



ABSTRACT:

Re-presenting Foreigners – Representing the Public: A Microsociological Contextualisation Analysis of Franco-German Knowledge Construction in Museums

Representations of foreigners in museums are a matter of debate due to the symbolic and educational significance attributed to these institutional contexts. In this case study I consider how public representations of foreigners are portrayed in a French-German museum exhibition. I focus on how the institutional contexts are generated and how public spheres are represented or enacted in interactions between museum staff, visitors and journalists. I firstly analyse how different paradigmatic museum approaches are negotiated in the production process of the exhibition, i.e. between the national history museums Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, the Deutsches Historisches Museum and the neighbourhood format of the Friedrichshain-Kreuzbergmuseum. Secondly, I compare events of reception on different dramaturgical stages of interaction (e.g. guided tours, catalogues, mass media). A contextualisation analysis is based on video-recordings, documents and ethnographic observations. The methodology combines elements of ethnomethodological interaction analysis, poststructural discourse analysis and analytical ethnography. Results show firstly what has been said about, in and through the museum, secondly to what extent and how immigrants are talked about on the museum stage, spoken for or are themselves speaking and thirdly how subjects are positioned in relation to the national public. I propose a model of contextualisation that encompasses dimensions of time, hierarchy and materiality to conceptualise how the global and the local intertwine as knowledge and identities are attributed and representations and memory are discussed in transnational institutional contexts.

Key words: museum, immigration, knowledge, representation, public, identity, context, discourse analysis, interaction analysis, ethnography.