Digitalisera bort kolonialismen?

Kan digital media hjälpa etnografiska museer att göra upp med sitt koloniala arv?

I uppsatsen *Digitalizing World Culture. Modes of Digitalization within the Museum of World Culture,* tittar Andreas Henriksson närmare på Världskulturmuseet i Göteborg. Syftet är att se om digitalisering och Internet har betydelse i museets arbete med att hitta nya sätt att hantera de numera omtvistade museiföremål som museet ärvt från sin föregångare Etnografiska Museet. Föremålen, varav många plundrades ur gravar och smugglades från sina ursprungsländer, speglar enligt många idag ett kolonialt tankegods, där djupt problematiska idéer om västerländsk överlägsenhet sågs som självklara.

Hur fungerar digital media?

Henriksson visar att digital media inte bara handlar om nya sätt att presentera föremål. För att digitalisering ska få en viktig plats i museet, måste även synen på 'analoga' föremål förnyas och sättas in i nya sammanhang. Att till exempel bara skanna in gamla katalogkort där museiföremålen registrerats, medför inte någon större skillnad mellan analog och digital katalog. Men när man fotograferar varje föremål ur olika vinklar, standardiserar sökord och skapar gemensamma sökmotorer för flera museer i syfte att maximera möjligheterna för den framtida användningen, då blir den digitala katalogen någonting helt annat än den gamla pappersbaserade, och digitaliseringsprocessen blir viktig för museets framtid.

Digitalisering handlar därför i hög grad om att skapa sammanhang, där digital media skiljer ut sig från annan media och där den blir viktig för museet. När digital media introduceras i en organisation, menar Henriksson att de som arbetar med den måste förändra organisationens självbild, men också anpassa sig till rådande synsätt. Utan denna samtidiga förändring och anpassning kommer fördelarna med och betydelsen av digitaliseringen aldrig fram och processen framstår som meningslös.

Strid om media

Inom Världskulturmuseet har digital media enligt Henriksson introducerats på två motstridiga sätt.

Det första sättet handlar om marknadsföring; museianställda som arbetar med den här formen av digitalisering talar om museiföremål som medium. Föremål i en utställning är ingenting om de inte upplevs, hävdar de anställda; föremålens främsta funktion blir att förmedla känslor och mening till besökare. Men i den egenskapen kan de också delvis ersättas av presentationer på Internet, som förmedlar liknande

känsla och mening. Detta synsätt förnyar enligt Henriksson föremålen genom att de hanteras respektlöst; genom att den förmedlade upplevelsen blir det viktiga, kan de ställas i nya och innovativa relationer till andra former av media, vilket inte hade varit möjligt om man haft kvar deras ensidiga roll som bärare av kunskap om andra kulturer.

Det andra sättet att introducera digital media är enligt Henriksson mer troget tidigare synsätt inom museivärlden. Här vill man skapa en stor, sökbar och flexibel databas över alla föremål för att möjliggöra framtida användning i nya sammanhang. Men även denna digitaliseringsprocess tar avstånd från tidigare etnografiska synsätt. Där man förr försökte placera in föremålen i ett givet kunskapsfält om 'främmande kultur', vill man med dagens digitala katalog möjliggöra för användaren att själv skapa ordning bland föremålen, beroende på egna intressen eller praktiska avvägningar. Även en person från ett annat land ska ha användning av katalogen och få den information om föremålen som han eller hon behöver.

Dessa synsätt på digital media innebär också olika syn på vad föremålen 'egentligen är', där marknadsföring säger "media" och arkivanställda säger "kunskapskällor inom en flexibel ram".

Gemensamt problem

En av slutsatserna i uppsatsen blir att en organisation misstar sig om den tror att digital media helt enkelt kan användas inom ramen för redan befintlig verksamhet. Digitalisering kräver nya synsätt på gamla praktiker. Men å andra sidan stödjer digital media inte heller bara nyskapande och respektlösa idéer, utan kan även verka som ett sätt att aktualisera och därmed ge nytt liv åt gamla synsätt.

Henriksson frågar sig hur en organisation som Världskulturmuseet, med två så vitt skiljda sätt att se på digital media, alls kan hålla ihop. Han hävdar att sammanhållningen är villkorad och att den bland annat krävt att de två synsätten får hålla till i två skiljda byggnader – själva museibyggnaden respektive föremålsarkivet. Den kräver också att marknadsföringsavdelningen har ensamrätt till hemsidan, medan allting som rör föremålen måste förhandlas med anställda på arkivet. Han skriver också att synsätten trots allt förenas i en strävan efter att hitta nya sammanhang för de gamla etnografiska föremålen; dock förutsätter denna gemensamma strävan att ingetdera synsätten någonsin kan få ensamrätt att säga vad föremålen 'egentligen är'. Museiföremålen måste fortsätta att utgöra en grundläggande problemställning i museet, kring vilken skiljda lösningar kan samlas och laborera.

Abstract

Title: Digitalizing World Culture. Modes of Digitalization within the Museum of World Culture

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The thesis investigates the renovation of outdated museum objects through the use of digital media and argues that this process is mirrored in two recent trends within the museum world, namely re-enchantment and digital databases. Influenced by Actor-Network Theory, the thesis asks 1. how the digital media is arranged in local networks through what it defines as modes of digitalization, 2. how re-enchantment and digital databases are determined by those arrangements and 3. how those arrangements are held together, both separately and jointly within a single museum.

These questions are answered through a careful case study of the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, where the two investigated trends are emerging through nascent arrangements of digital media. The study is comprised of several interviews, observations and extensive document analysis.

The study shows that limits between analogue and digital, and between object and medium, are depend upon local arrangements or modes of digitalization. It argues that the current trend of mediating the museum, equates the museum identity with characteristics usually ascribed to different media. It also argues that the integrity of the Museum of World Culture can only be sustained through the relative failure of its two competing modes of digitalization.

Keywords: The Museum of World Culture, Actor-Network Theory, digitalization, John Law, recent museum trends.

GOTHENBURG UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

Digitalizing World Culture

Modes of Digitalization within the Museum of World Culture

Master Thesis in Sociology
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September 2008

Content

Acknowledgements

Introduction

A journalist that visited the Museum of World Culture on its opening day 2004 reported her experience to the local newspaper:

> "Darkness. The cries of apes and birds. A large waterfall rumbles on a wide screen, the rain forest crowding in from the walls and ceiling. Looking up, one sees the crowns of palms (on images). Display cases? Well, yes, ceramics, arts and crafts […] but these cases are sparsely scattered as small glass altars in the forest. In clearings, people living along the Orinoco River are working (on screens. Continuous movement, one finds oneself in the middle of an installation) and a giant snake is hissing. / - … the creators of the earth were not yet born, nor animals, nor humans…, a friendly voice narrates throughout. / The space is maximally used. Sound, sight, objects – and sensations. Close to the 'waterfall' there is a starry sky, the interior of a hut – and your feet sink down into the blue floor. / – A marsh, exclaims one of the other visitors."[1] (Melin 2004)

This is a description of an emotional, embodied and personal experience. Being an experience that took place in a museum that at the time had only just replaced the old Ethnographic Museum in Gothenburg, it might appear as a rather surprising account. At least, it is far removed from the standard picture of the ethnographic museum that tells of impersonal arrangement of objects to furnish scientific evidence to disciplined visitors. To sum it up in one word, this is a *re-enchanted* museum, rather distant from its disenchanted predecessor.

As such, the Museum of World Culture exemplifies an international museum trend, where re-enchantment is the new keyword. Sharon Macdonald, acclaimed museum anthropologist, describes this trend in a recent article of hers – and the text echoes the experience from the Museum of World Culture:

> "museums may […] seek to emphasise the 'magical' qualities of objects by using display techniques such as dramatic lightning, background noise or music, and labels with suggestive questions […], cryptic quotations or fairy-tale-like narratives. The magical and spectacular qualities of museum spaces or buildings themselves may also be played up – visually arresting and sometimes outlandish architectural designs, which strive to make individual 'style statements', being one of the signatures of the current museum movement." (Macdonald 2005: 216-17)

The re-enchantment of the Museum of World Culture is no doubt facilitated by the introduction of digital media into the museum organization. In other words, it involves the organization of the elements of which digital media is comprised – hardware, software programs, know-how etc – that I will discuss under the title of *modes of digitalization*.

The re-enchanting digitalization process is parallel with another set-up of digital media within the Museum of World Culture, namely object digitalization. Object digitalization seeks to assemble different types of information on objects within large, searchable databases that are publically available. This process is also representative of current trends within the international mu-

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[1] "Mörker. Skrik från apor och fåglar. Ett stort vattenfall dånar på bredbild, regnskogen tränger sig på från sidor och tak - tittar man upp ser man palmkronor (på bild). Montrar? Jo, keramikfigurer och konsthantverk […] men montrarna är glest utslängda som små glasaltare i skogen. I gläntor arbetar folk som bor längs Orinocofloden (på filmdukar. Det rör sig hela tiden, man är mitt i en installation) och en jätteorm väser. / - ...jordens skapare var ännu inte född, inte heller djuren eller människor...berättar en vänlig röst över alltsammans. / Rummet är utnyttjat till max. Ljud, ljus, föremål - och känsla. Strax intill "vattenfallet" finns en stjärnhimmel, en hyddinteriör - och så sjunker man ner i det blå mjuka golvet. / - Träskmark! säger en av besökarna med aha-uttryck."

seum community, a trend that has attracted some attention from museological research investigating the future of museum object collections. (Cameron and Robinson 2007)

In this thesis, I wish to investigate into how these two trends – re-enchantment and object digitalization respectively – are materialized within the same museum through the organizing labour of two distinct modes of digitalization. My point of departure is distinct from more mainstream research done on the field in at least two ways.

Firstly, different theorists have accredited the re-enchantment trend to different underlying causes, citing, among others, the post-colonial global situation, marketization of museums and the idea to foster initiative and responsible visitors/citizens through the use of interactivity (Barry 2001: 130-31; Chakrabarty 2002). While not disputing any of these suggestions, in this thesis I have chosen to look closer at the controversies surrounding the ethnographic collections of objects housed by the Museum of World Culture in order to say something about the relations and practices into which they are merged and show that they are the common problem that both re-enchantment and object digitalization seek to tackle.

I will suggest that the current trends of re-enchantment and object digitalization are strategies to reorder the objects and reconstruct them within renovating arrangements that give them new and more acceptable meaning.

Secondly, my thesis differs from other texts by not accepting *a priori* any concept of digital media as a single, unitary tool. Rather, I will investigate different and competing modes of digitalization as strategies to reorder and reconstruct – indeed, to *renovate* – the collections of objects housed in the Museum of World Culture either as re-enchanted or collected in digital databases. I will argue that this is a messy project, since the end-results require a vast array of heterogeneous elements to be connected, standardized and ordered. Digitalization, then, is no mere tool used for attaining a preset goal, but a painstaking process that in the end will determine the character of its results.

In short, using the Museum of World Culture as a case, I will investigate how digital media is set up within the contexts of competing modes of digitalization, working to renovate the museum collections of objects.

Let me state in passing, though, that this is a sociological thesis that does not believe in the social. Following Actor-Network Theory, an empiricist programme of constructivism that encompasses an ever-growing field of studies, my starting point is firmly lodged in the assertion that technologies such as digital media and re-enchantment are products of local, messy and boundless construction or ordering processes. Here, there is no room for a medium, such as the social, that can give instantaneous spread to, for example, postcolonial museums. It may be that these museums are or will be important in questioning colonialism or fostering consumerism, but if so, those are products of local imitation, actions and construction processes, not the effects of a post-colonialist or consumerist 'society' or a 'social condition'. Needless to say, this assertion has both theoretical and methodological consequences, and I will return to these and treat them at length below.

Earlier research
Museums are the subject matter for endless amounts of research articles and books. Indeed, there is an entire discipline, museology, dedicated to the study and improvement of museums. Before going on to discuss earlier research, I must therefore erect strict limits to the definition of the

kind of research project I am suggesting here. I will do this simply by restating that this thesis is a work within the tradition of Actor-Network Theory. There has indeed been some important research on museums done in the name of that theoretical field and it is to that research I now turn.

Actor-Network Theorists have above all concerned themselves with the order and disorder among museum objects, but also with the organizing role that these objects themselves come to play. They tend to highlight the local and historically specific and therefore resort to case studies or meta-research on other case-studies.

In their 1989 article *Institutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects* Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer discuss the Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (Star and Griesemer 1989). Star and Griesemer ask the question how, in an institution of only loosely connected actors with different interests and goals, a joint scientific undertaking is possible. In many organizations a chief administrator works to translate, i.e. realign, the work of participants to better suit the organization and its goals. However, in the case of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, there were several administrators with different interests and ideas concerning the museum. How, in this situation, ask Star et al, is a joint project, satisfactory to all parties, possible? Their primary answers are method standardization and boundary objects.

As to the methods, Star and Griesemer identify several ways in which a certain amount of standardization leads to practices that leave different groups within and outside of the museum both with a great degree of autonomy and with the opportunity to participate in the museum's scientific undertaking through their own work. Star and Griesemer also discuss what they call boundary objects. These are abstract or concrete objects that are meaningful and participate in several of the divergent groups simultaneously. The foremost boundary object may be the collection of specimens itself, accessible and meaningful to each separate group engaged in the museum.

Kevin Hetherington has written two articles on museums that I will relate here, in both expressively inscribing himself in the tradition of Actor-Network Theory. In *From Blindness to blindness*, he investigates the history of art museums in terms of the changing heterogeneous orders of their object collections (Hetherington 1999). During the Renaissance, museums were mostly private collections of symbolically interconnected paintings and sculptures, crafted with specific positions of the spectator in mind, so that the on-lookers stood outside, and yet became part of the work. The collection was centred on the aristocratic owner, who also gave the artworks their order and identity. From then onward, Hetherington describes how the order of objects became less given and how the spectator was increasingly removed from the artwork. During the nineteenth century, the disciplined and educated visitor to museums was himself supposed to make out the order among the objects and artworks displayed. Then again, as the twentieth century began, attacks were mounted on the notion of order itself; Dadaists played on the absurdity and meaninglessness of objects, and thus gave them an agency of their own, an autonomy vis-à-vis museum orderings and ordering subjects. Hetherington ends his article on a speculative note, suggesting that the museum trend underway seems to undercut the universal gaze of the on-lookers even further; now, the objects have taken centre-stage and can only be appreciated through the relative blindness of always situated, embodied museum visitors.

In the second article by Hetherington, *The Utopics of Social Ordering*, the author takes on the museum without walls in terms of heterotopia (Hetherington 1996). Heterotopia is a concept forwarded by Michel Foucault to indicate places outside of social ordering, where a sort of utopias can be temporarily enacted. Hetherington draws on the works of the author Tony Bennett to show that whereas the earliest museums competed with the circus and the fair, they soon became

places of ordered wonderment and discipline through the 'Othering' of its competitors. However, the museum without walls, and here Hetherington introduces Stonehenge as his example, is a place allowing room for visitor autonomy. Indeed, whereas there have been many attempts to impose structure and discipline on the visitors to the Stonehenge, Hetherington argues, it is still heterotopical, yearly becoming the site for druid and new age festivals, the proponents of which are quite ready to furnish the place with unorthodox meanings.

In his article *Museological science?*, John V. Pickstone tells of a museological or analytical moment in the history of Science/Technology/Medicine or STM (Pickstone 1994). Pickstone identifies *ways of knowing*, both cognitive and organizational in character, that are born during and dominates a certain historical epoch, but are more or less mixed in together with other kind of STM once their hegemony is lost. According to Pickstone, the French revolution was the birthplace of the public museum, when privately gathered collections of natural objects and machines were opened to the wider community and handed over to professional curators. These immense collections made new and more systematic studies of objects possible, which was one condition that facilitated the new analytical science, accrediting form to underlying mechanisms or interactions between simpler elements. Thus, public museums, understood to discipline and teach the free citizens of the new republic, where co-emergent with the analytical sciences. Pickstone argues that museums were given a new and less glorified role when the predominance of analytical science gave way to experimentalism around 1850; now, they were reduced to be zones of interaction between science and the public – which is not to say that analytical STM:s were not enacted locally later also.

Aims and questions of the thesis

Earlier research on the field has tended to define the museum as a heterogeneous assembling of objects. In my thesis, I will try to specify how the museum under investigation, is not just an enactment of one specific order of objects, but a decentred and multiple ordering of mediating technology, different ways of knowing, visitors, staff and objects. This is not to say that I devalue the role of objects; following Hetherington, I will rather treat the objects as having taken centre-stage and gained some autonomy of their own. However, I will argue that this is precisely the reason why there can be many and partial attempts at ordering the objects through re-enchantment and digitalization; indeed, object autonomy is exactly autonomy from specific, all-encompassing and total orders. As a matter of fact, this is one of the points that I wish to convey by using the concepts of re-enchantment and digitalization of objects. In other words, the first aim of my thesis is to illustrate what object autonomy may actually mean.

Secondly, I wish to present ways of investigating heterogeneous digitalization processes. This second aim can be given two formulations, one having to do with situating, the other with non-instrumentality.

Situating: It is no coincidence that digitalization is used to re-enchant and digitalize objects within the Museum of World Culture – the problem of autonomous objects and how to deal with them permeates that entire organization, as I will demonstrate. Therefore, I am able to tell a story of a specific and situated set-up of digital media, how it is crafted and assembled to solve specific problems in the context where it is enacted. That story is poignant, as it rebukes common concepts of digital media as unitary or decontextualized.

Non-instrumentality: I think that the Museum of World Culture exemplifies how digital media introduces new materials into the organization that berates any concept of digitalization as just a

tool for specific purposes. Digitalization must be ordered; in fact, to have a concept of a passage between digital and analogue itself requires specific ordering. Therefore, digital media is bound to have unintended consequences if it is simply employed for specific instrumental purposes; without labour to standardize or centralize the modes of digitalization that must inevitably govern the introduction of digital media, it will dissolve into different and particular endeavours.

Following Bruno Latour, who maintains that all Actor-Network Theory studies must both take apart its subject matter, as well as describe how it is in actuality held together (Latour 2005: 23-25), my third aim is to reassemble the museum and its modes of digitalization, without overlooking its heterogeneousness. Thus, rather than labelling the museum as purely post-colonialist or ethnographic, or even relating clear-cut struggles between two sides, I wish to point out the diverging places where the processes hold together, both separately, as single modes of digitalization, and jointly, i.e. within the museum as a whole. Here, I heed the points made by Star and Griesemer and will try to make out what materials are holding the museum together. Is it objects, as in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology? Are there other amalgams at work?

The three aims I have set up for my thesis, boil down to three questions: 1. How are modes of digitalization enacted within the Museum of World Culture and the context of object autonomy? 2. How do these non-instrumental and situated modes of digitalization determine the resulting re-enchantment and digital databases? 3. How are different modes of digitalization separately and jointly held together in the museum?

Background

In this chapter I will discuss the history behind the renovation of outdated museum objects and unravel the possible reasons to why digital media has come to play an important part in that renovation. I will do this by firstly connecting the recent trends of re-enchantment and object digitalization with the history of Western museums, and then suggesting that the renovating role given to digitalization may have historical roots in the dispersion of digital media within Swedish bureaucracy in the 1990s.

I will also show that digitalization is indeed utilized to cope with the increasingly problematic objects within the Museum of World Culture, by tracing that idea back to the founding documents of the museum and by showing that the problems pertaining to the collections of objects play important roles throughout the museum today.

Re-enchantment and digitalization

Re-enchantment in the context of museums can seem misplaced for anyone familiar with Max Weber's studies of modern bureaucracies – of which museums surely are examples. According to Weber, bureaucracies attain legitimacy by reference to universal laws and equal treatment of all.[2] Thus, they tend to be ruled by instrumental rationality, making humans exchangeable means for achieving collective goals or applying common laws. The meaning of individuality, experience and emotion is made null and void by the rationalizing process that *disenchants* the world according to Weber's account.

One version of the history of Western museums can be read as a classical process of disenchantment. Initially, from the days of the *Wunderkammer* where the nobility was to be astounded by many curious objects, we have stories of not yet ordered proto-museums, spaces of re-enchanted possibilities outside of everyday life. (Hetherington 1999; Pickstone 1994) As the art of collecting objects was taken over by the so-called *savants*, however, it was soon reconfigured into their often private and economically driven quests for classification and ordering. After the French revolution in 1789, privately gathered collections were opened to the public and a salaried profession of curators, politically as well as scientifically driven, was established – an arrangement that soon spread over Europe. In these public and professional museums, nature and the colonized world could be unveiled, classified and displayed for the universalized gaze of the informed and disciplined occidental citizen. The museums cooperated closely with their respective science; the ethnographic museums both gained objects from scientific fieldtrips and became important sites for the scientific construction of non-western cultures and for the career opportunities of professional ethnographers.

However, as ideas of scientific universality became less sustainable under the era of anticolonialism, increasing scientific specialization and the critique of scientific objectivity during the twentieth century, more and more museums found themselves left with huge collections of utterly disenchanted objects, representing no one and no thing.

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[2] As with many other of Weber's concepts, disenchantment and bureaucracy are both eloquently discussed in his lecture Science as Vocation. Max Weber, 'Science as Vocation', *From Max Weber: Essay in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

While these histories then suggest that Weber's account of disenchantment applies to museum history, there is also empirical evidence to suggest that a countermovement may be underway. Sharon Macdonald argues that there are parallels between new modes of museum exhibitions and new religious movements. (Macdonald 2005) Both share a disdain for the instrumental, unemotional gaze, and argues for the centrality of personal, bodily and emotional experiences. Thus, in many contemporary museums, objects are excluded if they cannot be integrated into the narrative and emotional whole that makes up an exhibition.

While Macdonald is hesitant to call re-enchantment of museums generally a *recent* development – she argues that museums have always been places where objects have taken on an aura of magic and wonder – she nevertheless admits that the tendency has become more pronounced in recent years. Weber's account of disenchantment, Macdonald seems to suggest, must be supplanted by a less one-sided account of how different processes of re-enchantment and disenchantment operate side by side. Thus, Macdonald compares the relation between old magic of the classical museum and the re-enchantment of the new, with the relation between the tattered spirituality of state churches and the individual spirituality of New Age:

> "The 'established church' of the museum world is surely the nineteenth-century public museum – that confident expression of, especially, nation state identity, of worthiness of public learning, of progress and the achievements of science and the arts, and the ambition of civil society itself. Although many national and municipal museums formed on this nineteenth-century model continue today, they have, especially since the 1970s, come under increasing criticism. [...] In response to this, and particularly in response to falling attendance in a political climate in which visitor numbers are one of the justifications for public funding, many established museums, as well as new museums, have developed new philosophies, new forms of working, new exhibitions and building programmes." (Macdonald 2005: 213)

Macdonald's argument resonates with that of the historian John Pickstone, who can be said to investigate the other process connected with object renovation and digitalization underway in contemporary museums, namely object digitalization. Pickstone, who, as I mentioned in the Introduction, ventures to write a new history of science, technology and medicine, builds on the work of Foucault, and identifies specific, historically formed ways of knowing that *inter alia* have also been operating on and arranging museums. Pickstone does not, though, accept Foucault's concept of history as a series of mutually exclusive ways of knowing. Instead, he argues that different mindsets are operating in tandem within seemingly homogeneous institutions. Thus, the magical thinking of the Renaissance may well be important for sustaining some of our contemporary institutions, even those where instrumental reason seems to reign supreme.

Briefly discussing the role of digitalization within modern museums, Pickstone notes that "'[v]irtual' collections, virtual museums, mega-libraries all now beckon. The technology is omnivorous, it minimises distinctions" (Pickstone 2000: 82). He then goes on to conjecture that this technology, as it creates common meta-databases that let individuals use words or strings to search for objects of quite varying kind, gives a sort of magical quality to these query words. Words used to search the databases, skip the traditional boundaries and are the common denominators of the varying objects as they are temporarily arranged together in the search result. Thus, these words seem to act as keys to new meaning, linking the disparate items within the database.

To sum up then, these are thus the two recent trends that I think are at work in the Museum of World Culture: re-enchantment is about recognizing non-human and hidden powers, and to delve on the personal and emotional, rather than on the universal and intellectual; object digitalization is about finding new meanings for objects furnished by keywords that skip the boundaries of traditional categorizations.

Information technology as enchanted talisman[3]

Are there any reasons to why digital media is employed to renovate museum collections, apart from qualities that possibly inhere in the technology? As I will demonstrate in this section, there is at least anecdotal evidence to suggest that there are historical factors determining this usage, having to do with the character ascribed to it when digitalization was introduced into Swedish bureaucracy. However, I will only sketch these historical factors and the section must be read accordingly; certainly, the influence of the factors on the actual implementation of information technology in museums can be traced in textual references, but their direct impact on the motivation of important actors has yet to be proven.

The government proposition from 1996 that I will discuss here, is referred to in a chapter on information technology, IT, in the 1999 report by the commission that handled the then to-be Museum of World Culture during the initial year (Rogestam et al. 1998: 35).

Again, the history of Information Technology in Swedish welfare society has not yet been written. Reading the government proposition from 1996, however, I venture to suggest that it gives us an example of enchantment. It tells the tale of magical forces, or digital media that defies the laws of bureaucracy and market, and can cause havoc if it is not harvested and used rightly.

> "The spread of IT has now reached levels where it demands structural changes in society. [...] IT creates new and unexpected connections that counter old and established structures.[4] (Regeringsproposition 1995/96:125: 9)

Later, the proposition could be said to sum its overall attitude on IT up when discussing law and education:

> "The task should therefore be to create the capacity for integrating the operational forms and patterns of the information society into law and education, without altering the fundamental values that since long have been established on those fields."[5] (Regeringsproposition 1995/96:125: 17)

In short then, the Swedish Social-democratic cabinet of 1996, that lay the foundation for the use of IT within the Museum of World Culture, took a somewhat ambiguous stance on structural changes to accommodate the new technology. The reasoning seems to come back to this point: the technology should be a tool for the implementation of values inherent in the current structures, but at the same time it demands that those same structures be changed. In other words, the technology seems to live a life of its own according to unknown laws that cause it to behave unexpectedly. In the face of such powers, it is necessary to take precautions not to be become a tool of the tool itself.

In the eyes of the government, there seems to be something about IT that escapes bureaucracy and rational understanding, as it demands the change of those same structures on the basis of which it could be understood. Nevertheless, it is precisely that hidden power of structural reconfiguration that can be harvested and put to good use, and that the government is keen on applying

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[3] In the interest of clarity, I have chosen to reserve the word 're-enchantment' for the renovating process underway in contemporary museums, while using 'enchantment' for other processes ascribing magical qualities to different materials; the distinction has no further implications.

[4] "Spridningen av IT har nu nått en sådan nivå att den kräver strukturförändringar i samhället. [...] IT skapar nya och oväntade samband som går på tvären mot gamla, väletablerade strukturer."

[5] "Målsättningen bör därför vara att i lagstiftningen och utbildningen bygga in kapaciteten att inrymma informationssamhällets verksamhetsformer och verksamhetsmönster utan att för den skulle rucka på de grundläggande värderingar som sedan länge varit styrande på dessa områden."

in its own activities. In such a situation, the only way forward seems to be the simultaneous invitation of and protection against the same technology. Here, the instrumental model of usage falls short. Indeed, instead of usage, the government report speaks of allowing or inviting, to pave the way for. Metaphorically speaking, IT appears as the magical talisman that in the end threatens to take possession of its too trusting user. One must maintain a healthy distance to such a force, allowing it some freedom, while taking precautions not to become addicted or accustomed.

Later the proposition discusses the country's state museums and again takes structural changes as reason for both using and taking precautions against the new technology:

> "IT also opens entirely new perspectives on the possibilities of museums to provide for the interests and demands of the public, while it simultaneously creates new conditions and synergy effects for the interpretations and reconstructions of our past. Therefore the museums must take active part in the development of multimedia, digitalization systems and telecommunications."[6] (Regeringsproposition 1995/96:125: 63)

The concept of "entirely new perspectives" is important here, as it introduces the above-mentioned element of unpredictability into the reasoning, now applied to museums. The idea seems to be that Swedish museums must take active part in the development of information technology in order not to later be caught napping by revolutionary systems developed by someone else.

Above all, however, the quotation points us to the potency said to inhere in information technology, as it is capable of changing "conditions" and creating "synergy effects". Clearly, the technology is supposed not only to enhance current exhibition practices, but to make possible new, hitherto unthought-of perspectives. Here also the proposition breaks away from instrumental rationality, as it hinges its reasoning on unpredictable but supposedly potent forces.

To my mind, then, the government proposition on widening and increasing the use of IT from 1996, enchants the new technology in at least two ways. Firstly, it ascribes hidden and unpredictable forces to it, claiming that these must be guarded against. Secondly, it hinges its assurances of unthought-of innovations on these same forces and suggests that they be allowed and invited. These are forces that make information technology into a sort of enchanted talisman that both makes promises and implies secret threats to its users and that can never be purely instrumental, but merely invited and guarded against.

Again, though, I wish to point out that while this overview presents us with possible historical reasons to the role of IT in re-enchanting museum objects, the actual mechanisms and translations responsible for the actualization of those reasons have not been demonstrated.

Experimental digitalization

I will return to the history behind the Museum of World Culture in a coming chapter, and for now, it suffices to know that the museum was created simultaneously with the state authority the National Museums of World Culture, under which it is currently placed. The authority has its central office in the Gothenburg museum building, but is also responsible for three other Stockholm-based museums.

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[6] "IT öppnar också helt nya perspektiv på museernas möjligheter att möta allmänhetens intressen och krav samtidigt som den skapar nya förutsättningar och synergieffekter för tolkningarna och rekonstruktionerna av vårt förflutna. Därför måste museerna ta aktiv del i utvecklingen av multimedier, digitaliseringssystem och tele- kommunikation [sic]. "

In the year 2000, the authority took over from the preparatory committee that had published its summary report the year before. That report was, according to many, the most detailed instruction to the new authority and the museums written do date, and some have recently argued that it has been given even too much influence on the museum over the years (KPMG 2008: 27-28; Lundahl 2008).

The report stresses the importance of digital databases covering the museum collections. It suggests that the process of object digitalization should be initialized as soon as the museum staff has been employed. This is a demand made throughout the report, and I will here focus on its less ubiquitous idea of using digital media in innovating exhibitions.

The report, as mentioned above, does give reference to the government proposition on IT from 1996. It does puts much hope in the new technology to pave way for an experimental museum with little room for a rational, disembodied and universal gaze.

> "It is obvious that the demands on exhibitions have increased when it comes to external shape and active implementation of technology, but also concerning topicality, ideas and relevance more broadly. […] The idea to focus the Gothenburg museum on experimental forms of exhibition has been brought up. […] Furthermore, it has been pointed out that a bolder and less conventional perspective on objects can promote for example artistic and interdisciplinary approaches, and that technology, object and personal contacts constitute a bothand and can never really replace each other."[7] (Rogestam et al. 1998: 40-41)

The idea, it seems, is to integrate IT into the museum in order to meet the growing demands on exhibitions, both from the public and from other museums. The museum, the report decides,

> "shall inspire to creativity, new initiatives and untried activity forms. By enticing people to make their own discoveries and experiences, the museum can become a culture mirror that gives insight into the human condition and her creative capacity."[8] (Rogestam et al. 1998: 27)

The key words here are creativity, enticement, insight and experiences – in short, emotional, bodily engaging and personal attitudes that have little to do with impersonal and value-free knowledge. Consistent with this, the report goes on to maintain the importance of displayed objects, not because the objects are examples of abstract categories, but because of their "entirely unique ability to create concretion and nearness."

To be sure, this is a re-enchanted museum being described, where objects and spaces come to life and tell their stories to and entice the audiences. Even if technology is not the only means of re-enchanting, then, it certainly is described as one tool among several for innovating exhibitional forms. I would argue that this important role for technology in the re-enchanted museum is not random, but that it pays respect to the specific role given to IT by the Swedish government. Indeed, the report does refer back to the proposition I analysed above. Again, though, how different formulations, strategies and orderings were active in the composition of the report remains to be demonstrated.

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[7] "Uppenbart är att kraven på utställningar ökat i meningen attraktiv yttre gestaltning och aktiv tillämpning av tekniken men också aktualitetsanknytning, idéinnehåll och relevans i vid mening. […] Tanken att fokusera Göteborgsverksamheten till experimentell utställningsverksamhet har förts fram […]. Vidare har framhållits att en djärvare och mer okonventionell föremålssyn kan främja t.ex. konstnärliga och tvärvetenskapliga infallsvinklar samt att teknik, föremål och personlig kontakt är ett både-och som aldrig kan fullt ut ersätta varandra."

[8] "Museet skall inspirera till kreativitet, nya initiativ och oprövade verksamhetsformer. Genom att locka till egna upptäckter och upplevelser kan museet bli en kulturspegel, som ger insikt om människans villkor och skapande förmåga."

The problem

Not only has digital media been figured as an enchanted force and not only is re-enchantment and digitalization general trends in the museum world today. The disenchanted, ethnographic objects are also presented as a main problem in the current Museum of World Culture. Perhaps best summed up by Jan Amnehäll, head of the museum collections, this attitude spells out as follows:

> "We must start seeing the objects in a new light. […] it is perhaps also something of a general trend in the West. I mean, most museums here have gone through some sort of transformation. So it was only timely that the old Ethnographic Museum disappeared and became the Museum of World Culture. Now, Sweden has not had any colonies, but in many countries, like Holland, it has been a big process dealing with the colonial past."[9] (2008-05-19)

This assertion is more or less made in all of the interviews I have conducted, though there are variations on the common theme. For example, Anna Mighetto, who heads information and marketing, told me:

> "I know Margareta [the museum director] talks about a mountain of objects in Sweden, we just have so many objects and we know nothing about them."[10] (2008-05-28:a)

In other words, the objects constitute a problem for the museum, connected to the demise of colonialism and the subsequent disenchantment and that problem is maintained as a problem throughout the organization. As I will show in this essay, however, though digital media is the prime solution that many adopt, there are different strategies employed to deal with the objects through digitalization. Digitalization is hence not one, but several often opposing processes that are applied in strategies to convert the objects and rid the museum of their current meaninglessness.

Conclusions

Having discussed trends in the international museum world, the Swedish government proposition on IT and the report instructing the Museum of World Culture, I have sought to make some general points about the current place of technology in the re-enchantment and digitalization of museum objects and to show that the Museum of World Culture has the concept of re-enchantment and information technology build into its very foundations.

Firstly, in order to attract visitors and public funding, and bypass their problematic object collections, more and more museums have created enticing and emotionally evoking exhibitions; simultaneously, digitalization of collected objects is also presented as a means of renovation. Secondly, in the context of Swedish bureaucracy, information technology has been attributed with special, hidden powers that can change structures. Thirdly, IT was from the very start stated as an important tool for developing the exhibitions in the Museum of World Culture. Fourthly, the objects do constitute a problem in the context of that particular museum, as their colonialist heritage and disenchanted character is commonly articulated. The Museum of World Culture is in this perspective an excellent case for the investigation of recent museum development.

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[9] "vi måste börja se föremålen på ett nytt sätt. […] det är nog lite grann också av en allmän trend i västvärlden. Jag menar, de flesta museerna här har ju genomgått en slags transformation. Så det låg ju helt rätt i tiden att det gamla Etnografiska museet försvann och blev Världskulturmuseet. Nu har ju Sverige inte haft kolonier, men, liksom många länder, som Holland, har det ju varit en stor process att göra upp med det koloniala förflutna."

[10] "jag vet Margareta pratar om föremålsköttberg i Sverige, alltså vi har så mycket föremål och vi vet ingenting om dom."

Theoretical remarks

I devoted the previous chapter to discussing the background to the renovation of ethnographical object and why digital media seems to furnish a solution. In this chapter I will develop concepts to better grapple with the processes I have studied empirically, namely the strategies of digitalization that work to make the renovation possible. More precisely, I have tried to conceptualize both how digital technology changes local networks and how these local networks in turn are part of arranging the technology.

In order to accomplish this, I have applied Actor-Network Theory to show how re-enchantment is arranged in the Museum of World Culture through information technology.

Actor-Network Theory has sprung from social empirical studies of technology and science. Associated with the constructivism of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, the theory maintains that things and people are related in local networks, and that any specific form of a network must be forged and maintained through repetition. (Dugdale 1999) Claiming that even seemingly inherent qualities such as durability or allure can exist only as arrangements of local network, the theory advocates methods that highlight repressed parts of these networks in order to show how the qualities investigated could not exist without the repetition of that specific repression (Lee and Stenner 1999).

For some, Actor-Network Theory has overstated its case when it maintains that even human agency and the lifelessness of objects is an effect of network arrangements. However, for the case I am about to investigate here, where museum objects are treated as problematic entities that also have the abilities to entice and inspire, this far-going constructivism only seems appropriate.

On a similarly positive note, since Actor-Network Theory has been developed through many empirical studies of technology in organizations, this also makes it a good candidate for my study, treating the use of digital media in a museum.

However, some would argue that the theory has shortcomings relating to its take on information technology and digitalization. I agree in part with this estimation, but think the problem remediable, a point I will now turn to discuss at length.

The problem arises from the fact that much of the current debate concerning information technology is informed by *media materialism*, i.e. the notion that ideas are shaped by the character of the medium in which they are presented. For example, the commonly posed questions on how digital media changes our ways of writing and corresponding, is inspired by such media materialism.

Actor-Network Theory is not media materialist, but *relational materialist* (Law 1994: 102, 39). As I understand that concept, it means that the theory in question cannot concede of characteristics inherent in any medium as such. Rather, media and its characteristics are effects of relations within networks.

Thus, in so far as we pose questions informed by media materialism – and those abound around the new digital media – and try to answer them with the relational materialism of Actor-Network Theory, we are begging for trouble.

To make the problem even worse, I would argue that most questions worth asking about digital media have in some way or another been inspired by media materialism. This is so, because media materialism sets the new media apart and takes it to be a potential cause of many contemporary phenomena, thus posing many and intriguing questions.

I will devote the rest of this chapter to remedy the said problem by introducing *modes of digitalization* as a relational materialist alternative concept, which will allow for questions highlighting the importance of new media to be investigated by relational materialist theories such as Actor-Network Theory, despite the media materialist starting point of those questions.

Why we should not define medium as form

When seeing a certain museum object displayed in an exhibition, consequently in a museum catalogue and lastly on the museum website, it can seem appropriate to define digital media as the form of display, as opposed to the content or object that remains more or less the same throughout all these forms. Exploiting that definition to its fullest, what I have called media materialism have had a heyday searching out the different interconnections that exist between form and content, showing that the latter is permeated by the former (cf. Hayles 2005: 142). However, to repeat the point I made above, relational materialism would argue that media has no inherent qualities whatsoever – regardless of whether these show up as form or content (Law 1994: 102-03). Rather, relational materialism claims that media is entirely formed by network relations between humans and things.

Thus, a seemingly innocent definition of media has got us into a debate that is a long way from being resolved.

Since I believe that relational materialism should be used to investigate the role of digital media in reshaping current social networks, I am of obvious reasons quite hesitant to use the aforementioned concept, distinguishing form and content. Rather, I believe we must speak of media in a way that alleviate the tension discussed here. We must see to that we are able to show how digital media matters in different milieus, at the same time as we are allowed to investigate into how local networks of those milieus also play a large role in defining and shaping those same media.

Introducing modes of digitalization

Perhaps we must embroider on the abovementioned tension to better understand how it could be overcome.

Digitalization has been presented as an important case for media materialism, since its proponents have been able to show that the content of a digital version must be said to differ from its analogue counterpart. For example, a digitalized book becomes searchable in a fashion quite different from the analogue one; a digitalized copy of an ageing manuscript looses, naturally, its texture, weight, smell, etc., that for many make up its identity and is part of its very content. For media materialism, then, media form is tightly attached to media content – even if this is rarely recognized in commonsense notions of, say, literary works.

The relational materialism of Actor-Network Theory, meanwhile, lacks a concept pertinent specifically to digitalization. Regardless of whether the target medium is digital or not, important figure within Actor-Network Theory prefer to speak of translations or modes of representation, whereby one material – by means of local arrangement – is used to represent another. The suc-

cess of this process is then ascribed to arrangements of networks that make the target material durable and widespread, so that it is not distorted or lost when far from its source. The underlying point is that neither materials, nor persons, have inherent qualities, independent of their position in local networks. While this may pose important questions about digitalization – e.g. how did digital mediums come to 'represent' anything in the first place? – such questions would first and foremost build on a critique against any claim giving digital media a unique position as of itself.

Once again, I wish to point out that an opposition between these two stances is actualized only with certain definitions of media, for example those analytically separating it from its content, identifying it with form. In a vein closely related to Actor-Network Theory, I would instead like to decentre the concept of media, thus making the possible specificity of digital media not into a question of inherent or formal character, but of networks and arrangements.

In other words, I propose that such distinctions as digital/analogue and object/medium are effects of local arrangements and vary accordingly. Admittedly, digitalization is itself dependent on a distinction between analogue and digital – it is indeed the labour if converting the former to the latter – and my idea to decentre the concept then makes it dependent on local and contingent arrangements. But in this way abandoning the universality of digitalization is perhaps not as problematic for digitalization studies as for example Catharine Hayles would have us believe when she writes about digitalization processes throughout both culture and nature, as well as throughout history (Hayles 2005: 56-57). Locally, people do make a great fuss about digitalization, be it universal or not, thus opening up vistas for studies of its variation, dispersion and assemblage.

In an article on medical Internet sites, Samantha Adams and Marc Berg touch on the debate between media and relational materialism mentioned above (Adams and Berg 2004). Arguing from the point of view of Actor-Network Theory, they show that concerns raised around the new, digital medium are the same as those raised around printed texts in the 15th century. Their point, to repeat the argument made by relational materialists generally, is that different media have no inherent qualities, but play similar roles in the relational networks into which they are introduced.

Importantly, however, Adams and Berg's article is good evidence that Actor-Network Theorists are prepared to accept that the introduction of new media into old networks at least temporarily opens the latter up to debate and new arrangements. Their argument resonates with Actor-Network Theorist Bruno Latour's concept of blackboxing; according to Latour, the development of a new technology involves a myriad concerns that are blackboxed once the technology is deemed usable and retailable (Latour 1987). However, under specific circumstances – as when a group questions the safety of the new technology – the black box is reopened and its bits and pieces once again available for reassessment and rearrangement.

Adam and Berg's article, then, can be said to demonstrate the capacity of new media to reopen the black boxes of the local networks where they are introduced, even if this is not done everywhere. Thus we are half-way to giving digital media new relevance within relational materialism. Before going further, however, I wish to introduce Actor-Network Theorist John Law's discussion on representation in order to give further depth to the concept I am about to coin.

John Law argues for the existence of different modes of representation, related to ways of ordering and organizing (Law 1994: 137-58). Representation is the same as letting a durable, homogeneous and centralized material represent another, less controlled material. An example would be statistics of workplace efficiency, available to a board of directors, representing the heteroge-

neous work done in different places and by different people. Law reasons that such representation always requires intervention, active arrangement and monitoring. But, he adds, it is only by means of such representation that an organization can reflect on itself and take centralized decisions. Thus, representation is one place where organizing, knowledge and discipline come together, an insight Law expressly accredits to Michel Foucault.

Finally, then, combining the unpacking effect of new media, as explored by Adams and Berg, with Law's recognition of representation as a central node for discipline and reflexivity within organizations, I propose *modes of digitalization as a concept for the rearranging processes opened up by digital media, processes that are central to retaining, challenging and changing organization identity, reflexivity and discipline*.

Implicated in the definition just given are the following points: 1. Digital media introduces elements that cannot be handled – or are perceived as impossible to handle – exhaustively within existing arrangements of representation, 2. There is not one, but many ways of arranging digitalization, 3. The character and extent of one mode of digitalization, for example decided by specific distinctions between analogue and digital, cannot be perceived *a priori*, but is entirely a thing for empirical research.

The modes of modes

Hitherto, I have discussed and defined the *digitalization* part of the concept 'modes of digitalization'. But what about *modes*?

The concept I have proposed is modelled on the theoretical and methodological points made by John Law in the book where he introduces the concept 'modes of ordering'. Law wishes to introduce a way of thinking into Actor-Network Theory that looks for patterns, rather than questions any claim to meaning and over-all connection whatsoever (Law 1994: 106-07). He claims that his concept of modes comes close to Foucault's concept of discourses; both are unusually 'bold' for the poststructuralist camp, in that they allow for imputing large patterns to empirical data. The argument Law proposes for this 'boldness', is that there must be room to describe those relative and contingent orders within which, according to the standard poststructuralist account, subjectivity and agency are materialized. Law also follows Foucault when he talks of non-subjective strategies; modes of ordering have specific aims that are part of the ordering itself but never limited to a specific person and her or his interests. Against Foucault, however, Law stresses the fact that ordering is a process that is best described by narratives; there is never order, only the illusion of order created by the labour of ordering.

As I have already mentioned, Law also introduces *modes of representation*. Here again, while he discusses at length how to think about representation, he is less forthcoming concerning the character of its *modes*. The outer similarity of the two concepts 'modes of ordering' and 'modes of representation' implies that there is some relation between the two; Law does not specify which, however. Is representation a necessary part of any mode of ordering? Or is it a mode of ordering in its own right? Or, again, is it something quite different from ordering?

The issue becomes more pressing when turning to modes of digitalization. As I introduced the concept above, digitalization is not only about ordering, but also about breaking down or at least disclosing the illusion of completion within earlier orders, since digitalization itself presupposes admitting that the introduction of digital media requires new arrangements. At the same time, digitalization is also about creating or retaining order. Furthermore, I have connected digitaliza-

tion to representation, seeing it as the replacement of one medium by another and discussing the processes of reflexivity and central decision-making implicated in the latter.

My take on this is, I hope, close to Law's: the concepts and theories of modes are to be connected in ways that best leaves room for the investigation of specific empirical material. Thus, digitalization can be a continuance of an earlier mode of ordering that require and make possible modes of representation that digital media has reconfigured. Or it can be the bases of resistance against a specific ordering, a resistance whose order is build around the arrangements of digitalization. And so on. The final word is given to the empirical material.

Reflecting on museum identity

When defining modes of digitalization above, I used the concept of organizational identity without further specifying its meaning. As it figures frequently in the material I have gathered, I wish to give a short description of the concept.

In later years, organizational identities have come to the fore in empirical organization studies. (Gioia et al. 2000) The idea is that identity is enacted by the organization and its members. As with many other academic concepts, organizational identity has spread widely outside academia and into organizations themselves. The staff at the Museum of World Culture, for example, was quite self-conscious about their organizational identity when I interviewed them, reflecting on how it was best constructed, maintained and changed.

Representation and digitalization have a special relation to identity within Actor-Network Theory, as it is by means of these that questions of identity and image can be posed at all. It is namely through reducing the heterogeneous materials of the organization to the homogeneous and centralized material of written text and the like, that self-reflection and centralized decisions are made possible. An example of this is annual reports, protocols, websites etc.

As digitalization, in order to come to the fore as a project, also requires a certain problematization of order, one should expect that such a project begins with the thematization of identity – not only in the reflexive mode that representation makes possible ('is this what we are?'), but as something that is itself a problem ('our identity is threatened, how to defend it?').

To my mind, the government proposition on the use of IT discussed in the last chapter illustrates this point. Here, digital media was discussed because of its restructuring power. According to my theory and the interpretation I have furnished here, digital media had opened a black box within which centralized decisions, identity and planning were possible. Thus it was seen as both a possibility and a threat and the task proposed was to integrate, within the order of current institutions, the very technology that had opened that same order up for rearrangement.

In this sense, the invitation of IT into older arrangements, such as exhibitions, in order to attract audiences by emotive, personal and embodied experiences is a specific mode of digitalization, i.e. a specific way of using information technology to challenge some earlier order, retaining others and introducing digital media as representative and ordering power. Remember, though, this is only one of many possible modes of digitalization.

In the next two chapters, I will describe my case study and suggest that there are two competing modes of digitalization within the Museum of World Culture. Since both can be seen as strategies of object renovation, the question I will ask is how modes of digitalization are arranged in

the context of the museum and its autonomous objects, and how they determine the renovation that they facilitate.

Method

To call Actor-Network Theory an empirical programme of constructivism is to say a mouthful, since it points us to the interdependence of theory and method in the establishment and development of the field. Bruno Latour, one of the most important proponents of the theory, has said that it was developed in order to stay true to the intentions of ethnomethodology (Latour 1999). In other words, the theory should be open enough to allow us to simply report back what is going on in the field that we study.

But what Actor-Network Theorists have discovered in being faithful to their fields of studies, is that the ordinary sociological rack of conceptual tools are annoyingly narrow in scope. For example, a museum object may have many different dimensions that in no way respects classical boundaries, such as its pedagogical value, its international travelling, the scientific knowledge associated with it and its place in the digitalized catalogue. To reconfigure such an object is always more than a purely social or technological or pedagogical effort; it is all these together and more. But classical sociology is inbred with the classical distinction between nature and culture, and the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter. Therefore, sociological research has, at least in its own opinion, concerned itself with the culture and mind side of things. In the sense that a museum object is a cultural object, sociology has investigated how the mind interprets the object, or how different hidden 'social forces' – always working culturally and through the mind – has formed the object. The 'bare fact' of the material, its measures, colour and weight, sociology has left to the natural sciences, along with a bundle of other facts deemed natural or material. But, again, these are distinctions thoroughly disrespected by the actual practices around museum objects, or indeed around any other actor or object or machine or animal.

Actor-Network Theory therefore argues for a radical renewal of sociology, importing and creating concepts and methods that allows for investigations into what is actually going on, say, in the borderless interactions of a museum, a laboratory or a household (cf. Latour 2005). What it offers is both less and more than what ordinary sociology is currently offering. Less, because Actor-Network Theory refuses to believe in any grand narrative of the social; what remains are interconnected, local arrangements. More, because with the proposed changes, sociology can report what is actually happening when people and things interact, not only speculate on the shaky ground of contesting grand theories. More, also because Actor-Network Theory claims to investigate into how reality is constructed through interactive exchanges between actors and materials, not just remain limited to the 'merely' social, cultural or cognitive. By constructed, then, I do not mean a purely cognitive construct or a linguistic monism bordering on idealism, but constructed as a non-subjective, strategic arrangements of many radically different materials and actors.

Methodological critique

Actor-Network Theory, such as I have presented it here, is both indebted to certain methodological schools, and quite critical of much of current sociological methodology. In what follows, I will sketch out three of the most important critical point that Actor-Network Theorists have made against mainstream methodology.

What is method? Actor-Network Theorist John Law is quite critical of the widespread definition of method, ruled as it is by a striving for agreement between propositions 'in here' and relations between actual entities 'out there'. (Law 2004) Law is instead suggesting that we define

method as a way of arranging the limits between presence, manifest absence and Otherness. What he is calling for by this definition is an insight into how research presentations are always necessarily neglecting certain facts (for example those deemed 'peripheral' or 'incoherent with the facts presented' – i.e. Otherness) when explicitly addressing other facts, either as research results (presence) or as facts that are consciously put aside (manifest absence). His point is that the relation between propositions and reality does not address this larger methodological operation and hence does not come up with satisfactory answers to how these borders between presence, manifest absence and Otherness are to be erected. What is worse, current practice within social sciences, steeped in a number of dubious metaphysical presuppositions, does demand certain borders between the three to be erected – but as methodology is incapacitated by its limited definition of method, the methodological merits or disadvantages of these presupposed borders are never evaluated. For example, if one assumes that reality consists of clear-cut and autonomous entities, one simultaneously 'Others' their fluidity, vagueness and dependencies – and whether that is good or bad is a question far from being resolved. Law modestly ask that these choices at least be opened up for debate.

The order sequence of theory, method and data. I believe that it follows from Laws' definition of method that theory, method and data are co-emergent. As he writes in another book of his, we might "treat data, theory and method as all going together in some self-testing, self-exploring, but suitably modest form of inquiry." (Law 1994: 97) Indeed, if we are, as Law suggests we should be, concerning ourselves with how our presentation of research is situating the limits between presence, manifest absence and Otherness, then we must take decisions that consciously touch on data, method and theory *simultaneously*. Theory is not propositions to be tested, but decides which data is deemed important and how it is presented; method is not the procedures testing theory, but a myriad of decisions determining the choice and interpretation of theory and data; and data is not reality, but *some representation of* reality that is presented before the background noise of Otherness. Decisions on one will inevitably change the other two. As I understand Law, method is to take informed decisions in the light of this interconnectedness.

Generality. Being a concern of utmost importance for traditional methodology, generality has been a key factor in determining what belongs to presence and what belongs to Otherness. This traditional concern goes back to the pivotal metaphysical distinction between local and universal (Latour 2005). The idea is that research should concern itself only with universal, widely spread or at least widely important phenomena. Actor-Network Theory does not exactly oppose that view, but throws suspicion on concepts such as 'the social' or 'society' that underpins much of the generality-reasoning in social sciences. Arrangements and orderings, Actor-Network Theory asserts, can be spread widely; but they are always enacted locally. From another perspective, the local is always part of broader networks and overlaps with other local practices. Therefore, the most general study should concern itself with how generality is constructed out of translations into and enactments in local situations; and the most local study should not blind itself to the fact that the phenomena under scrutiny is not created out of nothing, but comes from certain places and interacts with and influences others. The point then is not so much to deny that widely spread arrangements may be more interesting to social sciences than less widely spread arrangements (though without 'the social' or 'society' as the foremost models to weigh the relevance of research results against, that idea is perhaps in need of new legitimating arguments), but to point out that there are no convincing general arguments for the exclusion of what is deemed 'local' from the presence of scientific results.

To conclude this critique, Actor-Network Theorists are problematizing metaphysical presuppositions in methodology, not arguing for method anarchy, but rather for a re-evaluation on a new

basis of old, stagnant concepts. In the next two sections, I will describe how this critique influenced my method decisions when writing this thesis.

Choice of case

The most suitable methodological name for what Actor-Network Theorists usually do is case studies. But the concept should be used cautiously since case study methodology often comes in a package containing problematic ideas on generality. – Are there any reasons to believe that the studied case is close to the mean value when it comes to important variables?, is one common question that usually pops up in those contexts. Now, if we agree with Actor-Network Theory that there is no such thing as 'the social' or 'society', which would underpin the notion of for example museums as a normally distributed phenomena or indeed as one well delineated single phenomenon as such, then how are cases to be chosen?

Perhaps this is a question that lacks single, clear-cut answers. That, however, does not mean that there are no answers at all. Let me present and look closer at two possible criteria for choosing cases.

Bruno Latour has argued that we should choose cases where the investigated phenomenon is not black-bloxed, i.e. where there is still a myriad of decisions to be made and ordering to be done before there can be talk of one single phenomenon with immediately detectable functions (Latour 1987). Latour's argument is constructivist and anti-metaphysical, and sits well with Actor-Network Theory; we should learn to abhor notions of naturally functional entities with single essences, and instead show that these are assembled out of boundless materials that attain singularity only with ordering and disciplined usage. Therefore, we should investigate localities where this construction process is still visible and not hidden behind a surface of unity and function.

I am interested in digitalization and its use in renovating museum objects. Does Latour's suggestion about choosing cases without black boxes, work to justify the choice of the Museum of World Culture? I would say yes, since the museum is quite new and has been the focus for much public debate since its opening.

The newness of the museum and the criticism levelled at it could of course indicate, but never *guarantee* that its use of digital media and its work with problematic object collections were not black-boxed. However, some months before starting writing the thesis, I had done a small pilot study of the museum, interviewing one of the employees working with the website (2007-12-14). The employee also furnished me with some in-house documentation. Admittedly, I was at the time quite clueless as to what I really wanted to study and how and why the study was to be projected. There were, however, some features in the sample I gathered that got me interested. Above all, my interviewee seemed more or less displeased with how things were currently going, while simultaneously having rather high ambitions for the museum website. Again, the documentation he supplied me was extremely ambitious, even talking about 'erasing the borders between digital and real in the museum', while the website itself was impressive, but far from overwhelmingly so. Here was a discrepancy that spoke of unsettled debates and half-measures without names. Also, the pilot interview quickly came down to details, where lack of money and time mixed up with computer languages, pedagogy and anti-colonialism. There was a messiness here that confused me up till the time when I began to understand the underlying message about boundless materials in Actor-Network Theory.

In short, my pilot study showed that the digitalization process in the Museum of World Culture was unripe enough to warrant an Actor-Network Theory study.

Another criterion for choosing cases: influence or dispersion. Any study will be relevant to more people if the realities it studies are more widely dispersed. Needless to say, this criterion is far from unproblematic: for example, if I write a helpful but very specific essay about an organization, would that essay be better or worse than if I had chosen to sacrifice all the specifics in order to present an abstract and generalized version of the organization? And if the only readers are employees of the studied organization? I think that my point is close to John Law's when I say that we should perhaps be more modest about the texts we produce and also take the methodological consequences of that modesty.

However, that is not the same thing as saying that we should suppress facts about the dispersal of the patterns we detect in the empirical data. Quite the opposite; it is saying that we should be more concerned with specifying how that dispersal is done and where.

In actuality, I believe that there are several widely spread patterns at work in the Museum of World Culture, some of which are specific to the museum world, and some which are not. I believe, therefore, that there is an important flaw in my thesis to keep in mind when reading it: I have not been especially good at mapping links between the museum and other localities. This is a flaw with two dimensions; firstly, the unmapped links may be important for understanding the Museum of World Culture itself; secondly, I have little to say about those other localities, apart from that they should be studied further. At the other hand, I have been able to specify which different modes of digitalization are being organized in the museum and I can make educated guesses at where else to find them. I present these guesses in the end of the thesis, where I also suggest important questions to ask when studying them in other localities.

Now, to return to the main question: did the concepts of dispersal and influence go into the consideration when I chose the Museum of World Culture as case? Yes, it did insofar as I was keen to choose a state museum, rather than a municipal or private one. My idea was that state museums have larger contact zones, partly because they have enough money to pay for travelling. The National Museums of World Culture, to which the Museum of World Culture belongs, is also a 'responsibility museum', which means that it has national responsibility for its specific disciplinary area, namely ethnography. Do these indicators really mean anything in terms of how far the museum network reaches in comparison with other museums? I do not know. I only know that they seem to reach far; my interviewees repeatedly referred to museums abroad, travels, and international consultants. Indeed, one of my informants did claim that the Museum of World Culture is one of the most internationalized museums in Sweden (2008-05-27). In short, there is data indicating that what I have observed may be of interest elsewhere and that implementation of digital media in the Museum of World Culture can influence and be influenced by the arrangement of digital media in other localities.

Other choices

Let me describe three rather different moments in the process of writing this thesis. First, and early on in the process, I had read theories, made my pilot study and felt hopelessly uninformed about the museum; what was it really about, were my theories relevant for anything and would anyone agree to be interviewed? Second, some months later, I was swamped with data; not only had I made lengthy interviews with employees, former employees and a consultant, I had also read newspaper and magazine articles, evaluations, government reports and in-house documents. Could I, and should I make sense of everything? What was important and what was not? Third, I mailed out a coherent, structured thesis with quotes from the data, reporting on the digitalization processes in the Museum of World Culture to my informants, asking them for comments.

What had happened between these three points in time? What did I do to assure that the end-result did not misrepresent the museum? What could I have done better?

Looking at the three stages in the process described above, I argue that the earlier a decision was taken, the more difficult it was to assure that it enhanced the end-result. I would even go so far as to say that, as regards the qualities of the finished thesis, the best choices I could do in the beginning of the process was to leave as many options open as possible. Many methodologists would disagree, as they claim that any thesis becomes scientific only on the ground that the empirical testing is well prepared in order to ascertain isolation of important variables, reliability of measurements, and validity and generality of results.

I would answer with John Law's concept of method: regardless of our initial hopes – in the end our presentation of data will have been decided by choices both theoretical and methodological in nature, choices that highlight some data and hide other; in short, these pivotal choices will be made after the fact, regardless if we wish it so or not. Rather than believe any misrepresentation exorcised by initiative rites, I tried to leave many options open when gathering data, in order to make narrowing choices as late as possible and in the light of what I knew to be thereby expelled.

What did this mean in actuality?

Firstly, I chose several different kinds of data, namely articles about the museum[11], external, printed documents[12], internal documents[13] and interviews.

I chose the resulting thirteen interviewees in three different ways. First, I interviewed persons that worked closely with the digitalization process; the photographer, the chief of information and marketing, and an information technician. Secondly, I chose to interview two former employees that I hoped could furnish an independent perspective on the museum. Thirdly, I asked all of the first five interviewees to give me names of other persons they thought I should interview, which led me to seven other informants. All in all, and together with the first pilot study, this meant thirteen interviewees in twelve interviews. I represent these in **diagram 1**.

As the diagram informs, the interviews were conducted in different ways. I recorded seven of them in mp3 format, all of which were carefully transcribed. Four interviews were noted directly in handwriting, but were rendered in more fluent and detailed writing directly after each interview. The informants that had been interviewed in the latter manner were all sent the written rendition of the interviews and asked to edit and comment on these. Four of the interviewees made extensive editing, and all five gave me their expressed approval after having read the last version of the interviews.

In between, I visited the museum several times, both to stroll around in the exhibition alone and with friends, and to be present at some of the happenings that the museum arranged. I also visited the museum webpage regularly, trying to go through its entire structure.

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[11] I read all Swedish newspaper and magazine articles that contained the words 'Världskulturmuseet', 'Världskulturmuseum' or 'Världskultur', all in all 130 articles

[12] I read the Government proposition on Information Technology that inspired the report initiating the process that became the Museum of World Culture, a report which I also read, as well as a recent evaluation of the museum.

[13] I asked all interviewees to furnish me with any documents that they thought I should read.
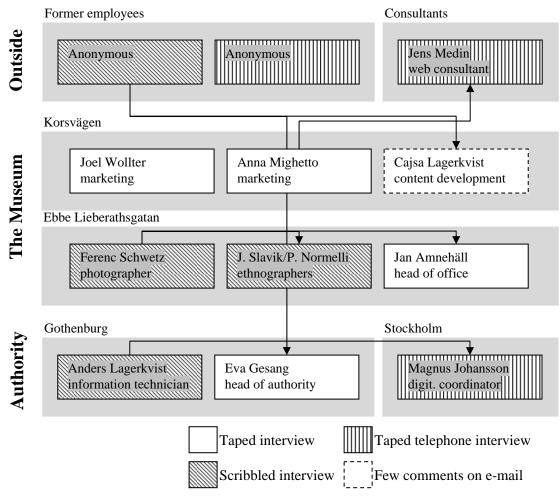
Diagram 1. The interviewees, types of interviews and who led me to whom.

Afterwards, I do recognize that I focused too much on the museum when I should have enabled comparisons with, for example, international museum websites. Also, I would have felt more secure making some of the claims I make in this thesis, had I been able to support them with observations from, say, meetings and discussions between members of staff. At the other hand, I have made some important conclusions and I do not feel overly anxious making them.

So how did I go about narrowing the data down? In hindsight, I can see that I alternated between two operations during this often frustrating period. First, I enmeshed myself in data, reading and coding the material. After a while, such a reading period would end with a sort of break-through, when I found a concept that I thought captured some important aspect of what I had read. Such concepts were 'digitalization', 'modes of ordering' and the late-comer 're-enchantment'. Then, I reread the material again, or read new material, and let the new concept give impetus to my reading[14]. Needless to say, the concepts began to make some data more interesting than other, and so

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[14] I tried different styles of reading in order to broaden my outlook. Among others, I used NVivo, a computer program for qualitative text analysis. While I initially had far-going ambitions with NVivo, the coding database and noting system it facilitates just became another style of reading. The main obstacle for any more ambitious implementation, was that NVivo's coding database is rather rigid, and does not facilitate rereading in light of added theoretical concepts; or at least, such rereading seem difficult to present systematically within the program. Nevertheless, the program suited me well when I wished to delve deeper into the text sources I had picked out for reading.

the data-onion was peeled layer after layer till I thought that it was small enough to be presented in writing.

In this perspective then, the 'break-through concepts' were the theoretical-methodological choices of data that John Law talks about. Did I make them consciously? Yes, after a fashion; I did choose them after having read the data through, and I would not have taken them on so whole-heartedly, had they not focused on aspects discussed in the theoretical literature, such as processes and uncertainties rather than states and certainties.

Do these concepts and this thesis represent reality? Certainly not, if we agree with the whole row of sociologists from Max Weber onwards, who understand reality as inexhaustibly complex. But I think they represent *one* reality, and to assure myself of it, I gave all my informants three weeks to comment freely on my by then nearly finished thesis. I did receive a few comments. Most of these asked me to euphemize some quotes, and one actually concerned the interpretation of data. After having conformed to these comments, I do now believe that my undertakings at least approximate what Law calls methods:

> "They condense and manifest a version of reality, but as they condense it they re-enact it, they re-confirm it. *Method always works not simply by detecting but also by amplifying a reality*." (Law 2004: 116)

Results

In this chapter I will discuss the two modes of digitalization that I think are active in renovating the objects of the Museum of World Culture, namely what I will call mediating and object digitalization respectively. Consistent with Actor-Network Theory, I will try to show how these modes can be understood as active efforts to (re)organize networks of humans, objects and machines. I will also demonstrate how they work as strategies of object renovation.

As a large part of my theory about how modes of digitalization work, hinges on their being different from other ways of ordering, I will also try to demonstrate where and how this difference come to the fore and how it is acted out. Lastly, I will show how and why the two modes of digitalization come to oppose each other as different ways of looking at the museum and its objects.

Let me begin, though, by introducing the reader to the location and history of the museum.

The museum

The Location

The Museum of World Culture is located at Korsvägen, one of Gothenburg's largest tram stations. Not the easiest place to reach by foot from the city centre, the quarter is a focal point in its own right. From here one can enter Liseberg, the city's amusement park, the Swedish Exhibition Centre, that hosts several important annual fairs, Scandinavium, a large arena for sport and cultural events, as well as Universeum, the city's science centre whose interactive and experience-oriented fairs have that made it popular with children. Also important, at Korsvägen one is never far from the central library of the University of Gothenburg, nor from several of the main philosophy and art departments and centres.

Being one of the newest buildings in the area, the placement of the Museum of World Culture was not made by chance. For the state committee that decided on the location in 1998, the nearby entertainment attractions translated into many visitors, and the proximity to the university meant cooperation. The university placed a centre for museum interdisciplinary studies, Museion, in the museum building, but only after its proximity to the library had been assured. It nowadays seems happy to offer its students closeness to a place of work. For municipal politicians, the museum has become part of the increasingly important entertainment area around Korsvägen, especially appealing as a pedagogically mediated experience for young people. Göran Johansson, the local councillor, announced to the local newspaper in 2005:

> "It is a good thing that we were successful in realizing the idea of offering a total experience to children and young people. The Museum of World Culture and the Universeum provokes thinking, both about history and the future. And afterwards, Liseberg can make your tummy tickle."[15] (Johansson 2005)

Since the museum building is not quite dissimilar to the science centre Universeum and placed next to it, the two buildings are easily mistaken for parts of the same project. In actuality, Universeum is a joint, private undertaking, while the museum is part of the National Museums for

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[15] "Det känns bra att vi lyckats förverkliga idén att erbjuda barn och ungdomar en totalupplevelse. I Världskulturmuseet och på Universeum väcks tankar, från historien till framtiden. Och efteråt kan det få killa i magen på Liseberg."

World Culture, a national state authority with its central office in the Gothenburg museum building.

Coming from Korsvägen, the exterior of the museum building is dominated by concrete walls and the building's cubical form, which gives a rather banal or even dull impression. Several large windows, however, works as a kind of display cases – or show-windows – for the museum, giving by-passers a glimpse of its exhibitions. Entering, the concrete partly gives way to huge glass walls and oak. From the spacious central hall, several storeys tall, one can see how the banal cubical form of the exterior is repeated and twisted inside, as the exhibition halls on different levels are turned around in various angles and pushed out into the hall itself. This central space, to which the visitors enter and return after each exhibition visit, is bright, lit by daylight streaming in through the massive glass walls or by a vast array of lamps. It is dominated by a huge oak staircase, both taking the visitors up to the café, as well as working as an atrium theatre.

The exhibition halls, of which none are located on the ground floor, vary in size and height, but differ from the main hall in being to a large extent sealed off from sunlight and therefore dim. They also share an absence of ornamentation, which makes them quite flexible as exhibition halls.

While the exhibitions are an obvious element of the museum, it is the central atrium that remains most conspicuous. This bears witness to the fact that the museum stresses the importance of activities other than the exhibitions. Interviewed in *Arkitektur* just after the premier opening, the Britain-based architects Cécile Brisac and Edgar Gonzalez that designed the museum building avowed:

> "The museum obviously has the ambition to become a place of dialogue, not only a place for collecting and displaying historical artefacts. This was one of the main criteria for the composition of the building."[16] (Jansson 2004)

Curiously, however, the museum building lacks capacity to host any collections of objects, despite the fact that the museum has inherited collections of more than some 170 000 ethnographical objects. These are instead gathered on a separate and considerably less conspicuous address, Ebbe Lieberathsgatan, four tram stations further away from the city centre. Such a physical separation between exhibitions and collections, accompanied by a division of labour between the two addresses, as well as recent cut-backs on the preservation personnel, has spurred notions of conflicts mirrored in the interviews I conducted with members of staff placed at Ebbe Lieberathsgatan (cf. 2008-05-14:a). Some have also argued that the location of the museum collections reflects an unwillingness to make the politically precarious objects available to the public (Fiskesjö 2007).

History of the museum
The Museum of World Culture opened for the first time in December 2004. It had taken over the collections and some of the staff from its predecessor, Gothenburg's Ethnographical Museum that had closed its doors to the public four year earlier.

The Ethnographical Museum was for many years a municipal institution. Threatened by close-down after years of economical crisis in the city, some of the museum's employees asked for support from the government. One of the employees from that time recalls that "when you lobbied the Social-democrats, you needed bait. Instead of speaking of ethnography, only making the

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[16] "Museet har utan tvivel ambitionen att bli en plattform for dialog och inte blott för att samla och visa upp historiska artefakter. Detta var ett av de huvudsakliga kriterierna för utformningen av byggnaden."

politicians think of colonialism, you spoke about the new Swedes [i.e. immigrants] and about seeing this as a new project for integration."[17] (2008-05-14:a) However, when the social-democratic government consequently proposed a new state authority for world culture in Gothenburg with three well-known Stockholm museums under it, as well as an entirely new museum in Gothenburg, even the lobbying staff of the Ethnographic Museum was positively overwhelmed.

However, this specific historiography, making world culture an unintended outcome of the Ethnographic Museum's survival strategy, is only one of the museum's creation myths. Another story can be told from the perspective of concepts. World culture was afloat as a concept in Sweden during the late nineties, and gave name among others to the politically prestigious Forum for world culture. While some politicians defined it mainly as a contribution to Swedish multiculturalism, others gave it a theoretically more sophisticated denotation, connecting it to globalization and post-colonialism (Jonsson 1997). According to the latter camp, world culture was a means of highlighting hybrid and cross-boundary culture, subverting seemingly homogeneous global capitalism and national societies. While some writers in this camp also criticized the newly founded National Museums for World Culture for using the concept as an ideological smokescreen in order to vindicate an outdated ethnographical museum model, other post-colonialists, while recognizing potential contradiction and reproduction of colonialist discourse, cooperated with the new museum (Thörn 2005). Today it would not be an overstatement to say that the museum and its university tenant Museion have become important bastions for Swedish post-colonialist thought.[18]

Mediating the museum

When I have told my friends in Gothenburg about my thesis on the Museum of World Culture, many have had their opinions ready. The museum has certainly stuck out its head in a country with a fairly conservative museum culture, as it has chosen not to focus on displaying objects, but instead to organize exhibitions around controversial themes such as the trafficking of women,

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[17] "Det var ju så att när man skulle lobba hos socialdemokraterna, så behövde man agn på kroken. Istället för att tala om etnografi, som bara skulle få politikerna att tänka på kolonialismen, så började man tala om de nya svenskarna och att se det nya som ett integrationsprojekt."

[18] Though a crude measurement, the titles of the lectures currently arranged by Museion testify to this point: "European Social Forum – Important in world politics?", "Solidarity beyond the nation state", "The body as politics" and "Cognitive Capital & Spaces of Mobility". Se Museion, 'Museion - Göteborgs Universitet', [Website], <http://www.museion.gu.se/>, accessed 2008-07-28 .
It should be noted that the question on to what degree the Museum of World Culture and Museion are post-colonialist has been publically debated; generally, this debate can be said to have been fought over the value to be given concept of post-colonalism; indeed, some seem to have implied that it makes scholars untrustworthy. Museion has therefore publically pointed out that while some individuals engaged in the university unite define themselves as post-colonialist, others, though "knowledgeable" about post-colonialism, are less prone to define themselves in terms of that camp. See Mikela Lundahl, 'Kommentarer Till Kpmgs Rapport', (Gothenburg: Museion, Göteborgs Universitet, 2008). While this debate, fired by conflicts around the political left/right-divide, the status of social sciences and Swedish colonialist and nationalist heritage, is hugely interesting, I cannot find that Museion's contribution to it undermines the judgment I make here. In short, in so far as post-colonialism is defined as a chiefly academically driven, interdisciplinary enterprise to question and investigate the consequences of colonialism, while focusing power, identity and locally varied narratives rather than the grand narratives of for example classical social theories (Ania Loomba, *Kolonialism/Postkolonialism. En Introduktion Till Ett Forskningsfält*, trans. Oskar Söderlind (Stockholm: Tankekraft Förlag, 2005) at 33-37.), the activities of Museion and the Museum of World Culture fit rather nicely into that definition, regardless of how specific individuals within those unites may choose to define themselves.

fair trade clothes and HIV (cf. Fiskesjö 2007). As a consequence, it has been the target of much criticism in media, in personal letters to the museum and on the Web.

Having read through many newspaper articles on the subject, I would however like to point out that the controversy has had surprisingly little to do with the museum's strategy to envelop its visitors in a sort of total experience of sound, sight and sensations. Rather, people have more often been upset with the unusual position of objects in the exhibitions. The museum exhibitions do contain many display cases with object, but as a visitor, one immediately senses that these are downplayed and that they are present only to partake in the total experience offered. This feeling is also confirmed when visiting the colourful and large website of the museum, where many exhibitions are in one way or another represented digitally; here, again, the objects are only haphazardly represented and have given way to animations and sounds that recreate the exhibition experience in an interesting and often powerful way.

In this part of the chapter, I will investigate in detail how objects are positioned within the networks of things, thoughts and people. I will try to show that the concept of objects as mediums belongs to a specific mode of ordering, i.e. mediating, and that this ordering of things also works as a mode of digitalization. I ask the reader to bear with me as I delve deep into how the museum experience is managed and arranged, both by analogue and digital means, in order to finally draw conclusions about how digitalization works as a re-enchantment strategy.

Introducing mediation

One of the most interesting interviews I did for this thesis was with Anna Mighetto, who is responsible for information and marketing in the Museum of World Culture and who has been its employee from very early on. She repeatedly invoked examples and metaphors and from her tone of voice and gestures it was clear she was quite committed to her work. Also, she rarely ducked when asked to develop her thoughts on currents conflicts within the museum. In short, she was an ideal source of information and furnished a rich material. Though at times finding it difficult to distance myself from her usage of terms, I have chosen to cite the interview with her at some length below.

In the interview, Mighetto returned again and again to the museum brand. The museum marketing staff has at times fought bitter struggles over its right to use logos and colours that differ from those prescribed by the national authority. When discussing the difference between museum and authority logos, Mighetto argued that at the time when the authority worked on its own graphic design,

> "[t]here was not really any analysis on how to handle the brand. And that is, from my perspective, an entirely preposterous way of reasoning. You can't go about buying a wardrobe for someone if you're entirely ignorant of that person's size or personality. You must know who speaks, I think, before deciding on how to say things. But Lars Hall [who developed the graphical design for the authority] is, as I understand, more focused on graphics, so he is more into solving problems, not the analysis behind brands. And such analysis wasn't perhaps very common in those days, 2001, 2002. Brand and such. Nowadays, everyone speaks about brands. But we were early then, and as a museum we were very early when speaking in those terms."[19] (2008-05-28:a)

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[19] "Det fanns väl ingen riktig egentligen analys kring hur vi skulle hantera varumärkena. Och det är ju kanske, utifrån mitt sätt att se, helt bakvänt. Du kan ju inte gå ut och köpa en garderob med kläder om du inte vet vilken storlek eller vem personen är som du ska köpa kläder till. Du måste veta vem det är som pratar, tycker jag, innan man går loss och pratar om hur man ska säga saker. Men Lars Hall är ju, vad jag förstått, som en mer grafiskt inriktad, alltså så han jobbar ju med problemlösning, och inte med analysen bakom varumärket. Och det var inte sådär jättevanligt då, kanske, 2001, 2002. Varumärke, och så. Idag pratar ju alla om varumärke. Men vi var ju ändå ganska tidigare med det och som museum var vi väldigt tidigt ute med det."

Here Mighetto explains quite well what I have chosen to call mediation. Graphics, marketing, information etc, is not just about designing a nice-looking form. Perhaps more importantly, it is about mediating content.

But if such arguments are to be taken seriously, the marketing and information staff cannot be satisfied with providing design where it is needed. Indeed, anywhere content is mediated within the museum, its mediation must be a matter for the information and marketing unit. This also goes for exhibitions, where, again, you cannot stay satisfied with just giving a nice design to the display of objects, but where instead objects, space and technology must be seen as means for mediating messages. Here is how Mighetto explains this strain of thought:

> "The purpose [of the museum] is not to display objects. The purpose is of course to give people a substantial experience in their everyday lives, something that connects their everyday lives with bigger, global events. That is our purpose. And then we use exhibitions and objects as methods. But it is quite easy to fall back on exhibitions and objects and think them sufficient. Today, however, they are not sufficient anymore. People like to get experiences and like things to happen all the time, everywhere. It is here we can offer something, namely authenticity and a stimulating depth. That is something you could possibly also get from exciting documentaries on television and, to a lesser extent, from newspapers."[20] (2008-05-28:a)

In this sense, the arrangement of exhibitions requires a specific message to be mediated. Of course, that message cannot have any form regardless of its subsequent mediation. In so far as it should be possible to mediate a message, that message must be able to be carried over by comprehendible experiences. Thus, mediation always requires two closely interrelated materials, namely the message and the means of mediation.

Now, Mighetto's use of the concept of experience is important. Indeed, only considering the bipartite concept of mediating – message and means of mediation – it could seem that mediating would go well together with the simple display of objects, in so far as those objects carried messages about the cultures from which they were taken. However, as I understand her, Mighetto argues that the objects are means of creating experiences, nothing more and nothing less. As such, the objects are mediums. They may be inimitable mediums, but in so far as their task is to furnish visitors with experiences that convey a message, that experience may be approximated by other mediums. Hence, given that I have a message about, say, colonialism, such a message can be conveyed by objects, but also by an Internet application, or a drawing, given that these latter mediums were arranged correctly. Again, though, it may be that the digital version of that exhibit can only be a crude approximation of the actual exhibit; then, again, the digital version may have certain virtues of its own.

Whereas the classical ethnographic object was ascribed with qualities only relating to its real or imagined role in its real or imagined culture of origin, so that its history of acquisition and place within the museum was put under erasure, mediating in a sense brings the object back into its actual relations with other objects, with the museum and with the visitors. In so far as this means problematizing earlier museum praxis, where the qualities of objects indeed depended on their independence from their current contexts, mediating can be said to be anti-substantialist. That means that it supports criticism of earlier, substantialist or free-floating notions of the objects.

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[20] Syftet är inte att visa föremål. Syftet är självklart att ge människor en substantiell upplevelse i sin vardag, som kopplar ihop vardagen med stora globala skeenden. Det är syftet. Sen använder vi utställningar och föremål som metod. Men det är väldigt lätt att man glider över på att föremålen i sig själva är tillräckliga, eller att utställningar är tillräckliga. Men det är det ju inte idag – folk måste få upplevelser och det måste hända en massa saker överallt. Vi kan bidra med något där, som heter autenticitet och stimulerande djup. Det är något du eventuellt också kan få i spännande dokumentärer på tv och från dagstidningar i någon mån.

This version of mediating have common features with Actor-Network Theory, as it decentres the earlier supposedly given meaning of the objects, having to do with for example their culture of origin, their use or their religious significance, in order to highlight their position in current networks of museum collections and exhibitions.

This anti-substantialist movement is not denying that the objects may be the most important mediums for messages about, for example, a certain culture or a certain ethnographic praxis. Nevertheless, in the end, they must be evaluated on the basis of the visitor experience that they add to the total exhibition where they are introduced and the overall message of that exhibition. And this somewhat reductionist notion does not always sit well with other members of staff in the museum. Mighetto told me that she often finds herself in conflict with others in the exhibition groups that she frequents.

> "I am responsible before our target group and visitors in these matters. […] We can't just have an exhibition meeting and discuss Paracas textiles without deciding what kind of feeling the exhibition has. Does it taste Coca-Cola or low-fat milk?, I ask. If someone could tell me, I would know better how to present this outside the museum. But instead, people just sit and talk about how three roundels connect well with the graphical thinking of the Paracas culture. And you just want to say: please, no one visiting the exhibition will get the message!"[21] (2008-05-28:a)

In Mighetto's view, then, objects not only represent the qualities that they may have had in their cultures of origin. As museum objects, they are in the last instance means of creating specific experiences in visitors. In their role as means of mediation, the exhibitions must be evaluated on the basis of the experience and understanding that they produce: it is this experience and understanding that can be manipulated in order to convey the intended message. Evidently, this comes into conflict with more symbolic use of the object, where the experience proffered is of lesser concern.

As I have said, mediating presuppose the division between message and means of conveyance. If this division is to be maintained, all mediums, including objects, must be temporary, whereas the message remains the same. Maintaining this division has not been easy within the Museum of World Culture, but has nevertheless been ventured. Specifically, I interpret the museum's decision to only use temporary and avoiding permanent exhibition as a way of medializing[22] the objects and structuring the museum identity as message: no exhibition should represent or 'be' the museum identity; rather, objects are arranged and rearranged in order to furnish new experiences to its media-literate and young visitors. As of late, this principle of the museum has come to the fore in a controversy around the museum, as a consultant bureau, commissioned by the new non-socialist government, suggests permanent exhibitions as means of cutting expenses. As though travestying the standpoint critiqued by mediating, the bureau speaks of "a permanent exhibition more firmly based on the objects in the collections of the Museum of World Culture."[23] (KPMG 2008: 30) Unsurprisingly, the museum has reacted with outrage, not least rebuking the permanent exhibition argument.

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[21] "Jag är vår målgrupps och våra besökares gisslan i de här frågorna. […] Vi kan inte sitta på ett utställningsmöte och prata om Paracastextilier utan att prata om vad det är för känsla i utställningen. Smakar den Coca-Cola eller smakar den lättmjölk, försöker jag fråga. Om jag får reda på det, då vet jag vad jag ska prata om externt. Men det man sitter och pratar om är att tre rundlar kopplar bra till Paracaskulturens grafiska sätt att tänka. Och man vill bara säga: ursäkta, men det är ingen som kommer att uppfatta det här resonemanget i utställningen."

[22] I introduce this neologism as shorthand for 'restructure as medium'.

[23] "en permanent basutställning som i högre grad baseras på de föremål som finns i Världskulturmuseets samlingar."

Hence it is the visitors' experience of the museum and its message that are central to mediation, whereas the means of furnishing those experiences are important, but secondary. I will claim that this central position of experience is synonymous with re-enchantment. Mediating as a specific mode of ordering, then, works to divest the objects of the earlier, ethnographically coloured meaning they have had, and give them temporary, mediating functions, connected with the emotive and personal experiences that they can create.

As I pointed out above, meditating centres on experiences that can be created through the use of exhibitions or indeed through Internet applications. This opens up for mediating as a specific mode of digitalization, a point I will devote the next section of this chapter to explore.

Mediating digitalization – its rise and fall

In what follows, I will venture to demonstrate that mediating qualifies as a mode of digitalization. In fact, as it presupposes the division between message and means of mediation, and measures the success of the latter only in terms of the visitors' experiences, any specific medium can be coupled to and used in tandem with another. Mighetto explains:

> "I don't say: we are working on an exhibiting. I want to work on a project. And there are many different ways of creating the appropriate experience. Trafficking is a great example of this. There is an exhibition. We have had many happenings around it. We have a series of seminars with different researchers. We have produced a supplement that was published and distributed with Göteborgs-Posten [local newspaper]. We have an international cooperation with fifteen different institutions that work to change laws. We have a campaign site that will accompany the exhibition when it starts to move around to different museums."[24] (2008-05-28:a)

Modes of digitalization, as I have defined them, are ways of opening up earlier arrangements as a response to digital media, subsequently introducing the latter into the local networks by means of rearrangements. The idea of defining exhibitions as media and of seeing an exhibition and its website as parallel means of conveying a message, must qualify as such a mode of digitalization. Thus that mode of digitalizing operates by redefining objects as mediums whose primary function is to instil experiences. It is namely in such a capacity – i.e. as mediums – that objects can be approximated by digital exhibitions that provide the visitors with similar experiences.

Of course, I do not want to argue that digital exhibitions are supposed simply to *substitute* the 'analogue' ones, though there certainly are indications that ideas of such substitution have been put forward in the museum. Rather, I believe that 'analogue' exhibitions, conveying messages and thus reducing objects to mediums, and digital exhibitions, replacing those object mediums with digital artefacts, reinforce each other.

Or to put this reasoning in less theoretical terms: by creating a website where visitors get approximately the same experience as they get when visiting the actual exhibitions – consisting mainly of emotions, thoughts and information – the nature of the objects displayed in the exhibition is consciously changed to that of mediums for certain messages. Now, this effect is naturally brought about also by analogue means, such as for example creating an exhibition about trafficking and conveying the message about the exposed situation of trafficked women by displaying objects in the museum building. To repeat the argument made above then, digitalization and exhibition both reinforce the notion of mediating objects, and thus the exhibition contributes to the

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[24] "Jag säger inte: vi jobbar med en utställning. Jag vill jobba med ett projekt. Och det finns många olika sätt att skapa den upplevelsen. Trafficking är ett jättebra exempel på det. Det finns en utställning. Vi har jättemånga programpunkter. Vi har en forskarseminarieserie. Vi har en, en tidningsbilaga som gick ut och pratade om det här med GP. Vi har ett samarbete internationellt med femton andra olika institutioner som arbetar för att förändra lagar. Vi har en kampanjsite som följer med nu utställningen nu när den flyttar."

import of the website, while the website reinforces the intended structure of the exhibit. All in all, digital media has become part of local networks through this rearrangement.

It deserves to be mentioned that the digital exhibitions developed have also been incorporated directly into certain exhibitions by way of projectors, giving testimony to how the different mediums have indeed worked to reinforece each other's medium-character.

My point is illustrated by the criteria that according to Anna Mighetto govern the construction of exhibition websites:

> "For example, in the exhibition *Sister of dreams*, we decided to let the structure of the exhibition float towards you through the jungle. You should hear the sounds, because they were an important part of the exhibit. But in the exhibition by Fred Wilson, for example – he is an artist and made an exhibition for us – the exhibition as such was not very interesting; instead we could include other exhibitions he had created, as well as recording a personal interview with him. That was more interesting than the exhibit – here are three pots and here… – You understand?"[25] (2008-05-28:a)

In *Sister of dreams*, the visitor is enveloped in the experience, something that one has tried to mimic on the website. Fred Wilson, at the other hand, is an artist famous for placing ethnographical objects in new contexts in order to problemize old colonialist notions and posing questions visitors allegedly seldom ask themselves. Here, only reproducing the ethnographical objects on the Web would give the impression of a museum naïve enough to believe that the objects *per se* are on the centre-stage in a Wilson exhibition. Of course, objects are important mediums in a Wilson exhibit, but in the last instance the artist has a message and uses objects to make statements. Thus, the digitally accessible interviews amplify the object-decentring effect provided by Wilson, making this exhibit an excellent example of how digital and 'analogue' exhibitions reinforce each other's mediating character.

As shown by the examples above, while the museum exhibitions are always surrounded by the same exhibition halls, there are no digital spaces or other approximation of the halls that can be used for all digital exhibitions. Or rather, such a digital space has hitherto never been developed. There are of course the 'digital museums' or website templates for displaying collections of objects. However, this is not the way Museum of World Culture presents its exhibitions digitally. Perhaps the YouTube notion could better serve as an acceptable image for what would be needed in terms of a digital space for mediating digitalization. But then Anna Mighetto and her co-workers lack both time and money to even start dreaming of such a YouTube-like project.

In the Museum of World Culture, the information and marketing staff has thus simply commissioned a web bureau to create a new Flash application for each bigger exhibition.

Flash is a software used to couple large and complex graphic materials, sound, text and interactivity to create tailored multimedia applications. The program has been optimized to allow for the import of a vast array of mediums and the editing of these, thus creating flexibility and minimizing standardization in the applications created. At the other hand, exactly because creating of Flash application involves little standardized labour, it demands artistry and advanced editing of digital material. In short, it is time-consuming.

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[25] "I utställningen Drömmens syster till exempel, bestämde man att utställningens struktur ska komma svävande genom djungeln. Man ska höra ljuden, för de är viktiga i utställningen. Men i utställningen av Fred Wilson, till exempel, som är en konstnär och som gjorde en utställning för oss, då är inte utställningen som sådan jätteintressant, utan där kunde vi blanda in även andra utställningar han hade gjort och göra en personlig intervju med honom. För det var ju mer intressant än utställningen, att här står tre krukor och här... – Förstår du?"

Since there is no continuance to a Flash application beyond the topicality of its exhibition, mediating digitalization is not a one-time investment, but will increase the cost of producing each exhibition where it is demanded.

Consequently, and as a result of downscaling, this version of digitalization is now a thing of the past. Since about a year back, the museum website just informs about new exhibitions, though it keeps an archive of old Flash applications for several dismantled and two older, though still running exhibitions. Joel Wollter, a member of marketing staff who works closely with Mighetto, testifies, when speaking about website, to how ideas may change rapidly with changing circumstances:

> "But as for the experience-part, it's more information [nowadays]. So you have to come here and experience it. And that may in fact be the way we actually want it… [laughter] But really, now when I come to think about it, I mean, you can never create a web experience that is the same thing as experiencing an exhibition."[26] (2007-12-14)

Wollter's statement, perhaps secretly lamenting sour grapes, or perhaps displaying genuine new attitudes towards exhibitions on the Net, does point us to the failure of mediating digitalization.[27] When the museum lacks money, creating Flash application by proxy becomes a superfluous part of working with specific exhibition projects.

As a mode of digitalization, mediating in its current form has thus necessitated non-standardized, interpretative and multimedia-oriented applications. In the last instance, it is a matter of coupling the exhibition medium with a digital one, making these two mediums parallel and mutually reinforcing ways of conveying a message. This, however, is a costly practice, implying repeated commissions to web bureaus. As parallel to the exhibitions, these additional, digital applications may seem superfluous when the flow of money to the museum stops.

Mediation and post-colonialism

Mediating is far from the only or even the ruling mode of ordering in the Museum of World Culture. This is an important point to stress, and I will devote this shorter section to reflecting on how mediating and post-colonialism work together and how they at times conflict.

Post-colonialism, within the theoretical framework I have chosen in this thesis, Actor-Network Theory, could be defined as a specific mode of ordering the museum and its objects. This is of course not to deny that the concept of post-colonialism usually is taken to mean a much wider enterprise – but it is indeed denying that such an enterprise is anything if not materialized in local arrangements. And it is focusing specifically on post-colonialism's support within the local networks of the museum.

As a mode of ordering in museums, I would argue that post-colonialism connects interdisciplinary research with the decentring of ethnographic objects and the use of exhibitions as a technique of questioning colonialism and highlighting local narratives. All this presupposes setting up the ethnographical museum as a problem, a theme recurring all over the Museum of World Culture as I demonstrated in the Background chapter of the thesis.

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[26] "Men just upplevelsemässigt, så är det mer information. Då får man gå hit och uppleva det. Och egentligen så är det ju så, någonstans, man vill ha det… [skratt] Nä, men när jag tänker på det, jag menar, du kan ju aldrig skapa en webbupplevelse som är detsamma som att uppleva en utställning."

[27] Mighetto also gives hints in this direction, even if she are not equally clear on the point.

It is quite clear that the Museum of World Culture currently employs mostly researchers with an interdisciplinary persuasion, thus more or less consciously mirroring the post-colonialist perspective prevalent in the museum and its university tenant Museion. Here is what Eva Gesang-Karlström, head of the state authority, told me when we discussed the museum recruitment policy:

> "**Me:** *You describe it as a not really traditional museum. Does that also show in the groups of staff employed?* / Yes, when it comes to the researchers I think so. Like now, when we have just recruited a historian of science and ideas, and not chosen a social anthropologist absorbed in our collections, like someone having defended his or her doctoral thesis on spears from Congo, if I am allowed to force the comparison. It could be sociologists, anthropologists too of course, religion researchers – well; we need so many disciplines and work much more interdisciplinary than before. And that is why having Museion here in Gothenburg is excellent."[28] (2008-07-18)

Now, from my discussion of the two modes of ordering above, it is clear that post-colonialism and mediating share in the decentring efforts made to convert current museum objects. Thus, the problem of ethnography, the objects and their decentring are materials and projects that work as joint ventures for post-colonialism and mediating. They are what Actor-Network Theorists have called boundary objects, i.e. objects connecting disparate modes of ordering within an organization that more or less lack staff members that can accomplish the same connections through active and on-going translations. These efforts well describe what post-colonialism and mediating have in common. But the two modes of ordering do also occasionally clash.

As I said above, mediating demands that messages be possible to convey by comprehensible and effective mediums. This at times seems to irritate post-colonialists who are not happy about reducing their theories to something comparable to Mighetto's "exciting documentaries on television." One former employee of the museum, openly taking a post-colonist stance, recalled, when interviewed, how painstaking work before an exhibition was more or less dismissed by the consultants setting up the display:

> "The development of exhibitions bore some resemblance to the production of a Hollywood movie. The content group supplied a script – texts that were really good – and then some consultants with good reputation were brought in […]. Partly, the result differed from what we on the content side had intended. […] Personally I had produced a short text about one part of the exhibit, which we in the content group wanted to splash on a central spot […]. It became a small sign on a level with the visitors' knees and was rarely even noticed."[29] (2008-05-27)

My point is this: the Museum of World Culture contains many different modes of ordering. Where the old ethnographic museums employed ethnographers that were supposed to know the messages inherent in the museum objects and thus were most suited to arrange them in exhibitions, the successors of those museums nowadays have problemized ethnography, both from a mediating and a post-colonialist perspective, and are employing post-colonialist researchers and

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[28] **"Jag:** *Detta som du beskriver som att man inte är ett riktigt traditionellt museum, speglar det sig också i vilka personalgrupper museet har till skillnad från andra?* / Ja, det är vilka forskare man har, tror jag. Som när vi nu precis har rekryterat en idé- och lärdomshistoriker, och inte har valt en socialantropolog som har fördjupat sig i våra samlingar, till exempel någon som disputerat på spjut från Kongo, om jag hårdrar det. Det kan vara från sociologer, det kan vara förstås också antropologer, religionsvetare, alltså vi behöver vi så många olika discipliner och jobbar mer tvärvetenskapligt mot tidigare. Och därför är det ju förnämligt med Museion här i Göteborg."

[29] "Utvecklingen av utställningarna liknade lite produktion av en hollywoodfilm. Innehållsgruppen tillhandahöll manus – texter som var riktigt bra – och sedan togs det in välrenommerade konsulter […]. Det blev till vissa delar något annat än vad vi på innehållssidan hade tänkt oss. […] Själv hade jag producerat en kort text kring en del av utställningen som vi i innehållsgruppen ville slå upp stort och på central plats […]. Den blev en liten skylt i knähöjd, som besökarna sällan lade märke till."

marketing staff to deconstruct, open up and rearrange their objects. The different modes of ordering thus present among members of staff can partake in the common enterprise to convert objects, but do at times also conflict.

While mediation and post-colonialism agree on the need to re-enchant objects and problemize the delocalized meanings ascribed to them in the colonialist settings of ethnography, they generally disagree as to the need and/or possibility of conveying the theories behind such considerations to museum visitors. Or, put more precisely, such disagreements are materialized around the placement of objects, texts and symbols within the exhibitions.

Decentring website re-enchantment
The website of the Museum of World Culture can be found at both www.varldskultur-museet.se and www.worldculture.se. In this section I will show that the construction of the site is also part of the process to re-enchant the museum. This website re-enchantment can be described by three concepts, namely difference, change and monitoring. I will end the section by showing how these three concepts also help us unpack the concept of re-enchantment that I here wish to associate with mediating.

When the Gothenburg communication bureau M2B was commissioned to create the website for the Museum of World Culture, one explicit demand was that the site should be something entirely new in the world of museums.

Jens Medin, who co-headed the M2B project, described to me how the bureau went about implementing that curious demand when I, somewhat perplexed about it, asked him over the telephone. First and foremost he argues that most other museum sites are boring and unattractive. Then he points out two aspects that single the Museum of World Culture out from that other, dreary bunch.

> "[Then] we built up navigation and what we call pushing links, so you can immediately show the visitor what are the most recent news, instead of having some dreary navigation up in the left corner, because that doesn't build up any image, well, there is not much going on there, it's rather boring. [… I]f they wanted a website to attract visitors to the [museum] building, then they actually had to have a site that really visually attracted people, well, and those other pages just don't do that."[30] (2008-07-01)

Thus, according to Medin, the museum website is different, both graphically and structurally[31]. This difference could be interpreted as pertaining to the site's relation to all other museum sites on the Internet. But there are reasons to narrow the perspective down a little. Medin is namely especially critical of the other museums under the National Museums of World Culture, and much of the work he and the rest of the M2B did was about distinguishing the Gothenburg museum from the Stockholm-based ones.

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[30] "[Så] har ju vi byggt navigeringar då och vad vi kallar då för puffingångar, så att man kan visa besökaren på en gång det som är mest aktuellt för tillfället, istället för att ha någon tråkig navigering uppe i vänster hörn, för det är inte så imageskapande, ja, det händer inte så mycket, det är ganska tråkigt. [… S]kulle man nu gå ut med en webbplats där dom skulle attrahera besökarna med det som fanns i huset, så får man faktiskt ha en sida som verkligen visuellt attraherar och det gör inte de andra sidorna."

[31] The 'pushing links' that Medin mentions can be said to 'tweak' the ordinary hierarchical structure of a website. Whereas a visitor to a hierarchical site must progressively specify her interests as she clicks herself through its tree structure, pushing links on the welcoming page and most other pages gets visitors *directly* to the most popular sites in the top of the hierarchy.

When the state authority was formed in 2000, one of its first decisions was to choose a so-called Content Management System (CMS), i.e. a program that takes ordinary texts and images and create websites on the Net. I interviewed Anders Lagerkvist about that choice, a technician that has worked in the authority since early on. According to him, the most important criteria for choosing the CMS program was that it could work on all the varying computers and operative systems throughout the museums then just recently joined under the authority.

The choice fell on a Swedish CMS program used by larger newspapers, Polopoly, something regretted by virtually all persons with whom I have discussed this issue, not least Jens Medin of M2B. According to Medin, Polopoly is optimized to handle a large input of news and debate articles, not to create graphically attractive and experimental websites.

But while the downsides of Polopoly is more evident when it comes to the other museums – their sites do indeed combine conspicuous navigation menus at the top with a body of news articles announced by headlines and summaries – the M2B, according to Medin, put much effort into manipulating Polopoly to allow for something different.

The result is a site with a downscaled menu at the top, combined with many inviting logotype-like images linking directly to different exhibitions and happenings. There are also some animated images and texts, all fitted neatly together.

The site, graphically and structurally different from the Stockholm museums, quickly got the information and marketing staff into trouble, however. The National Museums of World Culture had namely demanded that its four museums should adopt the same model for their websites, thus displaying their common belonging. The website of the Museum of World Culture won its autonomy only after a long and bitter struggle. According to Anna Mighetto, one of the reasons to why the former head of marketing quitted his job was because he had become too unpopular after his vigorous and successful campaign for the website.

I have presented this narrative about the creation of the museum website in order to make the following point: Difference and novelty on the Net had in this case little to do with creative innovation, and much more to do with laborious reworking of technological (CMS) systems in order to allow for differences vis-à-vis other sites based on the same system, and about sustaining those system changes against bureaucratic interventions.

By discarding or playing down the traditional navigation menu, where all new things can be sorted under stable categories, the current site uses direct image links to all new exhibitions and happenings, which compels the marketing employees to continuously update the structure and graphics of the site. The stable core of the museum website is minimized, the temporariness maximized.

In short, the museum changes its face continuously, which to my mind mimics the desubstantializing effect I discussed above, pertaining to the exhibitions: stable messages are conveyed by temporary mediums such as objects that amount to no more or less than the experiences they instil in visitors. But whereas that effect meant both the medialization and temporalization of exhibitions and objects – on the website, which, as I will shortly demonstrate, can be described as a 'pure medium' that conveys its own properties, it is achieved simply by the temporariness of texts and images.

Thus, another difference between exhibitions and the website is that whereas exhibitions convey thematic messages, for example about trafficking, the website is supposed to convey messages

about the museum (I am for the moment disregarding the digital exhibits available on the site). Anna Mighetto, as I interpret her, explains this relation between digital media and the museum identity when she discusses her view of the website in the interview I conducted with her:

> "We are contemporary I think, and we try to convey that the Museum of World Culture isn't an ordinary museum, that the world is an exciting place; it's not so much about museums here, but something more alive. I think you can still connect those things to our website."[32] (2008-05-28:a)

In other words, the museum identity is mediated by difference and change arranged on the website. Now, consider that the two messages – the museum is not an ordinary museum, but different and is contemporary, or changing/up-to-date, respectively – are both *identical with*, not just mediated by the effects achieved in the arrangement of media.

Where am I going with this? As I made clear in the theoretical chapter, according to John Law organizational identity requires centralized and controlled representation, furnished by knowledge about the organization inherent in modes of ordering. Based on this insight, I would argue that if mediating is introduced as a mode of ordering, it will inevitably represent the organization as medium. Nothing less is indeed implied when it medializes exhibitions and objects in its capacity as a mode of digitalization. In short, mediation medializes the museum identity, an effect at least partly achieved by means of the website that is thus used as a pure medium, conveying the message of its own properties.

Put less theoretically, I am suggesting that if you entertain the idea that everything within the museum - exhibition, objects and technology – are first and foremost mediums, then you will inevitably identify the entire museum as a medium. And so, from that point of view, it makes a lot of sense to talk about the museum's identity as being about a different appeal and an 'up-to-dateness'. However, this entirely cancels out the difference between message and medium entertained by the ideas of mediating. In other words, the museum website does not mediate the museum identity, it *is* the museum and its qualities are equal to the identity of the museum.

Now, in so far as this effect is achieved by the specific construction of the website – including the painstaking manipulation of CMS software and the fierce struggle to maintain website independence, as well as the website structure, promoting continual changes and updates – this again speaks for describing mediating as a mode of digitalization. As I defined the concept, modes of digitalization are ways of rearranging local networks identities in order to introduce the extensive labour of digitalization as imperative. The definition of museum identity in terms of difference and change is not only accomplished by creating the website in a certain way, but also necessitates the on-going maintenance and change of that site.

My point is not that this mediating version of the museum identity is the only one. Rather, as mediating is one mode of digitalization, it is but only one way of (re)arranging the museum identity. And as a mode of ordering among many, it is one way of speaking about and representing that identity.

Lastly, both Medin and Mighetto describe the website as *attractive*. However, as I will now demonstrate, not even this quality can be described as some *deus ex machina* that works through inspired creativity. Rather, both the creation of the website and its continual updating has been effected only after consulting feedback from focus groups and visitor statistics from the web.

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[32] "[S]amtida tycker jag vi är och att vi försöker förmedla att Världskulturmuseet inte är ett vanligt museum, att världen är ett spännande ställe; det är inte så mycket musealt här, utan det är mer levande. Det tycker jag man kan koppla ihop vår hemsida med fortfarande, faktiskt."

Mighetto explains that the statistics is important when deciding where to invest time and effort, avoiding working on pages that visitors hardly notice. But she adds that if the statistics shows that visitors do not open pages that the museum deem important, it can also work as an impetus to work more on those specific pages, at least highlighting them on the welcoming page. In short, feedback can work both as the voice of the visitors, telling the museum what they like and do not like, as well as supervision, underpinning and defining the attractiveness of the site and its links.

Mighetto told me she would like to see similar feedback from the pedagogues that daily watch visitors to the museum exhibitions. She also tries to tell the rest of staff about statistics from the website, making everyone feel responsible for improving the numbers.

Of course, I would argue that such kind of visitor supervision is coherent with mediating, as this mode of ordering hinges the success of its re-enchantment – the conveyance of messages through the arrangement of media – on the experiences of the visitors. Thus, it is this experience that must be monitored and represented for members of staff to better arrange and re-enchant the museum in the future. Again, this is coherent with the theoretical definition of modes of digitalization that I have given, stating that these modes are bound up with discipline within the organization.

To sum this section up, let me briefly show how the concepts of difference, change and monitoring help us decentre the concept of mediating re-enchantment. If mediating is about arranging the museum as medium that triggers personal and unusual experiences, then this is accomplished by structurally differentiating it from other museums, necessitating continual change that desubstantiate through temporalization, and by monitoring visitors to get feedback that motivate further and enhanced change.

Digitalizations in conflict
Anna Mighetto is critical of how another process of digitalization is implemented within the museum.

> "Just because you take that text and that image and put it out there [on the Net], it won't get more interesting. That which makes an object interesting, and which really means applying the concept of accessibility, is formulating the information so that it gets interesting."[33] (2008-05-28:a)

Here, Anna Mighetto answers the question about what she thinks of another extensive digitalization process taking place within the museum, the digitalization of objects. She is hesitant about the process to say the least, above all since she detects a lack of effort to make the objects interesting. I interpret this as a critique against the absence of re-enchanting effort within the long-term enterprise of object digitalizing. In other words, Mighetto's opinion of what I will show to be another mode of digitalization, centring on objects, is structured by mediating.

Importantly, Mighetto's critique is not directed at the digitalization as such, i.e. giving museum employees access to digital photos and texts, but at the efforts to make the same information public on the Internet. While she admits that making the information public could serve re-

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[33] "De har ju gjort ett jättestort fel tycker jag där, både politiskt och när man sätter föremåls- och databasmänniskorna att göra jobbet, och det är ju att bara för att man skriver om en viss text från papper till digital form, så behöver inte den blir mer tillgänglig eller attraktiv för det. Man förutsätter att texten [ironiskt tillgjord röst] 'Kruka från Sydamerika, hittad av Sven Hedin 1923. Längd arton centimeter, vikt en komma två kilo. Samling nummer 1923 punkt sjutton streck sex femhundrasjuttiosju.' Bara för att man tar den texten och den bilden och lägger den där, så behöver den inte plötsligt bli mer intressant. Det som är mer intressant att göra med föremål, och om man ska få in begreppet tillgänglighet, det är att forma informationen så att den blir intressant."

searchers and students, her main argument concerns the greater majority of people, those that in her opinion would never click the link to a digital object collection, potentially giving it a languishing existence in statistics from the site. Again, this does not mean that such information is inherently doomed to public lack of interest, but rather that it must be mediated, i.e. given a short and easily grasped formulation that is topical and attracts.

Mighetto also questions an arrangement of staff, where what she calls the "object and database people" have been given authority over digitalization. Though not specifying this explicitly, she seems to be saying that these members of staff primary concern themselves with objects and collections, while disregarding what ordinary people like to read and search out on the Net. In other words, objects and public information should be held organizationally separate, the latter given over to members of staff able to mediate it publically. Interpreted thus, Mighetto's critique can read as a defence of the obligatory point of passage that the information and marketing staff hitherto has constituted for most information on the website.

Also implicitly, however, Mighetto questions the unmediated objects and their place in object digitalization. Here, she touches on a tension between purposes that has been present in the museum from the start, namely between at the one hand taking care of the museum's ethnographical collections and at the other analyzing and questioning the colonial heritage. On this point of course, mediating as a mode of ordering sides well with the post-colonialists trying to refigure the objects and place them in a new context.

Håkan Thörn, who was one of the first employed to develop the content of the exhibition but who has hence left the museum, describes the conditions pertaining to its post-colonialist aspirations in an article published in the left-leaning magazine *Arena*:

> "At the same time, the museum's aspiration for change comes with an array of contradictions that, as far as I can tell, will always mark its activities. Not least, these contradictions arise from the collection of hundreds of thousands of objects that the museum inherited from its predecessor, the Ethnographical Museum in Gothenburg. In spite of its focus on contemporary problems, one of the tasks of the museum is to administer this collection and display parts of it to the public."[34] (Thörn 2005: 47)

The dual task of renewal and preservation is indeed inscribed in the founding articles of the museum, and the potential for conflict was already mentioned by the state committee that laid the groundwork for the museum in the late nineties. (Rogestam et al. 1998: 48) The objects come with a history and have been given a required context – preservation, storage, display – that is no longer politically and organizationally innocent – at least not to mediating and post-colonialism. And so, taken *per se*, or rather with the arrangements that the preservation staff must reproduce in accordance with the museum articles, the unmediated collections of objects have come to represent somewhat of an antithesis to the post-colonialist and mediating ambitions. In this sense, the objects are also central in defining what mediating the museum means, since part of that work is exactly to arrange these objects in a new fashion, indeed to re-enchant them as a way of mediating and problemizing their earlier substantialist existence.

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[34] "Samtidigt bär museets förändringsambitioner på en rad motsägelser som, så vitt jag kan se, alltid kommer att prägla dess verksamhet. Inte minst föds de ur den samling av hundra tusen föremål som museet ärvt av föregångaren Etnografiska museet i Göteborg. Trots inriktningen på samtidsproblematik hör det till museets uppgift att förvalta denna samling och visa upp delar av den för allmänheten."

Ordering objects

Some would argue that collections are the core of any museum. If so, the Museum of World Culture has had its core displaced. Taking the tram a few stations south of the museum, I soon found myself in a milieu quite different from the museum building, namely the offices and storehouse holding the collections. Here, instead of the open-plan office, each employee had his or her own room, often packed with things necessary to take care of objects. Many a shelf here is crammed with objects and books, sometimes giving a rather messy impression. Since the offices lack the big screen windows of the museum, the interior is somewhat dull. Not wishing to overstate the difference, I did find the museum logo strangely misplaced when seeing it stuck on a wall in an office. The impression was of a place where people did not care much for outward finery, but had devoted themselves entirely to the stored objects.

The reason that is often stated to why the objects are stored separately from the museum is that it is only at *Ebbe Liebrathsgatan* that they can be provided with a large enough storage and a controlled climate. Hence, the staff has moved to where the objects are best kept. Most employees here literally work with and for the objects. This also goes for the persons that labour with the object digitalization.

At the surface of things, the storage building, the preservation, the entire meticulous handling of objects can seem too tangled up with old-style ethnography to ever merit the label renovation of objects. To be sure, the objects themselves may appear alluring to those few still initiated in the deeper meanings of ethnographic interpretation, but this is an old, tattered magic of a detailed but increasingly meaningless ordering.

And still, perhaps it is within the realms of the collections, more than anywhere else, that the absence of that bygone magic is most evident, where disenchanted objects of no particular interest cries out for something to be done to them. When interviewing the photographer Ferenc Schwetz, for example, we both had a laugh when he showed me a pile of quite ordinary shells, each meticulously marked with handwritten numbers in ink, a testimony to the meanings that had once been attached to them, and that was now utterly gone. And as Jan Amnehäll, who is the director of the collections, told me: "then of course there are collections without the remotest interest to anyone. I mean, we have thousands of potsherds, and no one cares about them."[35]

As I will show, digitalizing the objects is a process initialized to save the objects from this utter meaninglessness, to replace the object's old relations to each other and to humans with new ones. Their future usefulness must be guaranteed, and so ethnography must be problemized and replaced by something new. Slowly, and frequently interrupted by defensive actions from worried ethnographers, there is a digitalized ordering emerging, one that prepares the objects for future, unthought-of usages, a planning ahead, again not unaffected by ethnography, for a journey to places where no ethnographic object has gone before.

Catalogues and objects

Perhaps those last lines in the previous section about future sites for objects are a bit melodramatic; still, when I talked to Magnus Johansson, who has recently been employed by the authority to coordinate the object digitalization, it soon became obvious that he has future, perhaps unconventional users in mind. At least, this is one reason to why he has drawn up some guidelines for object digitalization in all museums, and why he has put so much effort into convincing photographers to include a stick with a colour scale on all digital photos:

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[35] "sen finns det naturligtvis samlingar som inte är ett dugg intressanta. Menar, vi har tusentals krukskärvor, det är ingen som bryr sig om det."

"I have wanted to include a colour scale from the start, but there was so much resistance to it, many thought it didn't serve any purpose. So in my current proposition we will continue without the colour scale, but make some tests with the scale during the coming year. After all, it is the colour scale that will guarantee that the colours are correct if, for example, someone from Greece in ten years time want to check out the colouring of a particular object."[36] (2008-06-04)

There is, however, one particular future usage for the catalogue that Johansson prioritizes:

"most important is the position, that you know where in the collection you can find the object. That is how I think about the future, that each object should have a position and a searchable word, that you should be able to do searches. [...] The idea is that you, before an upcoming exhibition for example, can get a quick overview of which of the objects in the collection can be used. [...] And that you could serve researchers more efficiently at the object secretariat. You should quickly be able to get a list of all the things we have and show images. And regarding the images, it is a stated aim that you shouldn't have to go down in the storage rooms and bring out every object. [...] But that is obviously a question of resources, since taking photos of sufficiently good quality is expensive. So it is a matter of balancing good photo quality and taking picture of every object."[37] (2008-06-04)

This is, I believe, where a new ordering of objects is emerging; this new ordering has nothing to do with the correct classifications à la ethnography, but has three priorities of its own: 1. that the objects can be easily found in the collections, 2. that the collection catalogue can be queried with words, and 3. that the objects can be substituted with digital images and texts when the actual object is not required.

If order in the old days of the ethnographic museum was about categorizing objects correctly, placing them not in the context of the specific museum catalogue, but in the taxonomic context of an scientifically ordered world of 'primitive cultures', today, categories are above all used as indexes for finding objects by means of search engines. Thus, while the earlier, often handwritten catalogue at the same time contextualized objects and gave them meaning, today it is the connection between words and between the catalogue and object number that matters most – and the meaning is foremost furnished by the individual users that come to the digital catalogue with specific query words which in turn creates the temporal orders of search results.

Digitalization is thus synonymous with a *changed* order in museum collections. But at the same time, this new ordering presents itself as *increased* order in the eyes of today's museum staff. Thus, for example, once the digitalization got started, employees began to discover unexpected 'faults' in the old, paper-based catalogue – objects were missing, had been given the identical numbers, had been given wrong numbers, etc. –making many objects hard or even impossible to find. Furthermore, identical words had been spelled differently, making automated and searchable indexes harder to create. In my interpretation, this is not exactly 'faults' according to the old mode of ordering; indeed, it is thinkable that the relation between catalogue and object collec-

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[36] "Jag har väl hela tiden velat ha med en färgskala, men det var så mycket motstånd mot det, många som ansåg att det inte hade något egentligt värde, så i förslaget nu ligger att man ska fortsätta utan färgskala, men att vi ska göra försök med färgskala under året. Det är trots allt den som garanterar att färgerna blir korrekta, om till exempel någon från Grekland om tio år vill kolla just färgerna på ett föremål."

[37] "Det absolut viktigaste är positionen, att man har kollen på föremålen, var de finns i magasinen. Så det tänker jag mig för framtiden, att föremålet ska ha position och även ett sökord, att man då faktiskt ska kunna söka på [dem] […]. Tanken är väl att man till exempel inför en utställning snabbt ska kunna få en bild över vad vi har i samlingarna som kan användas i utställningen. […] Och att man snabbt ska kunna serva forskare på till exempel föremålssekretariatet. Då skulle man snabbt kunna få fram en lista över vad vi har och snabbt rita upp bilder. Och vad gäller bilder, är ju ett uttalat syfte att man ska slippa ta fram alla föremålen och slippa gå ned i magasinet. […] Men samtidigt är det ju det också en resursfråga, för ska man ta tillräckligt bra bilder, så blir det väldigt dyrt. Så det där är en avvägning mellan bildkvalitet och att ha bilder på allting."

tions was a minor concern to ethnographic ordering. Rather, the catalogue was about registering the objects' own meanings by scientists, and was used as a tool, not by any individual users with their own intent, but by certain employees that had perhaps grown acquainted with the objects and just needed the 'correct' scientific information that was not evident from looking directly at the objects.

In the ordering of object digitalization then, order is about search techniques and standardized indexes, rather than scientific order. If scientific order was about mastering objects by being able to provide them with all-encompassing taxonomies of categories for cultural belonging, sphere of society and use, etc, the new searchable order can control objects by including them in a catalogue that makes them associable with one another and with words. This new order has no stable taxonomies, but does, ideally, create new taxonomies from the words furnished by the user and orders objects accordingly. Through digitalization *the very order of objects* is broken up and made malleable and thus applicable to varying tasks.

Order, then, has moved closer to and centred on the individual user of the catalogue. While scientific order centred on the learned scholar, able to interpret and order the world to a homogeneous whole, searchable order purports to start off from any individual, recreating itself according to her interests.

This in no sense diminishes the fact that each object will still be associated with certain terms, categories and facts that someone other than the user of the catalogue has registered. However, these terms are seen as part of the search mechanism, chosen to make it user-friendly. Furthermore, is it important that this added data is correct? Jan Amnehäll, the head of the museum collection bureau, is not so sure. He sees few problems apart from some technical and esthetical obstacles, with putting digitalized objects on the Net. When asked about the risk of not furnishing visitors with enough and sufficiently critical information, a concern raised by some of his colleagues, he answered:

> "No, that is perhaps not such a big risk. As long as the information you give is correct. Then again, you can always do as the City Museum here in Gothenburg – they have published a great many of their objects on the Net. Certainly sometimes giving erroneous information, they have had response from the public, people have sent them corrections."[38] (2008-05-19)

I soon discovered that this argument about knowledgeable visitors is not new; Anna Mighetto for example also used it when discussing the silver lining of object digitalization:

> "We could also more easily expand our knowledge about our own objects. I would find this very interesting, and, well, I have learned this from people working here. Objects we know nothing about, there are individuals in this society that knows a hell lot about them. If they could come and tell us what they know about the objects that would be invaluable."[39] (2008-05-28:a)

Now, if searchable ordering, as it has reconfigured the old order of ethnography, is implemented by and thus necessitates the digitalization of objects, it is a specific mode of digitalization. Im-

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[38] "Nej, det kanske inte är en så stor risk. Nej, bara dom uppgifter man lämnar ut är korrekta. Och sen kan man också göra som Stadsmuseet här i Göteborg, dom har lagt ut jättemycket av sina föremål på nätet. Och med felaktiga uppgifter kanske många gånger, men då ser dom att man får ett gensvar från publiken som kommer med rättelser."

[39] "Vi skulle också ha lättare kunna bygga på kunskap om våra egna föremål. Det här skulle ju jag tycka vore väldigt intressant, och jag har lärt mig det här av folk som jobbar här. Föremål vi inte vet någonting om, finns det människor i vårt samhälle som vet en hel jädra massa om. Kan dom komma och berätta vad dom vet om dom här föremålen, så är ju det ovärderligt."

portantly, however, this new digital ordering does not go unchallenged. In the next section I will show how ethnography indeed goes about cancelling out the effect of digitalization.

Ethnographic interventions
As with post-colonialism above, I will define ethnography as a mode of ordering; in other words it is maintained by being performed among arrangements of humans and objects.

But before going on to present my conclusions I wish to make a methodological note. When I did my first interviews in the storage building of the museum, it was quite obvious that I had come to a milieu where discourses and ways of ordering were quite different from those at the museum. However, it was far from obvious that there was any difference between object digitalization and ethnography. It was only after reading my transcripts and thinking things though many times, that I began to discern that there could be different modes of ordering not only distinguishing museum and collections, but within the collection bureau itself. My point is that ethnography and object digitalization are two entangled modes of ordering, often invoked by the same person during one and the same interview. This is not surprising given that object digitalization is a rearrangement of ethnographic order and that the objects are so important to both modes of ordering. Nevertheless, it is a point to keep in mind when I now go on to highlight and perhaps exaggerate the opposition between them in the section that follows.

I will present three ethnographic interventions in different areas, namely 1. the catalogue, 2. photography and 3. knowledge. Let me present each of these separately.

Firstly, as digitalization of objects was emphasized in the 1999 report that has animated much of the work in the Museum of World Culture since its opening, this type of digitalization was one of the first activities initialized. This quick start of the digitalization process was also facilitated by a labour market initiative, where the government was paying salaries to unemployed academics in order for them to work on 'increasing public access' to the collections of Swedish museums.

In the Museum of World Culture, these so-called SESAM-employees, financed by the government for a couple of years, were put to the task of entering the entire old catalogue into computers by means of keyboards. As Magnus Johansson can establish today, however, there is a not-so-subtle difference between digitalizing old catalogues and digitalizing objects:

> "Then they really just have the information from the cards in digital form, not knowledge about whether the object exists or not, or in which condition it is. The card could be from the 1920's and the object could have disappeared, been destroyed or registered incorrectly, for example. So you could ask yourself whether it is a digitalization of the catalogue cards we want or a digitalization of the objects."[40] (2008-06-04)

As I interpret this distinction made by Johansson, it highlights one aspect of the difference between ethnography and searchable ordering; whereas the latter is about the relation between catalogue and object, as well as using searchable keywords, the former is about the kind of knowledge registered on the old catalogue cards. Now, I am not arguing that the choice to register the old catalogue constitutes some planned coup on part of the ethnographers. However, it does

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[40] "sen har de ju egentligen bara informationen från korten i digital form, inte kunskap om huruvida föremålen finns eller inte eller i vilket skick det är. Korten kan ju vara från 1920-talet, och föremålet kan ha försvunnit, förstörts eller felregistrerats. Till exempel. Så där kan man fråga sig om det är digitalisering av katalogkorten vi ska ha eller digitalisering av föremålen."

point to a lack of critical distance to the paper-based catalogue, a lack that testifies to the relative strength of ethnographic discourse during those first years of the museum.

Let us move on to what I choose to call the second ethnographic intervention. Ferenc Schwetz works as a photographer for the Museum of World Culture. I asked Schwetz to show me how he photographs an object. He chose a ceramic jug and placed it on a table. While he was keen to have proper lighting and an inconspicuous background colour and while he used professional photographer equipment, I noticed that he never placed a ruler in his photos. I asked Schwetz what he strives to catch and he told me that "the important thing is to get high definition and all the details. You should be able to recognize the object immediately."[41] (2008-05-14:b) In other words, the photos he takes will be useful for finding objects in storage.

Schwetz does not mention Magnus Johansson's hobbyhorse, namely the possibility of substituting, as long as possible, the image for the object in research and exhibition planning. Instead he told me that: "If some researcher would like several photos of a specific object, we can always take them there and then."[42] (2008-05-14:b)

Thus detaching the images from future contexts, where individuals could come to need the exact measures without access to the object, Schwetz is, as I interpret him, reproducing the ethnographical order of the old catalogue; the images are merely further descriptions added to the older information. However, Schwetz is also enacting the distance between the museum and Ebbe Lieberathgatan, between exhibitions and collections. Only complementing the old catalogue by taking one frontal photo of each item, he is helping those members of staff that work directly with objects to find these in storage, while only marginally aiding those working with exhibitions and who may need to list several digital objects simultaneously and know the sizes of the objects and see them from different angles in order to know whether they fit or not into the exhibition.

Schwetz himself is very open about what he thinks when it comes to the current situation in the museum:

> "I think we must have a collection and a permanent exhibition that represents the collection, or else we are not a museum. Today, the building has become a place where different objects and ideas come and go. / Me: *So what is it then, if not a museum?/* A community centre. But we do still call ourselves the Museum of World Culture. So if we are to present ourselves, we must present what we have, namely our collections. What else should be display on the website, if not our collections?"[43] (2008-05-14:b)

This is an argument that places itself in opposition to current museum policies. And it poses as a defence for something crucial that is threatened by these policies, i.e. the museum identity and its core collections.

Of course, the geographical distance between the two houses, the museum building and the storehouse, lends itself to such defensive arguments. The recent cut-backs that exclusively hit the Ebbe Lieberathsgatan staff, and the post-colonial and mediating critique against the unmediated

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[41] "Det viktiga är att skärpan är hög och att detaljer kommer med. Man ska kunna känna igen föremålet direkt."

[42] "om någon forskare sedan vill ha flera foton av ett särskilt föremål, så kan vi ju fixa det då."

[43] "Jag tycker att vi måste ha en samling och en basutställning som representerar samlingen, annars är vi inte ett museum. Idag har huset mer blivit ett ställe där olika föremål och idéer kommer och går. / **Jag**: *Vad är det i så fall, om inte ett museum? /* Ett kulturhus. Men trots allt kallar vi oss Världskulturmuseet. Och om vi ska presentera oss så måste det väl handla om det vi har, våra samlingar. Vad ska vi visa på hemsidan, om inte våra samlingar?"

collections, add to such rhetoric, which does also the fact that current exhibitions display relatively few of the collected objects. In short, Schwetz and other employees at the storage house identify partly in opposition to the museum, and ethnographic ordering has become a practice of resistance as it enacts topographical distance through photography methods.

Lastly, let me discuss the third ethnographic intervention. Another person working at Ebbe Lieberathsgatan is Jan Slavik, a doctor of ethnography and soon-to-be pensioner. I met him when drinking tea in the staff cafeteria after having interviewed Ferenc Schwetz. After a while, the two of us were joined by Peter Normelli, who was upset and angry with the museum after having got notice to quit. Slavik and Normelli, both former employees of the Ethnographical Museum of Gothenburg, argue that digitalization requires a knowledge that the museum currently lacks. Slavik claimed:

> "In the exhibitions it is not enough just to give basic information about the objects – and in that context it is also pointless to state their measures, collection numbers and the like. We must be able to put them in context, to tell of the roles they had in their respective cultures, how they were used and so on. That knowledge should be registered and accompany the objects in the database. But writing that kind of information demands specialist knowledge. And such a knowledge is lacking in this museum today."[44] (2008-05-14:a)

Later in the discussion, Normelli added:

> "You could ask yourself if it is right to publish photos of objects from other culture without asking them for permission. The museum is keen to represent groups lacking power, and often-times the objects come from small and exploited groups in the world. But at the other hand, this is a discussion no one is capable enough to have within the museum nowadays. There really is no knowledge left. Jan here is the only one with a doctor's hat."[45] (2008-05-14:a)

While not exactly completely dismissive of the digitalization, Normelli and Slavik clearly imply that the objects cannot be handled save within the framework of ethnographic learning. Such learning knows namely how to correctly and ethically categorize and display objects. In a certain sense, the objects both belong to their culture of origin and to the museum, and the former can exercise their claim on the objects through a knowledgeable academician employed by the latter. The peripheral location of the Ebbe Lieberathsgatan address, then, seems to signify the peripheral role of that knowledge within the current museum, which also makes the museum a dubious implementer of digitalization in the eyes of Normelli and Slavik.

In contrast to the two earlier ethnographic interventions, this ethnographic view of knowledge has not, as far as I can tell, been enacted in actual practice. It is present, however, in the in-house critique and debate; those I have interviewed about object digitalization have all been made aware of the objections.

Now, as this is an area of controversy, I would like to point out that I am not arguing for or against any mode of ordering here. Personally, I can easily both feel sympathy for and realize the

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[44] "I utställningar räcker det inte med grundläggande uppgifter om föremålen, det är dessutom lite meningslöst att i det sammanhanget ange deras mått, samlingsnummer och liknande. Vi måste kunna sätta dem i ett sammanhang, berätta vilken roll de hade i den kultur där de användes, hur de användes och så vidare. Den kunskapen borde registreras och följa med föremålen in i databasen. Men att skriva sådan information kräver specialkunskap. Och den kunskapen saknas på museet idag."

[45] "Sen kan man ju fråga sig om det är rätt att lägga ut bilder på föremål från andra kulturer utan att tillfråga dem. Museet gör ju en poäng av att representera de svaga och många gånger kommer föremålen från små och utsatta grupper i världen. Fast å andra sidan är detta en diskussion som man knappast har kompetensen att föra inom museet idag. Man har egentligen ingen kunskap kvar. Jan här är den ende idag som är disputerad."

limits of the points of view put forward by Slavik and Normelli. While their reasoning is far removed from other opinions held in the museum today, it definitely is possible that they are right in pointing out that certain ethical values around the handling of objects demand ethnographic knowledge to be sustained. Whether this is so or not is not my point, however. If there are any moral insights to be had from reading my thesis, it is that there exist many different modes of ordering and that specific ethical values are never universal, but always dependent on an ordering, and that they, exactly because of that, may require the maintenance of certain arrangement to be actualized at all.

To sum this section up, let me once again point out how entangled ethnography and object digitalization are. Indeed, much of the digital catalogues that have been created to date, are mostly a digital version of earlier text-based catalogues, thus deeply entrenched in ethnography. Still, a digital version of the catalogue is always a searchable version, regardless of how well or inadequately it was prepared to optimize the flexibility of the searches. Furthermore, both ethnography and object digitalization take objects as their starting point; they are both activities of the storehouse, thus both susceptible to the opposition between museum and collection built into the very geographical structuring of the museum.

Arranging object digitalization
Object digitalization cannot be discussed without showing how and why this process goes beyond the single museum. As I will demonstrate, the standardization needed for proper digitalization of objects and the representation that the process entails, means support for agents that make claim to central authority. Let me demonstrate this by briefly discussing how Actor-Network Theory makes sense of some interviews I did with employees of the authority, the National Museums of World Culture.

Actor-Network Theory has been accused of neglecting questions about power. In response, it has shown that its concepts are quite apt to handle power differentiation, but makes a point about seeing power and concomitant agency as effects of network arrangements, not something inherent in certain persons or materials. Also, it problemizes the idea of total power or total powerlessness, underlining that one and the same person can both lack and have the agency that power brings, depending on circumstance and time.

Each museum within the National Museums of World Culture has its own marketing staff, but all the technicians have been placed directly under the authority. While this would imply power on the part of technicians in a hierarchical model of organizations, in actuality it seems to gives them little room for agency.

I interviewed Anders Lagerkvist, who is the chief technician for information systems within the authority (2008-05-28:b). While weary of the technician's curse, being unnoticed and unacknowledged till things start to malfunction, Lagerkvist did seem careful not to trip on somebody's toes when talking to me. Responsibility for all four museums means being responsive to many different demands and being careful not to make enemies and thus aggravate an already complicated situation. For example, when evaluating a system (Carlotta) to be used for object digitalization in all four museums there were many demands to be met, such as the possibility of using Chinese symbols, of registering loans and of using one and the same nomenclature for all objects.

To repeat then, the technicians get their salaries from the central authority, giving them responsibility for the diversified activities of all four museums. Here I agree with Actor-Network theorist Andrew Barry, who argues that central power requires standardization of technological systems

(Barry 2001: 17-19) – to which I would like to add that lack of standardization means lack of power for any agent that lays claim to such a central position.

To complicate things further, however, there is also an opposing tendency underway, where the authority is implementing standardized information systems for all four museums. While not taking the final decisions in these matters, Anders Lagerkvist and other technicians are responsible for evaluating the new systems, thus giving them some influence on the matter.

Thus, the strain felt in accommodating different demands of the different museums has been somewhat lessened since the authority increased standardization.

> "Me: *Is it a problem sitting in Gothenburg while supposed to help the museums in Stockholm as well?* / Anders Lagerkvist: It was tougher to begin with, since the different museums used different operative systems, which for example made it impossible to remote-control computers. But since then we have demanded that everyone change to PC and Windows XP […] and now we can easily use the remote-control functions in XP. So there is less travelling to Stockholm now".[46] (2008-05-28:b)

Enforcing PC and XP use, also lessened the demand on the technicians' know-how and made possible a future change of web publication software within the authority. But it was a difficult decision for an authority that is much in the hands of its diverging museums.

Eva Gesang-Karlström, who is the authority director and who has taken several decisions on standardization, has been made very aware of the controversial nature of these matters. For example, taking the decision to implement one and the same software system for object digitalization, Carlotta, in all four museums was tough:

> "[T]here has been a resistance to Carlotta here in Gothenburg, in the Museum of World Culture. And then, at last, we have been able to agree on Carlotta, that it is okay. And it has taken a really long time. The amount of time it has taken is really amazing. And I know my decision sat uncomfortably with some people".[47] (2008-07-18)

The authority has thus recently standardized the software tool used for object digitalization and employed Magnus Johansson to coordinate digitalization efforts. The software Carlotta has been developed by a group of Swedish museums, among these the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm that is also placed under the National Museums of World Culture.

In contrast to mediating, then, where standardized platforms and applications are virtually non-existent, object digitalization is increasingly standardized each year. This is not limited to common software programs for different museums. As Magnus Johansson told me, efforts are made to coordinate digital museum collections in Sweden, across Europe and the world.

As I interpret this, not only is object digitalization a strategy to renovate the objects and centre their order on the individual user, but it also spells system standardization and increased power of centralized agents, such as the authority.

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[46] "Jag: *Finns det ett problem med att sitta i Göteborg, när du också ska hjälpa Stockholm?* / Från början var det jobbigare, i och med att de olika museerna använde olika operativsystem, vilket omöjliggjorde fjärrstyrning. Men i och med att vi krävt att alla ska gå över till PC och Windows XP […] kan vi enkelt använda de fjärrstyrningsfunktioner som XP erbjuder. Då har antalet resor till Stockholm minskar rejält, vilket är skönt."

[47] "det har funnits ett motstånd mot Carlotta här i Göteborg på Världskulturmuseet. Och sen, äntligen, så har man kunnat enas om Carlotta, att det är okej. Och det här har tagit jättelång tid. Det har tagit fantastiskt lång tid. Och jag vet att det var ett obekvämt beslut som jag fattade för flera"

Perhaps this could seem paradoxical, as centralization is often opposed to individualization. From the point of view of Actor-Network Theory, however, where both central power and individual users are simply actors in networks, not abstract and opposed entities, opposition between the two is reduced. Indeed, if we speak here of digitalization as a mode of representation, then virtually all-encompassing databases or search engines mean the increased possibility of common identity, monitoring and central power. However, such instruments of representation are also the conditions of possibility of individual overview of the collections.

To sum up the points I have made about object digitalization then, this is a mode of digitalization that is also a mode of ordering and a mode of representation. Indeed, it breaks up the old order of ethnography, and establishes a searchable ordering that centres the objects on the future individual user. While both supported and repressed by ethnography, this tendency is also endorsed by central authority that establishes standardized order and the possibility of centralized decision-making.

Conclusions

My results have if anything shown that crafting digital media is a messy business. Indeed, some would perhaps argue that my thesis is giving a too messy impression, not fitting the pieces together in order to present a coherent story of how digitalization is accomplished. 'What have we learned', these people would no doubt demand, 'except that the Museum of World Culture presents many case-specific obstacles and conditions for the digitalization process?'

And to these objections I would reply that messiness is at the very heart of this thesis and the message I wish to convey. Disorder should not be read as external to, but part of and defining digitalization itself. Not only must we realize that any seemingly ordered display – such as for example a stable relation between analogue and digital media, or re-enchanted exhibitions – is the outcome of painstaking construction, an arrangement of disorderly actors and materials. But we must also understand that these actors, materials and hence the arrangements needed, overflow any limits and boundaries that we as researchers may desire to erect beforehand – such as one between analogue and digital media or indeed between agents and materials. Thence my efforts to demonstrate that modes of digitalization – the very processes of crafting digital media – include a vast array of machines, humans, ideas, representations, buildings and objects. Both modes of digitalization discussed, mediating and object digitalization, require the local, specific and often messy ordering of these materials to emerge at all. In short, they are emergent orderings that materialize in the disorder of things.

The presentation of this messy business, itself demands ordering. Following John Law, I would say that concepts such as 'digitalization' and 're-enchantment' are tools that have permitted me to see repeated patterns in the noise of ethnographic data (cf. Law 2004: 108-10). As such and in the actual process of creating this thesis, they were chosen *ad hoc*. Thus not being limited to theory, method or results, they were a little of each. They were tools that permitted me to circumscribe the orderly presentation of more unambiguously theoretical concepts in order to present messiness; for example: digitalization, because the concept focuses on the process of construction, rather than any tidy result; re-enchantment, because it is about decentring old orderings and accepting the agency of non-human powers. In short, these and other concepts gathered disparate elements together and presented them in bundle.

Let me now summarize this thesis and at the same time answer the questions that I spelled out in the introduction: 1. How are modes of digitalization enacted within the Museum of World Culture and the context of object autonomy? 2. How do these non-instrumental and situated modes of digitalization determine the resulting re-enchantment and digital databases? 3. How are different modes of digitalization separately and jointly held together in the museum?

Object power

So let me start off by describing what is being renovated within the Museum of World Culture, namely its collections of objects. The objects are richly meaningful, scandalous, beautiful, marvellously interesting – but what are they *really*?

Actor-Network Theorist Kevin Hetherington has described the agency wielded by objects as a 'will to relation', i.e. their utter meaninglessness itself calls for contextualization and attracts ways of knowing and ordering (referred in Brown and Capdevila 1999; Hetherington 1999).

What I have described as the problem permeating the Museum of World Culture – namely the problem of what is to be done with its collections – could from this perspective be understood as the power of objects in the organization. Heeding the point made by Hetherington, I would argue that this power has grown, rather than diminished, since the orders and meanings of ethnography were found wanting. In a certain sense, the objects play the lead role in the museum; it is with them that exhibition staff experiment and tinker.

And still, at certain times and places, there are orderings and meanings emerging, stabilizing objects and merging them into orders. This is the reason, I think, to why staff working with mediating as a mode of ordering can speak of using the objects to convey messages, and the reason to why object digitalization, if tentatively, can dream of handling the objects in digital databases. When the objects have been merged into contexts where they are taken as meaningful, they are also less strenuous and autonomous agents. In mediating, they have been partially subsumed under messages; in digital databases, they are partially subsumed under keywords and search results.

But only *partially* subsumed; indeed, I would argue that the vagueness and ambiguousness of the museum exhibitions, where objects both are subsumed under and enrich the message conveyed by overflowing the limits of its meanings, is accomplished solely on the basis of this partiality, mirroring the sustained autonomy of objects in the organization.

Negotiating the digital

Then, how has digital media been enacted within the context of this object autonomy?

Early on, I advised against presupposing any specific delineation between object and media, or between digital and analogue. This caution has paid off; it is now possible to conclude that mediating works through a concept of objects *as* media and that the notion it has of the difference between (analogue) object mediums and digital media is in flux.

In flux: the distinction between analogue and digital in mediating is oscillating between two extremes. At the one hand, mediating sets objects up as mediums to convey messages. Thus, logically speaking, digital exhibits, conveying the same message as the actual exhibitions, should be able to replace objects. At the other hand, digital exhibits – and I am now just referring notions expressed in the interviews conducted – never do the same job as the actual objects displayed, because, it seems, objects are conveying something more to visitors than what is contained in a message. Thus, digital exhibits do something *other* than the actual exhibits; they may inform about, enhance, approximate the exhibitions – but never replace them.

This tension between digital media as replacement and as addition, quite evident in the interviews I have conducted, is a variation on the tension between mediating messages and autonomous objects that I sketched above. As such, the tension is, unsurprisingly, entrenched in the flux of objects, buildings and people that make up the museum organization as such.

The other mode of digitalization, namely object digitalization, attach much import to the separation between object and medium – here, objects are certainly not reduced to mediums – but how and where that separation is drawn, is less clear. Whereas objects are objects and never mediums, the digital medium is both a means of transporting and means of (re)ordering objects. Indeed, the medium *is* order, and hence it inscribes new meanings onto the objects. The opposition between analogue and digital, at the other hand, is at the core of object digitalization; after all, it is the conversion of objects from analogue to digital that defines its very labour. Still, the opposition is

negotiable; is typing an ethnographical catalogue of objects into computers digitalization? Is a non-searchable, scanned digital image of catalogue cards enough? These are still unresolved questions for those working with object digitalization – even if specific and formalized demands are underway.

My point is that the difference between object and medium, analogue and digital, are more or less unstable within the Museum of World Culture. This is not to say that there is no stability at all; indeed, the very argument about two modes of digitalization within the museum builds upon evidence to the contrary. However, while both these modes are based on notions of important differences between analogue and digital media, they sustain quite dissimilar, and unstable, version of these differences.

A more general conclusion to draw from this reasoning is that the above-mentioned divisions between object and medium, and between analogue and digital, cannot be taken for granted, but that any stability pertaining to them is an effect of arrangements. This is not to deny that the concept 'modes of digitalization' presupposes a division between digital and analogue and that it would be difficult or impossible to speak of such modes where such a division was lacking. Rather, I am 1. denying that such divisions has universal validity (it is historically contingent) and 2. consequently arguing that each version of the division must be read in the context of specific modes of digitalization.

Re-enchantment and digital databases

If I have been hesitant to use any predefined concept of digital media, I have been equally cautious of any definitions that would undercut the possibility of tracing the messiness of re-enchantment and digital databases within the Museum of World Culture. So how have the modes of digitalization determined re-enchantment and digital databases?

Mediating as a mode of ordering univocally reduces objects to experiences that they offer to museum visitors. Once again, however, this univocity crumbles when scrutinized closer. Importantly, at the one hand, experience is conceptualized as bodily and emotional and is an arrangement of objects, machines and visitors within exhibitions. But at the other hand, objects, exhibitions and graphics are used as allurements and their success is measured in visitor statistics from the website. These two versions of mediating re-enchantment are not mutually exclusive or opposed, but neither are they identical.

To my mind, the division is one between exhibitions and museum. Exhibitions are to convey messages, whereas the museum is supposed to attract visitors to those exhibitions. Or put less crudely: exhibitions re-enchant objects by relating them as medium to message, whereas the museum re-enchants objects as pure mediums, i.e. as mediums that attracts audiences through its capacities as medium (e.g. as up-to-date and different), not because of any message conveyed. Again, the boundaries between these two modes are not clear-cut.

Both these variations on mediating re-enchantment include the usage of digital media. Thus, Flash applications enforce the notion of message mediating experiences in exhibitions by replicating those experiences on the Net. Furthermore, the website of the museum has become part of arranging the organization identity, showing it off as up-to-date and different.

The sought-after effect is one of an unusual museum, an experience-oriented fair that can both attract visitors to the entertainment area where the museum is located, that can deliver the experiences craved and simultaneously convey serious messages. In the words of Anna Mighetto, it

is a museum that can successfully contest with exciting documentaries on television, and still provide a stimulating depth. This, of course, is an ordering fantasy where every aspect of the museum has a place and where mediating has taken the leading role. In certain aspects, it also corresponds to an emerging reality – in others, it does not.

Object digitalization immerses objects in multiple future orderings made possible by digital databases, orderings that centre on and empower the individual user. This, then, has little to do with bodily experiences or allure; it is about knowledge and arrangements – or about ensuring the future use of collected object. In this sense, digitalization makes objects more flexible and gives more initiative to the individual user; the objects may lack meaning as of now, but who knows about tomorrow? It is the future that promises usage of the digital medium and new, individualized orderings of objects.

However, exactly how to create and define the digital database and its flexibility and individualization is up for debate and concerns the arrangements of objects, rulers, colours, cameras and words, and the programming of digitalization applications. Currently, the field of object digitalization seems nothing short of a disorganized mess with a few streaks of order here and there.

Once again, however, we can hear voices speak fantasies of ordering: a digital database will empower individual choices, open new fields of applications for objects, facilitate interaction with users and spread interest in the old collections. Again, there are places and times where these fantasies are emerging reality; most of the time, however, they remain hopeful wishes for the disenchanted storage building and its stored-away objects.

In short, re-enchantment and digital databases have only partially emerged as real within the Museum of World Culture; in a certain sense, they point to the failure of their respective mode of digitalization. At the other hand, they are partially successful, as they do emerge in the disorder of digital media. We are in a grey zone, where the borders between success and failure are flexible indeed.

How are modes of ordering held together?

Let me now turn to the third question that I posed in the introduction: How are modes of digitalization held together separately and jointly? Let us start by discussing the internal coherence of mediating and object digitalization.

Mediating first. One obvious element that holds this digitalization process together is that certain people, namely the marketing and information employees 1. get all the money for the development of digital media, which gives them the right to hire consultants and programmers, and 2. have the sole right to edit and stop any text from being published on the museum website. These people, it needs to be said, read certain books and texts that they deem important. They also visit certain websites that they wish to emulate. Why do they visit exactly those websites and read exactly those books? Important question with many answers: because of their education (marketing and design), discussions with other members of staff in the museum, visits to other museums around the world, former jobs. Here is a question for a future essay: how are marketing and information employees assembled?

Importantly, these members of staff are also all working in the museum building, which gives them proximity to post-colonialist thinkers, books and exhibitions. They have immediate access to visitors and statistics from the web.

As of late, one thing has changed for mediating: there is no more money for the development of digital media.

So lets us turn to object digitalization. Here, things are not so much held together by people and texts, as by collections of objects and instruments. Indeed, there are many different individuals, such as temporarily employed students, who have worked with the digitalization process. Hitherto, the common denominator for all digitalization labour has been objects and different instruments, such as digital cameras, software programs and keyboards.

This might be about to change, as different texts with strict rules on how to handle the instruments may be introduced into the process. This is not yet the case however, and such rules seem to be controversial; many people have their own little digitalization project going on and do not wish to start all over again on someone else's behest.

Those working with object digitalization are held geographically separate from the museum and are housed together with ethnographers and ethnographic orderings.

Object digitalization uses one material that is quite important for the maintenance of its defining dreams and which is the one factor explaining why this digitalization process establishes so many contacts outside of the museum: the object database software. The more museums that uses compatible databases, the more valid object digitalization becomes as a reordering of ethnographic objects. Therefore, these databases have become the focus around which members of staff from different museum gather, talk and jointly constructs the objects of the future.

Assembling/disassembling the museum

My reasoning comes back to this point: the re-enchantment of the ethnographic museum through digitalization requires a vast array of humans, knowledge, ideas, objects, machines and buildings. Among these, new realities are emerging, new objects, new orders, and new meanings. But these realities are still vague and disparate. Indeed, this brings us to the "jointly"-part of my third question; how can it all be held together as a single museum? To this there are many answers, and I will try to explicate some of them here.

First, let me highlight the point that the emerging digital orders are dependent on the machines and applications that so obviously are central to digitalization as such.

As I have tried to show, in the Museum of World Culture, software applications are making mediating a costly and limited business, but involve object digitalization in ever wider standardization projects. Whereas mediating is not interested in comparison or overview, but in conveying specific messages and creating unique experiences, object digitalization is creating new digital orderings among template objects. Thus, while mediating hitherto has resisted the standardization efforts made by the authority National Museums of World Culture, the members of staff concerned with object digitalization are active participants in the process. Mediating counts its difference from the authority website as a characteristic of the museum identity, while object digitalization dreams of universal search engines for all Swedish, or indeed European, museum collections.

I have started off by relating these connections between programming and organization in order to draw some initial theoretical conclusions: how different bundles of emerging order are assembled is not exactly something that different agents within those orders intentionally decide upon; however, there may be unintentional features within the orders (such as software) that in one

way or another goes into determining those assemblages (such as when software standardization becomes a means of tying the museum closer to the authority). Furthermore, how this assemblage is attained may well have an impact on individual orders (such as when resistance to the authority translates into museum identity for mediating).

A second way, then, in which the orderings are assembled: the modes of digitalization occupy and arrange different geographical and digital spaces. Indeed, the actual separation between museum and storage is to my mind pivotal in maintaining the current museum organization. And it is anyone's guess if and how object digitalization can publish its databases on the museum website in the future; that there is currently no such database available is again to my mind one reason, but of course not the only reason, to why the modes of digitalization can go along within the organization.

But, and this is a third method of assemblage active within the museum today, there are indeed common spaces. In the exhibition groups, staff from both museum and storage is present – with consequent struggles, as I related above. Furthermore, conservators spend time putting their objects up for display when new exhibitions are assembled. Oftentimes, the entire staff travels to visit some other museum in Sweden or abroad.

One important means for keeping the museum together seems to be clear-cut areas of responsibility. Indeed, all of my interviewees spoke about other members of staff in terms of the function group to which they belonged.

The staff comprising the information and marketing unite, does constitute an obligatory point of passage for any information published on the Net. In Actor-Network Theory, this kind of arrangements is often interpreted as a way of keeping an organization together; or in other words, one mode of ordering is entirely responsible for one species of materials, such as the website, and so the usage of that material must be negotiated with the proper group and controversy is avoided. Likewise, I suspect that the staff at the storage house is an obligatory point of passage for all stored objects, digital or analogue, going into or out of the building.

Needless to say, there are also several materials that are common to the two modes of digitalization and that are flexible enough to accommodate different modes of ordering at the same time. For example, the museum building and the exhibition halls are more or less common spaces to the two modes, and thus work as a sort of boundary object. That it is in the exhibition groups that the two modes come together and cooperate, can hence be explained by the flexibility of the halls. And, perhaps surprisingly, the objects, constituting the problem that the different modes of ordering seek to solve, must count as boundary objects. Obviously, they are not the passive, undisputed object of Star and Griesemel's research on Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. Rather, they are more often than not the objects of dispute; nevertheless, grounds for dispute are also common grounds.

Let me add a point made by John Law in his most recent book: neither unity nor division is inherently good or bad within an organization. Modes of ordering receive some of their identity by relating to other modes, but whether they fare well or worse because of these associations must be decided individually in each case. As I have shown in this thesis, mediating does indeed derive its current character partly from its ambivalent relation to objects. It is said that the worst thing that can happen, is getting what you want; perhaps, then, the worst thing that could happen to mediating would be the successful conversion of all objects to mediums. My point is that division and relating, even if they at times take the form of opposition, may well be something that

holds the museum together. Or in other words: if there is something that I have encountered throughout the entire museum, it is the following question: what is to be done with the objects?

Therefore, disputed objects are also boundary objects, important to the integrity of the museum. I wish to connect this conclusion with my characterization of mediating and object digitalization as partially emerging realities. It is namely this partiality which allows for the object autonomy that opens up the question permeating the museum: how to deal with the objects? It is in other words this partiality or failure of the two modes of digitalization that allows for the museum collections to work as boundary objects within the organization. If I am allowed to stress this point somewhat: the integrity of the museum requires the failure of its orderings.

Spreading realities

The sociological drive to generalize must be resisted till the very end. According to Actor-Network Theory, any generality is the result of translations between different realities, any coherence a work of assemblage. Still, that leaves us with imitation and overlapping worlds. Indeed, as Actor-Network Theorist John Law skilfully argues, there is neither absolute particularity nor absolute universality. Rather, everything is found in between those extremes:

> "But if the universal disappears then so too does the local – for the local is a subset of the general. Instead we are left with situated enactments and sets of partial connections." (Law 2004: 155)

In other words, we must resist the temptation to propose that the emerging realities in the Museum of World Culture are emerging realities in all museums that can be labelled post-colonialist – but we must also avoid the timid limiting of results to the specific case under scrutiny.

Perhaps we do best to ask if there are any concrete aspects in the results of the investigation that point us in the direction of wider practices. I will do so here, but remark that this leads us to disentangle the skein of orderings present in the Museum of World Culture, in order to ask questions about their individual relations to other localities.

I would like to highlight how object digitalization is building standards, establishing contacts and cooperating over many different locations throughout the world. This is an emerging practice that is obviously driven by fantasies of a world-wide search engine that create the possibilities of ever new and shifting orderings. However, as I have demonstrated, there seem to be little evidence of any clear-cut rules governing the digitalization process today, rules that could for example establish the limits between analogue and digital, the character of a digital order and the future meaning of ethnographic objects. The question is then how this technology negotiates and reconfigures the objects in other localities and how standardization is accomplished between those localities.

Another widespread trend is the post-colonialist problematization of ethnographic objects and their on-going re-enchantment. Here, post-colonialist academics are opening up possibilities of new material practices in museums. Perhaps this trend will forge new academic alliances and indeed new ways to materialize academic theory in museums, such as those suggested by Museion. Or else it may be that new orderings will emerge, dissipate and re-emerge with lesser degrees of centralization and certitude – again, this opens up new vistas for future Actor-Network Theory studies.

A more theoretical observation: many new materials and ways of knowing proliferate when organizations initialize digitalization and the use of digital media. Here also there are new order-

ings and identities arising. Any organization that believes itself able to limit its usage of new media to the realm of already existing orders seems in this perspective naïve. Indeed, the multitude of machines and humans that this 'usage' brings could be conceived of as an unintended effect.

After having studied the Museum of World Culture, I would be very surprised to learn that mediating as a mode of digitalization – branding and medializing the organization – would be 'case-specific', or that it indeed would be limited to the realm of museums. In this perspective, I would suggest that object digitalization is a mode of digitalization that is more specific to museums, while mediating is a more generally applied practice. Again, there are interesting question to ask. How is mediating changed by its involvements with museums? How are museums changed by the networks that mediating brings about? Are there locations to which object digitalization spread outside of current museum practice?

Finally, I have suggested that the integrity of the Museum of World Culture requires that its two modes of digitalization fail, or at least that their successes are only partial. It is namely through this partiality that its collections of objects remain problematic – and I have argued that the problems pertaining to the objects are important amalgams holding the organization together. Is this method of assemblage applied elsewhere? Are there measures by which we may determine it importance within different organizations?

To conclude, museums such as the Museum of World Culture are important location for the forging of academic practices, public objects and modes of digitalization. With this thesis, I hope to have contributed to the investigation into the roles that these locations can play in the current and future assembling of the social.

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