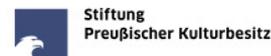


Engaging with collections of human remains

Anna Szöke

Workshop on Research Ethics in Evolutionary Biological Sciences

Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology





TRACES – Transmitting Contentious Heritages Trough the Arts: From Intervention to Co-production.

Funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation program.



Creative Co-Production (Adler, 2019)

- **Multidisciplinary:** multidisciplinary team represents 4 perspectives: artistic, ethnographic and/ other research that is related to the heritage in question, heritage providers (museums, memorials, sites, festivals, clubs, associations, etc.), ‘Communities of implication’ (Lehrer, 2018)
- **Long-term:** extended period of time, not shorter than three years.
- **Equal relations** by sharing resources
- **Budget ownership:** The budget is not provided or owned by one of the collaborators but is acquired by the team as a whole. The budget and the decisions around it are managed by the entire team and in transparency.
- **Self-reflection, external observation**
- **Generating change:** develop ways to promote significant, sustainable change in the context of contentious cultural heritages in a variety of institutional settings



Ethnographic research

- Respect research as processual
- Participant observation
- Reflexive awareness – reflexive journal written by researcher
- Participants:
 - Power balance between participants and researcher
 - Obligation to participate/collaborate/share knowledge
 - formed consent – anonymity, confidentiality?
->Anonymity may not be possible
 - Can withdraw from study at any point
 - Release forms
 - full collaborators or co-researchers->disclosure of analyzed data



Useful links

- **Positionen zum Umgang mit Forschungsdaten in der Europäischen Ethnologie, Entwurf 10-09-2018 (German only)**
http://www.evifa.de/cms/fileadmin/uploads/Entwurf_Positionen_Forschungsdatenmanagement_dgv_Stand_10-09-2018.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3vZuRtHZmJ5vuRAKHpwZ5Cap16IOwUOWLcY6ipbRaW0I1RZIY59uMhEo0
- **Ethikbegutachtung in der sozial- und kulturwissenschaftlichen Forschung? Ein Debattenbeitrag aus soziologischer und ethnologischer Sicht, Unger, Hella; Dilger, Hansjörg & Schönhuth, Michael (2016) (German only) doi: 10.17620/02671.17** https://www.ratswd.de/dl/RatSWD_WP_259.pdf
- **Research Ethics in Ethnography/Anthropology:**
https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/ethics-guide-ethnog-anthrop_en.pdf



- **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sozial und Kulturanthropologie:**
<https://www.dgv-net.de/dgv/ethik/>
- **American Anthropological Association – lots of links and discussion:**
<http://www.americananthro.org/ParticipateAndAdvocate/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=1895>
- **Association of Social Anthropologists (UK) Ethical guidelines:**
<https://www.theasa.org/downloads/ASA%20ethics%20guidelines%202011.pdf>
- **British Sociological Association ethics statement and guidelines:**
<https://www.britsoc.co.uk/equality-diversity/statement-of-ethical-practice/> and <https://www.britsoc.co.uk/ethics>

DEAD IMAGES

Facing the history, ethics and politics of European skull collections



- Tal Adler, Humboldt-University Berlin
- Linda Fibiger, University of Edinburgh
- John Harries, University of Edinburgh
- Joan Smith, University of Edinburgh
- Anna Szöke, Humboldt-University Berlin
- Maria Teschler-Nicola, Natural History Museum Vienna

Recommendations for the Care of Human Remains, Germany



Recommendations for the Care of Human Remains in Museums and Collections,

2013: <https://www.museumbund.de/publikationen/recommendations-for-the-care-of-human-remains/>

Statement of Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) to handling human remains in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin) collections:

https://www.preussischer-kulturbesitz.de/fileadmin/user_upload_SPK/documents/mediathek/schwerpunkte/provenienz_eigentum/rp/151001_Grundposition_Human_Remains_eng.pdf

Pre-engagement – to decide about



- Awareness of former relationships and relevant laws and regulations (e.g. historical relationships, sensitivities, working with children)
- How to approach communities/people and what to say to them..
- Anonymity and confidentiality
- Intellectual property
- What will be done with the data – how to store, for how long etc.
- Who will have access to the data and analysis
- Forms of feedback – ongoing and/or afterwards
- Will people be informed before researchers are giving presentations, publication?
- Possible benefits or risks of working with us.



DEAD IMAGES, film links:

RETURN (29 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9Wjimh9-sA&feature=youtu.be>

CULTURE (25 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH1cFYtkqJU&feature=youtu.be>

PHOTOGRAPH (15 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbu7gQhmWhU&feature=youtu.be>

DARKROOM (21 min.):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6AxIznkc7o&feature=youtu.be>



Questions for reflection

- Are human skeletons persons?
- Do you think human skeletal remains should be on display?
- Is it important to talk about the history of skeletal collections?
- Would you mind if your body were part of a museum display after your death?
- How would you feel if you discovered that the skeletal remains of one of your relatives were in a museum collection?
- Should human skeletal remains be repatriated?
- What do you think about the photograph of the skull collection?



Exhibition view DEAD IMAGES, video-installation



Exhibition view DEAD IMAGES, video-installation 'photograph'





**You are about to enter an area which contains
a photograph of human remains**

Photography is strictly prohibited



DEAD IMAGES engagement possibilities at the exhibition



- Team member of DEAD IMAGES constantly present during opening hours for face to face conversations (Qualitative research, audience research)
- Questions for reflection, including A1 papers on the wall to respond
- Anonymous feedback cards (Quantitative research)
- Sticky notes
- For 3 weeks daily special guided tours “Biographies” (Qual. & audience research)
- July: once a week, August: twice a week general guided tours
- Lunch time talks
- Diverse workshops for different age groups and backgrounds (professional/non-professional)
- Videos “DARKROOM”, “Photograph”, “Return”, “Culture”
- “Unfinished Library”, “Encountering Histories”



Outreach program

1) Presence

A DEAD IMAGES team member was constantly present to engage in conversations, questions and answers during opening hours.

2) Lunch time talks

5.7.2018, In conversation: Linda Fibiger & Anna Szöke. 'From touch to taboo: The ethics of handling human remains'

6.7.2018, 'Discussing contentious learning processes in the Dead Images exhibition' by Karin Schneider

7.8.2018, 'Rethinking skull collections through colour' by Joan Smith

8.8.2018, 'Can images die?' by Aglaja Kempinski

15.8.2018, 'First findings on visitor engagement at the Dead Images exhibition' by Callum Fisher

22.8.2018, In conversation: John Harries & Linda 'Searching for the person within - Anthropological and bioarchaeological reflections on skeletal identities'

14.8.2018, Lecture at the National Galleries of Scotland, by Ola Wojtkiewicz 'Bodies in Pieces: Representations of the Human Body in Visual Arts'



3) Exhibition sessions for groups

9.7.2018, creative writing workshop & reconstruction workshop

19.7.2018, creative writing workshop

23.7.2018, creative writing workshop

4) Exhibition sessions for young people

9.7.2018, exhibition visit and discussion

12.7.2018, exhibition visit and discussion

17.8.2018, drawing workshop

5) Screening

23.8.2018, “Trapped in a Human Zoo”

6) Guided tours and “Biographical tours”