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HERITAGE AND TIME TRAVELS AS A METHOD FOR CREATING FUTURES

PATRIMÔNIO E VIAGEM NO TEMPO COMO MÉTODO PARA A CRIAÇÃO DE FUTUROS

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Heritage and Time Travels as a method for creating futures

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Abstract:

The Time Travel Method is an educational method focused on addressing contemporary issues or challenges using an historical context. By placing the challenges of contemporary society in a local history setting, the method creates a safe space for reflection and dialogue, but also an understanding of historical continuity and change. The goal of the Time Travel Method is to find solutions and a common way-forward, in order to address the issues of today and to create a better future. In this article, an outline of the basic elements and mechanisms of the Time Travel Method as it has developed at Kalmar County Museum, is presented along with three practical examples on Time Travels conducted by Kalmar county museum.

Resumo:

O Método de Viagem no Tempo é um método educacional focado em abordar questões ou desafios contemporâneos usando um contexto histórico. Ao colocar os desafios da sociedade contemporânea em um cenário de história local, o método cria um espaço seguro para reflexão e diálogo, e também para compreensão da continuidade e mudança histórica. O objetivo do Método de Viagem no Tempo é encontrar soluções e um caminho a seguir comum, a fim de situar os problemas de hoje e criar um futuro melhor. Neste artigo, é apresentado um esboço dos elementos e mecanismos básicos do Método de Viagem no Tempo, desenvolvido no Kalmar County Museum, junto com três exemplos práticos de Viagens no Tempo conduzidas pelo Kalmar County Museum.

Keywords:

time travel method, kalmar county museum, bridging ages, heritage futures.

Palavras-chave:

método de viagem no tempo, kalmar county museum, bridging ages, patrimônios futuros.

INTRODUCTION

Kalmar county museum is a regional museum located in the south-east part of Sweden. With 85 employees in the fields of archaeology, preservation, conservation, education, exhibition production among others, Kalmar county museum is one of the largest regional museums in Sweden. The department for education and exhibitions had 14 employees in 2019 with competences in history, archaeology, journalism, human rights, education, pedagogy, textile history, drama and museology. The field of work ranges from exhibitions, guided tours and educational programs for schools, which involves pre-school to adult education. One of the flagship methods for the department of education and exhibition is the Time Travel Method.

The Time Travel Method was first developed at the museum in the mid 1980's as a technique for learning about the past, based on the questions that primary school students had. By testing pre-historic tools/technology and reading the physical traces in the landscape close to the school, student would get an understanding of, and experience, local history. The idea of using local history has been a key part of the method since then, but the "how" and the "why" has changed. The Time Travel Method, as used by Kalmar County Museum today, is more focused on learning-through-heritage, than learning-about-heritage. Social cohesion and community building have also become integrated parts in the method.

The concept of time travels doesn't have one single definition and many heritage institutions have different outreach programs, educational tools and ways of interpreting the past that is referred to as time travels. In the introduction to "The Archaeology of Time Travel – Experiencing past in the 21st century" Cornelius Holtorf gives a variety of examples that all can be described as time travels:

"Prominent examples of popular forms of time travel in contemporary society and popular culture are living history, historical role play, re-enactment and first-person interpretation, often associated with cultural institutions of various kinds. But time travel also occurs, amongst others, in literary fiction, movies, TV docu-soaps, advertising, themed environments and, last but not least, in rapidly improving virtual realities and computer games. Time travel is thus linked to a wide range of contemporary phenomena." (HOLTORF 2017 p. 2).

Holtorf also argues that time travels represent an alternative way of engaging in the past, as opposed to the two more traditional ways, which he refers to as the "evolution way" and the "political way". The former perspective, Holtorf describes as the understanding of the past from the beginning of the universe to present day, in a chronological way. The past is relevant to the present in the sense that it explains the way up to the present point in time. This perspective is often present in school education and similar. The political understanding of the past is more focused on the construction of the past in the present and how "the past mirrors existing norms and expectations of the present in which it was constructed." (HOLTORF 2017 p.5). The time travel in this case differs in the sense that emphasis is placed upon the personal experience. "Whereas the most common approaches to the past have been foregrounding either knowledge and insight or critique and politics, now credible experience and sensual immersion feature large." (HOLTORF 2017 p.4).

NORMAN, Adam. Heritage and Time Travels as a method for creating futures. Cadernos do Lepaarq, v. XVII, n.34, p. 112-125, Jul-Dez. 2020. The traditions and origins of time travels can also be discussed. Of course, time travels in the form of movies and virtual/augmented reality has evolved recently but the idea of living and acting out different kinds of historical scenes has a long history. In her article "Performing the Past Time Travels in Archaeological Open-air Museums" Stefanie Samida draws attention to the fact that historical re-enactments of famous battles began during Roman times and different types of time travels have taken place in different time periods up until present day (HOLTORF 2017 p.137).

This article will focus on one specifically type of time travel, or more specifically one defined method, which was developed at Kalmar county museum in the mid 1980's. The method is known simply as "The Time Travel Method" but is clearly defined and follows a certain number of steps. This is just one method of many that museums and heritage institution use for their outreach programs, and it is beyond the scope of this article to compare the Time Travel Method to these other methodologies.

BRIDGING AGES AND THE BASICS OF THE TIME TRAVEL METHOD

Kalmar County Museum is the founder and a member of the international organization *Bridging Ages – International organization in applied heritage and Time Travels*, a non-profit NGO that acts as a network for institutions and individuals with an interest in using and developing the Time Travel Method. Bridging Ages has members in 25 different countries, in Europe, Africa and North America. The members represent museums, schools, universities, NGO's etc. Bridging Ages also sets the basic outline for the Time Travel Method, although the implementation can vary between countries and organizations. According to Bridging Ages the Time Travel Method is defined as follows: "The Time Travel Method is an educational method, using local heritage in a learning process, to create reflection on contemporary issues, and provide tools for community building" (BRIDGING AGES' website, 2020-06-10)

This definition is followed by five principles. The first principle is the *use of local sites and stories,* a key aspect since the start of the method in the mid-1980's. One of the ideas that formulized the method is the notion that history is present everywhere in the landscape and that school students could engage in the this instead of reading about history in textbooks. The use of local sites and stories is still present today, engaging people in local history in the local community. The second principle is the use of *key questions*. The key questions are the themes or the issues that should be addressed during the Time Travel. The key questions create a connection between the past and present. They should be formulated in line with the goal of the organization that is planning and conducting the Time Travel. The third principle is to *work together with several partners*. Since one of the clear goals with the Time Travel Method is to promote community building and social cohesion, several stakeholders can and should be involved in the Time Travel. You should involve different participants with expertise in areas relating to the key questions, as well as decision-makers or leaders, depending on the situation. The fourth principle is to include different perspectives of today and the past, mainly bottom-up approach. This means that the Time Travel should represent

a variety of perspectives, both on the specific history at hand but also on the key questions. The main perspective should be bottom-up, meaning that the Time Travel should focus on the life of ordinary people. The fifth and the last principle is *reflective dialogue in the process and the event*. The learning process in the Time Travel is based on experiences and relations, so in dialogue with others, the heritage in the form of local sites and stories is activated to facilitate a critical discussion on challenges in society with the aim of contributing to community building.

The practical work is divided into two different parts, *the process* and *the event*. In the process, the organizers gather to plan the Time Travel Event. In the process, the goal and the key questions for the Time Travel is set. These should match the organizations goals i.e. align with the curriculum if the Time Travel is done with school classes. In the process you also identify the target groups and different stakeholders. Based on the chosen key questions, the organizers should also decide on a historical time period and a specific site that is relevant. If historical research needs to be done, the target group and different stakeholders should be involved in order to create engagement and learning in the process. The outcome of the process is a scenario, a fictional story based on historical facts. In the scenario, the local site and stories should merge together with the goals and the key questions for the Time Travel. The scenario is written to resemble a told story or the setting of a scene. It should not be mistaken for a manuscript in a theatre or a factual text; instead it functions as the framework for the Time Travel Event.

The Time Travel Event is a physical gathering where the participants engage in the local site and stories, using the scenario as a foundation for a role play. The Time Travel Event is not a drama, since there is no audience and no manuscript, instead everyone participates and takes the role of someone who might have lived in the scenario's specific time and place. During the event different mechanisms are used to help the participants stay in character. This can include nametags with a historical name, role cards, historical clothing or props, performing of activities that are situated in the historical context like cooking, handicrafts etc. These things can add to the learning-aboutheritage, but their most important function is to create a safe space for reflection and discussion. By taking the role of someone else in another time and with your hands occupied with handicraft or other practical chores, the participants are free to act in a way that might not represent their personal, contemporary, self. In interviews with students and teachers the clothes, name tags and roles in the Time Travel is mentioned as something important that alters the normal roles and social structures that are present in school classes. (Norlin & Högberg, 2015 p. 8) The historical context can also open up discussion and instigate the processing of topics that are difficult to approach or even taboo in contemporary society. In the Time Travel Event, different opinions can arise, and it is the task of the organizers to lead the discussions towards the key questions but also to balance the discussions so that all participants have their voice heard. At the end of the event, the participants travel forth in time, to present day. Here, they all gather in a reflection based on the experience of the Time Travel Event and the key questions. Comparisons between past and present inspires the participants to reflect on their own time, and in some sense, the future.



Figure 1. A young girl speaks out in front of the community and the chief in the role play. She tells the group what the girls have discussed in their group when it comes to harmful traditions. In the role play a safe space is created where opinions can be shared freely

The Time Travel Method has been important for Kalmar County Museum, not only for the big interest regionally, nationally and internationally, but also for developing the idea of working with heritage to address issues of today. This idea is being used in many parts of the out-reach programs and exhibitions in the museum in order to be relevant and to work for social cohesion at large.

The Time Travel Method is about experiencing something else together with others for a limited amount of time and with a specific goal. The method is based on local history and participation, where you involve all your senses to experience something new. The outer form, with props and historical handicraft is the important part of the Time Travel, since it is visual and something else compared to ordinary life. The direct experience and comparison to ordinary day is of importance for understanding other contexts and societies. Perhaps more importantly is a process for testing another reality, in what Amnert & Gusatfsson describes a journey: "A time travel means an intertemporal journey with clothes and props, but most importantly it is a mental journey that creates existential reflections about the participant's own life." (AMNERT & GUSTAFSSON, 2017, p. 125)

Needless to say, the participants don't travel in time for real. Instead they are engaging in local history on a very personal level together with others. In the method, local history comes alive to give the participants an opportunity to learn about and reflect on the past. Since this still takes place in contemporary time, the idea of the past and the present merges and creates new meaning among the participants. By pretending to be someone else, in another (temporal) context, new perspectives and understandings can be revealed and in the safe space that the Time Travel creates the participants can use the past, in the present, to plan for the future.

In the following parts this will all be put into practice with three different Time Travels developed by Kalmar County Museum. For a more extensive description of the method, please see Ebbe Westergren's article.

TIME TRAVEL IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN TANZANIA

During 2018-2019 Kalmar County Museum worked together with the Church of Sweden and two local organizations in Tanzania, the Christian council of Tanzania and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Tanzania. In the project staff from the local organizations were trained in the Time Travel Method, in order to address the issue of gender-based violence and female genital mutilation (FGM) in local communities. In order to address these issues, a great range of measures are already taken, including information, health care, legal help, safe houses and financial support to create alternative sources of income. Many of the methods used to address female genital mutilation are based on reactions rather than prevention. The harmful practice of female genital mutilation is illegal in Tanzania but is still practiced in various parts of central and north Tanzania. According to the research organization 28 Too Many, the prevalence is declining, and a vast majority of the women in the country believes that FGM should be stopped. (28 TOO MANY'S website, 2020-06-10). The Time Travel Method was introduced as a method to start a communitybased dialogue on sensitive topics in order to make change happen with a bottom-up-perspective.

During the project, the staff at the different organizations developed four different Time Travel scenarios as a part of their training and the Time Travel events were conducted in four different communities in Tanzania. The goal was that the staff of the partner organizations would get enough experience to conduct Time Travels and train local teams after the project ended. In the Time Travel developed for the Mara region, the local staff decided to focus on the phenomenon of lawalawa. Lawalawa first emerged in some parts of Tanzania in the 1970's and although the true reason of lawalawa could be vaginal and urinary-tract infections, it was explained in some context to be the result of a curse from the ancestors that could be cured or prevented by cutting the girls. The consensus today is that the belief in lawalawa emerged in the early 1970's as a reaction to the Arusha declaration in 1968, where FGM was abolished. (WILSON et al, 2013 p. 50) The tradition was upheld by creating a new reason for it to be performed.

In the Time Travel process, the local staff involved stakeholders such as religious and traditional leaders and the entire community was the target group. For the historical background, interviews were made. The key questions focused on the why communities practice FGM despite of government prohibition. For the scenario a fictional story was created, taking place in the same village in the early 1970's, when FGM was abolished and the idea of lawalawa was new. In the scenario, a young girl has fallen ill, and the village can't agree if they should take her to hospital or call for a ngariba, the traditional cutter. Some of the staff in training played the role of pro traditional cutting while others were against it. This ensures that different views meet during the Time Travel Event. There was also staff from the local organizations with special roles, such as mother of the girl, village chief and government official. All villagers that participated got new names and a nametag to mark their new role. The Time Travel event started with a staged argument between the mother and the aunt of the girl, who disagrees on what to do. During the argument other participants engage in the argument by themselves until the chief interrupts and

asks for consensus. The chief then asks the villagers to split up into smaller groups, discuss what to do and to come with advice. In this specific Time Travel, the villagers are split up into groups consisting of women, men, girls and boys in separate groups. This is done to strengthen the safe space even more and to give the children an opportunity to speak more freely. In each group, one of the staff in training acts as discussion leader, still in historical character. After some discussions the chief gathers the villagers to listen to the different solutions. This part of the Time Travel is crucial since the different group have agreed on how to handle the given situation in the Time Travel and are given the opportunity to speak their mind in front of the village. This is important especially for children, who seldom are a part of the decision-making process. After the gathering the group travels forth in time and the staff from the local organizations facilitate a reflection where the experience and results from the Time Travel is discussed in relation to contemporary society. What traditions are important to keep? Which traditions should we do away with? In this case the local heritage is essential for the community to critically discuss the questions of change and continuity. The safe space created by the Time travel makes it possible for a multitude of voices to be heard, even the voices that seldom have a say.



Figure 2. In the Time Travel Event, the participants are gathered to an initiation ceremony, marking the start of the role play and the transition from the present to the past.

NORMAN, Adam. Heritage and Time Travels as a method for creating futures. Cadernos do Lepaarq, v. XVII, n.34, p. 112-125, Jul-Dez. 2020. The project was evaluated by external consultants, interviewing the trained staff and participants in the project. Based on the results of the report, the aspect of participation and engagement is emphasized. By including the community and createing safe space for dialogue, the will to change is strongly based in the community:

"Respondents declared that with TTM they have enhanced communities' unity and has been able to talk about contemporary issues openly in Tanzania. It was witnessed that the methodology is very participatory and enabled all sexes and age on board. Over 82% of the respondents pointed out that TTM is great on communities' engagement and participations. It was again reported that the TTM being participatory it also creates sense of communities to value their culture and fill part of the approach. The method employs the traditional and cultural heritages practices, it also values the communities history and brings back the value of the community culture and practices for discussion". (TACADECO, 2019, p 13).

Working with norms and values related to gender justice is a long-term commitment towards change and it takes time. The two partner organizations, ELCT and CCT, has continued their work with the Time Travel Method as an integrated part of their out-reach programs and are noticing some preliminary results:

"Time Travel Method has been a very strong initiative leading communities to rethink why they should not continue embracing FGM. FGM teams in every district have been integrating FGM planned activities with Time Travel Method. This has developed the peoples reasoning capacity and a number of them have abandoned FGM and joined hands to fight against Gender Based Violence (GBV) and FGM in particular." (*Christian Council of Tanzania*, 2020 p. 5)

TIME TRAVEL TO THE STONE AGE

Time travels with primary and secondary school students is the backbone of the educational department at Kalmar County Museum and each year more than hundred full-day Time Travels are carried out with students from age 5 to 15. In this example we will focus on a Stone Age scenario developed for grade 3. In this case the most important partner is the school and the teachers. The curriculum is one of the basic steering documents for the school and the scenario is designed for strengthening their work with norms and values. The curriculum says:

"The goals of the school are that each pupil [...] can empathise with and understand the situation other people are in and also develops the will to act with their best interests at heart, and [...] shows respect and care for both the immediate environment, as well as the environment from a broader perspective." (*Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and schoolage educare*, 2011, page 10).

Apart from this, the curriculum also includes knowledge about pre-history and "How the past can be observed in our own time through relics in nature and language expressions." (*Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and school-age edu-care* 2011 page 209f) The combination of knowledge about physical traces in the landscape, the general understanding of the time period and the emphasis on norms and values has formed the foundation for the scenario. In the Time Travel Process, there is also a certain amount of learning and studying that needs to be done. In

this case, learning is incorporated into the classroom teaching during the weeks before the Time Travel Event. This way the method is integrated into the school system. Evaluation made by Linnaeus University and Kalmar County Museum has shown that this integration be a challenge. An extensive dialogue between museum and school is needed for the learning to be as efficient as possible. (NORLIN; HÖGBERG, 2015 p. 13)

The key questions are formulated in dialogue with the teacher and focus on cooperation and the use of resources. The key questions are of importance today and the task for the Time Travel is to put this in a historical context. The written scenario, which is a fictional story based on historical/ archaeological facts, situates the Time Travel as a spring feast to which the neighbouring tribes are invited. During the actual Time Travel Event the students take the role of children in different tribes or families that have gathered to celebrate the return of the summer. During the day the students try different activities such as preparing the food, hunting, knapping flint tools etc. At the same time the teachers and museum staff facilitate the reflective dialogue based on the key questions while in character. As an example: this could involve discussing that we are very careful in not using too much flint stone in the tool making since that stone was very rare in the Kalmar region during the Stone Age. When preparing the meal, the dialogue often concerns the gathering of food and fishing and how this needs to be done in a sustainable way so that there are fish in the ocean during the next year as well. After the Time Travel, a gathering is held where the students get to reflect on similarities and differences between the Stone Age and present time. Quite often the students note that everybody has been working together during the day, a fact that is identified as positive. The ideas of a close connection to nature and the direct consequences of a non-sustainable life are also a common reflection from the students. Often, they see the Stone Age way of living as a more sustainable alternative than modern time. Of course one could argue that a half-day roleplay doesn't say anything about the actual circumstances of living during the Stone Age, but that is not the point with the method. Instead the student reflects on their own time and formulates the challenges and the possibilities for the future. Heritage is the process in which an understanding of the past is activated in present time.



Figure 3. At the end of the Time Travel Event the school students are invited to eat the food that has been prepared during the day. This is a great opportunity for discussion and reflection.

A TIME TRAVEL TO THE FUTURE

During 2018 Kalmar County Museum got the opportunity to pilot the Time Travel Method with a Time Travel to the future. The initiative came from Professor Cornelius Holtorf at Linnaeus University and the idea was to use the method without any big changes, except that the Time Travel should go into the future and not back in history.

Just like an ordinary Time Travel, this one involved key question and a scenario. In order to start thinking with a future perspective a workshop was held in Kalmar. An archaeologist, a priest and a strategist at Competent Authority of the South Baltic Water District were invited to the workshop. The

participants in the workshop shared different forecasts on water levels, built environment, existential questions and so on. Based on this, the key questions were decided with two main themes emerging: loneliness and climate change. During the workshop it was decided that the Time Travel should go 50 years into the future, to the year 2068.

The next step in the Time Travel Method was to create a scenario, a fictional story based on historical facts. In this case different prognoses from authorities, universities, NGO's etc. were used to create a possible version of Sweden and the world in 2068. Just as in a Time Travel back in time, it is not possible to present a true version of the future/history, instead we must create one version of the future/past that in plausible and relevant for the task at hand. The future is always seen in perspective from the present, and so is the past. Therefore, the understanding of the futures and the pasts changes with different contexts.

The created scenario was based on the city district of Varvsholmen, a small island in Kalmar and the site for a shipyard that was closed in the late 20th century. The island was transformed into a rather exclusive residential area during the early 2000's. In the scenario for the Time Travel to the future there is a severe risk that the island will be flooded due to climate change. Apart from the climate change the group working with the scenario also decided that the individualism has gone so far in Sweden, that society is beginning to fall apart. In the scenario of Sweden 2068 people have a life expectancy of 110 years and the birth rate is 1.6 babies per women. This led to a large number of elderly in the country and not enough people in working age. The loneliness is spreading and the golden age in the 20th century is gone. In the scenario, an activist group on Varvsholmen have gathered all tenants and the municipality to a general meeting to discuss the future of their home. The key questions focused on the issue of whether the tenants should leave or stay at Varvsholmen.



Figure 4. "Rising sea levels. Social problems. What do we do? Stay or move? Public meeting at the retirement home at Varvsholmen. Wednesday 5th December 2068 9.30 am. Activist group for Varvsholmen"

In the pilot project this scenario was tested with two different group, one school class (8th grade) and one group of mixed adults. Just like an ordinary Time Travel, this was done on the specific site Varvsholmen, and the participants took the role of someone else. During the Time Travel the discussion was vivid and the participants had a hard time agreeing on how to solve the situation. In the interviews conducted after the Time Travel many of the participants agreed that Time Travels to the future could be an fruitful way to address contemporary challenges and issues. (NORLIN, 2019 p. 13) In particular, many of the school students reflected on the fact that they will live to experience 2068 and that they, together with others have the possibility and responsibility to shape the future: "You understand more about the present time and what might happen if we don't behave" (NORLIN, 2019 p. 13).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Time Travel Method lets the participants walk in someone else's shoes for a while. The experience of past times, and the involvement in local history working with others makes it possible for the participants to create an understanding of the past, the present and the future. The Time Travel Method is implemented in much of the work done by the educational department at Kalmar County Museum and has spread to different organizations and countries. In a way heritage is always present in processes of change, either as something we want to get rid of or something we want to reach, but heritage is seldom used as an active tool. The Time Travel Method is one way to use the notion of heritage as an active part in change-making.

One of the challenges when it comes to community building and social cohesion is the long timespan. Changes in norms, attitudes and behaviours takes a long time and requires complex processes. However, together with other actions it can create the foundation for a reflective dialogue about the future. Evaluations and different attempts have been made to better understand how and why the method is received by participants and what kind of results that are derived from the interactions. Even though more research is needed it is clear that Time Travels create meaning and are regarded as useful by many stakeholders. With this said, the Time Travel Method is no quick fix, but can open up dialogues and reflection upon different contemporary topics, even those issues which are sensitive or taboo. Heritage, together with other methods, heritage can act as a catalyst to create different futures.

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