Towards an inclusive re-use of FAIR cultural heritage data

FAIR-data (Wilkinson, Dumontier, Aalbersberg, *et al, 2016)* – meaning the findability, accessibility, interoperability and reuse of digital assets – is currently the guiding principle in data management in the current science policy that emphasises machine-actionability, enabling the technological support for humans to deal with an increasing volume of data but also human reuse of research-data. And also OpenGLAM (OpenGLAM, 2022) fosters open access and reuse of digital cultural heritage within the field of Cultural Heritage. A database therefore becomes the nexus for digital mediation as well as knowledge generation (Wiencek, 2019). Therefore, the task of a digital repository goes far beyond merely providing accessibility and enabling the findability of data. Rather databases are a framework for storytelling and co-creative knowledge generation on the basis of its data as well as a basis for diverse possible experiences through re-contextualization and reuse of the data, depending on the visitor interaction. This depends on the active engagement with the material rather. Software and technology act in that context as agents in their own right within the mediation process, determining for example possible actions or interactions with the data on the side of the users, or encoding archive politics that influencing the findability, accessibility and visibility of data. But who are these systems actually designed for? Who is really encouraged and enabled to actively reuse the data? Whose needs are taken into account in the design process of the interfaces and data models? And who is actually enabled to contribute to processes of co-creative knowledge generation?

Where interactive processes of engagement with data, contextualization and storytelling are key for the mediation for a wide range of users and use-cases, many databases and online collections in the Cultural Heritage sector, which hold information and specific value also for non-scientific users, seem to mainly focus on the use of these tools for research. However, we argue for the importance of including different target groups outside of the specialist community with their specific needs into a user-centered-design process for these technological agents of mediation. We do so using the specific use case of authorial communities within the restitution process of museum objects that were ingested into European ethnographic museums during colonial times. Many of the current debates in this area include the call to open the archives and databases of the museums (Sarr & Savoy, 2018, pp. 66–69). This move should enable members of the authorial communities - those communities who produced the objects - to find out, which museum hosts the objects so that they could study and/or reclaim them. But it would also enable to open up the interpretation and knowledge generation to the communities of origin and their intangible heritage and profound knowledge around

the objects. At the same time the digital cultural data can play a role in intercultural and intergenerational communication, triggering conversations that pass on the oral history to the younger generation. The digital cultural object can act as an information hub to potentially many different points of view on the specific object.

However, in several museums, processes of digitization and the introduction of collection management systems along with the respective data modelling started at times, when claims of the authorial communities to their objects were not seen as pressing issues (Savoy, 2021) and therefore the necessary provenance and context information, that would allow the communities to find the objects in their own "query language" (Rogers, 2013) not included in the design data model and documentation strategies. The resulting collection databases therefore mostly answer the needs of curators and scientist within the global North. They mostly include the information that were collected in the inventory books when the objects entered the museum. Due to the historical genesis of European museums, these entries follow a collector-centric approach. As an example a large number of items of similar nature bought from or donated by a collector was in many occasions collectively described in the entry books as a group of objects with similar properties, without further detailed information about the individual objects, whereas there were detailed information about the collectors available.[1] This alone can impede members of authorial communities to identify individual objects. Moreover, depending on the circumstances of acquisition, the collector might not have known detail about the original use and purpose of the objects. Thereby, an object might have originally entered the museum without detail about its original name and purpose, but with a name or description according to what the collector or the museum curator thought it might have been.

With this in mind, additional detail entered into the museum database might help to identify the object or at least to provide information on its acquisition and history in European museums, since often enough objects were exchanged between the museums. The databases could provide room for such information that is based on provenance research. However, often enough ethnographic museums are part of a museum associations within which other partners are more influential in decisions concerning the design of a shared collection database and its shared and published online collection (cf. Schien & Brüderlin 2021). Especially if the museum association pays for an externally serviced database with an agreement that raises the price with each new data field, new fields for provenance research become difficult to justify if the other partners do not see the necessity for the register in case their own museum is not (yet) in the focus of restitution debates.

The transfer from a collection management system to an online repository is a more complex process that includes editorial decisions beyond simply transferring the database into an online version. Many entries in the inventory books might include descriptions and references that are no longer deemed politically, socially or scientifically correct so that each entry has to be checked for outdated or even offensive descriptions, that were also encoded in classification systems such as ICONCLASS (Knickmeier 2020). Even if checked the intended user of the database or in this case

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[1] The inventory book of the Weltmuseum Vienna for example lists within the post number III from 1925 a part of the collection Ignaz Knoblecher. The entry even provides detail on the person who sold the collection to the museum; yet, the numbers 119.018-119.024 are collectively described under the general geographical entry Upper Nile, Egypt simply as "Lanzen, (7 Stück)" without further detail.

the online collection still informs the use of specific vocabulary. The data entries of a coin with the inventory number 21945 in the design of a 5-Franc coin from the collection of SMS Corvette Frundsberg - Emerich Billitzer in the online collection of the Weltmuseum Vienna illustrates that point.[2] It is listed in the collection as "Gefälschte 5 Francs-Münze". However, this title clearly continues colonial ascriptions. At that time these coins were made it was clear that they were produced locally whereas the term "forged" implies the intention of misleading someone. Instead of "forging" one should discuss the coin in the sense of appropriation, at least when mediating the object to the general public. However, the collection metadata is usually created with a specific purpose or usecase in mind – mostly catering curators and researcher as potential users. If looking into the described phenomenon of "appropriated coins", those users will look for the specific term "forgery" to find such objects and would not find it under the term "appropriated". However a field in the database or the online collection to provide a different point of view or discuss the vocaulary in use is missing to date.

These points concern those databases set up by ethnological museums as part of their documentation-workflow. The issues of provenance research and restitution however, led to initatives to design databases with thefocus of presentatiing the results of provenance research . The website of the PAESE project (Provenance Research in Non-European Collections and Ethnography in Lower Saxony) exemplifies that approach.[3] It includes a database which extends the tombstone information of the regular object documentation with the results of provenance research in their data-model. However, up to date the database is not only available in the German version of the website whereas the English version does not even mention the database within its content or navigation. This example also poses the question of the inteded target group as well as inclusion of authorial communities bydesign, since members of authorial communities are more likely to read English than German. While an English version might be in the scope of the projects it is currently unclear wether such initiatives will find permanent funding and a continuity in their work.

Nevertheless, a number of projects such as "Digital Benin" and even established approaches like that of the Museo do Indio provide examples of more inclusive practices and will be discussed in this context. With our presentation we want to open the discussion towards the development of a framework for a more inclusive design of cultural repositories as a nexus for mediation as well as restitution not only in the physical but also the digital realm.

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[2] The entry can be found at https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/object/?detailID=838349&offset=7&lv=list (visited 18.07.2022) for inventory number 21945 includes detail for the collection it is part of,

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