphysischen Fragen, die die Physik aufwirft, ein. Sie setzen dafür einen medientheoretischen Zugang ein, der sich auf kulturanthropologische Feldforschung am Forschungszentrum Jülich stützt, wo Hans de Raedt und Kristel Michielsen, die beiden Protagonist:innen der Feldforschung, Computersimulationen zum quantenphysikalischen Doppelspaltexperiment erzeugen. Die mögliche theoriebildende Rolle des Computers, so lernen die Leser:innen, ist auch innerhalb der Physik umstritten, das Ideal einer Unterscheidbarkeit von Labor- und Simulationsdaten und dementsprechend unterschiedlichen Wahrheitsansprüchen nicht aufgegeben. Dippel und Warnke eruieren, wie sich grundlegende Konzeptionen von Theorie und Methode mit Computersimulationen ändern, halten bewusst an einem Anspruch an Wirklichkeit fest und bieten das Konzept des ‚Operationalen Realismus' an, um die Entwicklungen in computerbasierter physikalischer Forschung zu beschreiben und in ihren Konsequenzen zu beleuchten.

In vier Kapiteln leiten Dippel, Kulturanthropologin und Historikerin, und Warnke, Informatiker mit einem Hintergrund als Mathematiker und Physiker, die Leser:innen durch die Materie und bieten dabei einen programmatischen, einen ethnographischen/wissenschaftstheoretischen, einen physikhistorischen/medienanalytischen, sowie einen ethischen/epistemologisch-reflexiven Ansatz an, die in ihrem Zusammenspiel die Notwendigkeit von interdisziplinärer Forschung in diesem Themenfeld deutlich machen. Diese vier Kapitel werden im Folgenden genauer vorgestellt.

Das programmatische Einführungskapitel stellt die gesellschaftlich längst verankerte Bedeutung von Computersimulationen vor und gibt einen ersten Einblick in das Feld der ‚computational' Physik. Es zeigt die damit einhergehenden Verunsicherungen auf, das Reale vom nicht-Realen zu unterscheiden und hält dezidiert am Realitätskonzept fest. Mit dem Ziel, im letzten Kapitel die Wirklichkeits- und Sinnerzeugung in digitalen Gesellschaften in den Blick zu nehmen, führt es in epistemologische Fragen der Quantenmechanik ein, deren Erforschung sowohl physikalische Laborexperimente als auch informatische Modellierungen verlangt. Die Kontinuität mathematisch-dar-

stellbarer Theorien steht der Diskretheit der informationstechnischen Methode gegenüber: Simulationen erzeugen diskrete Wirklichkeit, die nicht ‚falsch' sein kann und somit erlangt die Frage nach dem, was wahr ist und was falsch ist, einen neuen Grad der Komplexität. ‚Tiefen der Täuschung' – das zeigt das einleitende Kapitel – widmet sich den großen epistemologischen Fragen der Wirklichkeitserzeugung in unserer sich zunehmend auf Computersimulationen stützenden Welt.
Das zweite Kapitel trägt die Handschrift Anne Dippels, nimmt die Arbeit von Kristel Michielsen und Hans de Raedt in den Fokus und leitet diese mit einer dichten Beschreibung ein. Die Leser:innen lernen, dass Kristel Michielsen und Hans de Raedt das in der Quantenmechanik ausschlaggebende Doppelspaltexperiment simulieren. Dabei können sie auf mathematische Hilfskniffe, den Hilbertraum (ein Vektorraum mit beliebig vielen Dimensionen), verzichten und stattdessen in der vierdimensionalen Raumzeit bleiben. Ermöglicht wird dies, indem eine mathematisch-kontinuierliche Beschreibung der Welt durch Anhäufung von diskreten Ereignissen ersetzt wird. Als Konsequenz muss das, was bislang als Theoriekonzept galt, neu gedacht werden. Einerseits deutet dies einen grundlegenden epistemischen Shift innerhalb der Quantenmechanik und in der Naturwissenschaft im Allgemeinen an; andererseits begeben sie sich damit in den Außenbereich der Mainstreamphysik. Als Hilfsmittel bei naturwissenschaftlichen Experimenten haben Computersimulationen längst Einzug gehalten; als Ausdrucksmedium von Theorie fordern Computersimulationen die Physik auf, sich der Philosophie zuzuwenden. Das hier gelebte Verhältnis zum Realen ist operational geworden, Computer wirkmächtige Medien, die weltbildend wirken, Reduktionen bewirken und Wahrnehmbares generieren. Bei computergestützten naturwissenschaftlichen Simulationen lassen sich ‚Wahrgenommenes' und ‚für wahr Genommenes' (S. 59) nicht mehr klar voneinander abtrennen.

Das dritte Kapitel steigt mit einer medienwissenschaftlichen Brille tiefer in die Welt der Physik ein und ist stilistisch von Martin Warnke geprägt. Wie in einer Einführungsvorlesung wird der Fall des Doppelspaltexperiments in seiner Historie mithilfe von vielen Alltagsmetaphern eingeführt, um aufzuzeigen, wie das etablierte Verfahren von Theoriebildung durch Differentialgleichungen mit der Quantenmechanik an ihre Grenzen gerät. Unterschiedliche Hypothesen, basierend auf unterschiedlichen philosophischen Annahmen über erste Prinzipien, prägen seit langer Zeit die wissenschaftlichen Debatten über den Interpretationsrahmen von im Labor erzeugten quantenphysikalischen Daten. Inzwischen können mithilfe von Computeralgorithmen weit größere Datenmengen produziert und behandelt werden, gesteuert durch ein Regelwerk in Programmiersprache. ‚Erste Prinzipien müssen durch Regeln ersetzt werden' – ein ‚radikaler Bruch mit … dem Selbstverständnis der Physik' (S. 87). In der klassischen Physik ist zwar der Aufbau eines Experiments theoriegeleitet, die Ergebnisse sollten diese Theorie jedoch auch falsifizieren können. Computersimulationen hingegen sind dann erfolgreich, wenn sie ein Ergebnis liefern, das ununterscheidbar von den Ergebnissen des Experiments ist – unabhängig davon mit welchen Prämissen der oft nicht mehr nachvollziehbare Code geschrieben wurde. Sollen Computersimulationen

nun theoretische Probleme lösen, wird die Theoriebildung kybernetisch. Erfolgreiche theoriebildende Computersimulationen beschreiben dann Realität, die operational ist.

Das letzte Kapitel fungiert zusammen mit dem einleitenden Kapitel als Rahmen und stellt die gesellschaftliche Bedeutung der Entwicklungen in der sub-atomaren Forschung in den Mittelpunkt. Die Zeit, in der die Forschung für das Buch stattfand, ließ bereits erahnen, dass wissenschaftliche Dispute über Ansprüche auf Wahrheit auf gesellschaftliche Resonanz treffen. Dippel und Warnkes Forschung hat die wissenschaftliche Notwendigkeit, ‚dass Erkenntnis nicht unabhängig von ihrem operationalen Zustandekommen zu beurteilen ist' (S. 115) besonders deutlich gemacht und findet diese auch in gesellschaftlichen Debatten. Die Zeit, in der das Buch geschrieben wurde, war von der Covid-19-Pandemie geprägt, in der die Wissensansprüche des etablierten Wissenschaftssystem von einer nicht zu vernachlässigenden Anzahl an Menschen mit Skepsis betrachtet wurde. Wissenschaftliche Simulationen bestimmten politische Entscheidungen und auch Zweifel und Skepsis fanden und finden im digitalen Raum ihre Fürsprecher:innen. Doch, so formulieren es Dippel und Warnke, ‚das Wissen der Simulation darf nicht gegen das der ersten Prinzipien ausgespielt werden' und es braucht nicht nur gesellschaftliche Vermittlung von Wissen, sondern auch Vermittlung von dem, wie akademischer Diskurs funktioniert, denn ‚simulativ generiertes Wissen [bedarf] einer sorgfältigen Legitimation' (S. 116); sie ist mehr als Spekulation. Computer bringen neue Methoden und neue Theorien – und sie veranlassen uns die Theorie-Methoden-Unterscheidung zu überdenken ‚inhaltlich, strukturell, grundsätzlich' – ‚Gewissheit wird im simulativen Kontext zunehmend eine graduelle Angelegenheit, die … statistisch herzustellen ist' (S. 118). Für die Gesellschaft bedeutet dies, sich mit der Ambiguität von und Zweifeln in wissenschaftlicher Forschung als im Prozess verankerten Komponenten von empirischer Wissensgenerierung, zu der auch Techniken der Simulation gehören, auseinandersetzen zu müssen. ‚Das ist es, was als ethische Aufgabe aus Operationalem Realismus als wissenschaftlicher Haltung zur Welt erwächst' (S. 131). Das Buch endet mit einer Darstellung, wie die Geistes-, Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften, und insbesondere ethnographisch arbeitende Disziplinen, für die bevorstehenden wissenschaftlichen Aufgaben gebraucht werden, denn sie bringen eine jahrzehntelang erworbene und erprobte Expertise mit, wie mit Ungewissheit, Unschärfe, Ungleichheiten, Relativierung und Relationierung des Eigenen umgegangen werden kann, um die ‚Bedingungen erzeugter Wirklichkeiten sichtbar zu machen' (S. 138).

‚Tiefen der Täuschung' ist ein herausforderndes Buch. Es behandelt die großen onto-epistemologischen Fragen nach Wirklichkeit im heutigen digitalen Zeitalter und bezieht sich dafür auf unkonventionelle simulationsbasierte Forschung im Bereich der Quantenmechanik, die nach wie vor als hochkomplex und den Erfahrungshorizont sprengend gilt. Dippel und Warnke schrecken nicht davor zurück, die Grundlagen des quantenmechanischen Experiments, das die Simulation darstellt, zu erläutern und tauchen tief in philosophische Aspekte des physikwissenschaftlichen Sachverhalts ein. Sie treten dabei mit einer Vielzahl von Disziplinen in Austausch, was den Text

einerseits sehr reich macht und andererseits Abstriche einfordert. So könnte ich als Ethnologin bemängeln, dass die Leser:innen Kristel Michielsen und Hans de Raedt nur recht oberflächlich kennenlernen und dass auch das Bild der ‚Schneeflocken vom Beamerhimmel', das die laufende Simulation in Jülich beschreibt, ein rein deskriptives poetisches Bild bleibt und analytisch nicht zum Tragen kommt. Vielmehr gilt es jedoch zu betonen, welche interdisziplinäre Leistung in diesem Buch steckt. Das Resultat unzählbarer Aushandlungsprozesse zwischen den beiden Autor:innen, die sich auf jeweils ihre Weise bereits seit Langem auf das Überschreiten der Grenze zwischen Geistes-/Sozialwissenschaften und Naturwissenschaften einlassen, gibt das Buch einen Anhaltspunkt dafür, wie solch ein gemeinsames Projekt aussehen kann. Es versucht nicht, Unterschiedlichkeit in Assimilation aufzulösen, sondern wagt sich hinein in einen Versuch, ethnographische Kooperation von der Forschung bis in den Schreibprozess ernst zunehmen und sichtbar zu belassen. Es bleibt die Frage: wie bettet sich das Buch als Medium ein? Erzeugt es Wirklichkeit, stellt es eine Simulation dar, so dass wir als Leser:innen an der Forschung teilhaben können? Sind wir als Leser:innen bereits Teil des Apparats, den dieses Buch zu beschreiben sucht?

Abschließend lenke ich das Augenmerk auf einen inhaltlichen Punkt, der sich aus der Lektüre ergibt. Die Diskretheit der Daten, die Simulationen erzeugen und auf denen sie beruhen, wird mehrfach in Relation zur Kontinuität von Theorien, die sich durch Differentialgleichungen ausdrücken lassen, beschrieben. Während Karen Barad, deren Forschung den ‚New Materialism' entscheidend geprägt hat und von Dippel und Warnke aufgegriffen wird, in der Logik der Differentialgleichungen bleibt und aufzeigt, wie Differenz erst aus der Verschränkung heraus wächst (‚Intra-aktion'), stellt sich nun die Frage, wie Barad mit Dippel und Warnke weiterzudenken ist. Verfangen wir uns in Identitätspolitik, wenn sich unsere Wirklichkeit auf Diskretheit aufbaut? Oder können wir hier nicht eine Zuwendung zum immer-Konkreten, zum immer-Speziellen feststellen, das dem der Ethnologie ähnelt? Wie formiert sich daraus ein Verhältnis zum Allgemeinen und wie kann die Ethnologie dazu beitragen? Ähnlich wie es das letzte Kapitel des Buchs bereits formuliert, können für die Ethnologie gesellschaftliche Aufgaben abgeleitet werden, die Wirklichkeitserzeugung im Zeitalter von wissenschaftlichen sowie nicht-wissenschaftlichen Computersimulationen mit einem Anspruch an das Reale zu begleiten um ein Versinken in den Tiefen der Täuschung zu verhindern.

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Werthmann, Katja: City Life in Africa. Anthropological Insights.
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In her most recent book, German professor and urban anthropologist Katja Werthmann embarks on a comprehensive journey to illuminate anthropology's potential in understanding African urbanism. Not only does she trace the development of urban anthropology with reference to the African continent over the course of nearly a century, she also provides a rich overview of the multitude of existing empirical case studies. The declared aim of this book is to trace 'what anthropologists have come to know about African city dwellers' ideas and practices' (p. 16), making it a book about the history of the (sub)discipline, as well as the experience of African urbanites.

A distinctive feature of the book is its meticulous referencing of a wide range of literature, consolidating various perspectives under one roof. Werthmann undertakes the long overdue task of establishing and enriching the topical canon by highlighting contributions by African and female anthropologists that have previously been overlooked. The book serves as a remarkable repository, offering an unparalleled overview of a century of anthropological studies on urban spaces in Africa. Its breadth is impressive, drawing on works in English, French and German, while its empirical depth is substantiated by insightful primary source quotations, making it a useful resource for students, teachers and practitioners interested in urban space and its inhabitants in Africa.

The book's focus is on African city-dwellers' experiences, practices and notions, focusing on actions and behaviors rather than the built environment or structural factors. Each chapter employs a verbal gerund as a title (Moving, Connecting, Governing, Working, Dwelling, and Wayfinding), underscoring Werthmann's choice of viewing African cities as spaces where 'doing the city' takes precedence.

The book is structured into six chapters of 21–33 pages each, preceded by an introductory chapter and followed by a discussion chapter. The chapters are designed to stand alone, allowing readers to delve into them separately. Each chapter follows a similar structure: starting out with an introductory note elucidating the respective practice, Werthmann presents between three and seven 'insights' per chapter. These insights (statements or hypotheses about the experiences and practices of urbanites on the continent) are then substantiated by empirical material. A special feature of the book are the text-boxes strewn throughout the text, in which the author highlights and elaborates on persons or themes that are central to the (history of the) study of African urban spaces.

In some ways, reading the text resembles taking a stroll through some urban spaces on the African continent: the scenery is quite fragmented and challenging to navigate without zig-zagging, minding one's step and taking an occasional detour or leap to arrive at one's destination. Much like the informal settlements of African megacities, the most interesting structures and relevant landmarks are missing on the 'map': to ease the navigation, it could have helped to have more than just the abstract first-level headings in the table of contents. However, in being divided into short sections, the text

allows readers to jump to topics of interest or to discover interesting bits on the way, while an index offers the opportunity to explore specific themes or to find information on a particular city, author or topic.

The overall structure of the book is quite accessible. In the introduction, Werthmann sets the scene, discussing quite self-critically how present-day anthropologists doing fieldwork in the cities of the African continent are often unaware of the long and diverse research tradition they stand in, but even more oblivious of the historical depth of forms of social organization in urban Africa. She calls into question the preconceived notion that views the urban anthropology of Africa in the 1930s–1950s as synonymous with the Rhodes-Livingstone-Institute, pointing to research (often by female and/or African scholars) that went on before or in parallel to the RLI's studies, yet received much less attention. This latter point makes a much stronger argument than the unsurprising 'selling point' that follows, citing Africa's urbanization statistics to underscore the relevance of the publication.

The initial chapter, 'Moving', masterfully delves into the pivotal role of migration, particularly rural-to-urban migration, in the study of African urban life. Werthmann skillfully intertwines historical context with ethnographic case studies, painting a vivid picture of urban experiences, right down to the intricacies of cinema behavior in the Copperbelt during the 1950s, as observed by Hortense Powdermaker (p. 18). This chapter sets the tone for the book's deep and detailed empirical engagement.

The longest chapter, 'Connecting', explores various forms of relating as they happen in African cities, from marriages to ethnic bonds and neighborhood ties. While one sub-section of the chapter (Insight 4) touches on segregation – an essential aspect of post-colonial African urban life – it only receives more substantial attention in Chapter 6. Some insights sound quite common-sensical, e.g., 'Insight 1: Forms of coupling in African cities are extremely varied' (p. 44). However, the author is to be commended for the meticulous work she does in substantiating such broad claims by use of empirical materials from various regions of the continent.

In Chapter three, 'Governing', Werthmann delves into the political anthropology of African cities, examining the role of chiefs, elders and other informal authorities being the real power-holders in urban areas. In the latter half of the chapter, she looks at small and medium-sized towns as arenas in which national politics are played out. This being the shortest chapter, a reader looking for insights into the specifics of positioning oneself in a line of research in small or medium-sized urban centers is probably left wanting more. The call for more attention given to research in smaller towns is a critical point that Werthmann herself raises in her concluding remarks (p. 181).

Chapter Four, 'Working', investigates the intricacies of labor in the city, including how people find work and the organization of professional communities. Insight 3 in this chapter reads: 'Wage labourers do not necessarily constitute political interest groups' (p. 101), an example of a peculiarity found in several places in the book: Several insights are formulated in the negative while one can only speculate about what counter argument the author is writing 'against'. Here, Werthmann probably imagines a reader

trained in (Eurocentric) social sciences, assuming 'class struggle' works in the same way everywhere as it did in the particular history of Western Europe and the US. Other examples include: 'Ethnicity does not matter in all social situations.' (p. 53) and 'Moving to the city does not mean leaving the countryside for good' (p. 18). It would have been interesting to read more about the schools of thought that posit that ethnicity matters in all situations or that rural-urban migration be a one-way street.

Chapter Five, 'Dwelling', explores the built environment's influence on African urban life, encompassing topics such as segregation policies and the impact of the state on urban structures. Unsurprisingly, the empirical case studies illustrating the insights about segregation are drawn from research in the Republic of South Africa – here, it would have been interesting to add examples from other regions. In fact, out of the 55 African countries, only about 20 are represented in the ethnographic material referenced in the book, with countries like Ethiopia, Sudan or Rwanda missing, whose particular histories could have added further representations of the diversity of experiences on the continent.

In the final chapter, 'Wayfinding', Werthmann presents 'the concept of socio-spatial negotiation for exploring how city dwellers find their ways in the literal and figurative sense' (p. 153), arriving once again at a question she explored in her 2014 article 'Are cities in Africa 'unknowable'?' (in German). Insight 3 in this chapter focusses on Bobo-Dioulasso. It is a pleasure to read about Werthmann's own research here, though linking the empirical descriptions of this particular place back to the central questions of the chapter could have strengthened the sub-chapter's argument.

Certainly, each insight could warrant its own dedicated book, yet Werthmann does a tremendous job in concisely summarizing complex empirical studies in a few sentences and in ordering this vast and complex body of literature. In the book's final chapter, 'Discussion and Outlook', the author ties the threads together, formulating questions and trends in the study of urban Africa since the 2000s. Quite a number of new aspects are introduced in this final chapter of the book, leaving the reader with ample opportunity to reflect.

Thanks to her nuanced exploration of these themes, backed by compelling case studies and insights, this book enriches the reader's understanding of African urban realities. In conclusion, *The African City: Anthropological Insights* by Katja Werthmann is a monumental contribution, encapsulating a wealth of knowledge and diverse experiences pertaining to urban life in Africa. It serves as an invaluable resource for anyone keen on getting to know the multifaceted realm of anthropological studies on urban spaces and their inhabitants and on exploring lesser-known studies of crucial importance to the development of this sub-discipline. The book's richness lies not only in its contents, but also in Werthmann's unrivaled expertise, which is necessary to unearth them, making it a seminal work in the field of African urban anthropology.

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Strange, Stuart Earle: Suspect Others: Spirit Mediums, Self-Knowledge, and Race in Multiethnic Suriname. Series: Anthropological Horizons.
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Suspect Others draws a differentiated picture of relational selves in contemporary Suriname. Centering his analysis on epistemic affects, such as doubt, suspicion and mistrust, Stuart Earle Strange contributes to anthropological debates about self-assertion and belonging in ethnically and religiously diverse societies.

Surinamese Hindu and Ndyuka Maroon selves are always embedded in social relations. At the same time, it is difficult or even impossible for Strange's interlocutors to really know these selves. Finding out about the self or multiple selves is beyond their human consciousness and requires divine or spirit mediumship to learn about others and how these others affect the self. The Surinamese case exemplifies the importance of suspicion and 'racecraft' as key aspects of Indo-Caribbean and Maroon lives and their quests for self-knowledge, which are worth considering in other postcolonial societies. The author adopts Barbara and Karen Fields' (2012) concept of racecraft, which emphasizes race as socially constructed. Including both Hindu and Ndyuka rituals in the ethnography is a welcome approach to show the parallels, overlaps, interactions and frictions in terms of ritual practices, conceptual notions of the self/selves and ethnicity or racecraft.

Strange provides the reader with a rich ethnography of ritual possession as a means to gain knowledge about the self, knowledge which is otherwise beyond the awareness of human beings. In these rituals, patients realize the presence of spirits in themselves, and they learn how to reflect critically about what they thought they knew about themselves. Suspicion against others is critical to the processes of how people learn about these otherwise hidden selves.

In Chapter 1, the importance of suspicion is contextualized with regard to contested land, fragile property and prosperity, and uncertain belonging in post-plantation Suriname. Chapters 2 and 3 introduce the reader to Surinamese Hindu and Ndyuka ritual quests to find out about their selves. The book's cover shows two examples of what the altars around which the mediums center their ritual activities can look like. The Hindu shrine on the left features offerings, such as fruits and flowers, assembled around deities. The image detail of the Ndyuka spirit altar on the right conveys secrecy through its mysterious installation of ritual objects, which some mediums refrain from explaining to further enhance their obscurity (p. 114–115). Despite different notions of selves – Ndyuka selves consist of multiple souls or spirits, while Hindus have single selves – both Hindu and Ndyuka mediums urge clients to reflect upon and question their selves.

Chapter 4 takes up pain as an important individual sensation that embodies social relations. Mediums reveal pain as an expression of particular divinities, spirits, mistrustful or violent kin or neighbor relations. As an example, the author describes how a Ndyuka medium relates a specific painful sensation back to an ancestral spirit, who had suffered from the same pain and now resides in the afflicted person.

Dreams, the focus of Chapter 5, are also far from merely personal, but have collective relevance for the dreamer's social relations. Frequently discussed and interpreted among Surinamese Hindus and Maroons, dreams are important sites where knowledge and relations between the self and others are revealed.

Mediumship renders identities complex and diverse, as they are embedded in nuanced webs of ancestral ties. By contrast, ideas about race and processes of racializing others reduce personhood to exclusive ancestral identities. In Chapter 6, Strange skillfully shows how mediumship and racecraft can work in competing ways. Mediumship emphasizes the opacity of selves; racecraft assumes truths based on physical traits that mediums deem misleading. This mutual suspicion of the ethno-racial other between Surinamese Hindus and Maroons can prevent personal and economic relationships, as well as successful mediation.

Throughout the chapters, the author provides the reader with thick descriptions of ritual experiences, complemented by his interlocutors' conversations about pain and dreams and their ways of questioning their social relationships and the mediums themselves. These rich and vivid insights form the basis of a thorough analysis of the interlocutors' lifeworlds. The author adeptly interweaves these into a well-managed book. I would have loved to read even more about their life stories, their professional and daily lives outside the ritual context, to picture in greater detail how social class background and aspirations for social status, as they intersect with ethno-racial communal belonging, play out in the individual life stories.

It is exciting to read about the ethnographer's interactions with his interlocutors and with the deities. I appreciated the well-placed glimpses into the ethnographer's involvement in the ritual actions. 'Dressed in my *pujari*'s uniform, I stood to Bhairo's left, recording and assisting him in whatever way he requested' (p. 78). In such instances, I would be interested in knowing more about how the anthropologist reached his position of 'recording and assisting' a deity who is possessing one of his interlocutors, for example whether there was a process of initiation. Reflection on how the ethnographer's positionality and authority developed in the course of the fieldwork would also be interesting when interlocutors ask him for his opinion about how much an interlocutor should pay a particular medium (p. 192).

The book is well structured. The chapter titles are telling, and they guide the reader through how the themes develop and ultimately interact. Frequent subheadings contribute to the book's readability. As a minor remark to further enhance reader-friendliness, I would have preferred to read some of the information provided in the endnotes in the main text instead. For instance, percentages of the ethnic composition of the Surinamese society (p. 7, n. 5) are helpful to getting a sense of the ratio of the minorities and of the lack of a clear majority, which is critical for grasping the social complexities described in the book.

Suspect Others offers valuable insights for scholars and postgraduate students interested in postcolonial societies and in the anthropology of religion. Focusing on suspicion and self-understanding, Strange develops a productive lens through which

to think about contemporary Suriname. The importance of jealousy and suspicion of neighbors or relatives, whom mediums reveal as, for instance, performing sorcery against the afflicted person, and the ways in which ethnic suspicion is played out in these processes, seems particularly pronounced in the Surinamese case. At the same time, these observations resonate with ethnographies about African and South Asian traditions in other post-plantation societies. Strange's work on epistemic affects, such as suspicion, provides helpful tools for scholars to examine the making of relational selves, social relations and societies.

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Reference

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