

Museums and Migration: Controversy, Crisis and Change

Dr Susannah Eckersley

Lecturer in Museum, Gallery & Heritage Studies, Newcastle University, UK

MeLA Project: European Museums in an Age of Migration

CoHERE Project: Critical Heritages: Performing and Representing Identities in Europe

Centre against Expulsions



Museum approaches to controversial topics

- **‘Neutral’:** *This happened.*
- **Situated:** *This happened here, it changed this place.*
- **Mnemonic:** *This happened here, to us. It changed us, we remember it like this, these objects/sounds/places/people remind us of it.*



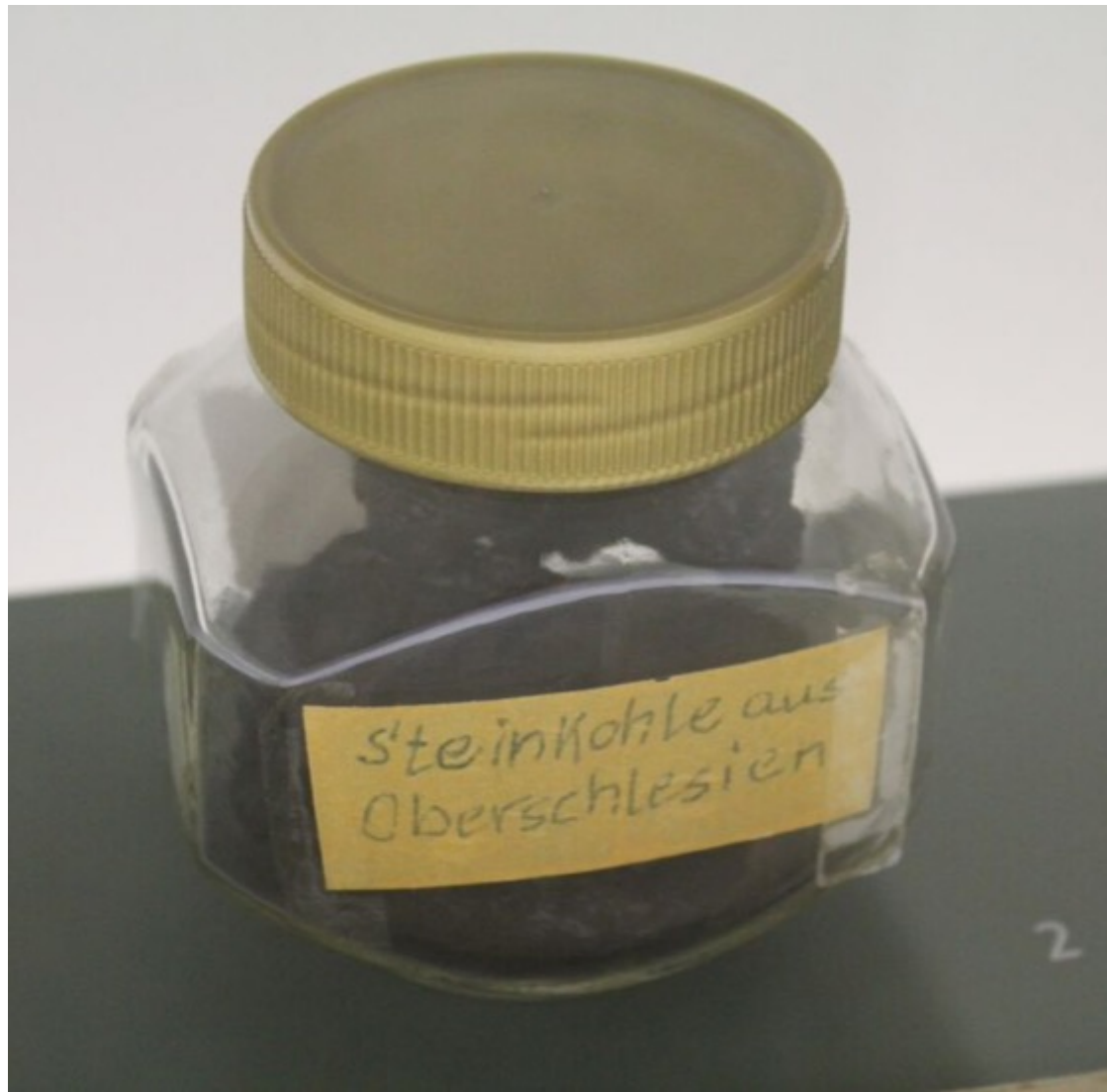
German Historical Museum Berlin

Neutral: this
happened

Silesian Museum Görlitz



Situated:
This happened here, it changed this place.



Silesian
Museum
Görlitz

Mnemonic:

This happened here, to us. It changed us, we remember it like this, these objects/sounds/places/people remind us of it.





The Museum as a Contact Zone

“when museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a *collection* becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral *relationship* – a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull.”
(Clifford 1997:192)

“Neither community ‘experience’ nor curatorial ‘authority’ has an automatic right to the contextualisation of collections or to the narration of contact histories. The solution is inevitably contingent and political: a matter of mobilized power, of negotiation, of representation constrained by specific audiences” (Clifford 1997:208)



Museum for Islamic Art, Berlin

Dialogic

تجمع
المكتبة

Multaka
Treffpunkt Museum



German Historical Museum



متحف
المطعم

Multaka
Treffpunkt Museum



Museum for Islamic Art, Berlin

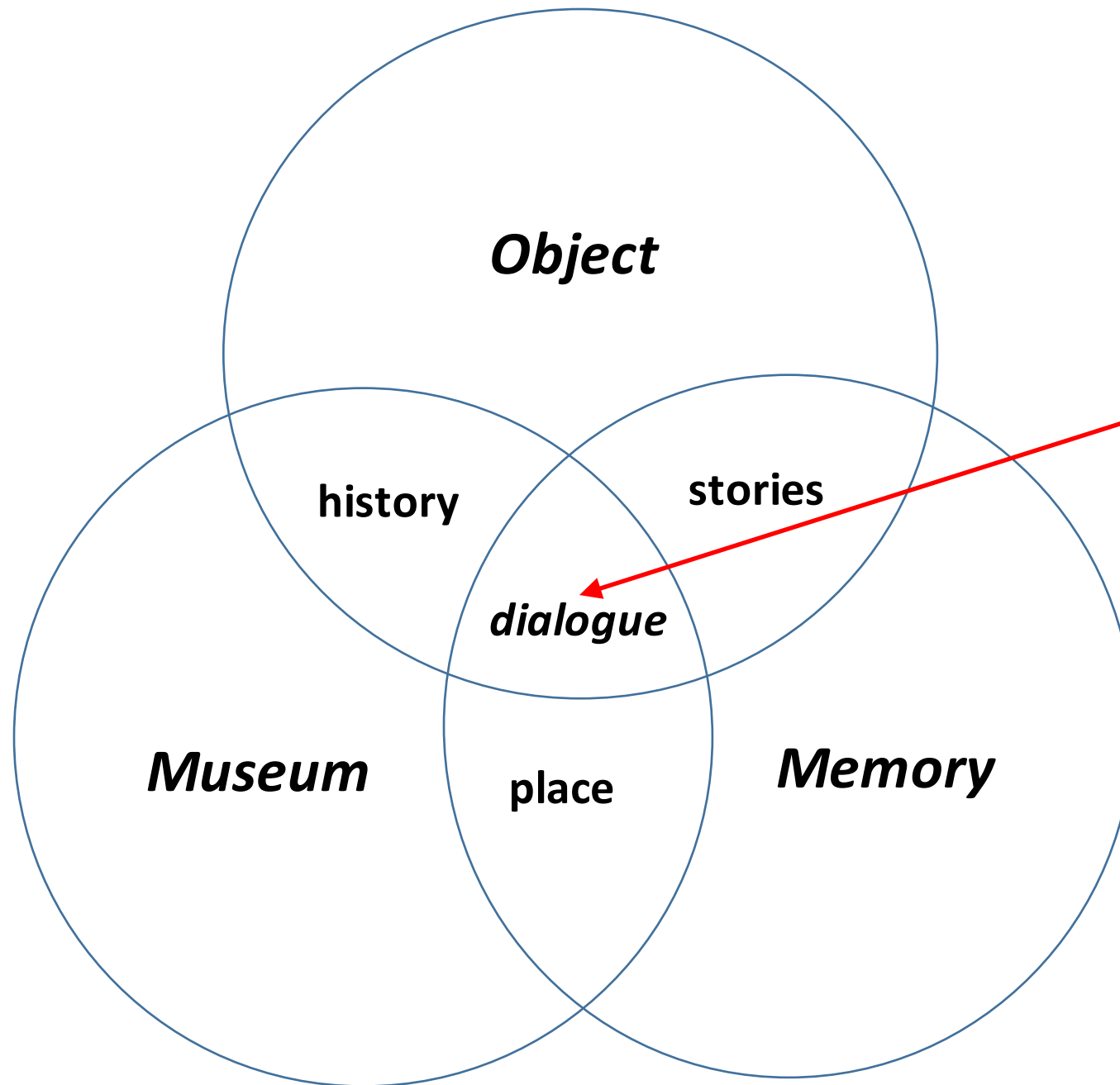


“The museum, as a site of accumulation, as a gatekeeper of authority and expert accounts, as the ultimate caretaker of the object, as the ultimate arbiter of the identity of the object, as its documenter and even as the educator, has to be completely redrafted... This is not only possible but, I would argue, could renovate the museum into an institution that supported the enrichment, rather than authorization, of collections. To do this, however, requires museums to learn to let go of their resources, even at times of the objects, for the benefit and use of communities and agendas far beyond its knowledge and control.”

(Boast 2011:67)

Dialogic

- *This happened here, to us. It changed us, we remember it like this, **these objects/sounds/places/people remind us of it, we feel like this about it.***
- *Did something similar happen **to you? Did it change you? How do you remember it? How do you feel about it?***
- *Are there **commonalities or differences between our memories and experiences? What might it mean for you, for me, for all of us?***



'affective opportunity'?

