

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power: a reflection on the history and current reality of the museum through the eyes of Foucault*

Swen Seebach

Lecturer at Universitat Abat Oliba CEU

Date of submission: October 2017

Accepted in: December 2017

Published in: January 2018

RECOMMENDED CITATION

SEEBACH, Swen (2018). "Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power: a reflection on the history and current reality of the museum through the eyes of Foucault" [online article]. *Digithum*, no. 21, pp. 11-20. Universitat Oberta de Catalunya and Universidad de Antioquia. [Accessed: dd/mm/yy] <<http://doi.org/10.7238/d.v0i21.3124>>



The texts published in this journal are – unless otherwise indicated – covered by the Creative Commons Spain Attribution 4.0 International licence. The full text of the licence can be consulted here: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstract

This article reflects on the developments of and concerning the museum as a dispositive. It argues why the museum must be considered a dispositive. Then it follows the developments of the modern museum as a dispositive from its rise in the 19th century towards its current digital form. A critical historical reflection shows how structures of power, working within the museum, have changed. This article presents how relations of power in the museum are being woven, and how they produce respectively forms of freedom and regulation, according to the socio-historical context of which the museum is a part. Openness, inclusion and participation appear as key concepts that facilitate a better understanding of the structures of power within the late modern digital museum. These key concepts will help explain why and how the museum as a dispositive connects and relates with late modern society. Corresponding dangers will be pointed out along 3 key dimensions that can be found in the museum – the museum as place of experience, the museum as place of individual effect and data extraction, and the museum as place of creative production and self-exploitation. As a conclusion, the article wants not only to point at important and critical aspects of the late modern museum, but also to provide suggestions for improvements in the future.

Keywords

museum, digitalisation, dispositive, history of the museum

* This article is part of a research project funded by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness CSO2013-48232-P.

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power...

Creatividad, interactividad y estructuras ocultas de poder: una reflexión sobre la historia de la realidad actual del museo a través de la mirada de Foucault

Resumen

Este artículo reflexiona sobre el museo como dispositivo y los avances que se han producido en este ámbito. Argumentando por qué el museo debe considerarse de este modo, se examinan los avances del museo moderno como dispositivo, desde su auge en el siglo XIX hasta su actual formato digital. Mediante la reflexión histórica crítica, vemos cómo han cambiado las estructuras de poder que actúan dentro del museo. Este artículo analiza cómo se tejen las relaciones de poder en el museo y cómo generan formas tanto de libertad como de regulación, según el contexto historicosocial en el que se insiere. La apertura, la inclusión y la participación aparecen como conceptos clave que facilitan una mejor comprensión de las estructuras de poder dentro del museo digital contemporáneo. Estos conceptos clave ayudarán a explicar por qué y cómo el museo como dispositivo se conecta y se relaciona con la sociedad actual. Se examinan los peligros que ello supone partiendo de tres dimensiones clave que aparecen en los museos: el museo como espacio de experiencia, como espacio de efecto individual y extracción de datos, y como lugar para la producción creativa y la autoexplotación. En conclusión, el objetivo de este artículo no es solo destacar los aspectos más importantes y críticos del museo contemporáneo, sino también proponer sugerencias para futuras mejoras.

Palabras clave

museo, digitalización, dispositivo, historia del museo

1. Introduction

This article wants to provide a reflection on the museum in the context of technological and social developments in later modernity. It will provide a perspective on the current museum as an institution that comes with its very own potentials, possibilities and limits. A special focus will be on processes and consequences of digitalisation which are an existential part to new forms of exhibiting content and to the appearance of the museum, and which fit perfectly into a wider network of social transformations and consequent forms of power distribution.

In order to show how the digital museum fits into the restructuring of power in a new digitalised society, this article will present the museum as a modern dispositive of power. It will discuss briefly the history of the museum as dispositive and reflect on its role in shaping new forms of subjectification.

The definition of the museum as a dispositive goes back to Foucault (2012a; 2012b) who has not directly addressed the museum as a modern safeguard of norms and order but rather dealt with those institutions in which mechanisms of power dealt with the limits of society. Central dispositives which play an important role in the shaping of society have therefore not been included in his reflections. Inspired by Foucault's general idea of the mechanisms of power in dispositives, this article will draw on Crimp (1980) and Bennett (2008), who have started to close the gap that Foucault had left open.

It will then take a more concrete focus on the mechanisms of power in the contemporary museum. It will therefore redraw the threads that run from within the museum to society and

from society to the museum. It is by looking at the interrelations between society and the museum, in the context of ongoing digitalisation that we can understand the reorganisation of power and identity in late modern society. This analytical reflection of the museum will be subdivided in three different analytical dimensions: (1) the museum as a dispositive of experience, (2) the museum as a dispositive of individual effects, and (3) the museum as a dispositive of creative production.

The article will close by looking at some normative consequences of the rise of the digitalised museum as dispositive and by providing a reflection of its opportunities and limits.

2. Theoretical debate

In his work *Dits et Escrits*, Foucault describes dispositives of power as those essential institutions that are responsible for responding to a social and historical urgency and have therefore a dominant strategic role to play in society (Foucault, 1994, p. 299, compare with Agamben, 2009, p. 2). In order to play that role, the dispositive unites heterogeneous elements, discourses, institutions, architectonic buildings, laws, administrative structures and scientific, philosophic and often moral elements in spoken or unspoken form which become the different dimensions of the dispositive. (Foucault, 1994, p. 298, compare with Agamben, 2009, p. 3).

Following the footsteps of Foucault, Agamben defines the dispositive, that he calls apparatus, as conglomerate of power

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power...

structures as a "machine that produces subjectifications, and..." that "...as such is... a machine of governance" (Agamben, 2009, p. 20). In other words, the dispositive is a point of increased complexity and intertwining in which different semantic, discursive and material dimensions meet and through which certain forms of subjects and subjectivity come into being, which can then be turned into the fuel for the different parts involved in the dispositive. In this sense, the dispositive creates a circular movement of power which produces material effects, and which uses what it produces as its primary resource. Thus, the often unequal distribution of power and its effects are so constantly re-invoked.

Having defined the concept dispositive, it is important to emphasize that Foucault has never focused on the museum as dispositive. This article suggests that a reason for the absence of the museum in his reflections might be due to his focus upon the social and historical urgencies which concern the management of the limits of society. Therefore, Foucault dealt with subjects which move along those limits. Accordingly, the Foucaultian dispositive marks subjects at social boundaries and brings them into being thanks to subjectification processes. This would explain why Foucault pays attention to the mad (Foucault, 1988), the sick (Foucault, 2012a) and the criminal (Foucault, 2012b) which mark modern society but he does not focus on subjectification processes in the middle of society and dispositives responsible for them.

Foucault has concentrated on modern institutions of confinement: the asylum, the clinic, and the prison; for him, it is these institutions that produce the respective discourses of madness, illness, and criminality. (Crimp, 1980, p. 45)

Whilst Foucault's analysis is shaped by his interest in normative boundaries and limits and subjects at those limits, this article claims that there are a variety of other nexus of complexity, institutions of discursive and material power that fit potentially with Foucault's definition of a dispositive, as much as there are a variety of other subjects that serve the purpose of marking crucial social limits, although not so clearly referring to normative questions: Simmel's figures of the stranger (Simmel, 1992, p. 509ff.) and the poor (Simmel, 1992, p. 551ff.) are examples for the latter. Examples for the former might be the museum (Crimp, 1980; Bennett, 2008), the mass media (Baudry, 2003)¹² and the school (Sibilia, 2012). These other dispositives are not responsible for the production and administration of subjectivities at social boundaries, they rather produce and administrate subjects that are considered normal. They deal with those who have not or not yet fallen out of society. They are dispositives because they administrate society as such by invoking, managing and subjectifying normal identities but

they are different as they do not produce subjectivities through processes of subjugation but by marking and channelling processes of identification, experiences and decisions. We will therefore follow Crimp arguing that:

There is another institution of confinement ripe for analysis in Foucault's terms: the museum. (Crimp, 1980, p. 45)

The birth of the museum is bound to an important social urgency, providing us with a first hint at the characteristics of the museum. If modern society is based on established social norms and on society's members acting within the margins of these norms and if a crucial column of such a norm is a shared ethnic, cultural and social identity, some dispositives have to be responsible for the creation and reproduction of such identities. Furthermore, dispositives that can provide society's members with a framed imaginary of identity, also allow processes of collectivising identity and thus the establishment of imaginary moral and social boundaries. If we interpret the role of the museum in this sense, we can see how the museum plays its role in the governance of society. It is obvious that this role is marked by socio-material processes that the way it needs to play out its role must adapt to the socio-material conditions of its time. This is as much true for the factory as a dispositive of production, as for the school, the media and for the museum. The museum and the form it played its role is therefore also marked by those socio-material changes that condition its forms of production.

The museum of the 19th century played a double role. On the one hand, it familiarised with the own culture and key cultural references. On the other hand, it helped to mark the meaning of own and other cultures, of collective identity and otherness by presenting a clear hierarchic difference between both and presenting both to a wide public.³ This traditional museum played the role of a place that opened the visitors' eyes to own and foreign art, culture and lifeworld in a non-religious form and which constructed identity on the basis of differences that were often built upon a seemingly scientifically-historically verified system of reference. The form of presentation in the museum made differences appear as of a developmental nature and marked so the difference between "the own developed" and "the other not yet developed" culture. It is the strategic complicity of the museum with scientific discourses that made the production process of social differences appear almost neutral and that established a collective imaginary that created an almost natural bond between those who belong to a collective we and those who do not. The objectification process was essentially achieved by building on strategic relations with different traditional and emerging sciences,

1. See Hicethier (1995) and Paech (1997).

2. In limited form in Foucault (2013).

3. See Haraway (2003, pp. 26-58).

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power...

which found in this early form of the museum, a place in which the myth of science (Kolakowski, 2001) and the myth of culture were verified and gained an experience-able reality. The interplay between science, architectural building, discourse, myth and experience that the museum created shows that the museum employs similar synergies that Foucault described as symptomatic for a dispositive.

As a strategic place of power and identity creation, the 19th century museum contributed to the establishing of a new horizon of values and norms based on rationality and scientific observation by offering the experience and contact with the own higher culture and foreign lower culture. Furthermore, it introduced into the necessity of social and individual development and work on one's self. Education became an essential form in which the museum created possibilities for and limits of identification with the collective identity and thus marked differences of accessibility.

This is crucial because the museum as dispositive introduced a new form of general accessible knowledge. The museum as space and institution embraced people from all social ranks and classes. It turned culture into an object of consumption for all members of society. However, we should not misinterpret these new conditions for accessing culture, this new openness must be understood as a technique of governance. The demand for society's members to consume culture became an implicit imperative as much as the demand for visitors to work on themselves and on their cultivation.

The complexity of knowledge in the museum created obstacles especially to those members of society who lacked time and education, which were often the economically disadvantaged. They now experienced themselves in the museum as inferior to others.⁴ They felt a lack that could only be overcome by investing in education and by accomplishing the knowledge of the adequate scientific reference system. Lack of access and knowledge became interpreted as lack of effort and sacrifice. The museum produced universal accessibility to knowledge and culture but reproduced also social differences not only on an objective level but as a subjective experience. The museum materialised so social class on a personal level and anchored it in the individual character.

In this sense power in the museum followed the logics of modern liberalism, and defended the idea that everyone is responsible to make the best out of his/her guaranteed freedom. It freed horizons of value from their former traditional and religious embedding, addressed society as a whole, introduced to a form of difference based on knowledge and objective variables but it did so via techniques of differentiation and disciplination.⁵

The forms of disciplination and even the type of subjectivity that the museum in the digital era evokes are not completely comparable to those in the 19th century. In the *Birth of Biopolitics*

Foucault (2006) explains that with a growing liberalism and a general increase of freedom, the governance of society cannot exclusively take place via dispositives that function through disciplination.

Whilst some of those dispositives, which take care of social order at society's limits, might continue to function according to the logics of the discipline, those institutions that are responsible for the transmission and general awareness of social norms within society, have been forced to adapt to new forms of functioning and logics.⁶ The increase of objective freedom that society's members demand and that late modern forms of governance need to guarantee, implicitly require that regulation must enter the subject on a deeper level. Power must shape subjects' actions beyond decision and will (Seebach and Feustel, 2008).

For Foucault, this means a change in the mechanisms of power, from mechanisms based on distance and dominance, to mechanisms based on collaboration and implication. In this sense Foucault's later work moves away from former conceptualisations of power as abstract structures that need dispositives of the discipline to create feasible forms of experience. Power works through mechanisms that imply and embody, invite and motivate.

It may seem as if the museum still fits with more traditional understandings of power in Foucault, reflected in Debord's concept of the spectacle:

The fetishism of the commodity — the domination of society by 'intangible as well as tangible things' — attains its ultimate fulfillment in the spectacle, where the real world is replaced by a selection of images which are projected above it, yet which at the same time succeed in making themselves regarded as the epitome of reality. (Debord, 2002, p. 6; p. 36)

Dispositives of power like the museum mediate reality by presenting a realistic copy of what they represent and substituting so reality with representation. However, the relationship between image, representation, object, power and consumer that we find in Debord's reflection of the museum has undergone profound changes. Mechanisms of power do not any longer built on visitors' passivity but on the activation of the subject and its freedom to act.

This new implication of an active willingly engaging subject corresponds to a new form of governance of society, in which the subject must manage and develop its relation with itself, with own and other cultures, with norms and limits and with its environment. Regulation aims not any longer at the direct limitation of action and at a collective we and a marked other but works on a deeper level at the fundamentals upon which actions are based. Whilst early modern dispositives were based on exclusiveness, exclusion

4. See Luhmann (1997, p. 220).

5. See Debord (2002, pp. 2-4).

6. See Sibilia (2012) especially with respect to the adaption of the dispositive school.

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power...

and passivity new dispositives are built upon openness, inclusion and participation,⁷ short they build on the implication of people's freedom in social governance processes.

If we bring this back to the reflection of the museum as dispositive we can say that Debord is right in as far as the representation of life in the museum becomes life itself but it becomes life itself not through substitution but implication.

The mass media show a similar development. In the era of digital journalism, the value of a good story is not any longer (only) based on trustworthiness, objectivity and information value, but on its capacity to implicate the consumer of the story actively in the development and consumption of the story. Digital journalism has adapted to the principles of prosumption (Blätzel Mink and Hellmann, 2010; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010) which does neither assume nor require a passive receiver but a receiver that replies, participates and co-produces. Such participation process might come through a comment, an emotion or an active creation of a part of the story. Interactivity, creativity and participation as experience (Sturm, 2013) are essential to digital storytelling.

The transformations of the museum have similar consequences and implications. In the digital museum the distance between art object and viewer seems to slowly disappear. Acting and interacting with art works becomes increasingly central to digital art exhibitions. The dispositive museum creates a more open bond between art and viewer because it fosters various forms of interaction. In the very same movement it reaches deeper into the viewer as it demands the externalisation and implication of the viewers' emotions and experiences within the artwork. This is how the museum sets regulation and freedom in a new kind of relation.

3. The museum in the digital era

The digital museum allows new forms of interacting with artworks. It builds on individual freedom in the form of approaching objects and exhibitions. Thanks to digitalisation, visitors can develop new forms of relating with traditional art and cultural objects, and they can interact and even co-produce digital art objects. The museum turns into a Lab, a place in which something new is created in processes of experimentation of the viewer with objects of intervention. Following Simmel (1996), we could argue that as a result of this process the museum emphasizes stronger the importance of subjective culture, of a subjective experience that

moves more to the foreground. However, we could also argue that a result is an increase of objective culture, as subjective experiences are congealed within the artwork.

The museum integrates people of different age, origin and social classes and milieus better because consumption of art is not any longer build on a rigid base of knowledge, every experience counts and contributes to the production of value. The exhibited object is freed from its stasis and is connected to the experiences of the consumer that transform its meaning. However, this new freedom of both the visitor and the art object serves also a new form of governance that needs the willing exposure and implication of its subjects in order to govern.

We want to analyse the functioning of the digital museum as a dispositive in three dimensions: the museum as place of experience and self-regulation, the museum as place of individual effect and data extraction, and the museum as place of creative production and self-exploitation.

3.1. The museum as place of experience and self-regulation

The museum has always been a place of experience, as such it has not only created knowledge about society but has, as already explained, intervened in society and created social difference. In the museum, the European citizen was able to gain an abstract pre-shaped experience with the African⁸ and Native American⁹ people, and their supposedly primitive art and cultural objects as much as with art and cultural objects from the own high culture.¹⁰ It allowed an individual and collective experience with the idealised own and the exotic other, with the upper and lower limit of society,¹¹ and so with social norms and limits.

However, the definition of the meaning of an artwork used to be marked by a knowledge which wanted to be understood as universally valid and unchangeable. The museum as dispositive had the tasks to mediate and teach this knowledge. The implicit expectation was that artworks talk to the one who knows and that only knowledge leads to fine art and culture experience.

This meant that for experiencing an artwork or a cultural object it was necessary to understand how to read it. The visitor of the museum needed art and cultural literacy. Not the structure, colour and history of an artwork itself allowed visitors to enjoy, only thanks to knowledge,¹² sophisticated subjective experience became possible. The museum demanded cultivation, and emphasised differences in cultivation and education, as a means

7. See Galloway (2016).

8. See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negro_of_Banyoles>.

9. See, for instance, the Grassi Museum, former museum of ethnicities in Leipzig.

10. Clifford (1988).

11. In this sense, it shares mechanisms and modes of production with the cinema.

12. See Simmel (1996) and Cantó-Milà (2013).

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power...

to motivate social members and as a basis to create modern social differentiation.¹³

In this sense, experiences in the museum might have been different but the idealised norm represented in the museum as dispositive was that such differences can be reduced, that they can all be lead back to one objective reality. Education and cultivation were tickets to enter a space in which people of different social origin were potentially able to meet and feel part of the same collective entity. The museum, the artwork and the cultural object, they all demanded education and cultivation.

The 20th century has changed the forms of mediation in the museum profoundly. Whilst the early modern museum presents the artwork as a mystical object with a rational objective content, the digital museum has turned the artwork into a rational object with mystical content.¹⁴ The museum of the 20th century does not imply the subject as a subject of knowledge but of experience. Experience moves to the foreground, knowledge into the background. The digital museum does not want to create a shared level of knowledge and so a shared basis for everyone, on the contrary, subjective difference becomes much more important, if not central. Different subjective experiences are collectivised and mediated not via the interactions on the basis of the artwork but as abstract processes in the artwork itself. The collective experience moves at a distance.

The museum is open and inclusive not because it helps to diminish differences but because these differences become an equally unequal basis of its form of governance. This means that the mechanisms of the late modern museum do not promote cultural and social transcendence but an access adapted to everyone, individually. In this sense the museum has become more democratic, if we understand democratic as something that simply allows active participation.¹⁵

This new freedom and openness to participation has its price. Education and cultivation are not any longer essential. As difference is essential, difference is emphasised. As a consequence, differences between social class, place of origin, gender and culture are not only reproduced they are implicitly naturalised. Openness, horizontality and participation do not mean equality, on the contrary without a shared horizon of objective meaning, a point of orientation for equality is lost. Subjective experiences reproduce inequalities with a soft naturalness, erect boundaries without force.

Here, the museum as dispositive shows its late modern structures of power. Under the name of a new horizontality,

power, crystallised in the museum, subjectivises, individualises, and produces social differences as result of experience and not as a consequence of differences in opportunities and access to power.

3.2. The museum as place of individual effect and data extraction

Whilst active participation builds on and naturalises social differences it has also another role to play. Interaction with the artwork moves increasingly into the centre of an exhibition. The digitalisation of the artwork allows participation in an almost perfect form, thanks to which the visitor really becomes a part of the artwork. The visitor is transformed thanks to his consumptive experience of the artwork (Campbell in Ekström and Brembeck, 2004) and the artworks thanks to it being consumed by the visitors (Chul-Han, 2015). In the museum we find especially two forms of interaction: commenting and active participation.

Digital exhibitions¹⁶ allow the interaction with artworks and shown objects, they allow the creation of interactional experiences and create a sometimes personalised, often individualised history of interactions. Digital art projects have created so new mechanisms of meaning creation. The audience interacts with the artwork and in fact does bring it to life. When the artwork loses its inner life it obtains it elsewhere. Like described by Benjamin in his reflection on the artwork (2010; 2003), the absence of the aura establishes a new requirement for life that comes from its relation to the viewer. This brings important advantages, the museum as Knowledge-Lab allows and lives from constantly new discoveries of its visitors, which allows visitors to inspire and provoke new contents.¹⁷ The visitor is enabled to experience the huge subjective potential that she/he possesses, her/his power to change, to influence and to shape the meaning of culture and cultural identity. We can see here the huge power that the digital museum contains.

This new freedom deriving from the interaction with the artwork comes however with a price. Data about interactions with the artwork are saved by the museum or the artwork itself and leave a trace of individualised (although not necessarily personalised) data. This data storage is usually neither presented nor made aware of by the museum but it contains a meaningful value. Whilst unquestioned data extraction is justified as a natural consequence of the liberation of the artwork and the visitor of the museum from their former restrictions, it should be rather understood as a sacrifice that visitors make. To extract big data as

13. Bourdieu (2003).

14. Similar to the logic of Galloway and Deleuze (1993).

15. An example is the *Ball del Fanalet* (Dance of the Lantern): <<https://vimeo.com/157922712>>. This allows participation and experience without the concrete requirement of knowledge.

16. See: <<http://www.themachinetobeanother.org/>>; <http://www.cccb.org/rcs_gene/imatge_web_4.jpg>; <<http://blog.cosmoaixa.com/ca/-/exposicion-mediterraneo>>.

17. To a certain extent, we could argue that the diverse subjectivities of the museums' visitors have become a part of the mystic content of the museum.

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power...

a price for free content is something typical for all kinds of digital environments. Almost unquestioned or hidden data extractions are carried out by applications, Barbie dolls and Smart TVs. In the museum as a dispositive the meaning of such an extraction is not less essential. Extracted data allows also forms of surveillance and analysis. Obviously the majority of the data cannot be lead back to a specific single subject but it allows the analysis of a generalised single subject and is thus meaningful nonetheless. Data might not inform about the actions of a subject but about potential decisions of a subject that faces a decision or a task. It is a kind of value extraction without consent. Especially in the synergies that digital art objects create between science, museum, and users, between showing knowledge and experimenting, we can see the value hidden in working with these data. The museum as dispositive justifies such a value extraction and leaves deriving critical aspects without reflection. It justifies an exercise of power and the price that needs to be paid for freedom, a price that we are often not aware of and therefore we are willing to pay.

Participation in art and culture in the museum is never only participation. In the powerful dispositive that the museum is, participation is always also a meaningful measuring of physical, social and psychosocial data. Sometimes an art object contains a hidden survey, sometimes a lab-test in which we voluntarily participate without real knowledge about how results are being used.

Like in the digital world of late capitalism, we are left in the dark about structures, sources, and later uses of our data. If we participate in a scientific study, we are usually informed about data use and rights, in the museum we are not informed at all.

As described, this practice is symptomatic for a digitalised network society, in which data about our actions and interactions are extracted and saved. By acting, interacting and classifying, we become transparent and easier to classify (Chul-Han, 2015). If the new type of museum is a lab we are not just experimenting scientist but also lab rat.

This becomes even clearer with the second form of participation. We are increasingly demanded to comment artworks and to add our experience to the artwork in direct (in the exhibition) and indirect forms (in some additional social medium). One important aspect of such participation is the already explained extraction of value and the transparency of ourselves that we create for structures of power.

But there is another important consequence that is of importance and must be understood as a technique of governance: Such participation creates and gives credit to content-free populism.

On the wall of the concentration camp Tuol Sleng in Cambodia some visitor has written on the wall: "Let shit like this ever happen again! Please!". A phrase completely arbitrary, substitutable, without complexity, adaptable to all kinds of negative events, be it on Ground Zero, in Tuol Sleng, Auschwitz, or after the

football game between England Iceland during the European Championship in 2016.

The invitation to comment might be hypothetically an opportunity for a critical reflection and intervention and a motivation for the discovery of hidden forms of reading artworks. However, there is also the implicit risk that the comments and their dynamics become similar to those in social networks, a wallboard for empty shallow phrases with the less possible concrete messages, in order to gain a maximum of affirmation.

If we want to understand the possibility of the comment in the digital museum as a possibility for critical politisation we must also accept the risk that comment functions produce. They invite to turn commenting messages into forms of (self-) promotion and so to turn the conversation in the museum in a form of advertisement in which forms weigh more than content. Critical capacity might get lost because the visitor sees her/his comment valued independent of the inherent message. Sharing our opinion might give satisfaction but it might also make us lose the capacity of criticism.

The twitterisation of the museum might even have another effect. In the comment and the comment function the problem of social differentiation, which the digital museum promotes to overcome, might reappear. Almost naturally the cultivated speaker can be differentiated from the uncultivated. The difference is that they can now compete and discuss on a personal level instead of measuring themselves on an objective knowledge. Fundamental is not any longer the knowledge on the basis of which all can discuss but the potential and power to communicate and to mobilise. Social capital is the centre of this new tendency.

3.3. The museum as place of creative production and self-exploitation

A third and last dimension of the digital museum is the invitation of visitors to various forms of creative co-production. Especially where the museum turns into a Lab such creative contributions are directly and indirectly demanded. Sometimes such contributions might be drawings, inventions or even forms of Co-Prototyping. The digital museum does not leave the potential of creative production within the hands of some self-defined experts. Instead, it opens up for those forms of creativity that might be hidden in the dark, in the most unexpected places of society. However, whilst we might understand such new forms of integration positively, we could also ask what people actually get for their creativity. They produce value but what do they get in return. Often the offered object of exchange is only to become another object of the exhibition:

Take a selfie – participate in the exhibition

Get inspired by the exhibition and take your own selfie. Upload it to Instagram and use the hashtag #nmselves and your image will be shown in the feed both in the exhibition

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

and on the website. (<<http://www.nationalmuseum.se/selfieseng>>)

However, the interesting question is whether we are here not double exploited, first for our creativity and then as objects of advertisement. This new form of inclusion or better to say exploitation of our individual creativity, we know from new marketing practices. In which creativity and experience become a part of the promotion of a product. Like in other parts of late capitalist society, in the museum the creative labour forces are exploited in format “friendly”. They are integrated in the creative project. The payment in form of exhibition serves the museum in a double form, it allows free value extraction and it creates a stronger attraction for not-yet connected visitors, so that they might become the creative potential of the future. Successfully not paying for creativity demonstrates that being exhibited is enough of value for their contribution.

4. Debate and conclusion

The analysis of the digital museum shows a big potential for better integration, a more diverse understanding of society, the creation of a collective, however heterogeneous world of art and culture. However, the museum as dispositive is a part of late modern structures of power which it reproduces and congeals in different forms of subjectivity. In contrast to the museum of the 19th century the late modern museum creates and promotes openness, inclusion and especially participation, which as new principles of order promote and build on freedom but create also new forms of limits and regulations. Openness, inclusion and participation co-produce a risk of devaluing knowledge, naturalised exclusion, unquestioned data and value extraction, generalised observation, and unpaid use of creative labour. These are the zones of danger of the digital museum that should make us aware of problem zones of our horizontal, open, transparent society (Seebach, 2015).

The museum is a nexus of power in which fundamental mechanisms of society and power become visible. Big data, opinion opportunism, populism, experience oriented superficiality, creativity exploitation are central issues that late capitalist power produces, especially in digitalised environments.

The museum might play a less central role in the 20th than in the 19th century but this is because the museum has become decentralised. It has not disappeared as a dispositive of power but has grown into society. In its digital form it has conquered social spaces. The world has become a museum and we all expose us. We

Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power...

can see this tendency in the transformation of all kinds of spaces and places into world heritage¹⁸ or in the exhibition of ourselves in Instagram and Facebook. As a counter movement the museum has opened up for subjectivity. The museum is a central pillar of these processes of subjectification and objectification and legitimises practices of power, which can become critical in a digital society.

The desire for openness, inclusion and participation should become connected to essential forms of criticism. Therefore the museum should:

1. Be transparent about data extraction and data use with clear defined limits.¹⁹
2. Create standards for a language and quality of contributions to the artwork.
3. Create events and experiences that aim at diminishing social difference and do not leave such processes to themselves.
4. Create mechanisms to pay back the value that is created by visitors in better and more honest forms than by simply offering exhibition.

The digital museum can become a central place for communication, reflection, and collective action in late modern society, in which critical reflections about forms of freedom and regulation are promoted or it can stay a dispositive of power in which the hidden structures of power find their way in society, legitimise practices of exploitation and connect them with different forms of subjectivities.

References

- AGAMBEN, G. (2009). *What is an apparatus?*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- BAUDRY, J.-L. (2003). “Das Dispositiv. Metapsychologische Betrachtungen des Realitätseindrucks”. In: Robert F. RIESINGER, Guntram GESER, Albano LUCILLA (ed.). *Der Kinematographische Apparat. Geschichte und Gegenwart einer interdisziplinären Debatte*, pp. 41-62. Münster: Nodus.
- BENNETT, T. (2013). *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. Routledge.
- BENJAMIN, W. (2003). *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*. Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp.
- BENJAMIN, W. (2010). *The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility*. MIT Press.
- BLÄTTEL-MINK, B.; HELLMANN, K. (2010). *Prosumer Revisited – Zur Aktualität einer Debatte*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

18. Declaring something to be “World Heritage” means nothing less than declaring it a preservable object of exhibition that we have to visit as if it were a museum.

19. A better and more open collaboration with the audience might be of greatest importance.

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power...

- BOURDIEU, P. (2003). *Distinction - A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- BREMBECK, H.; EKSTROM, K. (2004). *Elusive consumption*. Berg Publishers: Oxford.
- CANTÓ-MILÀ, N. (2013). "Simmel in the Archive. On the Conflict of Late Modern Culture". In: Keiji FUJIYOSHI (ed.). *Archives for Maintaining Community and Society in the Digital Age*. Koyasan: Koyasan University Press.
- CHUL HAN, B. (2015). *The Transparency Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- CLIFFORD, J. (1988). *The Predicament of Culture – Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- CRIMP, D. (1980). On the Museum's Ruins in *October* Vol. 13 (Summer, 1980), p. 41-57.
- DEBORD, G. (2002). *The Society of the Spectacle*. Canberra: Hobgoblin Press.
- DELEUZE, G. (1993). "Postskriptum über die Kontrollgesellschaften". *Unterhandlungen*. 1997-1990, p. 254-262. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
- DIRKS, N. B.; ELEY, G.; ORTNER, S. B. (ed.) (1993). *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*. New Jersey: Princeton.
- FOUCAULT, M. (2013). *Schriften zur Medientheorie*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- FOUCAULT, M. (2012a). *Discipline & punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage.
- FOUCAULT, M. (2012b). *The Birth of the Clinic*. Routledge.
- FOUCAULT, M. (2008). *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Springer.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1994). *Dits et Ecrits*. Paris: Gallimard.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1988). *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Vintage.
- GALLOWAY, A- (2016). "Widerstand ist zwecklos Computernetzwerke üben eine neue Form von Kontrolle aus. Darum brauchen wir neue Strategien für politisches Handeln". Ein Gespräch mit dem Medientheoretiker Alexander Galloway, Gespräch mit Bernard, Andreas und Staun, Harald. *FAZ*. 29.06.2016. <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/politisches-handeln-im-internet-14308016.html?printPagedArticle=true - pageIndex_2>
- HICKETHIER, K. (1995). "Dispositiv Fernsehen. Skizze eines Modells". In: *Montage/AV* 4,1, S. pp. 63-83.
- KLING, M. U. (2009). *Die Känguru Chroniken: Ansichten eines vorlauten Beuteltiers*. Berlin: Ullstein.
- KOLAKOWSKI, L. (2001). *The Presence of Myth*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- LUHMANN, N. (1997). *Die Kunst der Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt M.: Suhrkamp.
- PAECH, J. (1997). "Überlegungen zum Dispositiv als Theorie medialer Topik". In: *Medienwissenschaft*, 4, S. p. 400-420.
- RITZER, G.; JURGENSON, N. (2010). "Production, consumption, prosumption: The nature of capitalism in the age of the digital 'prosumer'". *Journal of consumer culture*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 13-36.
- SEEBACH, S. (2015). "Über die Notwendigkeit des Schließens von Offenen Prozessen in Research Arts". *Research-Arts.net*. 15/01/2015.
- SEEBACH, S.; FEUSTEL, R. (2008). "Freiheit im Vollzug: Foucaults Vorlesungen von 1978/79. Eine Replik auf Philipp Sarasin". *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, vol. 56, no. 1/2008, p. 152-154.
- SIBILIA, P. (2012). *Redes ou paredes: a escola em tempos de dispersão*. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto
- SIMMEL, G. (1996). "Der Begriff und die Tragödie der Kultur". *GSG 14*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
- SIMMEL, G. (1992). *Soziologie*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp
- STURM, S. (2013). *Digitales Storytelling*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

<http://digithum.uoc.edu>

Creativity, interactivity and the hidden structures of power...

Swen Seebach

Lecturer at Universitat Abat Oliba CEU
(swen.seebach@gmail.com)

Swen Seebach is a adjunct professor at the Universitat Abat Oliba CEU with a specialisation in media theory and sociology. He holds a PhD in Contemporary Social Studies. He has been at Juan de la Cierva program at the Autonomous University of Barcelona from 2015 to 2017. He has also published the book *Love and Society: Special Social Forms and the Master Emotion* (Routledge, 2017).

Universitat Abat Oliba CEU
Bellesguard, 30
08022 Barcelona
Spain
<https://www.uaoceu.es>



UNIVERSIDAD
DE ANTIOQUIA