Public Representations of Immigrants in Museums
Towards a Microsociological Contextualisation Analysis¹

Yannik Porsché
Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz / Université de Bourgogne

This paper outlines a microsociological contextualisation analysis as a methodology which selectively combines elements of interaction and discourse analysis to approach questions of knowledge and memory construction. Examples of such an analysis are presented from a case study on the production and reception of an exhibition designed by and presented in museums of history and migration in Paris (the Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration) and in Berlin (the Deutsches Historisches Museum and the Kreuzbergmuseum). In order to investigate how national and European images of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ are produced in “epistemic cultures” (Knorr-Cetina 2007) of the “global culture industry” (Lash & Lury 2007) the analysis focuses on the interaction between the museum institutions and the general public and asks: How is the public represented in public? Discursive and material constellations function as enabling and constraining contexts which participants simultaneously refer to and (re)produce in text and talk. The construction by reference is accomplished through multimodal contextualisation cues in talk, which serve as a methodological anchor point for the analysis. Additionally, ethnographic data and trans-sequential comparison sheds light on the context understood as conditions of possibility beyond conversation’s structural capacities. The article shows that not only does the content of the analysed exhibition deal with public negotiations of immigrant representations, but that the work by and within the museum institutions and the reception of the exhibition by museum visitors themselves constitute an asymmetrical, cross-cultural stage for negotiation.

Introduction

In this paper I will outline a microsociological contextualisation analysis by presenting an empirical case study concerned with knowledge constructions

---

¹ For helpful comments on earlier versions of this paper I would like to thank the reviewers as well as Johannes Angermüller, Vivien Sommer, Miguel Souza, Paul Sarazin, Ronny Scholz, Jennifer Cheng, Felicitas Macgilchrist and Patricia Deuser.
of images of immigrants in a Franco-German museum exhibition – concerning representations both held by the public and negotiated in public. With reference to theoretical notions about the museum space, issues of representation and the public I will combine elements from interaction and discourse analysis. I will illustrate the methodology’s use with two empirical examples.

The Exhibition Space

Museum exhibitions are strange places. Selected objects, people and discourses are taken out of their “natural habitat” and rearranged in an attempt to make the topic of the exhibition tangible or at least manageable. Objects are placed in showcases and people take a step back in order to reflect on what is seen. Visitors stop their daily routines and leave the noisy and chaotic city life behind them when they enter the museum building. In the early opening hours or in less popular exhibitions the visitor finds him/herself in a spacious, clean and calm exhibition space looking at society, arranged in an orderly fashion from a seemingly objective point of view. Well-researched information on labels next to the objects gives a condensed explanation of what an object is. And the scenography makes clear how the relation between the objects makes up the mosaic of the exhibition topic – knowledge, memory and experience seem to be presented in their purest forms (or at least we would like to believe so, sometimes against our better judgement; cf. Macdonald 2003, 3-5; Winkin 2001). By the time the first school classes arrive, and as visitors and guides begin to argue about the exhibition or the labels and the audio guide tell diverging stories, it becomes clear that even the “heterotopic” exhibition space cannot be a place outside all places, decontextualised and free of social order.

In the case study I take a closer look at one of these places, which attempts to tackle no less than the question of how immigrants are and have been represented in the public sphere in France and in Germany since 1871 – a date considered pivotal in the foundation of both nation states. Without doubt it is an ambitious endeavour to present one hundred and forty years of national history of two nations in one room, in a way that one can grasp it and talk about it, ideally in a one-hour guided tour. The image of society portrayed in the exhibition thus needs to be a

---

2 Museums can be considered as an “effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias” (Foucault 1986 [1967], 24).

3 The case study presented is analysed more broadly in my PhD project ‘Representing Foreigners in Museums. A Microsociological Contextualisation Analysis of Franco-German Knowledge Constructions’ (working title).
rather condensed one. It is needless to say that a number of people working on the exhibition project with various national, political and disciplinary backgrounds would not easily agree on what should or should not be displayed and how, or what an anticipated public might think the objects refer to. Even before a visitor comes into the environment the museum is already a “contested terrain” (Lavine & Karp 1991) that offers dynamic, ambivalent and contradictory classifications, which are then critically consumed by the audience.

Considering that exhibitions are not produced in a vacuum outside time and space, Lash and Lury (2007) describe today’s exhibitions as being particularly dynamic spaces of de- and re-contextualisation. Whereas objects in the past might have been produced according to a labour-intensive Fordist model in order to represent something, and the meaning could be understood by interpretive decoding of the object as a cultural good, the generation of meaning is said to have now become more fluid, informational, moving and open. In anticipation of the expected audience the production of cultural objects is design-intensive and geared towards what they will be used for. Particular attention is given to institutional settings by conceptualising them as “brands”, which become apparent to the consumer in an immediate affective and multimodal experience of using ‘things’ over and above any concrete perception.5

As will be outlined in the next section, approaches of practical and material sociology attempt to take multimodal practices and things into account when analysing the production of meaning and social order. For instance, Doering and Hirschauer (1997) look at how objects are alienated and turned into artefacts when placed into the museum space. They show how a generally disciplined and passive behaviour in the museum space creates an institution’s and its artefacts’ aura which enables a risk-free encounter with the Other. Before presenting examples from the case study, I would like to turn to the methodological question of how one might go about analysing the dynamic and multimodal (re-)contextualisation practices between various people, objects, discourses and institutional settings which are involved when negotiating meaning.

4 The team was made up of German and French museum practitioners and two external academic committees from the Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration and the Deutsches Historisches Museum, respectively, working together on the general preparation, yet, to a large extent, separately in the implementation of the exhibition in each institution.

5 For example, a product by brands like Apple or Nike conveys much more a lifestyle or experience than a certain kind of product.
Representing the Public in Public – Methodological Reference Points for a Microsociological Contextualisation Analysis

The exhibition project on representations of immigrants in the public sphere poses the following question as much to the curators and visitors as to me as a researcher: what is ‘representation’ and what is ‘the public’? Firstly, one might ask how ‘representation’ contributes to the knowledge production of an abstract cartography of ‘the public’, and where immigrants are marked on the map of ‘the public’ in the exhibition project. Secondly, we are confronted with the question of how ‘the public’ is produced in a state of being publicly visible, that is how ‘the public’ is represented ‘in public’.

Generally speaking, ‘representation’ means that something absent, which is being referred to (e.g. an idea, a group of people), is made visible or is prototypically, symbolically or politically stood for (cf. Hoffmann 2009, 24ff.). Here, I will highlight problems with notions of cognitive or material objective portrayals of reality. I argue that the publicly negotiated subject positions, that is the temporary ‘Selves’, are involved in a politically relevant way when talking about the public, that is when referring to representations of the ‘Others’. In the case of immigration the question of who is a politically recognised speaker is a particularly contentious issue (e.g. San Martín 2009). At the same time the representation of who is being talked about, that is images of the public or the political parties designed by public relation-campaigns, is becoming increasingly important (cf. Kavanagh 1995, 13), and as we will see, was also debated in the museums of this case study.

Regarding political representation in museums, Chakrabarty (2002) distinguishes between two notions of the political: according to a pedagogical logic humans only become political when educated; based on abstract reasoning, entities such as the ‘public’, ‘nation’ or ‘class’ can be imagined. In mass-democracies’ performative logic on the other hand, humans are inherently political, for example a consumer has a right to choose or refuse a product, whether s/he knows about his/her rights or not. And the senses, crucial for memory and experience as forms of embodied knowledge, will, it is said, become increasingly powerful in the media of late democracies. Chakrabarty maintains that contemporary museums are successful in overcoming the academic view that sensual experience only allows access to the local, the particular and the present (vs. abstract, cognitive, representational knowledge of cultural entities). From this perspective, looking at embodied political

---

6 For example, Spivak (1988) building on Marx’s distinction between aesthetic-philosophical representation (Darstellung) on the one hand and political representation (Vertretung) on the other; the former referring to portrayals and the latter to standing for someone through representation (portrait vs. proxy).
knowledge in the museum space is at least as interesting as attempting to elicit cognitive knowledge about abstract notions in interviews.

Various dimensions of representation – mental, material or embodied images and political voices – are relevant when investigating how museum staff and visitors reflect on what images the public has of immigrants. When placing an object in the appropriate historical section of the exhibition or talking about stereotypes and discrimination implied in media of propaganda, a whole array of subject positions or voices is mobilised which calls into question a simple relationship of a museum object ‘a’ representing a societal fact ‘b’ – be it an absent person, institution or discourse. It is therefore not surprising that objects can be understood and used in very different ways depending on who talks to whom about an object and where it is placed. Following Kant’s ‘Copernican turn’, Cassirer’s theory of ‘symbolic forms’ and Peirce’s ‘triadic relation of signs’, Hoffmann (2009, 26–54) describes the ‘crisis of representation’ based on the insight that representational practices always involve directionality depending on the eye of the beholder, as well as the “epistemic culture” (e.g. Knorr-Cetina 1999; 2007) context in which the relation is articulated or interpreted.

Traditional Cartesian understandings of cognition or the philosophy of mind according to which we can make a meaningful distinction between mental representations and external reality as formulated, for example, in Lippmann’s (1922) introduction to his book on public opinion entitled “The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads”, have been criticised by Discursive Psychology (DP; Potter & Wetherell 1987). DP adheres to a constructionist and relativist ontology based on ethnomethodology (Edwards, Ashmore & Potter 1995; cf. Porsche & Macgilchrist, forthcoming for an overview). It shares with sociological approaches the premise that knowledge does not mirror but constructs reality in interactive social settings (Gilbert & Mulkay 1984; Knorr-Cetina 1999). Concepts of mental representation are shown to be problematic if treated as “ways of understanding the world which influence action, but are not themselves parts of action” (Potter 1996, 168; italics in original). Instead, in a defence of Social Representation Theory by Moscovici (1961), it might be said that representations “not only influence people’s daily practices – but constitute these practices” (Howarth 2006, 74; italics in original). They need to be “seen as alive and dynamic – existing only in the relational encounter, in the in-between space we create in dialogue and negotiation with others. They are not static templates that we pull out of cognitive schemas” (Howarth 2006, 68). Social representation (cf. also Goffman 1959) then does not only entail the representative and the represented (representee) but also the audience and mutual expectations, which can be crucial in authorising the act of representation. The approaches mentioned differ in their stances towards the question of whether representations are predominantly to be found in the brain or in public interactions between people. Approaches of distributed cognition (Hutchins
1995) or the extended mind (cf. Clark & Chalmers 1998; Menary 2000) at least urge us to re-think the boundaries of cognition and acknowledge the activity of the environment. Representation thus appears to be spread across a whole network of social relations that involve humans as well as non-humans.

Furthermore, we need to ask what kind of ‘public’ is represented in an exhibition and how. The question of the public is interrelated to the one of representation. For instance, Jovchelovitch (1996, 122; emphasis in original) suggests that public life “is one of the conditions of possibility for the emergence of social representations”, whereby representations are seen as the knowledge-link between the individual and society. The public and representation is also combined in Garfinkel’s work. He describes his own ethnomethodological concept of ‘accountability’ as both publicly “detectable” or “recordable” (Garfinkel 1967, 33) and “picturable” or “representable” (ibid., 34). Generally speaking, definitions of the public (life or sphere) can refer to a stage (visible or open vs. private or secret), a communicative-interactive process or a collective actor resulting from communication (cf. Rucht 2010, 8–9). Such definitions frequently draw on Lippmann, Dewey, Arendt and most notably on Habermas’s (1990 [1962]) ideal sphere of a political public (‘Öffentlichkeit’) and thereby refer to the basic functional principle of democratic communication, that is, an ideally free, open, equal and non-exclusive exchange of rational arguments which would lead to a legitimate consensus. Intriguingly, the public as a theoretical and normative notion of the common good/public opinion or the public sphere where the interest or opinion is formulated is usually not analysed on the level of everyday communication. Yet it is in public where this sphere is acted out. It thus appears promising to me to investigate, on the level of everyday interaction, matters such as how citizens, journalists or politicians are endowed with different capacities to draw legitimately on their publicity (cf. Bußhoff 2000, 18).

Habermas’s initial account has subsequently been criticised (cf. Calhoun 2010; Fraser 1990, 62; Nieminen 2008, 12–13; Wickham 2010), modified on several occasions (cf. Turner 2009) and is still taken as the basis for much political theory. For example, Neidhardt (2010) conceptualises public communication as involving speakers, an audience and mediators (most notably today’s mass media). Messages which receive attention after a process of input, throughput and output today form a plurality of public opinion, which, however, does not need to be congruent with the findings of opinion research based on interviewing individuals within a given population. Instead individuals make use of an increasing number of arenas where voices can be publicly articulated (e.g. on the internet). Unless members of the press collect what has been said on these arenas and tie these voices to traditional public media on a political macro level, they run the risk of remaining fragmented and only possibly becoming politically relevant through social movements. A methodologically crucial point then is how we analyse a public taking into account the plurality of voices (e.g. beyond only press corpora). Regarding discourse
theoretical complexities concerning representation, the methodology cannot be based on a linear Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver Model (Berlo 1960; for a critique see Winkin 1996). As an alternative Turner (2009, 237–238) refers to Latour’s actor-network theory (ANT) as

an emerging approach to the study of public life that focuses on the res in res publica, arguing that that [sic] the entire tradition of sociology and political science that includes both Habermas and his critics has focused on the quality of representation and communication at the expense of what it is that is communicated, of the thing that is a matter of public concern in the first place.

With regard to the case study’s methodology the question is how we turn from the question of what is or ought to be ‘the public’ to an empirical analysis of what is communicated as well as how notions of the public are made relevant in concrete epistemic cultures of the museums.

Schmidt and Volbers (2011) describe practice-theoretical approaches, such as Latour’s ANT (cf. also Kalthoff, Hirschauer & Lindemann 2008; Hirschauer 2001; Mohn 2002), which concentrate on what is publicly visible, that is, they draw on publicness as a methodological principle. They are thereby frequently seen as disregarding questions concerning macro-sociological phenomena such as the public, which are not directly observable.7 Schmidt and Volbers state that a praxeological approach rejects the micro-macro dichotomy on the grounds that firstly every observation is necessarily mediated, and secondly they are convinced that so-called macro-sociological phenomena can nevertheless be understood through empirical analysis (e.g. Knorr-Cetina & Bruegger 2002). For instance, Latour (1994) rejects varying levels of depth of society; instead human and non-human actors (or actants) both produce the ‘local’ through techniques of canalisation, distinctions, focussing and reduction as well as the ‘global’ through culminating, compiling or condensing on the same level of social and situated practices.

The ‘global’ can further be understood as trans-situational contexts or structures (cf. Scheffer 2010) which also belong to the same realm as ‘local’ interactional practices, even if their source of impact is not apparent in a specific instant. According to Schmidt and Volbers, establishing joint-attention to something absent over time can best be achieved through objects. Participants might understand what an object is designed for without it being necessary for the producer or the circumstances of the object’s production to be present. Nor need this practical knowledge be consciously available.8 In order to operationalise ‘practices’, I suggest

7 This is similar to debates between conversation analysis (e.g. Schegloff 1987) and linguistic anthropology (e.g. Duranti 1997) or critical discursive psychology (cf. Wetherell 1998; Schegloff 1997; 1998) about the scope of the analysis.

8 For instance, Fleck (2006, 153–154) argues that we need to forget learned routines to be able to recognise something.
paying attention to multimodal contextualisation cues to, for example, institutions, debates, subject positions or objects, which can serve as material anchor points for the analysis.9

The analysis10 for this purpose draws on Goffman’s (1981) work on participant frameworks and his notion of staging numerous voices,11 positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove 1999; Harré & Moghaddam 2003; Harré et al. 2009), Gumperz’s (1992) contextualisation cues and techniques of multimodal versions of conversation analysis (CA).12 They show that actions are performed in a specific instance of discourse using situated devices (‘interpretative repertoires’; cf. Edley 2001; Wetherell & Potter 1988) without postulating or reifying the existence of separate (topical) discourses or institutions which are supposedly at work. Thus Potter et al. (1990, 209ff.) and Wiggins and Potter (2008) criticise a “tectonic” discourse conception embraced by analysts such as Parker.13 On the other hand, ignoring the fact that people refer to discourses and are constrained and stimulated by conditions beyond conversation’s structural capacities is not a viable alternative. Drew and Heritage (1992, 22) and Heritage and Clayman (2010) focus on how talk instantiates institutions, and Heritage and Raymond (2005, see also Raymond & Heritage 2006; Heritage 2012) introduce ‘epistemics’ as a CA approach to knowledge and identity. Wetherell’s (1998; 2007) broader discourse perspective includes notions from Foucault, ethnography and Bakhtin. This allows Wetherell to deal with issues of identity and power relations, yet runs the risk of attributing an ontological status to phenomena as being quasi-independent of the specific interaction situation (cf. Parker 2008, 547).

9 Whereby clear-cut distinctions between the material and the discursive are questioned, based on the view that the former is imbued with discursive meaning and the latter is constituted by a material surface that is open to interpretation (without assuming a stable or true inherent meaning hidden in the depths of these signs, cf. Angermüller 2007, 104).

10 See also Porsché (2013a; 2013b) for examples from this case study with a focus on multimodal markers and debates in the press, respectively.


12 For example, Goodwin and Duranti (1992), Mondada (2009); in guided tours De Stefani (2010) or regarding museums Luff, Heath and Pitsch (2009), Heath and vom Lehn (2004) and vom Lehn et al. (2001).

13 Intriguingly, Parker’s (1992, 6–22; 2008) list of discourse characteristics that is meant to help in identifying discourses in analysis (e.g. their objectivity and reflexivity) sounds very similar to some of Assmann’s (1988, 13–16) points about cultural memory, which could be questioned on similar grounds.
The challenge is to link adequately the context to contextualisation: CA, DP and Gumperz’s or Auer’s contextualisation research focus on the talk-intrinsic, indexical process in the temporal organisation of interaction (utterances, actions and contingencies providing the context for subsequent responses) and the type of interaction (e.g. expected behaviour in classroom interaction).

In addition, the methods of discourse analysis that are helpful are the ones that do not arbitrarily posit potential, extrinsic aspects of the context as explaining variables without examining practices of contextualisation (cf. Arminen 2000; Pomerantz 1998). Instead, they take the discursive, material and institutional context into account by understanding them as resources for participants (e.g. drawing on past events, orienting to categories of gender, ethnicity etc.) and as conditions for interactions (e.g. discursive preconstructs, institutional configurations or modalities of objects or technologies enabling or encouraging certain actions rather than others). Context and contextualisation are here intertwined in a circular way: the context provides the conditions for acts of contextualisation which, in turn, (re)produce the context. The location of knowledge production, or epistemic culture, therefore constitutes both a constraining or enabling frame which reaches into specific instances of knowledge construction as well as an indexical activity of referencing and differentiating.

The Museum Exhibition

The museum exhibition analysed in the case study is entitled “À chacun ses étrangers ? France – Allemagne 1871 à aujourd’hui / Fremde? Bilder von den Anderen in Deutschland und Frankreich seit 1871” and was first shown in Paris at the Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration (CNHI) in cooperation with the Goethe Institute Paris and a year later at the Deutsches Historisches Museum (DHM) and the Kreuzbergmuseum (KM) in Berlin. The exhibition was first shown in the temporary exhibition space on the top floor of the CNHI in a side wing connected to the permanent exhibition hall and a year later in the temporary exhibition space

14 According to Auer (1992, 26), the relevance of the context becomes manifest, either by being “brought along” such as the physical surroundings, time and features of the participants, which need to be foregrounded by contextualisation or at the opposite pole by being “brought about” in conversation (e.g. the activity type, modality, cultural knowledge about participation), which is created by contextualising the following sequence in the interaction. In between these poles there are social roles connected to institutional settings or default assignments through interactional histories, which must be reaffirmed by contextualisation.

15 Cf. van Dijk’s (2006; 2008; 2009) concept of the context as a subject participant construct, which however, does not take DP’s critique of traditional cognitive theories into account.

16 Literally “To Each Their Own Foreigners? France-Germany from 1871 until today / Foreigners? Images of the Others in Germany and France since 1871”, and translated by the DHM in their English audioguide “The Image of the ‘Other’ in Germany and France from 1871 to the present”.

53
of the DHM (a building designed by the famous architect I.M. Pei). Beginning in 1871 (Reichsgründung in Germany and first elections of the Troisième République in France) the exhibition guides visitors chronologically through (dis-)continuities and similarities and differences of images of immigrants that were found in the public spheres in France and Germany, for example, in cultural events, political administration, legislation, academia or the press. In some instances the ways in which immigrants presented themselves is shown and questions about the identities of immigrants and the host society are raised; the main topic, however, concerns the images that were constructed of the immigrants by members of the host societies and how these representations were fabricated. While historical phases constitute the central ordering principle in both versions of the exhibition, in the larger exhibition space in the DHM parts of the room were more extensively dedicated to certain themes (anthropology, “schwarze Schmach”, anti-Semitism, the Algerian war, “Gastarbeiter” and Islam). And in the CNHI, pieces of contemporary art accompanied the historical artefacts, most of which were not shown in the DHM version. While constituting “the same” exhibition in both versions, singling out certain objects by the interior design (a way of ‘local’ contextualisation) or relating them to pieces of contemporary art or cartographic arrows and graphs illustrating the migrant movements across the world (ways of ‘global’ contextualisation) had an impact on how they were dealt with.

The institutions have very different (political) histories, frequently shown to be relevant in the practices of producing and receiving the exhibition: the French CNHI used to be a colonial exhibition building in 1931, which turned into a museum of colonial art and history and was officially inaugurated – amidst much controversy – as the museum and network of immigration history in France in 2007 (cf. Murphy 17). Shown from the 16 December 2008 to the 19 April 2009 in Paris and from the 15 October 2009 to the 21 February 2010 in Berlin. In the case of the CNHI immigration is presented in a separate institution on a national platform. The all-encompassing national DHM on the other hand includes immigration as one temporary topic among others, without dedicating immigration significant attention in the permanent exhibition (with the exception of special guided tours on International Migrants Day appointed by the UN). In the KM immigration is framed as a topic in its own right in several temporary exhibitions, and in the permanent exhibition it is treated as an essential part of the local history.


19 Parallel to this temporary exhibition, known to CNHI staff as the “France-Allemagne” exhibition, a smaller temporary project was initiated by the network of immigration organisations (the réseau des associations) coordinated by the CNHI. The smaller exhibition dealt with topics similar to those of the main exhibition, yet in a very different way. Following an announcement by the CNHI (an appel à contributions), various art projects by students (schools and universities) were selected by the CNHI and funded by the European Union initiative “The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008”. These art projects (e.g. installations, descriptions and outcomes of student exchanges or newspaper projects) were presented in the CNHI in a room (the Hall Marie Curie) on the ground floor of the institution that is connected to the main hall (the Forum). In the DHM, on the other hand, the presentation of this smaller exhibition was not considered. Instead the KM, a neighbourhood/local history museum founded in 1990, was found as an appropriate host for the network initiative, which was then called “Baustelle Identität / Identités en chantier” [Building Site of Identity].
2007; Stevens 2008). The DHM was inaugurated – also with much controversy – as the German history museum in 1987. The current permanent exhibition opened to the public in 2006 with the main building previously serving as an arsenal, a war-museum, for Nazi-war-propaganda and a German Democratic Republic (GDR) history museum (cf. Heuser 1990; Maier 1992; Mälzer 2005; Ohliger 2002).

It transpired that the production process of this exhibition project made the exhibition an especially interesting object of study. Allegations of political censorship at the DHM, which were reported to the press by enraged members of the external academic committee, were subsequently discussed in interactions within the museum. This allows for an analysis of how the issue “travelled” through different modalities of interaction. In the course of these interactions previously discussed controversies surrounding the opening of the DHM were brought up, which would otherwise not have been talked about. Although no comparable allegations occurred in France, recent debates about the CNHI formed a part of the French production of the exhibition, too.

In general, this case study enables the analysis of intersections and tensions between academic, political and institutional discussions. For instance, an academic conference and doctoral workshops were organised to prepare the exhibition and the exhibition was financed by different political bodies – the French state, the German state and the European Commission. In this process several different academic approaches to national and cultural identity were brought forward, some of which differ from traditional notions that remain widespread in political debates (cf. Porsché 2008; 2011). At the same time, political stances occasionally drew on academic work when setting the institutional frame for what could be shown in the museums and in light of these stances museum topics were debated. How it was possible to produce an exhibition that was in some instances considered not in alignment with dominant, conservative political, academic and public debates and how apparent tensions were negotiated merits careful analysis of contextualisation.

I will turn to specific examples of such contextualisation in the following sections. The research material is based on ethnographic video and audio recordings of guided tours and discussions between museum staff and visitors as well as interviews with staff and visitors, guestbook entries and the press coverage of the exhibition. The first analysed case presents an extract from a discussion in the CNHI between a guide and pupils at the end of a guided tour when talking about a magazine cover of *Le Figaro* that was presented in a showcase. In the second case I show how a newspaper page in museum’s guest book, which publicly raised allegations of censorship in the DHM, was discussed by a guide and a school teacher after a guided tour of the DHM version of the exhibition.
Case 1: Islam in the Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration

This contextualisation analysis asks, on the one hand, which context constitutes the enabling or constraining frame for an interaction, and, on the other hand, how this frame is brought about through contextualisation cues in the interaction. Considering the first side of the coin, interactions during guided tours of the exhibition take place in a certain institution and at a specific location. The first example (Transcript 1 below) takes place towards the end of a tour in the CNHI. Comparing this scene with other recordings within the same institution as well as in the DHM shows that discussions between the guide and the audience are generally few and far between in these speech events. They are noticeably more common in the CNHI and usually occur at the end of the tours in both institutions. Also, the topic of conversation the participants engage in is not drawn out of thin air, but in this example they refer to a specific object (a cover page of *Le Figaro* magazine, 28.10.1985; Fig. 1), which is placed in a showcase. The object is thereby literally framed as important for the topic of the exhibition. And the cover image and title themselves refer to several debates, for example, the statue of the French Marianne and the national colours referring to the French nation and the headscarf tied around it referring to the presence of Islam, titled “Serons-nous encore Français dans 30 ans ?” [Are we still going to be French in 30 years?].

Figure 1. *Le Figaro*. Photo: Antti Sadinmaa.

A multimodal analysis of an extract from an interaction in which the magazine cover is talked about makes it clear that references to debates which might seem easily circumscribed in the abstract as discourses existing in society are in fact very

20 The guided tours were non-scripted, yet based on an introductory tour given by the respective curatorial team of each institution as well as the exhibitions’ catalogues.
much dependent on the specific setting. Here, for example, the statue of Marianne, which is depicted on the magazine cover, is also being shown elsewhere in the exhibition and the topics of discrimination and prejudices are referred to in the narrative of the guided tour. These general points about the context might be stated on the basis of ethnographic field notes alone. The details of how the context is negotiated through dynamic, tacit and not necessarily conscious contextualisation cues (the other side of the coin, both illustrated in Fig. 2 below), however, calls for a closer look at the transcript and the video-recordings:

Transcript 1: Guided tour in the *Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration*.  

1 guide: En fait ((swallow)) ce qu’on a vu c’est que maintenant on parle moins de race biologique, mais on parle plus en terme de culture. Et quand même la religion eh musulmane c’est\(\) quelque chose qui est vraiment brandi comme\(\) en plus depuis le onze septembre comme faisant peur\(\). eh /c’est assez impre\(\)-ça c’est les années quatre-vingt, mais aujourd’hui c’est toujours le cas. Eh en gros ce que ça veut dire c’est qu’on va moins dire tous les arabes sont pareils, parce que voilà eh (il a été) prouvé k’sait quand même délicat de le dire sur un plan scientifique, .hh mais on pourra dire (.), écoutez/ ah asser facilement, « ah les musulmans sont comme ceci comme cela. » ((pupil turns to guide)) Ça dérange moins maintenant, alors que c’est le même processus en réalité, ehm? Parce que parmi les populations musulmans il y a énormément de différences.

14 pupil: Mais Madame?

15 guide: Oui

16 pupil: Fin, ce n’est pas (à nous a trompé) que ce soit raciste, mais c’est vrai que l’islam\(\) ils viennent en France >ou ils vivent en France< mais ils s’adaptent pas aux lois et e:\(\) les valeurs franç\(\)aises\(\). Ils prennent la liberté et=

19 group: =la culture

20 pupil: et la culture et tout ((guide and pupil step back and fold their arms))

21 guide: Ben, [je ne suis pas sure de ça/ (.) Je ne crois pas que ça soit vrai en fait.=

23 guide: que ça soit vrai en fait.=

24 pupil: =Parce que (.) nous, on est un pays laïque et ils ne respectent pas ça. (.)

21 Owing to space constraints, aspects of multimodality are pointed out in the analysis by means of screen shots in Fig. 2 without providing detailed annotations for gaze, body posture, gesticulation etc.

22 Roughly summarised the guide in this passage explains to a group of pupils that people in the past would employ racial categorisation, which has been replaced by cultural and religious categorisation. Whereas the former way of categorising has been discredited by science, the latter is said to be generally more accepted. The guide maintains that both ways of categorisation, however, rely on the same mechanism of stereotyping and that glossing over differences within groups of people remains problematic. The guide says that Muslims for instance have been stigmatised and feared since 9/11. A pupil, supported by other classmates, challenges the guide by stating that the Islamic people in fact come to, or live in, France and take the freedom and culture but do not respect French laws and values. The guide disagrees and begins to talk about the number of religious Muslims, when the pupil clarifies that she is not talking about Muslims but “real Islamists”. The guide explains that it is important not to confuse Muslims with Islamists.
Contextual references can be of an explicit nature to the aforementioned academic work (8/9), which, for example, serve the function of legitimising the institutional presentation. Or more subtle intonation-indicated references (10: “ah les musulmans sont comme ceci comme cela.” [ah Muslims are like this or like that]) signal that a different speaker is being cited.\(^\text{23}\) Adhering to the principle of the members’ orientation, we can keep speculations to a minimum as to whether the guide hereby constructs a subject position and whether or not her intention is to reject the position. Instead we notice that the pupil listening turns from the showcase to the guide precisely at the moment in the interaction when the guide says something that can be considered a subject position (10/11). Observing that, she poses a question concerning the quoted utterance at the next possible occasion (‘transition-relevant place’) introduced by an indicator of polyphony “Mais” [But] (14). It is plausible that the pupil considers the guide to be rejecting a certain subject position (which the pupil decides to defend). In response to the question the guide and then the pupil both take a step back and fold their arms (18–21), which clearly shows that they are positioning themselves on contradictory subject positions (‘projecting disaffiliation’). Only after stating more precisely what they were referring to, namely the pupil talking about “islamistes” [Islamists] and the guide about “musulmans” [Muslims] do they seem to resolve the issue of misalignment (marked by a ‘sequence-closing third’ and ‘change-of-state token’: 30). Hereby, the guide shifts from a personal “C’est un peu étonnant ce que vous dites” [It is a bit surprising what you are saying] (26) in the specific interaction to a common confusion that “on fait” [one does] (33/34) in the general public “out there”, which makes the pupil’s statement possibly more excusable or understandable (vs. the claim of incertitude [21], surprise and amusement [26] indicating dispreference). Conversely, looking at how the guide changes from a general, third person “c’est”, “on parle” [that is; one says] (1) to a personal, first person “Je ne crois pas” [I don’t think] (21) or “Moi, je vous parle des” [I am talking to you about] (32) further enables

\(^{23}\) By indicating what we think of a view held by someone who would say such a thing we engage in what Goffman (1981, 325) calls “sustaining or changing footing”. He goes on to explain that this provides the speaker with “the least threatening position in the circumstances, or, differently phrased the most defensible alignment”. 

58
us to see how the positioning in relation to the official front-stage presentation in the name of the institution is managed.

The way different subject positions seen to be circulating in ‘the public’ are mobilised by carefully altering the distance and stance towards them, the people present and the hosting institution – as well as what does or does not have to be pointed out by whom – informs us about practices of representation in this specific epistemic culture and instance of interaction. In this sequence a consensus is negotiated that racism as well as fundamentalism is to be disapproved of; yet differences in what a headscarf means or whether this constitutes a threat to France can be noted, which hint at prior (poorly defined) discourses being brought into this conversation. The opposite positioning therefore cannot be attributed only to what the guide said, but in part also to a knowledge of other interactions, for example, in the mass media or voiced by politicians which previously constructed these subject positions. And it is crucial to the outcome of this negotiation in which institutional frame, where in the exhibition and in what interaction format, it takes place. For instance, only in an established ‘integrative practice’ (Schatzki 1996) of teaching with reference to a body of accepted research and set in a politically tolerated but somewhat peripheral institution24 do we understand the guide’s authority and stance.

Figure 2. Microsociological contextualisation analysis.

24 For example, funded by the government, yet geographically located on the periphery of Paris and inaugurated with the noticed absence of President Sarkozy.
In order to include more issues involved in these epistemic settings than analysing interactional linguistics and ethnographic observations alone, these can be read in the light of information from an interview carried out with the guide. For instance, the guide talked about the difficult situation she faced because whilst sympathising with protestors in front of the museum who were criticising French immigration ministers her job was to present a national museum. Also, the pupil’s hedging (16) along the well known line “I am not a racist but...” (cf. Bonilla-Silva & Forman 2000) and self-repair (17) could contribute to a broader understanding of the specific political debating culture. It tells us that voicing a certain view is possible, yet needs to be marked as problematic.25

A comparison of how the same object is talked about in the CNHI and the DHM makes similarities and differences in two epistemic settings visible. In order to see what kind of statements are considered (un)problematic, the analysis can focus on how the same object was, for example, framed by a CNHI guide as “pour rigoler” [to laugh at] with the effect that the visitors laughed, whereas the same object was called “spannend, wenn man das sagen kann” [fascinating, if it is possible to say that] in the DHM. Thus the question is neither whether a certain object is in fact funny, nor whether an individual finds it funny or not (cf. vom Lehn 2006, 1350ff.). Instead the fluctuating roles26 participants take on and the styles of presentation they perform in certain (institutional) circumstances have a more important impact on the interactive process of knowledge construction.

Case 2: Allegation of Censorship in the Deutsches Historisches Museum

This example deals with a heated debate that revolved around a label about contemporary racism and integration in Germany and Europe which in Paris received little attention.27 Presumably it would not have received more attention in Berlin either; however, it made newspaper headlines in Germany due to an

25 The reason the pupil felt the need to hedge her statement can be explained solely by looking at the ways in which the guide had already indicated her disapproval of negative or generalising statements about Muslims. However, only additional, extrinsic context information enables understanding of the political stance the guide is (seen) to be taking, which goes beyond the participant framework and institutional setting of the particular interaction.

26 These dynamic roles are a topic of positioning theory (e.g. Harré & van Langenhove 1999), and Sacks (1992, 40–48) calls this social organisation a “membership inference-rich representative device (MIR)” (also known as ‘Membership Categorisation Device’).

27 The issue mainly concerned a label stating that discrimination against foreigners shifted from the national to the European level. Debates mostly revolved around how this message was downplayed by the sentences “Während innerhalb Europas die Grenzen verschwinden, schottet sich die Gemeinschaft der EU zunehmend nach außen ab. Die ‘Festung Europa’ soll Flüchtlingen verschlossen bleiben” [While borders within Germany disappear, the European Union increasingly seals itself off from the outside. ‘Fortress Europe’ is supposed to remain closed to refugees.] being replaced by “Das Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge fördert seitdem staatlicherseits die Integration von Zuwanderern in Deutschland” [Since then through the Ministry for Migration and Refugees the state supports the integration of immigrants in Germany].
allegation of censorship. According to informants, the director gave in after being pressured by the Ministry of Culture and – opposed by the staff – changed the label. Besides the obvious importance of the political and institutional context, it is interesting to follow how the issue travelled and was dealt with: it was first raised publicly in an article in the press after a member of the scientific committee contacted a journalist. This article was then pasted into the guestbook under a heading “Liebes DHM, warum?” [Dear DHM, why?] (Fig. 3).28

Figure 3. Guestbook. Photo: Yannik Porsché.

It was then mentioned in some guided tours, once for instance with the remark that the label had been modified but not the audio guide. One person in the audience (a journalist) then published an article entitled “Es gilt das gesprochene Wort” [The spoken word counts]. In the following I would like to present an interaction following a guided tour that takes up this incident:

28 Guestbooks (or internet blogs about the exhibition – in a different way, cf. Meier 2008) offer a whole new set of modalities for the interaction: With the text multiple speakers are brought onto the stage (the journalist, the academic committee and the director mentioned in the text etc.), which can be commented on, highlighted, crossed out etc. by later readers, for example, without them having to face the other authors. More extreme (e.g. right wing) or more general viewpoints (e.g. whether the DHM collaborate with the Bundeskulturminister [minister of culture] as a “Bundesbeauftragter für Propaganda” [national representative for propaganda] or whether the CNHI is a “musée de bonne conscience” [museum for a good conscience]) become possible. In this example addressing the history museum with a term of endearment, conventional in writing letters, positions the writer as generally sympathetic with the museum, yet at the same time confronts the institution (and not e.g. a particular member of staff) with the newspaper article, which functions as a piece of evidence. The utterance “warum?” [why?] presupposes that the events happened as described in the article (e.g. instead of asking the DHM what happened exactly).
Transcript 2: Guided tour in the Deutsches Historisches Museum. 29

1  guide: Bon, [merci] bonne journée (☺)
2  teacher: [merci] merci, à vous aussi.
3  guide: et bon week-end
4  pupil: Merci. ((laughing))
5  [...]  
6  teacher: (Wo ist denn jetzt) das eh umstrittene corpus delicti
7  [zum Thema] Zensur?  
8  guide: [Ah oui, oui]
9  teacher: und ich weiß nicht, ob, ich hab jetzt kein Audioguide, da hieß es der sei ja noch
10  nicht ((walk to the label))
11  guide: C’est vraiment seulement eh la dernière phrase là () qui a été changé. C’est
12  maintenant [la]
13  teacher: [et] ça c’est plus l’originale
14  guide: No!
15  teacher: Das haben wir, das ist jetzt ausgetauscht hier?
16  guide: Das ist ausgetauscht.
17  teacher: Aha. [Das ist ]
18  guide: [Du filmst ] jetzt nicht mehr, ne? (☺)
19  me: Eh doch, grad noch ((laughing)) filme ich schon, ja, aber das weiß ich sowieso
20  schon, ja, ja ((laughing))  
21  teacher: Ja, ja, das war ja nun in der Zeitung  [und ]
22  guide: [ja, ja]
23  teacher: Und da war also ein etwas kritischerer Satz, oder wie?=
24  guide =Also hier stand () ursprünglich, >also so< im () jetzt eh umformuliert=
25  teacher: =mhm=
26  guide: eh zusammengefasst eh, dass Deutschland (), also >innerhalb der
27  europäischen< Un(),ion,=

29 In this transcript the guide and the visiting school class end a guided tour by wishing each other a good day. The teacher then approaches the guide and asks where the infamous corpus delicti that surrounds the issue of censorship can be found. The teacher inquires about the audio guide, which she has heard has not been modified. The guide says that it was really only the last sentence that had been changed. The teacher states that this passage is no longer the original and then asks the guide whether it has been replaced. The guide confirms that it had been replaced and asks me whether I am still filming. I respond that I am, but that I know about it already anyway. The teacher adds that this incident had already been in the press and asks whether the initial sentence was a more critical one. The guide summarises in her own words that it originally said that internal borders in Germany or in the European Union are disappearing and people are no longer controlled at borders. Yet Europe (first the guide says Germany and corrects herself) is said to be sealing itself off from the outside. The guide ironically explains that in contrast to the audio guide the label had to be changed to the current version. The teacher exclaims that this is funny and that it should have been left unchanged and debated. The teacher goes on to say that the curation of the exhibition should hopefully be “free”. The guide states that the museum work used to be free and the teacher expresses that the modification is worrying. The guide says that this matter was not supposed to go to the press and that this happened unofficially. The teacher maintains that this is normal and happens to all things that are supposed to remain secret. The guide recounts that this matter had only been vigorously discussed for a brief period of time and is mainly forgotten now. Without elaborating on the debate she adds that one could have made an interesting connection to an incident that was broadcast in the news and subsequently discussed among staff. The incident she seems to be referring to concerns media broadcasts about a contract of a TV journalist on national television which was surprisingly not renewed by politicians and could also be understood as politicians inappropriately influencing public discourse. Yet, a connection between these two incidences of exertion of political influence, to the guide’s knowledge, (regrettably) had not been made.
guide: durch Schengen und so weiter die internen Grenzen fallen, >dass man die
Leute nicht [mehr] an den Grenzen kontrolliert<, eh dass sich

teacher: [mhm]

guide: aber Deutschl- eh, dass sich Europa zunehmend nach außen ab[schottet ]

[abschottet]

ja

guide: Das stand da ursprünglich.

teacher: Mhm

guide: Und eh das musste geändert werden und jetzt steht de:hr Satz hier. Und im
Audioguide hört man=

teacher: =Das ist ja auch putzig, ne?

guide: Ja, ja

teacher: Das ist ja köstlich. Ich meine allein das ist ja schon, ich meine dann soll man
ihn stehen lassen und sagen darüber kann man sich streiten, oder=

guide: =Ja=

teacher: =eh () ich meine es gibt eine Ausstellungskonzeption und die ist ja wohl
hoffentlich () „frei“ ((indicated using her hands))

guide: Ja:hi, bisher war sie auch frei ((laughing))

teacher: Ja, ja, schon heftlich, ne?

guide: Und eh, ja. Das ist jetzt geändert worden und es sollte natürlich ursprünglich
auch nicht in die Presse gehen, das ist dann unter der Hand lanciert worden, das
ist dann=

teacher: Ja, klar, das iss logisch, das ist wie ()

bei allen [Sachen ]

[aber das ist halt ]

teacher: die nicht () bekannt werden [sollen ((laughing))]

[ja, ja, aber ] das ist natürlich jetzt ein

bisschen wieder eingeschlafen. Das war halt kurzzeitig=

teacher: =Aha, ok=

guide: =ist das hochgekocht worden

teacher: Mhm

guide: Ehm, was halt interessant gewesen wäre worüber wir uns natürlich auch
unterhalten haben, eh, was im ZDF vor kurzem passiert ist, da hätte man ja

auch=

teacher: =Ach so=

guide: eine, mit Brender, ne?= da hätte man [ja] auch eine Verbindung ziehen können

teacher: [ja]

ja

guide: eh und sei- und darunter dann die entsprechenden Schlüsse ziehen können.=

teacher: =mhm=

guide: =Das ist schei\nbar, >soweit ich das mitbekommen habe<, halt nicht passiert=

teacher: =(schon ok) ja, mhm/ ()

guide: naja.

teacher: Ja/ (0.7)
This passage tells us something about how institutional issues and press reports reach into the interaction and how they are dealt with. Temporarily and spatially separated from the official front-stage presentation (which had e.g. been closed by wishing each other good day: 1-4) the visiting class teacher and the tour guide engage in a semi-private conversation in which less official matters such as the allegation of censorship can be talked about. Without having to identify the label further (overlap 7/8) it is framed as an “umstrittenes corpus delicti” [controversial corpus delicti] (6) and the audio guide is brought into the conversation carefully (9: “ich weiß nicht” [I don’t know]). The guide falls back into the official language of the guided tour (i.e. ‘code switching’: 11), which was French, and relativises (downgrades the first assessment of censorship with “vraiment seulement” [really only]) that only the last sentence had been changed (although, comparing the versions of the text, in fact several sentences were modified, of which only the final one was considered noteworthy by the press). The teacher changes back to German (15) and shifts from “Zensur” [censorship] to a more neutral, descriptive and less accusatory statement that this text is no longer the original, which the guide decisively confirms. Yet, remaining on a merely descriptive account of the fact that the text had been replaced (the guide in 24 and 35 confirming the statement offered by the teacher in 13), this begs the question of who changed it and why. And the replacement is marked as a problem, for example, by asking me whether I am still recording. The sound of voice is “smiley” and the guide does not ask me to refrain from doing so, but the question (in combination with me saying that I know about it already and the teacher pointing out that it had been in the press, which qualifies it as having once been a secret that is now a matter of public knowledge) demonstrates that documenting institutional trouble is more problematic than filming the official tour.

At the end of the guide’s account (32/33) the teacher joins in finishing the guide’s sentence. She thereby affirms what can be seen as a European-critical sentence, thereby possibly encouraging unofficial statements. This provides an opportunity for the guide to use an ironic tone of voice (Goffman’s ‘keying’) when she points to the new sentence (37: “d↑e:hr Satz hier” [this sentence here]). Irony proves to be very effective to innocently point at what is officially written while being pretty sure that the present audience gets the dismissive hint, especially when taking up the teacher’s earlier statement that something else is heard in the audio guide, which was connected to her enquiry about censorship (7, 9). Put more generally, irony can serve to strategically maintain a multiplicity of ways one can understand what has been said (cf. Günthner 2002). The teacher indicates that she noticed the irony by briefly framing the occurrences as a funny issue (39), with which the guide can innocuously agree. Saying that the exhibition practice should be “free” (the guide indicating inverted commas with her hands) and the guide laughing and replying that it used to be free, without anyone having to articulate it, it becomes clear that it was not free in this case (44–46). To make sure that the irony is not
taken simply as humour the visitor re-qualifies the issue as a serious one (47). The participants are thus collaboratively saving face, with the result (60–73) that the guide can point out that she regrets that a possible, even evident (60: “natürlich” [naturally]), connection to another scandal of informational/cultural politics, which had occurred around the same time, had not been made. By pointing out that it had not been made (in the wider public, the press) she is of course performing this connection herself. Her point being though that this connection should not only have been made by the staff but elsewhere in order for it to become acknowledged and politically relevant (‘self-repair’ from a personal “sei-“[ne] to a general or factual utterance “die entsprechenden Schlüsse” [“one’s” to “the appropriate conclusions”]). Which interaction counts as being made in public (in the sense of German term Öffentlichkeit) thus depends very much on where exactly it is being voiced, by whom, in the presence of which (filming or note taking) audience, with which tone of voice, and at what point in the public interaction sequence, that is, in the mutually visible and accountable condition of social interaction. From one instance to the next the presentation of an issue can oscillate between constituting a mere replacement on the one hand and a ridiculous or scandalous (and thus not approved of) instance of censorship on the other.

Another way that the wider context penetrates the interaction is through Goffman’s (1967) interaction rituals implicating symbolisation processes that go beyond the interpersonal exchanges, such as a gift presented to the tour guide by the teacher shortly after the end of the transcript. Beyond the instrumental function of the gift, it expresses gratitude (and thereby the donor considers it noteworthy to comment on the guide’s commitment or the quality of her tour) and has membership significance, for example, in this case a present from the Christmas market signaling a personal and not merely an institutional tie, for which paying the entrance fee would have sufficed.

The institutional observations can also be understood as part of wider societal circumstances: The transcribed passage in the last example shows that a careful voicing of critique of the institution or the cultural ministry is possible (while playing the game of managing the brand of the museum as officially being neutral, working independently and with scientific integrity). However, interactions on other platforms show a continuum of different kinds of public. These range from the semi-private conversation after the tour, via the curators talking in the auditorium to a group of teachers to official press conferences or finally the vernissage attended by politicians and the media. The last mentioned public stage has symbolic relevance on the national scale and makes different utterances (im)possible or, when voiced, these are seen in a different light (e.g. the representative of the Bundeskulturminister [minister of culture] criticising the exhibition in her speech at the vernissage caused offence to the curators and was followed by reports in the press). On the day of the opening, when the audience is considered the national
public, the museum seems to be an important public relations instrument for the political spokesperson. Here the labels should display messages that put the current government in a good light instead of the museum constituting an arena for critical debate.

At the same time national politics does not seem to be particularly interested in interactions in the smaller exhibition designed by immigrant associations (shown in the CNHI and the KM). The cultural status of the national museums as "high-culture" intersects here with questions of representation, for example, when the smaller student exhibition – against the will of the immigrant network department – was not allowed to have its own name in the CNHI and was not considered for display in the national DHM but only in a neighbourhood museum considered as occupying a peripheral position by DOMiD ("Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland") (Gogos 2011).

Finally, the many temporary exhibitions annually shown at the DHM result in such a heavy workload and involving so much pressure on the staff that they are depicted by an informant as similar to a “factory’s production line”. Furthermore, a large number of school classes, foreign language and exchange students or international tourists were at times squeezed through the main exhibition in the temporary exhibition space in the CNHI and the DHM. Meanwhile the smaller exhibition on the ground floor of the CNHI and in the KM, which was less advertised and less prestigious, remained empty. Analysing interactions in the museum space thus shows how global commodification processes simultaneously manifest themselves and are produced on the local level of interaction.

**Conclusion**

An attempt has been made to introduce a museum case study and look at how theoretical notions of ‘representation’ and ‘the public’ are relevant from a methodological point of view – how representations of ‘the public’ are negotiated ‘in public’. Two examples were chosen to illustrate some techniques from a methodological approach meant to combine interaction and discourse analytical methods in a microsociological contextualisation analysis. I aim to underline the situatedness of knowledge construction and investigate how discourses, people, points of view, institutions and objects from elsewhere are brought onto the stage – be it through explicit or implicit multimodal contextualisation cues within and across interaction sequences, which are shown in transcripts and recordings, or through enabling and constraining contextual constellations, which are constructed by the researcher on the basis of interviews or ethnographic data. Applied to a binational museum exhibition, the analysis shows that not only is the definition of the public sphere at the heart of the exhibition, but the question of what kind of public stage
the museum constitutes is crucial to interactions within the museum. Producers and visitors of the exhibition engage in asymmetric negotiations about which kind of 'things' they refer to and how to define the institutional situation of interaction. The attempt to produce knowledge about what is the public and how immigrants are represented within it thus constitutes a continuous and context-dependent endeavour.

**Transcription Notation – adapted version of Gail Jefferson (1984).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>underline</strong></td>
<td>emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>()</td>
<td>micropause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.4)</td>
<td>timed pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[]</td>
<td>talk at the same time/overlapping talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>latching/next speaker continues with absence of a discernable gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( )</td>
<td>inaudible on the recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(laughing, taking a step back))</td>
<td>described phenomena/movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>((○))</td>
<td>smiley voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(not sure)</td>
<td>there is doubt about accuracy of material in round brackets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yea::h, I see::</td>
<td>extension of the preceding vowel sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think .hh I need more</td>
<td>a full stop before a word or sound indicates an audible intake of breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hh</td>
<td>out breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...]</td>
<td>square brackets indicate that some transcript has been deliberately omitted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↑ or / or ?</td>
<td>voice going up markedly (within word, beginning/end of word, end of phrase)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↓ or \ or .</td>
<td>voice going down markedly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>. and ? refer to intonation curves, / and \ to inflections with a delimitable beginning and end and ↑ and ↓ to jumps of pitch.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>,</td>
<td>same or slightly raised intonation indicating continuation or an insertion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;faster&lt;</td>
<td>speaking faster than surrounding talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;slower&gt;</td>
<td>speaking slower than surrounding talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>« word »</td>
<td>indicating reported speech through intonation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


——— 2013b. Discursive knowledge construction or ‘There is only one thing worse than being talked about and that is not being talked about’. In Herder Institut (eds) Knowledge in Flux – Wissenskulturen und Diskursivität des Wissens angesichts von Differenzierungs-, Dynamisierungs- und Transnationalisierungsprozessen.


