An Ethnographic Exploration of Cultural Representations of 'Africa' in The Buitenmuseum, Afrika Museum:

Understanding the Interactions Between Material Culture and Visitors in an Open-Air Exhibition and the Opportunities for Redevelopment.

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Abstract: This thesis identifies the 'African' cultural representations through material culture in the open-air exhibition of the Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal. It identifies the material agency of the collection and architecture and how this is consumed by the audience. In turn, it identifies how these representations affect the audience's perceptions of African cultures and proposes possibilities for the future renovation of the exhibition, with the focus on how to represent the diversity of contemporary African social reality. The data was gathered and analysed using an ethnographic method through visitor studies, observations, interviews and social media analysis. By triangulating these findings, it is possible to see the effect of the current representations and provide solutions for the future renovation. I argue that the wonder of the exhibition representations encourages a curious romanticised gaze at 'Africa' that may emphasise static cultural perceptions in the audience. Confronting this perception through an inclusive and contemporary narrative is required.

Vignette:

*"...I've always had a bit of a problem with it, but the moment when it started to really bother me was when I went to 'PhantasiaLand' in Germany, it's a theme park with rollercoasters, each rollercoaster is a different country. It's the most stereotypical place you will ever find. But the Asian and the German quarter, it's done with a bit more respect than the African side. It's your classic Hollywood stereotypes with voodoo and masks hanging everywhere...It's painful and especially because there are people role playing, they get a bunch of Africans playing monotonous rhythm and dancing and they shout at people [raises hands and stick tongue out] "come dance with us arghhh". When I saw that I realised it's only an inch away from what we are doing at our museum...We were so close to reaching that point and time has caught up with us...We're getting close to Phantasia Land because it started off as a Buitenmuseum for the congregation to say "hey look how poor they are give us some money and we'll help them", then we changed the theme to an architecture storyline but we didn't really build anything new or change the ways we display that better, we just changed the text panels. I think that we are missing a personal touch, or a touch that really connects to the visitors when you only talk about architecture, because no one goes to the Afrika Museum to see architecture. That's what I believe anyway. There could be a storyline in there but it doesn't really fit within our contemporary mission..." **Interview with staff member, 13/03/2017.**

<u>Acknowledgments:</u>

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Abbreviations
RCMC   (Research Centre for Material Culture)
NMWC (National Museum of World Cultures)
BM   (Buitenmuseum)
I   (Interviewer)
V   (Visitor respondent)
S   (Staff respondent)

Table of Pictures
All pictures were taken by myself at the Buitenmuseum, Afrika Museum on the 30/02/2017.

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1. Introduction.

1.1 The Buitenmuseum and My Research.

The critique of cultural representations in museums has arguably gained a new-found importance in contemporary globalised society. How should a museum begin to represent the diversity of cultures on the African continent? What social themes should be present when representing African cultures and what material culture should be used to portray this? It becomes especially important to answer these issues when the institution in question is historically embedded in colonial collecting practices, religious missionary movements and the exotifying curiosity of "the Other" (see Pels, 2015).

In the quiet valleys of Berg en Dal lies the Afrika Museum, tucked away into the folds of the forests and hills of the Eastern province of Gelderland, The Netherlands. The museum has a long history but it is its future that is arguably of more concern. At present, the museum's visitor's numbers have been dropping, renovation of the aged exhibition is now long overdue and requested by external institutions (Afrika Museum, 2010: 3)[1]. One of the main attractions of the Afrika Museum is the Buitenmuseum (open-air exhibition), renowned for its selection of life-sized reproductions of vernacular African architecture from the countries of Ghana, Mali, Benin, Lesotho and Cameroon. The Buitenmuseum has been somewhat neglected in recent years, with its only renovation occurring during the 1980's the call for attention gets louder each year. There have been significant changes in the last thirty years, with worldwide advances in technological, economic, political and social spheres it is time to question the relevance and representativeness of the current material collection.

I was asked by the Afrika Museum, in collaboration with the National Museum of World Cultures (NMWC) and Research Centre for Material Culture (RCMC) to carry out research on the Buitenmuseum and its visitors in order to rethink the future possibilities of representing contemporary Africa. This thesis offers an ethnographic exploration of the

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[1] This includes pressure from the government for the museum to be less dependent on subsidies and increase cultural participation among diverse communities (Afrika Museum, 2010: 3). In addition to the 2003 UNESCO "Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage" (see UNESCO, n.d.) which required this to be preserved in the Buitenmuseum (Ibid.). Furthermore, pressure from a "globalised society" to increase the museum's social responsibility by emphasising similarities and differences between various cultures (Ibid.).

current representations of African cultures through the use of material culture and architecture in the Buitenmuseum. It also identifies how these representations are received by the audience and whether this influences their perceptions of 'Africa'. I examine the importance of material culture in the exhibition, focusing on the interactions of the audience with the space and objects. Furthermore, I propose possibilities for a future redevelopment based upon my data, with the aim of representing the complexity of the contemporary continent. Here I propose my research question:

How do the Buitenmuseum's representations of Africa through material culture (and architecture) affect the visitor's perceptions of 'Africa' and what are the possibilities for representing the diversity of contemporary Africa in the Buitenmuseum?

My research is important as it builds upon critical debates from the end of the 20th century. We must challenge classifications of "culture" in relation to the "isomorphism of space, place and culture" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 7). The growing plurality of cultures and their processes of identification across borders disrupt static categorisations. This is problematic, as "all museums are exercises in classifications" incorporating the imagination processes of knowledge (Jordanova, 1989: 23). Museums have been experiencing fundamental changes since the 1980's and early 1990's due to increasing criticism of cultural representations regarding colonial and postcolonial bias, questions of ethnographic authority, the ethical duties of anthropologists and the epistemological power of categorisations such as "art" and "culture" (Jones, 1993: 201). As an institution of civil society, museums play a crucial role in understanding, reinforcing and encouraging values, norms and objects that society depends, in turn defining relations between communities (Karp, 1992a: 5-6). Therefore, it is increasingly important that museums as educational and cultural institutions adapt to this changing fluidity in contemporary cultural classifications as a means of accurately representing social realities. This raises the question, as to what representations of African cultural diversity should be present? *How* should these cultures be represented and *who* has authority to these cultural representations? How should museum address the interrelationship between traditional and contemporary social spheres? How should these representations be consumed? My research addresses these issues and offers some solutions to these problems that the Afrika Museum faces in today's globalised world. This thesis is built upon the museological debates of the 1990s's. However, I want to take these criticisms

further by using them in collaboration with my findings to provide an outcome, a potential future that identifies the possibilities of contemporary representations in the Buitenmuseum.

Demarcating my field becomes problematic as it is not contained within one specific space, place or time frame. Clearly, the Afrika Museum, more specifically the Buitenmuseum holds relevance as the space physically contains representations of traditional African cultures, which involve a variety of actors and material cultures within it. Therefore, my field includes various imagined spaces (see Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 11). The imagined space of "Africa" is key to my research, as the representations in the museum transport the audience into a reproduced reality, a 'snapshot' in time of rural vernacular African architecture. In this thesis, I use the term 'Africa' to refer to the whole continent, but also to an imagined space that is classified by the audience as a fixed homogenous culture. Today "ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 10) and we must now emphasise cultural differences through connection (1992: 8). This becomes problematic for the Buitenmuseum, as it attempts to represent a continent filled with a diversity of transnational cultures, through the theme of African architecture. The interrelationship and conflict of these imagined spaces within the museum and the audience are central to my field, an issue that my research aims to provide solutions to.

I will investigate the processes of identification and classification that represent "Africa" through material culture in the Buitenmuseum, identifying features that are effectively represented, missing or misrepresented. Questioning not only who constructs these identities but how they are constructed and presented. Material culture here is used to identify the material agency of the objects, artifacts, art and architecture used in the exhibition and how visitors consume and interact with the collection. This will identify the exhibition's representations of African cultures and identities and how this affects the perceptions of 'Africa' in the audience. I evaluate my findings using theories on modernity, identities and material culture that exist within contemporary African contexts. However, it is necessary to acknowledge the historical and colonial context that may hold significance in processes of contemporary identities, materiality and museum representations. In this thesis, I identify the relationship between the audience and the exhibition, and examine the perceptions formulated by the visitors in response to their experience. In turn, my findings

will shed light on the possibilities of representing the diversity of contemporary African social reality in the future of the Buitenmuseum.

1.2 History of The Afrika Museum and the Birth of the Buitenmuseum.

On first arrival, I was surprised to find the well-established Afrika Museum nestled in the remote forests and valleys just outside of the small village of Berg en Dal. The rural location raises questions about its biography and historical significance in the local area. Looking at the museum's history, we can begin to understand the situation that exists today.

It has not always been known as the "Afrika Museum". It started with the Catholic church, more specifically the "Congregation of the Holy Spirit and the Immaculate Heart of Mary" (Welling, 2002: 37). In 1848, its two founders initiated the birth of a worldwide organisation for missionary training with the aim of converting people of colonised continents to Christianity (Welling, 2002: 38). The era of colonialism provided a backdrop for the missionaries to claim a platform to "save their souls" and to "free them from the constant threat of evil forces" (Welling, 2002: 39). The missionaries were not only powered on by their religious faith but also had a deep concern for the harsh existence of African life (Ibid.) This notion of 'saving' Africans was reiterated into the missionary publications back in the Netherlands, with the first magazine, "De Bode van de Heilige Ghost" published in 1905 (Welling, 2002: 40). These primarily included entertaining articles of adventure, cannibalism and near death encounters, these hyperbolic expressions became a central source of income for the mission (Ibid.).

It wasn't until 1949 that the congregation found its way to the current location in Berg en Dal, using the Villa Merenwijk as a facility for trainee priests (Welling, 2002: 46). In 1954, Father Bukkems opened two rooms decorated with African objects from the spiritan missions (Pels, 2015: 1). Described as: "the threat of the jungle now hangs peacefully from nails…" (De bode cf Welling, 2002: 46). Later he called for missionaries to collect "[e]verything relating to superstitious practices, witchcraft and fetishism.... Musical instruments, dancing apparel and ornaments…The heads of creatures great and small… Practical implements from the daily lives of the natives…" (De Bode cf Welling, 2002: 46). Bukkems designated his work to a remarkable "museum of rubbish" (as opposed to art), seemingly aware of the contradictory influences that the displays of these objects could

arouse in local tourists (Pels, 2015: 1). The 1950's saw a growing impatience with missionary romanticism and increased political consciousness in the face of independence movements (Pels, 2015: 29). The museum responded by attempting to focus on the ethnographic validity of objects collected, with the aim to educate rather than to frighten (Welling, 2002: 46). However, the perception that ethnographic displays are an undeviating progression towards educative knowledge and appreciation was often undermined by the "entertainment" value of "freak shows, the exotic, or colonial trophies" (Pels, 2015: 3). Around 1957, the organisations attempt to 'shrug off' its label as a missionary museum which led to heightened focus on the value of African art and culture, strengthening their alleged civilising story (Pels, 2015: 30). Economic shifts in Africa which occurred during the same period initiated a perceived crisis based on the notion that "…[p]rimitive culture, which is closely tied up with superstition and fetishism, is at risk of disappearing…" (Welling, 2002: 48). This apparent extinction may have been utilised to validate collecting practices and growing collections by calling for conservation and preservation (Coombes, 1988: 62). Father Verdijk spread the call for the collection and safeguarding of objects in threat; "[f]etishes large and small (preferably old), anything that is connected with illness, death and burial. Anything that is related to sorcerers and medicine men, and also to initiation, circumcision and marriage rites" (Welling, 2002: 48). The collection soon outgrew the villa and in 1958 the new, larger museum building opened its doors to the public; it was an instant success, receiving 30,000 visitors in its first year (Welling, 2002: 47).

The proximity of the museum to "The Holy Land Foundation" (now known as The Orientalis Museum) is significant as it uses a similar open air environment to illustrate stories from The Bible (Welling, 2002: 46). Once a very popular museum, this undoubtedly spurred the development of the Buitenmuseum. Under the new director, Father Verdijk from 1956, the outdoor area was incorporated with an "African Zoo" including monkeys and livestock (Welling, 2002: 47). In 1959, the "Negro Village" was added with dwellings from across the African continent, with the intention to give the visitors a "more physical taste of African life" (Welling, 2002: 47) whilst promoting the mission by showing "how pitiful the Africans lived" (own translation, Buitenmuseum Algemeen, n.d.: 19). This included a chief's house from Cameroon, a "Morogoro-hut" as well as canoes, a Kongo-hut and a tamtam received from the Brussels World's Exposition (Pels, 2015: 50). The huts were built by "African experts", Pels speculates that the "Morogoro hut" was built by visiting apprentice priests from Uluguru (Pels, 2015: 51). In 1959, the local newspaper advertised that: "Africa is not as

far as you think! It lies close to Nijmegen.", which emphasises how ethnographic displays through objects can provide an immersive "quick trip to 'Africa'" by being transported to a world from which they originated (Pels, 2015: 1-2). Throughout the 1970's the museum surged in popularity, reaching 100,000 visitors in 1974 (Welling, 2002: 52). Social attempts to change ethnocentric perceptions of African cultures in the early 1980's was reflected in the extension of the "Negro Village" in 1982, with the policy plan stating: "the unknown, the foreign, will lose its exotic veil" (Policy Plan, 1982: 2 cf Welling, 2002: 52). Three years later "The Africa Open-Air Village" was extended with additions of architecture from The Kusasi people of Ghana, The Dogon of Mali and Ganvie in Benin (Ibid.). This extension aimed to improve the presentation of African lifestyle, work and housing in a way that juxtaposed the inside exhibition (Ibid.). These 'compounds' were designed as architecturally accurate representations, with architect Wolf Schijns researching Dogon architecture extensively before designing it. The Ganvie structure was acquired from the Expo exhibition in Brussels, featuring imported building materials and complete with true furnishings of the time (Afrika Museum, 2010: 3).

In 2013, the Afrika Museum joined forces with the Tropenmuseum (Amsterdam) and the Museum Volkenkunde (Leiden) to merge into one administrative body now known as the National Museum of World Cultures (NMWC) (*Fusie*, n.d.). This partnership aims to focus on the universality of humanity, emphasising themes that transcend through all peoples to achieve a mutual connection through global citizenship (Afrika Museum, 2016: 2). The museum targets "schools, families and art lovers", uniting these groups using the Buitenmuseum experience and the varied art forms on display (Afrika Museum, 2010: 3). Whilst the entertainment experience is key for the visitors, they also want to develop knowledge through experimental learning (Ibid.) In 2015 the Afrika Museum received a total of 73,160 visitors (Jaarrekening, 2015) with the aim of increasing this to 90,000 to 100,000 per year (Afrika Museum, 2010).

The inside museum contains two permanent exhibitions, one showcases contemporary art from Africa and the Diaspora and the other portrays ethnographic presentations of cultural and religious African objects. The "Carnival Worldwide" temporary exhibition received many visitors throughout my research due to the coinciding local carnival season ("*Vastenavond*"). The inside exhibitions are typical in their display techniques, with objects, artifacts and art either behind glass or demanding a respectful distance. This juxtaposition of

contemporary art and traditionalist objects expresses notions of transnational cultures, identities and traditional African cultures to the audience. The indoor museum holds weight in the processes of knowledge in the audience as they often experience these exhibitions prior to the Buitenmuseum. This distinction between the indoor contemporary and traditional art displays and the rural representations in the Buitenmuseum is significant to the entire experience of the audience. The Buitenmuseum displays objects and architecture free from physical barriers, allowing the audience to choose what and how to 'explore'. This makes the exhibition unique, entertaining and educational for both children and adults. Architecturally speaking, little has changed, the Buitenmuseum still houses the same life sized representations of vernacular architecture from Dogon in Mali, Kusasi in Ghana, Basotho in Lesotho, the Baka in Cameroon and the Ganvie of Benin nestled amongst the original buildings from the "Negro Village" which are said to be from "Angola and/or Cameroon". All the other buildings serve educational or practical purposes, such as the "Chopbar" café, the gift shop, The Kiwanda and the Palaver house (workshops and toilets) which have been externally painted in "African fashion" (Buitenmuseum Algemeen, n.d.: 20). Other features include an enclosed herd of goats, a large barn used by the ground staff and a "Kinderbeeldenbos" with large climbable 'creatures' from African mythology. Aside from the buildings, aesthetically much of the material collection has grown a little tired and outdated.

1.3 Communicative Context, Methodology and Ethical Considerations.

a) Communicative Context.

My research focused on the Buitenmuseum from January to April 2017. I conducted my visitor studies in February and March as attendance increased, the weather warmed and the space became more 'decorated' and accessible. During this time, some of the dwellings were closed entirely[2]. Other "houses" were open to the public but lacked "full" decoration. Noticeably, this concerned the "outdoor" objects for example, wax print cloth on washing lines, pots and pans placed on outdoor stoves. The weather also dampened the situation, and data collected on the more unpleasant days may have been tainted by this experience. In addition, the aftermath of "the merger" triggered some difficulty with access to informants and key knowledge. The reorganisation saw the former director and heads of staff (amongst others) lose their jobs, which is now managed within the wider NMWC. The organisational reshuffle saw many new faces replace those with a long museum history. This meant a loss of knowledge, especially regarding the Buitenmuseum's history and collections as this undocumented information left with the former directors and curators. I was unable to gain access to these key figures due to personal ties being cut. This especially affected my material culture analysis as I relied on one key informant (the caretaker), who has worked for the museum for over twenty years, for the basis of these findings which may lack in accuracy. This also caused some tension between 'new' and 'old' staff members, as opinions differed on the organisational changes. I found that staff members who had experienced the merger were more reserved in opinions and participation (for example reception and workshop staff). Therefore, my staff sample consisted of newer employees, I found that this increased the uncertainty regarding the Buitenmuseum collection. Therefore, my data gathered from staff members may lack in historical understanding, however it was possible to obtain accounts of the museum's history through literature sources (see Welling, 2002 and Pels, 2015). I also experience some initial hostility towards myself as a researcher, some 'pre-merger' staff members refrained from commenting or engaging in conversation, others were wary of my presence, my questions and my standpoint. For example, one potential key

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[2] This primarily included 'Benin' which is closed for the foreseeable future due to structural issues, the 'Tindi' house which shows a storytelling video, 'Barber/Contemporary' house which portrays 'contemporary' material culture and a recreated barber shop. In addition, many of the thatched buildings (Lesotho, Ghana, 'Oventjes' and Potters house) received rethatching and were inaccessible for a short period. See pp.29 for a map of the Buitenmuseum.

informant, who had worked for the museum for many years was wary of my voice recorder. They immediately asked me to remove it, even though it was not in use, and continued to remain very closed and discouraged any questioning. However, after I had made my position clear that I was researching the Buitenmuseum for my masters they became friendly and engaging. Although I was not able to further interview this informant, this reaction opened my eyes to the underlying organisational issues that exist within the company due to the impact of the merger. This highlights how difficulties with access, rapport and trust with staff informants during my research affected the response rates and content of my data gathered.

Of course, it is imperative to note the obvious hurdle of language. As the visitors were predominantly Dutch and German nationals and my limited knowledge of either languages, communication in English was required. Whilst I felt that throughout my interviews my informants could express themselves adequately; it is worth noting the constrained vocabulary of a second language may have affected choice in words or confidence to freely explore their own thoughts with me. Indeed, Fabian claims that the ethnographer must speak the language of their informants in order to gain insight into the production of social meaning (Fabian, 1971: 23). Through dialectics we immerse ourselves in language and the deeper production of meaning, embedded in semiotics (Fabian, 1971: 27). Arguably my methods are hindered by this, as my interviews were conducted in English, even if this is a strong second language for most informants. However, through my triangulation of observation, interviews and social media analysis it becomes possible to identify processes "…of meaning-production and meaning-exchange" that "concentrate on the producer(s), the 'owners', and the relationship between them" (Fabian, 1971: 27). In the case of a museum, the production of meaning occurs within the relationship between the material culture and the actors that consume and apply semiotic meaning to it. Through this approach, it is possible to see the data as results of an interaction which relies on the exchange of meaning embodied in symbols (Fabian, 1971, 27). Within the Buitenmuseum, this exchange of signs and symbols expresses communicative meaning that is embedded in historical, colonial, social and political contexts.

b) *Methodology.*

To effectively answer my research question and to understand the perspectives from both consumers and producers, a multi-methodological ethnographic approach was required. This

allowed me to interact with informants and collect data from disparate locations and sources (Hannerz, 2012: 406). This provides a range of viewpoints collected through social media, visitor studies, observations, staff interviews and advisory session which can be triangulated to ensure data can be cross-analysed against multiple perspectives.

Visitor studies is fundamental to understand the relationship between the audience and the representations through material culture within museums. Hooper-Greenhill's "ethnographic approach" to visitor studies "enables the analysis of visitors to be placed within the contestations and ambitions that characterized the development of the exhibition itself" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006: 373), this places my research in the context of representing African cultures in the Netherlands. I used a reflexive approach; my questions were open-ended and analysis placed within wider museological debates, with the aim to gain deep understanding of the processes of meaning making between objects and actors (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006: 373-374). This in-depth scope of analysis makes this ethnographic approach valuable (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006: 373) to gain understanding of the social meaning behind audience's experience in the exhibition. When conducting museum research and visitor studies it is not possible to "go native" (Ewing, 1994: 571, cf. Sluka & Robben, 2012: 14). Rapport with some informants, particularly visitors was limited which may have affected in-depth communication. On the other hand, this was positive as it allowed a reflexive disconnection from my field. For example, I often used the two-and-a-half-hour train journey to the museum to evaluate my findings, reconsider questions, prepare for interviews or simply reflect.

I conducted seventy semi-structured interviews with visitors at the end of their Buitenmuseum experience. To capture a representative sample, I conducted interviews over different days, including weekends, school holidays and some weekdays. My sample included all visitors who were willing to participate and had attended the Buitenmuseum, my respondents ranged in age and gender from families with children under thirteen to elderly couples aged sixty-five and over. I used a pre-set list of questions (see Appendix A pp.96) that took approximately five minutes to complete. I found that although most people were happy to talk, time was a real issue. This was to be expected, however questions had to be wisely selected and in some cases, there was little or no opportunity for in-depth probing. In other cases, informants were willing to contribute and discuss certain themes further. The questions ranged from basic information about the visitor's location and motivations for their

visit, to opinions about the houses, their expectations and desires for improvement. Interviews took place at the exhibition exit, as they returned indoors I approached visitors with my clipboard and asked permission to conduct an interview. I introduced my position as such: *"…I am doing some research for the Museum as we want to renovate the outside area…"*. This gave me an advantage; people were more willing to participate if they knew it was for the benefit of the museum or that I was a member of staff. However, this increased my authority and therefore the visitors may have confined their criticisms or failed to speak truly. The informant(s) would then provide their opinions, often through short answers which I attempted to probe. These conversations were often a dialogue between multiple people, clashes in opinions sometimes occurred which highlights the individual agency to apply meaning to their experience. To gain an understanding of the demographic of the audience, with surveys seemingly problematic given the visitors time constraints, I grouped my informants into age ranges in units of ten based on observations (25-35, over 65 etc.). Similarly, I noted who the informant attended the museum with, for example "extended family", "couple" or "alone". This allowed me to gain an understanding of the purpose of their museum visit, however, it is important to note that these were assumptions based on my own interpretations and observations.

My visitor studies also included observation, both participant and non-participant. It was important to understand how the visitors interacted with the space and material culture present. I did this by annotating copies of the Buitenmuseum map (see Appendix B pp.96) to track the visitor's movements and interactions with the architecture and objects to identify "hot and cold spots" (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006: 365). I observed and recorded the movements of individuals by drawing onto the 'maps' which buildings they entered or acknowledged, the objects they interacted with and how they navigated the space. This resulted in fifty-two 'maps' which I quantified by tallying trends in interactions with the space, buildings and material culture. I paid close attention to the visitor's relationship with the objects, noting what they admired, acknowledged, approached and touched. At this stage I believe the visitors were aware of my presence as a researcher, which may have made them more reserved in their physical interactions. For example, one visitor picked up a plate and after noticing my presence shyly placed it back down. Initially I tried to observe people inside the 'houses', but I soon realized that my presence alone would deter people from entering the same space, this was especially a problem in the small 'rooms' of the 'Ghana' compound. To overcome this, I distanced myself by observing from the elevated stairs of the entrance/exit,

by walking around or by sitting on the benches scattered throughout the site. This approach may pose ethical issues of consent, however I made my presence as a researcher clear by not covertly hiding my data collection. Although I must acknowledge the counter effect this may have had on the visitor's actions. As it was also necessary to understand the Buitenmuseum experience from the perspectives of my informants, participant observation became essential. Firstly, I tried to detach myself from my research position to understand how I myself as a visitor would communicate with the environment. However, my position as a researcher may have interfered as my processes of meaning are built within museological theory. I also participated in a guided tour with a group of fifteen to twenty visitors of mixed nationalities and ages. The forty-five-minute tour focused on the Baka Pygmies, starting with a brief educational overview inside the Atriums' Baka exhibition. Followed by an interactive tour of the Baka compound in the Buitenmuseum, this included an interactive discussion of the dwelling construction, gender relations, social life and contemporary struggles the Baka face today. This gave me the opportunity to understand the exhibition and tour from the perspective of my informants as I was perceived as another visitor. This allowed me to observe individual and group reactions to the material culture, whilst being able to compare participant and non-participant observation data.

The use of social media analysis extended my research population to visitors over a greater timeframe and diversity. This gave a platform for visitors to express their thoughts free from the presence of the museum or myself. I collected public posts from Instagram (eighty-six visitor's posts referring to the Buitenmuseum from 30/3/2017- 1/1/2016), TripAdvisor (fifty visitor's reviews from 30/12/2016- 2/12/2014) and Facebook (thirty-three written posts from 30/12/2016- 8/9/2013). I decided against using Twitter due to a lack of data, as this platform was mainly used for museum promotion and not for visitor's own responses. I catalogued online posts and coded them with key words or themes to reflexively analyse the data and understand prevalent features of the experience. I gathered my Instagram sample by collecting posts which used the "#afrikamuseum" hashtag and referred to the Buitenmuseum either in the image or through description. This method provides a valuable perspective from the visitor's personal sphere to understand the impact of material objects and representations. When users upload a photo to Instagram it usually goes through a

carefully considered process of capturing, editing and captioning the photograph[3]. However, it is important to be critically aware of the use and meaning of these posts as they are meant for a different audience and may be taken out of context. The meanings behind classificatory words in 'hashtags' are ambiguous, in some cases these reflect the desire for visibility online and not the perceptions or experiences of the visitors. Instagram was primarily utilised for personal use with attached pictures aimed at their own online community, whilst TripAdvisor and Facebook were used to review the museum experience. Google translate and the built-in translation software on Instagram and TripAdvisor were used where required. Therefore, the accuracy of translations may be questionable. When combined with visitor's studies, this methodological triangulation becomes a unique and valuable way to understand multiple perspectives of the audience's experiences and perceptions.

My methods go further than simply the visitors alone. The perspectives of the staff provide an understanding of the different opinions, influences and history of the Buitenmuseum. These included semi-structured and informal interviews with eleven staff members involved with exhibitions, collections, education programs, reception and ground keeping. My sample was identified by those who were willing to partake. I took a constructivist perspective, taking a dialogical approach through an "active" collaboration between interviewer and interviewee to produce an experience of meaning-making (Hiller and Diluzio, 2004: 3). To increase neutrality and objectivity during these conversations, I needed to be reflexive about my own "biographically situated" social interpretations (Hiller and Diluzio, 2004: 3). These ranged in time from thirty minutes to one-and-a-half hours, they took place either in the Buitenmuseum itself or in the office. I tried to remain informal during semi-structured interviews, encouraging the conversation to flow freely, referring to my list of key questions to keep on topic. I noticed staff were sometimes a little wary of my opinions as well as attempts to use my student researcher position to voice their standpoint, which may be reflected in the data.

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[3]   See   http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brian-honigman/the-100-most-popular-hash_b_2463195.html for breakdown of how to use hashtags and the list of the "The 100 most popular "hashtags" on Instagram" by Brian Honigman (May 24, 2017). When using Instagram "the" photo is taken and then doused with the appropriate "effect". The user then has the option to hashtag, this is usually relevant to the contents of the picture. These hashtags are then visible to the public on Instagram and the web, depending on whether your account is public or private. There is also the opportunity to add hashtags that a wider audience can see, for example the popular use of "#photooftheday" broadens your photo to a wider public, with the idea to make your content more accessible.

As some of the objects were in storage it was not possible to conduct a formal cataloguing of material culture. Instead I spoke to the museum caretaker who holds responsibility for the collection and redecoration of the Buitenmuseum by cleaning, preparing and painting the buildings. Through our conversations, I tried to gain an understanding of the provenance and biography of the objects in the Buitenmuseum. I rely heavily on this source of knowledge to understand the exhibitions collection which may have limited reliability. It is important to note that there were some initial barriers to communication with this informant, our first encounter required a translator. However, on our second meeting, the lack of interpretator was valuable. Although we stumbled over a few words, we could understand each other. This increased rapport, leading to more detailed and open conversation without the risk of misinterpretation through the translator (staff member). In addition, I interviewed two architects. This included Wolf Schijns, the architect who researched and designed the Dogon compound in the Buitenmuseum. This gave me the opportunity to understand more of the history of the buildings in the exhibition and their representativeness. Similarly, I contacted Antoni Folkers, an author and architect who has written about contemporary architecture in Africa and has previously worked with the museum. This provided a perspective about the possibilities of representing contemporary African architecture in the Buitenmuseum.

It was also important to involve opinions from those who have ties, knowledge or experience with the African cultures that are represented. Golding and Modest (2013) emphasises the importance of community collaboration by museums to work with similarities whilst respecting differences to develop social cohesion within today's complex world (2013: 3). Similarly, Fouseki and Smith (2013) conducted interviews and advisory workshops with community representatives to address the need for relationship building, honest communication about possibilities in exhibitions, and the miscommunication between object value, meaning and the audience (2013: 242). Through the African Studies Centre of Leiden University, I made contact with a number of Africans living in the Netherlands. In the end, I managed to arrange one person to act as my advisory group, Ibrahim Traore. Although I had issues with response rate, the opinion of an individual with relevant cultural knowledge was valuable, this engaged a fresh outlook on the Buitenmuseum and ensures cross-analysis. I was specifically interested in his thoughts on the way the outside exhibition currently represents African cultures, and his opinion about how the diversity of the African continent

could and should be represented. Ibrahim's opinion is not illustrative of the continent, I must be critical of the representativeness of my sample as it may lack the diversity of opinions and interests of communities (Fouseki and Smith, 2013: 233). For the first forty minutes, he explored the Buitenmuseum on his own, this ensured he created his own opinion free from my influence. We then discussed his initial impressions, followed by another tour with myself present to go into more detail regarding certain objects, buildings and ideas. Annette Schmidt (Curator of Afrika, NMWC) acted as translator as my informant was unable to speak much English. It is necessary to be aware of any bias when using my data as organisational loyalties may have misguided translations (see Mosse, 2006).

c) *Ethical Considerations.*

Whilst conducting my research I referred to the AAA (2012) code of ethics in order to reduce any negative impacts of my methods. I gained informed consent for all interviews and for recordings where applicable. In addition, I used Hiemlichs (2015) ethical code as a guideline during my visitor's studies. I informed my respondents of the purpose of my study, how their information would be reported to the museum through my research evaluation, all interviews were confidential and where necessary time and effort was confirmed (see Hiemlich, 2015: 22). Anonymity will be kept in my writing of the visitor, staff and social media data to safeguard the informants. Undeniably, my social media analysis poses ethical issues due to the lack of informed consent. Despite being forms of public data, I will keep anonymity of names and faces that are present in the photos.

Something that is of concern to me ethically is that my research is going to be produced for and consumed by the people that are in it. Some of the opinions of my informants, or myself, may damage organisational elements due to critique of employees, processes and representations. Even though I was given full critical freedom by the RCMC, certain opinions and outcomes may offend, upset or cause tensions for the readers. Therefore, anonymity will be kept in my writing to avoid harm to staff informants, however this is problematic in such a close knit organisation. The institutional politics and power influences on informants may "produce and protect authorised views" of the organisation (Mosse, 2006: 937-8). Producing a critical account of my findings may threaten my own position but also the security of the staff I interviewed (Ibid.).

2. Theoretical Framework.

In this chapter I will delineate the problems and criticisms that have arisen in museum studies in order to shed light on the debates that I will be using as a conceptual framework for my data analysis. These include historical concepts of museums in the context of imperialism, the representational critiques of the end of the 20th century, debates surrounding wonder, material culture and an introduction to African modernity. This thesis will not only build upon these debates, but attempt to provide a solution to some of these issues that arise, using the Buitenmuseum as a case study.

2.1 Historical and Colonial Contexts of Museums.

Firstly, we must look at the historical use of museums that have no doubt influenced today's social institution and the processes of identification. Collecting aspects of other cultures was embedded in European imperialist society, not just an elitist cultural activity in the search for beauty, but closely linked to nation building politics and the status of collectors (ter Keurs, 2011: 1). Furthermore, the governmentalisation of culture was used as a resource of power to regulate and mold social behavior of the population (Bennett, 1995: 20-24). From the start of the 20th century, through museum's collections and educational capabilities they "operated in the conjuncture between popular and scientific theories of race and culture, and thus acted as an agency for different imperial ideologies" (Coombes, 1988: 66). In reference to British colonial exhibitions, the construction of "mock villages" filled with collections that were allegedly "representative of a particular culture" produced a sense of accessibility and containment of those societies (Coombes, 1988: 59). This encouraged a "feeling of geographical proximity" whilst the "sense of 'spectacle' was calculated to preserve the cultural divide" (Coombes, 1988: 59). One must question whether this statement is still applicable to the Buitenmuseum today. Of course, the social and political context has changed, but the Buitenmuseum's 'mock villages' have been influenced by these colonial exhibitions, evident in the donations received from the Brussels World's Exposition (see Pels, 2015: 50). Although, the theme now refers to "architecture" it arguably still creates a sense of geographical closeness, curious wonder and may unintentionally encourage a cultural divide. This is something that I will investigate in this thesis.

Apter claims that the colonial invention of Africa has indigenised cultural productions and structures, and has "Africanised" categories and rituals of incorporation as "local, regional, national or even Pan-African traditions" (Apter, 1999: 591). Colonial powers in Africa attempted to invent 'new' traditions in order to modernise African thought and behavior, with the underlying motive of control (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983: 222-228). "Africa" was reproduced as "the land of darkness" populated with "inferior savages" in the eyes of Victorian colonial Britain, with the resulting "trophies" of curiosity presented in collections as a result of the civilising mission (Coombes, 1994: 2). This is seen in the Afrika Museum's missionary history which originally housed collections embedded in curiosity and romanticism of the exotic other, which were later adapted to emphasise the civilising nature of their Christian mission (Pels, 2015: 1). This thesis focuses on the processes of identification, classifications and representations of African cultural identities in the Buitenmuseum, which must be recognised within its historical and colonial contexts.

The impact of Europe's colonial history and missionary ventures has unquestionably affected the processes of identities and cultural classifications. As a site for identity politics, museums rely on historical, social and political representational contexts where certain knowledge is encouraged and others ignored (Macdonald, 2006: 3-4). According to Appiah African identity in the 20th century is a "new" thing, like all identities it is a product of history, but it is not enforced by these histories (and race), instead becoming a complex production, a changing performance and a choice in response to ecological, political and economic realities (Appiah, 2008: 88-89). Historical representations of the African "other" were a symbol of imperial domination as opposed to an objective observation of another culture (Mudimbe, 1988 cf Apter, 1999: 579). Within the global capitalist context Spivak (1988) claims that it is impossible to understand the subaltern on their terms, they cannot speak and know for themselves (Spivak, 1988: 103). Therefore, outsiders become speakers for the subaltern which is positioned relative to colonial and imperialist rule not by first-hand experience. This epistemic violence is a "heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as the Other" (Spivak, 1988: 76). The presence of this 'epistemic violence' in the Buitenmuseum needs to be questioned. Cultural representations entrenched in missionary history may create the "African" subject as the 'Other'. We must be critical of the complacency to dismiss non-western objects and people to a past with increasingly homogenous cultural assumptions (Clifford, 1988: 246). It is necessary to question the

historical influences on the Buitenmuseum's collection, displays and their epistemological status in order to understand the wider impact of the current representations.

2.2 <u>Representing Identities in Museums.</u>

Changing perceptions on representing cultures in museums has led to the fundamental critique of the 1990s. These debates provide a platform for representational criticisms that this thesis will draw upon, however they often overlook the fundamental sensations of exhibition experiences by prioritising educative functions (see Pels, 2015: 4). This thesis will attempt to expand on these debates by providing possible solutions. Vergo (1989) argues that the act of collecting had political, ideological and aesthetic connotations all embedded in specific constructions of history and elitist cultural values (1989: 2-4). Later, Karp (1992a) criticised the role of museums as agents of civil society (1992a: 4). Whether consciously or unconsciously museums redefine relations between different communities which reinforces identity construction based on hierarchical notions of difference (Karp, 1992a: 6). My research questions the agency of the Buitenmuseum to adjust definitions and perceptions of identities and communities. Arguably, the museum institution has a responsibility to represent a range of cultural diversity and social possibilities (Karp, 1992b: 31). This is required through representative material, dialogue with diverse communities, seeking knowledge that undermines essentialising notions of identity and self-reflexivity to their own claims to identity (Karp, 1992b: 31). Arnoldi's (1999) evaluation of the Smithsonian exhibition highlighted the scarcity of representations showing diverse African societies, instead focusing on the "traditional Africa" (1999: 712). After extensive discussions with communities and advisory groups Arnoldi proposed a solution that aimed to demonstrate Africa's dynamic history and contemporary reality, giving a balanced outlook that questions existing assumptions and stereotypes (Arnoldi, 1999: 718). There is a call for increasing collaboration between museums and the communities they are trying to represent (see Ames, 1991, Arnoldi, 1999, Golding and Modest, 2013, Hooper-Greenhill, 2006, Macdonald, 2006). This "collaboration through negotiation" (Ames, 1999: 13) highlights the need for productive involvement of "voices" from represented communities. This inclusive approach to processes of identification by museums, curators, communities and visitors is central to understanding the representational issues of the Buitenmuseum. It also helps to identify the limitations and possibilities of representing African cultures in the Buitenmuseum.

Clifford (1988) introduces the question of whether ethnographic and art exhibitions have a claim to representative authority over cultures. The Afrika Museum's internal exhibition has a contemporary and traditional African art focus, however the Buitenmuseum is arguably an aesthetic display of Africa that relies on mimetic ethnographic displays and collections. Clifford (1988) claims that ethnographic exhibitions increasingly mimic art shows and through aesthetic displays objects are showcased to highlight their former properties (1988: 203). This is applicable as the aesthetic in-situ display of the Buitenmuseum's banal material culture forefronts the traditional use and consumption of objects due to its rural architectural focus. The Buitenmuseum's ethnographic villages are highly mimetic, this approach portrays objects or replicas in-situ, placing the representation of culture within the idea of cultural processes and environmental influences (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991: 389). However, in-situ villages, like the Buitenmuseum's, are influenced by those who create these installations and in turn establish the subject (Ibid.). The risk is that these reproductions may be so alluring that the "theatrical spectacle will displace scientific seriousness" and the mode of display will overpower the curatorial and educational purpose (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991: 390). This highlights issues of representations as cultural identities are actively influenced by external realms of society, but also by the portrayal of identities in exhibitions themselves. Similarly, curators own cultural baggage may interfere with the professional obligations and responsibilities that museums have to other communities and cultures when exhibiting, curating and collecting (Karp, 1992b: 22). This justifies a research into the Buitenmuseum's claim to 'authentic' representations, the exhibition houses "accurate" replica structures based on research amongst others in "African fashion" (Buitenmuseum Algemeen, n.d: 20). Authenticity is a western cultural construct, closely linked to notions of individuality (Handler, 1986: 2). Museums act as the "temple of authenticity" using objects and pieces of culture which facilitates us to "appropriate their authenticity, incorporating that magical proof of existence into what we call our 'personal experience'." (Handler, 1986: 4). There is no single true claim to an 'authentic' representation of 'Africa', therefore the current representations are not necessarily 'inauthentic' as this is relative to different individual, temporal and cultural contexts. Nevertheless, this "representational critique" calls for reflexivity in the processes of knowledge production and distribution, exploring the historical, social and political contexts where some knowledge flourished and others were marginalised or denied (Macdonald, 2006: 3). This shift towards "alternative voices, histories and representations" is possible by "breaking off the dusty, dated molds of past representations" (Jones: 1993: 216). This thesis

will test these theoretical debates using the Buitenmuseum as a case study by researching its historical, cultural and aesthetic representations in order to provide possible solutions through a renovation.

2.3 <u>Material Culture and Wonder.</u>

The study of material culture is defined by Miller as the "investigation of the relationship between people and things irrespective of time and space" (Miller, 1996: 5). I want to expand this to encompass the agency of objects that have an effect on our cultural and individual identities, environment, experiences and how we use them to understand the world around us. Kopytoff's biographical approach to objects examines the range of interpretations in society and how these are shaped by its "status" in a culture, not just its exchange value (Kopytoff, 1986: 66). This approach becomes useful in understanding the singularisations, classifications and reclassifications of things in a world filled with social and individual categories (1986: 90). Objects are now regarded as meaningful as opposed to simply communicating meaning (Miller, 1996: 8). This draws material culture studies towards issues of identities (Ibid.). Similarly, architecture as a material form manifests social ideologies and cultural codes which highlights the role of material culture in processes of cultural classifications (Miller, 1996: 9). The biographies of objects in their museum life cycle are valuable to understand the processes of collecting and exchange, classificatory and analytical frameworks in display and the relationship between the object and the audience (Alberti, 2005: 561). This thesis highlights how disparate classifications are attached to the Buitenmuseum's collection and architecture by different actors, giving insights into the processes of meaning-making, cultural classifications and perceptions of "Africa" in the Buitenmuseum.

The "museum effect" turns material culture into static art objects displayed for observation, this combines a feeling of distance with a sense of human likeness and commonalities (Alpers, 1991: 31-32). Museums use objects to create a sense of increased authority through assumed authenticity, transporting objects from one "temporal continuity of use to another, their meanings are entirely reconstituted" (Crew and Sims, 1991: 163). Misrepresentations in curatorial collecting and management strategies diverts us from "hearing multiple authentic voices" (Crew and Sims, 1991: 160). The assembly of objects to portray an "authentic event" captures the viewers and "provides the context for historical

discovery" (Crew and Sims, 1991: 162). This event is produced in the audience's imagination as the "critical mass of artifacts pronounces a reality" (Crew and Sims, 1991: 162). Therefore, the audience becomes "co-creators of social meaning" within the authentic event (Crew and Sims, 1991: 174). The authenticity of the Buitenmuseum dwellings and collections need to be researched in order to question the authority the museum has to portray a cultural "reality", which may be taken as authentic knowledge by the audience.

The Buitenmuseum resembles what Greenblatt terms "wonder": a unique display of an object that evokes "exalted attention" (Greenblatt, 1991: 42). The architectural displays convey this "arresting sense of uniqueness" that stops the observer in their tracks through admiration (Greenblatt, 1991: 42). Ideally, when provided with the relevant resources and cultural contexts by the museum, "wonder" leads to the successful reorganisation of knowledge and categories in the audience to fit with their new experience (Karp, 1991: 22). This increases the museums responsibility to represent multiple world perspectives by indulging in both "typical" and "unique" aspects of cultural experience (Karp, 1992b: 22)[4]. There is no escaping the presence of entertainment alongside education in the Buitenmuseum, the museum institution embodies the same goals and desires that are found in theme parks (Kratz and Karp, 1993: 32). The Disney World Showcase shares this experience of wonder through replica vernacular architecture in an open-air exhibition (see Kratz and Karp, 1993). This exhibition example highlights how freedom, limited instruction and choice of movement offers the story telling power to the audience (Kratz and Karp, 1993: 39). The use of houses, the perceived authenticity of the objects and the freedom of interaction legitimises the exotifying gaze of the nostalgic touristic experience (Kratz and Karp, 1993: 40). This creation of hyper-reality by combining "artifice and authenticity" juxtaposes the "real" museum with "islands of authenticity" through replica buildings (Kratz and Karp, 1993: 39). These reproductions induce a sense of recognition and justification of authenticity (Ibid.). The Buitenmuseum provides an interactive, immersive and visceral experience that relies heavily on "wonder", and its effects on the audience expectations, desires and perceptions will be identified in this thesis. This perspective adds to material culture theory as it sees the human body as an active sensory tool that interacts with its surroundings, objects and experience in a way that goes beyond the static observer.

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[4] "Typical" refers to wider community and cultural values whereas "unique" signifies the processes of individuality that exist within those wider communities and cultures (see Karp, 1992b: 22).

The Afrika Museum shares a likeness to 19th Century World Fairs where the everyday lives of native people were commodified as a public spectacle (Griffiths, 2002: 52) which blurred the line between "…theatre and ethnographic display" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991: 397). Pels' (2015) reiterates that ethnographic exhibitions fundamentally rely on the aptitude for curiosity and wonder (see Clifford, 1985: 244 and Greenblatt, 1990 cf Pels, 2015: 35). The Africa Museum utilised its "African Village" as another "aspect of realist display that relied on a material form of magical transportation" by "reproducing the visceral experience of a material other" (Pels, 2015: 50). Using multiple narratives and 'authentic' material culture the exhibition creates scenarios of inclusion and exclusion through the "material presence of and a being in 'Africa' through a more or less conscious appeal to the magic of realism" (Pels, 2015: 40). This freedom to wander and this concept of wonder in the Buitenmuseum means that individuals process and experience the exhibition differently, identifying similarities in processes of material agency is required to understand the influential features of the Buitenmuseum.

2.4 African Modernity and Material Culture.

Contemporary African society does not exclude the traditional sphere. The museum has requested possibilities of representing African urban architectural developments, whilst acknowledging the "traditional" rural representations that are currently present. Therefore, identifying the possibilities of representing the diversity of contemporary African sociality is required. It is crucial to express the interrelationship between African rural and urban spaces. This is seen in Ferguson's (1999) use of the performance of "cosmopolitan" and "localist" cultural styles on the Copperbelt, emphasised through acquisition of material culture, for example the choice of "cosmopolitan" clear beer and "localist" brown beer (1999: 86, 218). Focus on geographical classifications is problematic when understanding contemporary social structures, organisations and human-environment relations (Rotenberg and Wali, 2014: 2). Objects have entered the global commodity circulation and although aesthetically they may be influenced by geographical location, they are no longer tied to one specific place (Rotenberg and Wali, 2014: 2). Collections must now portray the changes of cultural interactions within the globalised capitalist context by showing the transnational circulation of objects (Rotenberg and Wali, 2014: 2). When exploring the Buitenmuseum's collections these approaches will identify the processes of representations and interpretations, identifying

what features can be added, improved or removed to represent the diverse relationship between modern and traditional, urban and rural spheres.

When defining African modernity one must understand the value and diversity of social dimensions that avoids temporal classifications that encourage productions of the other (see Geschiere et al, 2008: 2). Geschiere, Meyer and Pels (2008) are critical of hierarchical oppositions between "us" who have left tradition behind, and "them" who are assumed backwards or underdeveloped (Geschiere et al, 2008: 2). This genealogical approach addresses Africa's dynamic history to disentangle the assumed interconnectedness of the western "package deal" of modernity, to fully understand the multiple trajectories and reconstructions that occur in Africa (Geschiere et al, 2008: 2-4). The Buitenmuseum represents African cultures from traditional rural contexts which exist today, my research suggests how the relationship between the modern and tradition in Africa could be represented. This approach to modernity is valuable in addressing material culture, identities and collections at the Buitenmuseum to understand the historical context and dynamic features that represent 'Africa'. Rowland (1996) problematizes African modernity, as it involves the personal creation of identity space in a location where this space is not formally set (Rowland, 1996: 188). He questions the western assumption that in Africa the mimicry of western modernity sits precariously upon the traditional (Rowland, 1996: 189). This reinforces the argument of authenticity, questioning who has the authority to state an 'authentic' claim and the realities of what 'authenticity' means to the audience.

The traditional and the modern do not cancel each other out, similarities exist within social ideologies of misfortune, success and failure (Rowland, 1996: 189). Although he emphasises the drive for individualism he concludes that modernity in Africa, and globally, is dependent on group consumption and relationships with others (Ibid.). Reinforced by Ferguson's (1999) notion of cultural dualistic styles, this is not simply due to an increase in modernity resulting in a breakaway from tradition but instead an act of self-construction and negotiation between social and political-economic spheres (Ferguson, 1999: 231). Identification and classification of "types" through teleological narratives emphasises the sequential formation of forms, museums lean towards representing these evolutionary phases (Gould, 1996 cf Ferguson, 1999: 42). It is important to question teleological assumptions about the nature of traditional and modern spheres in Africa as this is problematic when understanding the fluid and nonlinear contemporary sociality (Ferguson, 1999: 42). This

outlook is crucial in attempting to understand and portray the products of contemporary social reality in Africa. In order to understand the interrelationship between identities, material culture, and modernity in African cultures, recognition of the fluid negotiation of individual cultural performances within the context of economic and socio-political spheres is required. It poses the question; for whom are the current 'traditional' representations in the Buitenmuseum important for? In this thesis, I use these concepts to understand the object and individual agency that may influence the visitor's perceptions and classifications of 'Africa' and suggest opportunities of how this interrelationship between rural and urban can be represented.

3. Material Culture in The Buitenmuseum.

This section outlines data gathered on the material culture in the Buitenmuseum. It identifies the prominence and provenance of the collection and reflects on the interaction between the actors and the objects, architecture and physical space of the exhibition. This chapter will provide an understanding of how the material culture influences the visitor's perceptions of 'Africa'.

3.1 The "Villages"- African Architecture in the Buitenmuseum.
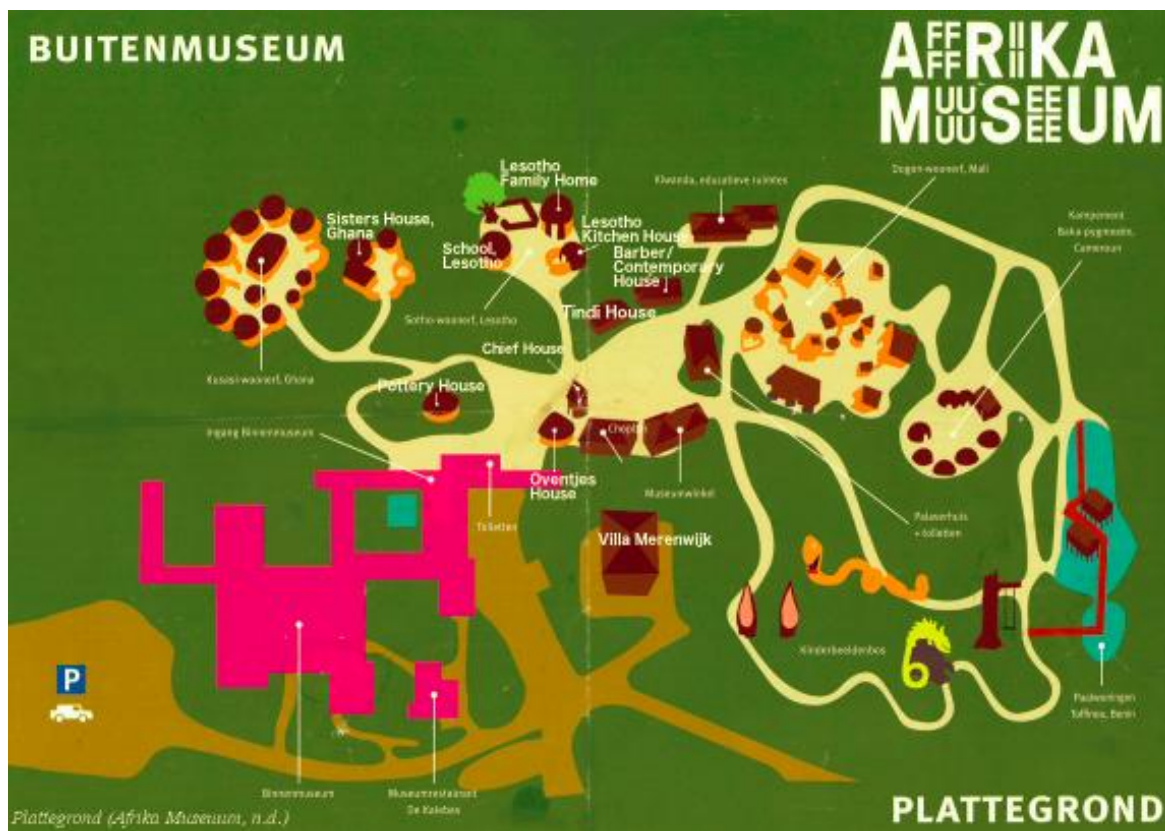
Fig. 1 Map of the Buitenmuseum (Afrika Museum, n.d.).

Firstly, it is important to paint a picture of the situation that exists today. The focus is directed towards the five "replica" residential areas. These were apparently chosen by the original architect (prior to 1980's) as he observed the landscape. He selected appropriate African villages that would lend themselves to the nature of the 'plot', "*that's why he chose Benin near the water and the Baka pygmies from Cameroon in the woods… there is a story behind it and some common sense, but the visitors don't know*" (Staff Informant). I discuss buildings in the "Central" area. By this I refer to the buildings that lie directly in the middle

of the Buitenmuseum, these include the Tindi House, The "Barber/Contemporary" house, the Chief House, "Oventjes" (*oven*) House and Pottery thatched structures, The Palaver House, The Giftshop and the Chopbar. It may be easiest here to provide a map, I have added my own labels to the houses that are not shown on the original (Fig.1). This may highlight the differences in treatment for the "accurate" and "non-accurate" representations. Perhaps instead of disregarding these structures it would be better to explicitly state their history, biography and issues in representativeness.

The exhibition has a collection of orange display signs, some that are so faded it is no longer possible to read them. These signs are presented before each compound, usually some distance away with the entire 'village' in view, this provides (albeit limited) background information for the visitors regarding the 'story' behind the compounds. For example, it will state who lives in each room, the organisation of the compound and its inhabitants and some religious or spiritual meanings. It raises the question, why the other dwellings that are present, like those found in the 'centre' are not given the same treatment? The 'major' compounds are accurately based on architectural research (Ghana, Mali, Benin), and therefore to emphasise these representations makes sense. However, providing limited information about representational structures that hold such a central position in the space may create uncertainty, and a space for imaginations to wander. The collection may portray an "authentic event" that is produced in the audience's imagination (Crew and Sims, 1991: 162). A couple of staff informants expressed some resistance to do anything with these buildings because they posed some significance in terms of showcasing the history of the missionary museum. With other staff members opposing this view by questioning their appropriateness, *"yes (they are original) to the museum but not to Africa"*. However, the histories of these representations are not presented to the audience and this may affect their perceptions of 'Africa' as they become "co-creators of social meaning" (Crew and Sims, 1991: 174). The architecture, objects and displays in the Buitenmuseum all contribute to an increasingly entertaining experience that encourages sensory wonder within the audience. The effects of this overriding entertainment on the processes of meaning and cultural knowledge production need to be further questioned.

3.2 <u>African (or not so African) Objects in The Buitenmuseum.</u>

It became clear quite early on that it was not going to be possible to catalogue the collection as one would in a typical study on material culture (See Prown, 1982). As the Buitenmuseum's collection was scattered throughout the houses, stored in bin bags behind the scenes or in "the bunker" it made little sense to attempt this mammoth task. I was also confronted by a surprising lack of knowledge surrounding the objects in the collection. This uncertainty was reiterated through many levels of the organisation. Multiple staff members suggested that a lot of the knowledge surrounding the objects had been lost during the merger, with the key staff members leaving with considerable detailed knowledge of the object biographies on display. However, there was an expressed *"need to acknowledge that loss and rebuild it"* and this would be beneficial going forward. The Buitenmuseum collection is treated as if it is not a collection at all and therefore has become masked in mystery. The collection is not as formal as the 'indoor' collections, with no systematic cataloguing of dates, materials, origin as you would expect. There is an (outdated) document named "Draaiboek Inrichting Buitenmuseum" (Script for decorating the outside museum, n.d.) that details some significant objects in the collection and instructs on how these should be placed. However, it is clear from the photographs that this document is now of limited relevance for the Buitenmuseum's current and growing collections. This lack of detailed knowledge has caused growing uncertainty and limited understanding towards the outside collection. There was a general sense of overwhelming deterioration amongst the staff I spoke to, with confessions that in the last two to three years the outside area and objects had been neglected significantly. This is a relatively short time; however, it highlights the growing call for change of the Buitenmuseum within the organisation. For example, the canoes would normally be set afloat complete with fake food on the water, in recent years they have been left overturned next to the Benin houses. In addition, this relaxed attitude to the outside collection may have encouraged a lenient attitude to the acquisition of additional objects in recent years. The donations of items by the public must be signed off by the curator of Africa, Annette Schmidt in Leiden. These donations are given priority to the inside collection and the gift shop, if not deemed appropriate they are then utilised outside. However, I was made aware of the concern regarding the lack of 'fact checking' of individuals (such as the caretaker) who have significant creative license, interaction and implementation of the Buitenmuseum's collection, something I will discuss in more detail below. The cultural baggage of museum staff when exhibiting, curating and collecting may

interfere with the professional responsibilities that the museum has to the communities and cultures they attempt to represent (Karp, 1992b: 22). It is important to be clear, factual and objective about what material culture exists and is incorporated into the Buitenmuseum.

The caretaker had a considerable understanding of the material collection. He had worked at the museum for twenty-seven years, with duties stretching from grounds keeping, animal care, previous visitor workshops, painting of the houses and signs to general maintenance of the grounds and buildings. This included reconstructing the 'Mongulu' dwellings in 'Cameroon'. Every few years he re-thatches the temporary dwellings of the Baka pygmies by using branches and leaves to make them structurally sound, water resistant and aesthetically pleasing. I spoke to this informant on two occasions and the *quantity* of knowledge was undeniable, he was always very welcoming and passionate about the Buitenmuseum, its contents and its interpreted symbolic meaning. This informant has not been to Africa, nonetheless, he expressed his deep passion for *"other cultures and people from all over the world",* with specific interests in spirituality, astrology and painting. We would walk around the Buitenmuseum, entering into the different houses and pointing out various objects, he would proceed by giving me details ranging from its origin, material and age to the best of his ability. Of course, there were some things he was unsure about, and provided assumptions based on his relevant archive of experience at the museum.

a) *The Collections Acquisition, Provenance and Prominence.*

I found him today in "Lesotho". He enthusiastically points out the new thatching on the roof of the Lesotho "Kitchen", last time we were here it had developed a substantial mouldy wound in the ceiling. We enter the "Family home"; he takes two pairs of thick grey socks and places them in the white hanging clothes organiser with the others (see Pic.1). He had previously voiced his disdain for this object expressing concern that there is "no control" about who can bring 'African' objects into the collections (referring to "travelling" staff, guests and the museum network). I notice that the pair of boots at the bottom of the bed also have socks stuffed in each shoe and there are "new" (second hand) clothes hanging from the rafters, like a vibrant 'African print' dress from the charity shop. It seems the houses have been treated to a well-deserved spring clean and a new wardrobe. The room's latest addition is a second hand brown leather couch from "Het Goed" charity shop. He informs me that

the suitcases under the bed represent the migrating mining workforce of Lesotho men and represents the significance of travel in their lives. There is no indication to any of the objects in the Buitenmuseum that provide further knowledge for the audience to make sense of these stories. Nevertheless, he seems to have an extensive understanding of these stories.

[5]*Picture 1. Lesotho Family House.*   *Picture 2. Inside room in Ghana Compound.*

Picture 3. Ghana Compound:Stone Pestle and Morter. Picture 4. Ghana Compound: Black Jerry can.

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[5] Pictures 1-27 are all photographs taken by myself at the Buitenmuseum on the 30/02/2017.

Picture 5. Ghana Compound: Washing area.   Picture 6. Ghana Room: Jewelers tool.

Picture 7. Ghana Compound: Stone and Wooden Pestle and Mortars. Picture 8. "Centre" informal Ghanaian shop, bicycle with plastic buckets and Palaver House.

It may be safe to say that the majority of objects that represent African cultures in the Buitenmuseum come from within the Netherlands. A member of the ground staff claimed that this applies to 90% of the outdoor collection. I got the impression that most objects were made, purchased or donated from sources within the country. Either from charity shops, markets, gifts from the public or bought from contacts who import goods from Africa. For example, the pots and pans seen in-situ on top of make shift fire pits are from a contact in Rotterdam who imports and resells African products on the Dutch market. It was clear the items sourced from the African continent were outdated and had aged considerably in the environment, for example books, calendars, newspapers, clothing and a solar oven. The position of authority that the museum has to control and present certain objects in certain

contexts influences the level of 'African' authenticity perceived by the audience (See Crew and Sims, 1991).

I further enquired about the yellow and red spotted metal tins (See Pic.1). Apparently, according to my staff translator these are "*super classic Dutch tins*" and "*obviously Dutch*", even though this is a Dutch product there is *"no stopping it being found in an African Village"*. However, it poses the question, were these bins just placed in the houses because they looked colourful and therefore 'African'? This conclusion is encouraged by the fact there are three, as if one 'tin' wasn't sufficient for a room. This example highlights how the Buitenmuseum obtains 'non-African' objects to represent African material culture. I am not stating here that all the objects must be from Africa. I acknowledge the fluid trade, transfer and "transient value of 'stuff'" that is so central to modern life (Clarke, 2014: 18). Moreover, a collection sourced from the Netherlands is considerably cheaper and clearly budget is an underlying issue here. However, it seems that there is little care and attention to what goes into the houses, and why. Although clearly the caretaker really thinks and understands about how things are displayed, aesthetically, but it may be that he is indeed *"making his own stories"* as suggested by one staff member. The caretaker is not to blame for the representational issues that exist, I feel that he has become a scapegoat for criticisms within the organisation, marginalised and left to his own devices. Of course, I too am questioning some of the material that he has created and possibly his imagination has played a role here, which may affect reliability of the representations. The responsibility should lie with the wider organisation that has failed to control and formally process objects that are collected, created and exist in the Buitenmuseum. In the Ghana compound during my advisory session, the room filled with black and white dated photographs of the Tempane village was open. Apparently, the request had been made to keep this room locked, assumingly because the photographs portrayed an 'out-dated' representation of the community. Nevertheless, the room was open to public, showing how opinions about what should be present differ. Communication and power relations within the organisation are underlying issues here, and clearly cause some discrepancies between requests and action on the ground level.

The caretaker confirmed that the objects *"come from everywhere, The Netherlands, from Africa, from charity shops and gifts"*. He also contributes to the collection by making, finding and adapting items to be rehomed inside the 'villages'. For example, large black plastic jerry cans were originally used for the construction of the Ganvie house on the water,

later placed around the site to act as water carriers (See Pic.4). He emphasised the choice to show the traditional, the modern or a mix of both and that through the collections; *"you have options, you see things, you find things, things get given, and you make things and you see what you can use"*. He enjoys creating things for the museum, which can be seen in his production of wooden stools, café chairs, tables and paintings. For example, benches and tables in the school were made from the refurbishment of the old museum's cladding. This resourcefulness and products of the caretaker's work are seen throughout the Buitenmuseum. In one of the rooms of the Ghana compound he points out a wooden pole attached to a metal pan, this is from an African jeweller that was here previous years ago, the caretaker found some tools that were left behind and placed them against the wall, alongside a leather bag filled with straw. I asked him about how he knows where to put things, he explained that *"inside"* tell him where to place specific objects but not everything. Due to his near thirty years of experience he knows where things should go and he gets creative freedom when arranging and creating objects. He reiterated that in the past the 'redecoration' of the exhibition would be done as a team effort, however in recent years the responsibility has been given to the ground staff and more specifically this informant. Therefore, the objects are placed according to the knowledge, experience and creative eye of this individual. This was brought to my attention when we were together outside with another member of staff who was acting as a translator. There was some back and forth discussion in the "Lesotho School" about the appropriateness of an ash tray placed on the corner of the teacher's desk. I received some concern that *"nobody's really checking…that things are correct"* which gives individuals freedom and creative license to *"make [their] own stories"*. Of course, achieving a "correct" display is ambiguous and arguably impossible; however, it highlights how differences in opinion, implementation and power relations influence the collection in the Buitenmuseum. This may cause representative issues as the cultural baggage of those in control of the collection influence the narrative of the material culture (see Karp, 1992b: 22).

I enquired whether any of the remaining collection is from the missionaries, he seemed to think not, although perhaps if you looked hard enough you would find something *"old"*. For example, one of the "stone grinders" is particularly smooth and well used, only achievable through sufficient use. He suspects this is from the beginning of the Buitenmuseum, and the other stones are replicating this (see Pic.3, 7). More 'recent' additions like the plastic buckets (see Pic.2, 8) were introduced in the last ten years, similar jugs are sourced from "West Africa" and are sold in the gift shop. Items in the gift shop are

mostly sourced from the continent, for example, chocolate from Madagascar, carvings from Ghana and Benin, jewellery from Mali, soapstone from Kenya and cream from Somalia. Although the collection in the Buitenmuseum is significantly 'non-African' in its origins, the gift shop sells "authentic" objects from Africa for the audience to consume. This blurs the lines between what is "authentic", if the Museum sells the experience as "African" including themed workshops, houses, lifestyle and commodities, then why is it that the objects do not follow in the same footsteps? In the gift shop the theme of "authenticity" is relied upon to sell the commodity of "Africa". This desire to possess and acquire authentic 'African' material culture is tied up in the concept of wonder, which the museum gift shop successfully produces (Greenblatt, 1991: 49-51).

The "Draaiboek Inrichting Buitenmuseum" (n.d) details the placement of objects in the 'redecoration' process and justifies the presence of the collection. Many of the objects are still present but it is evident from the photos that a lot has been added within the 'dwellings'. It also reiterates the attempt to provide a 'real life/lived in' mimetic representation. For example, *"hang clothes on the chair, like you would hang your coat at home, it should look as if it is lived in."* (Own translation, Draaiboek Inrichting Buitenmuseum, n.d.: 5). Similarly, it requests that *"each zone should have a totally different look and feel to the public"* (Own translation, Draaiboek Inrichting Buitenmuseum, n.d.: 4). It also shows even then, how to overcome the presentational issues of the outdated and ill-kept collection, *"The Lesotho blanket is costly, it is derived from Lesotho. There are two holes made by pests, but try to fold it so that it can still be exhibited"* and if *"the calendars are not recent it is not terrible, they are mainly hung for the pictures"* (Own translation, Draaiboek Inrichting Buitenmuseum, n.d.: 6). The importance of things from 'Africa' is clear here and they are given special treatment, if an *"African object is broken it is especially important to keep, fix and arrange in a way that is still observable"* (Own translation, Draaiboek Inrichting Buitenmuseum, n.d.: 3). This shows how an "authentic" aesthetic display overrides biographical reality of the objects. Highlighting how the curators have the power to imprint stories and meaning, *"use bright colours because they stand out and bring life to the residential areas"* (Own translation, Draaiboek Inrichting Buitenmuseum, n.d.: 5). This may encourage the visitors to experience the exhibition based on entertainment and wonder through aesthetic 'authentic' reproductions. This sensation within museum experiences is impossible to avoid (Pels, 2015: 4). However, these reproductions are so alluring that the theatrical sensation may displace "scientific seriousness" and that the contrivance of the display will overpower curatorial and

educational purposes (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991: 390). This may alter the visitor's processes of meaning and knowledge production. The document also states to refer to the internet for answers; *"try to orientate on the basis of actual photos from the internet, books and magazines"* (Own translation, Draaiboek Inrichting Buitenmuseum n.d.: 4). This method was used in the paintings of the houses, however using media and the internet needs to be from confirmed reliable sources.

The caretaker was also responsible for creating and maintaining the exterior decorative paintings that are seen on some of the buildings. In some cases, these were painted or restored in the 1990's, although the depictions remain the same. The "Tindi House" (Pic.9-12) and the now "Barber House/Contemporary House" (Pic.13-14) were, according to the caretaker, original to the "Negro Village" but had since been moved (fifty feet) from their original location due to the expansion of the main museum building and reconfiguration of the space. Both still show the original paintings on their walls, which have been retouched by the caretaker in recent years. The back of the Tindi house had been left unpainted, the caretaker extended the decoration about ten years ago. It now *"makes the story complete"*, which was based on an old folktale involving an oracle, a snake, war (shown by gun yielding figures), polluted air (represented by the dots) and resulting negative consequences (see Pic.9-12). This description is a bit disappointing as the language barrier caused issues in description. When I asked Ibrahim about the representativeness of the paintings on display, he mentioned that decorative paintings were not found on every dwelling, only dedicated to buildings of social importance such as the chief's house. The Palaver house (Pic.15-20) exterior is inspired by a photograph of a Cameroonian palace taken from the internet and features a hand painted storyline of the *"king's parade"*. However, due to the "African fashion" (Buitenmuseum Algemeen, n.d.: 20). and central location of this structure the visitors are frequently seen entering this building to be confronted by the toilets and the locked class room door. Recreating this 'African' style through aesthetic representations produce alluring wonder which leads the visitor to assume or accept the current buildings represent "real" African houses which "contradicts the sense of place the exhibition seeks to present" (Crew and Sims, 1991: 162). This supports the conclusion that the representations in the Buitenmuseum influence the way the audience experience the material representations and therefore may influence their perceptions of 'Africa' by the audience.

Pictures 9-12 Tindi House.

Pictures 13 and 14. Barber/Contemporary House.

Pictures 15-20. Palaver Huse.

Pictures 21-22. 'Amaka's' Chop Bar and Hand Painted 'shop' signs.

3.3 Physical and Intellectual Interactions within the space.

The significance of the visitor's conscious and subconscious interactions with the space, objects and architecture highlights the influential role the cultural representations in the form of material culture have on the audience's experience. In turn this affects the visitor's perceptions and knowledge processes of cultural understanding, arguably the museum as an institution has a responsibility to provide educative substance within its space that the visitors can rely upon to expand knowledge and systems of meaning (See Karp, 1992a). The main attraction that is provided by the Buitenmuseum is the ability and freedom to explore, wander and touch. It offers a four-dimensional space for the physical senses to embrace. This is exaggerated by its juxtaposition with the indoor museum, this warrants the excited unleashing of the physical actions that I observed in the Buitenmuseum's audience. This is especially the case with children. I remember sitting on a sunny Saturday in the "Chopbar" observing the central area, a stampede of excitable children came charging down the path. Each child would independently approach each house, shouting to others to come and look at the 'treasures' they had uncovered. They competed for the best 'bounty' and eventually they would all end up in one house, successfully coaxing the parents along too. Then, just as quickly as they had arrived, they were off again, running towards "the Kinderbeeldenbos" with the respective parents trudging behind. For children, these fleeting interactions with the houses were common. I noticed it was more experienced as a large-scale playground than a museum, however they seemed to have a purpose to their play which was based on the desire to search and find. Children often determined the movements of adults around the space, with exclamations of *"Look at this Mum"* or *"this way!"*. The adults would follow at a slower pace, taking a more relaxed approach to consumption of the exhibition. Education remained a reoccurring aspect that adults tried to encourage in younger participants. I witnessed two grandchildren (10-13) in the 'Mali' compound playing, however the grandparents reaffirmed the educative purpose of the museum visit by engaging them with the content of the display.

Visitors of all ages were obliged to look in every possible 'room', as if they didn't want to miss anything. Perhaps they expected to find something different between the rooms. Or maybe they were naturally curious to look inside at the content of each house. This was reaffirmed through my interviews, people often remarked that the 'houses' were not fully accessible, *"it's a shame we can't enter"* (Woman over 65*)*. This shows how the visitors see and expect the exhibition to provide a bodily immersion within the architecture, to feel

physically included in the space, as opposed to being forced to observe from a distance. This highlights the coexistence of wonder within 'wandering' that the actors experience as bodies that interact *with* the material culture present. In turn, this "realist display that rel(ies) on a material form of magical transportation" creates a powerful and memorable set of experiences and processes that are applied within a wider set of contexts and reproduces the "visceral experience of a material other" (Pels, 2015: 50). This wonder is key the Buitenmuseum experience and influences interactions with the material culture. The visceral experience may influence the processes of meaning making and perceptions of 'Africa' in the audience as the educative aspects are experienced as physical entertainment rather than through formal written displays (like the inside museum). Children (and adults) were often seen searching for something "more" interesting. This was particularly evident one day in the 'Ghana' compound. A man (35-45) and his children (under 13) entered the compound and made their obligatory trip to each "room". They poked their head in, or ducked down to peer into the room, then moved on to the next one. Where possible they might enter the room, especially if the doorway was of a more accessible height, however they would not linger for more than a minute. I witnessed this on many occasions, clearly the houses lacked something that captures their attention and entices them into an active participation. This occurred in both children and adults; however, these groups were in search of different things. Adults seemed to be drawn to written display texts, going out of their way to find "orange display signs" and further educative information, this desire for background knowledge was also expressed in interviews. The younger audience seemed to be searching for interactive elements, imagination played a key role for these actors, within houses I would often overhear 'role-playing' games which would incorporate the objects (beds, chairs, pots) on display. However, with short attention spans the presence of a 'real life' scenario would only entertain this for so long.

Fig.2 'Pestle and mortars' in the 'Ghana' compound being used by visitors (badabengt, 2017).

Fig. 3 henriekeschouten (2016).

One thing that was evident throughout all ages was the desire for tactility. Throughout my observations, I witnessed the audience observing an object or house and then, as if to clarify or add to the processes of knowledge, would reach out to touch it. I expected this in the children, for example I saw the wooden 'pestle and mortars' (See Fig.2) in the 'centre' being 'pounded' on multiple occasions. I recall sitting on a chair outside the 'Chop bar' amongst a handful of weary parents. Two girls (under 13) were enticed into a vivid "cooking" scenario involving these pestle and mortars, a large metal cooking pot propped on

top of the 'fire' pit and various concoction of twigs, leaves and stones (See Fig.2-3 for other examples of this). However, adults could not refrain from the allure of these "pestle and mortars" either, in some cases they too would engage in this 'pounding' action, others would walk past and lift the pestle limply or brush a hand across the wood as they strolled by. I also witnessed an elderly lady (over 65) curiously lift the lid of a cooking pot and peer inside, to then gently place it back and catch up with her partner. This childlike wonder plays a huge role in the Buitenmuseum's experience for the audience. Through multiple narratives and 'authentic' material culture the exhibition creates scenarios of inclusion and exclusion through the "material presence of and a being in 'Africa' through a more or less conscious appeal to the magic of realism" (Pels, 2015: 40). The Buitenmuseum's ability to break the distance between the actor and the object increases the engagement with the collection. Something that is missing within the indoor exhibitions of the Afrika Museum. This juxtaposition was expressed on multiple occasions in my visitor's interviews, for example *"outside there is no distance and you can get right up close to the objects"* (Man 35-45). This makes the objects more relatable as audience apply individual processes of meaning making and physical understanding to the objects. This is because the ability, freedom and choice of interaction gives the story telling power to the audience (Kratz and Karp, 1993: 39). However, this does not necessarily increase the understanding of the cultures that are represented through these objects. This may influence the way the audience perceive and attach meaning to 'Africa' as the experiences with the rural material culture are at the forefront of their exhibition experience. Tactility and curious wonder are not necessarily negative aspects of the exhibition, and there is certainly a call for more interactivity from the audience. However, this 'physically' interactive element clearly has a profound and lasting effect on the actors and therefore providing interactive elements from diverse social spheres quenches this thirst for tactility.

Fig.4 Map of the Buitenmuseum's "hot" and "cold" spots. (Afrika Museum, n.d.).

The results from my mapping of "hot and cold spots" were surprising (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006: 365). From 'tracking' where and how visitors would move around the Buitenmuseum it was possible to quantify the most popular areas and understand how the visitors used the space. To aid in detailing this data refer to Fig.4 to see a visual presentation of these "hot and cold" areas (Ibid.). The most popular "dwellings" were 'Ghana' (forty visitors), the 'Oventjes' House, the 'Chief' House and 'Mali' compound (all attracting thirty-nine visitors). I also mapped thirteen visitors (amongst other informal observations) entering the Palaver House under the impression that it was another "dwelling", to then walk out as if embarrassed by their mistake in curious judgement. Unsurprisingly, 'Ghana' and 'Mali' were key attractions, with their large scale they are simply hard to avoid. However, the unsuspecting prominence of the 'Oventjes' House and 'Chief' House in the visitor's interactions highlights the agency of the audience to choose their experience. I frequently observed the magnetic attraction of these two buildings. Due to their central location and arguably their aesthetic qualities, they are an alluring option for the visitors. The visitors lingered in the 'Oventjes' House for a relatively long time (one to three minutes), longer than any other structure. This is due to the textual display detailing the differing types of cooking

ovens and stoves. The issue here is that these displays have not been updated since the around 1980's and therefore the representations of "cooking in West Africa" are thirty years out of date. This is problematic as the outdated collection and description combined with a limited contextual understanding of the thatched building leaves the audience ill-equipped to apply meaning to it. The Chief House entices people due to its impressive aesthetic dominance, central position and towering form. Arguably this structure creates an "arresting sense of uniqueness" (Greenblatt, 1991: 42) in the audience as it is rarely entered but more observed through wondrous gaze. However, as the exhibition fails to provide relevant resources and cultural contexts this "wonder" leads to limited reorganisation of knowledge and cultural classifications in the audience (Karp, 1991: 22). The above interactions with the material culture shows how the representations in the Buitenmuseum affect the perceptions of 'Africa' in the audience.

The ability to wander, touch and physically immerse oneself in the Buitenmuseum provides a unique entertaining experience that contrasts with the inside exhibition. You will find no glass, no barriers to objects and no directed route. Therefore, the audience interacts with the material culture and space in a way that comes closer to entertainment than education. The freedom to flow as one chooses gives the story telling power to the audience (Kratz and Karp, 1993: 39). The concept of wonder plays a crucial role in the processes of meaning making in the audience. However, it is no longer situated behind a barrier and is now emphasised by the ability to heighten the senses, making the representations feel all the more 'real'. These hyper-real reproductions induce a sense of recognition and a justification of authenticity that reproduces cultural knowledge in the audience (Kratz and Karp, 1993: 39). In addition, the sensory wonder enhances the experience of curiosity within the context of highly traditional rural representations through material culture. With limited attempts to provide understanding of the diverse social reality in 'Africa', this may encourage static rural notions of the continent. The entertainment value of the Buitenmuseum is undeniable. However, should "other" cultures be subjected to representations that limit them to largely rural, outdated and banal material culture? Nonetheless, the "entertainment" experience is valuable to the audience and therefore the material culture needs to be adjusted to fit the contemporary diversity of a huge continent that defies "the West's" attempts at applying static classifications.

This chapter demonstrates the agency between the actors and the material culture in the Buitenmuseum. The freedom to wander and increased tactility of the exhibition provides an entertaining experience that contrasts with the inside exhibitions of the Afrika Museum. The 'life-sized' houses and banal displays of material culture encourages a visceral transportation of being 'in Africa' which the audience use as a basis for meaning making. However, this fails to acknowledge the diversity of contemporary social reality in Africa. This is in part due to the immersive display of the dated collection which is curated, created and collected from many sources, mostly from within the Netherlands. Much of the collection has been awarded creative license of display, decoration and the stories that go with them. This may create misrepresentations that the audience assume as authentic, which in turn may influence the perceptions of 'Africa' formulated by the visitors.

4. The Visitors: Their wants, needs and perceptions of 'Africa'.

This chapter presents ethnographic data from my visitor studies, observations, social media analysis and interviews to untangle the visitor's desires, expectations and their perceptions of Africa, and if/how this is affected by the Buitenmuseum experience. I examine my findings using debates on material culture, curiosity, wonder and museum representational critiques of the 1990's.

4.1 Who are the Visitors?

It is imperative to understand who the visitors are to provide a demographic context to further understand the experiences and knowledge processes of my informants. I provide a qualitative in-depth response to the data collected during seventy visitor's interviews, focusing on meaning embedded in communication and semiotics. This gives a representative sample of the types of people and opinions that are consuming the exhibition.
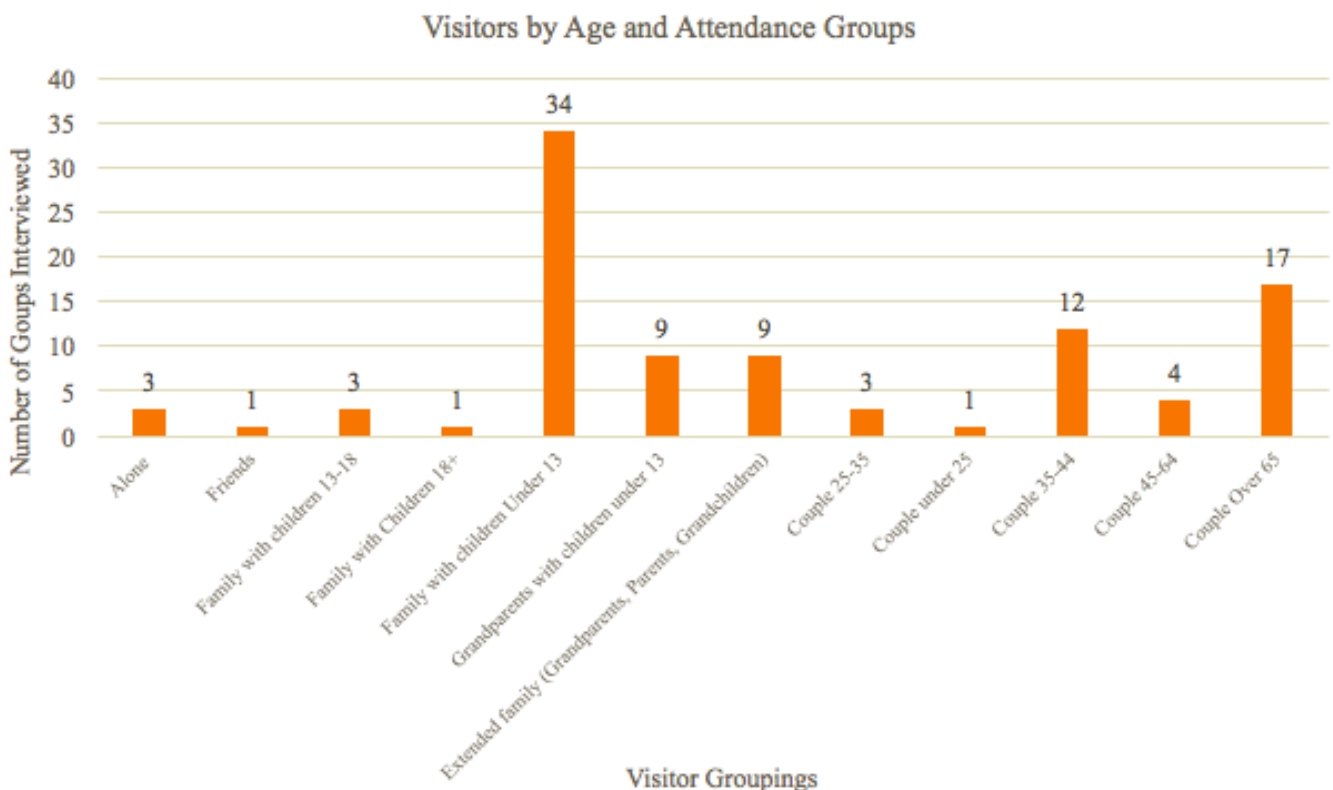

Fig.5 Graph of Visitor Groups.

The visitors came in all shapes and sizes. From families with young children, to grandparents, teenagers, couples ranging from there mid-twenties to those over sixty-five.

(See Fig.5). The main audience was families with children aged under thirteen, likely due to the attraction of the outside area. Excited children ran from house to house, screaming and laughing as they explored the Buitenmuseum. It is interesting to note that children infrequently exceeded over thirteen age bracket, unless on an externally organised educational trip. This may reflect the exhibitions entertainment priorities for this young target audience. The Buitenmuseum speaks out to families with young children. This could be due to the 'Kinderbeeldenbos', the 'fun' alternative to cultural education, the promise of fresh air or perhaps the opportunity for exertion of built up energy post or prior to the inside exhibition.

Many of the visitors stated that they specifically came for the Buitenmuseum experience. However, there was a significant number of visitors who came primarily for the "Carnival Worldwide" temporary exhibition. Regardless, the Buitenmuseum was not overlooked and many combined the two exhibitions to complete the day out. When asked what the visitors would improve, a popular request was for more objects and houses to be opened, some referring to less "boring" visits in peak season. It seemed that the visitors were preoccupied with the issue of weather, faded signs and inability to access all the buildings and collections. Recalling previous summer visits with increased colour, objects and access to the 'houses'. However, from experience of a visit in October when the exhibition was still fully decorated, I was surprised to see how much of the collection was still on display in the winter months. Perhaps the sunshine made all the difference to the visitor's exhibition experience, something that I noticed in responses on the warmer days in March.

This idea that the Buitenmuseum provides an entertaining and appropriate space for children was reiterated frequently by families. The Buitenmuseum has a history as a suitable location for a weekend family excursion, with many older visitors recalling their time spent here as a child. In the early days, the two exhibitions were characterised for their specific audience, with the goal of the inside museum for adults to "…sympathize with Africans through acquiring knowledge about them…" and the outside used "to keep impatient children busy" (Pels, 2015: 50-51). This divide is still visible, with many of the visitors stating the value of the Buitenmuseum lies with the children's appreciation and ability to "explore".
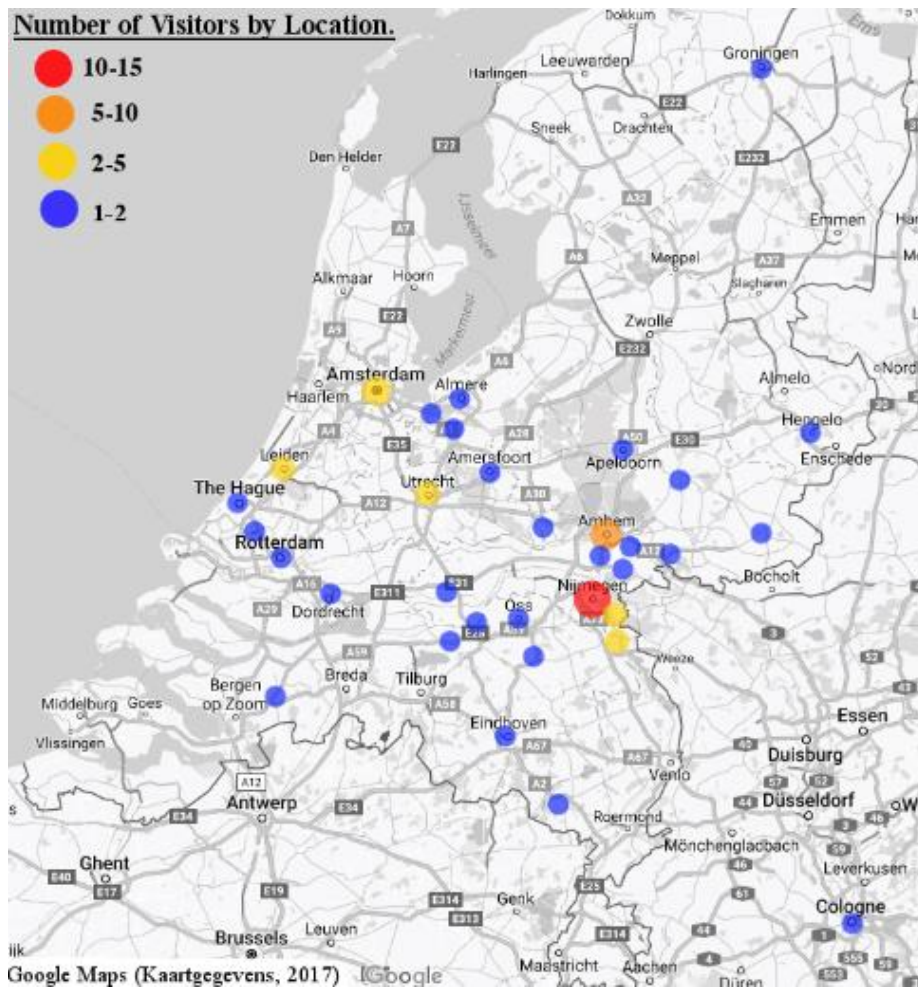
Fig.6 Map of visitor's numbers by location (an additional five visitors were on vacation in the "local area").

Naturally the majority of the visitors came from within Gelderland province, with most coming from Nijmegen, Arnhem and locally from Berg en Dal (See Fig.6). However, I was surprised to see people travelling as far as Leiden, Den Hague, Amsterdam and even Groningen. Although visitor's numbers have dropped in recent years (63,000 in 2016 compared to 72,000 in 2015 according to one staff member), it seems that the popularity extends not just through local communities but throughout the Netherlands. The visitors were predominantly white middle class Dutch or German. The audience were not exclusively white and ethnic minorities did attend, although indeed a minority in the museum. Paradoxically the "Africa Now" (formally "Keti Koti") festival is apparently popular with local members of the African community, seeing a large turnout from mixed communities to enjoy live music, dance and a day in the Buitenmuseum.

4.2 "Hey look its Africa"- The Visitor's Expectations and Desires.

This section identifies the main trends regarding visitor's expectations about their Buitenmuseum experience and understanding what they desire in terms of experience, displays, material culture, educative and entertainment elements. This provides an understanding of the relationship between the exhibition and the consumers in order to make a judgement about what is possible in the future.

a) The Buitenmuseum in Memory.

> *"V: We have seen them before (the houses), but they have never changed since I was a little girl. But it's a nice view of how Africa is, and used to be, and it's good for the kids…When I was little there were African ladies, "real life" Africa (so) add details to make it more lived in and (show) how (Africa) is now. The houses need more stuff happening inside (them), moving things, videos, making bread but I think in summer holidays maybe it's more like this. But I would like to see this again ("real life" Africa)."* **(Mother (V) (35-45) with partner and 2 children (6-2).**
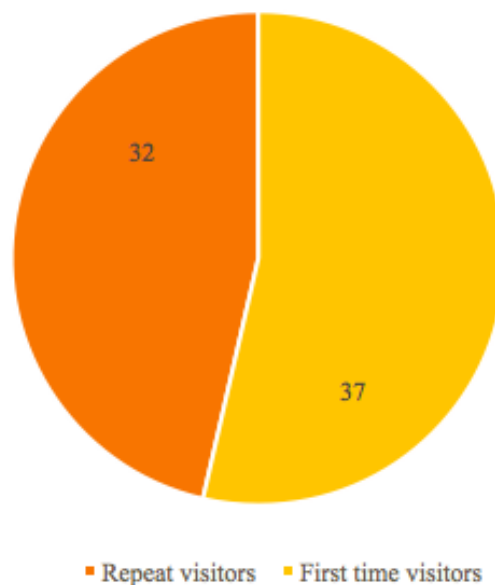

Fig.7 Number of repeat or first time visitors to the Afrika Museum.

The Buitenmuseum remains fondly embedded in the memory of multiple generations. My informants would often refer to when they came as children, or with their grandparents. The above diagram (Fig.7) displays the responses to the question *"Have you been to the Afrika Museum before?"*. Thirty-seven were first time visitors compared to thirty-two returning visitors. Of the repeat visitors, thirteen stated that they had last visited the museum a significant time ago, *"when we were children"* or when their *"children were young"*. The outside exhibition held a romantic notion in some of the audience and staff. It was seen as a space for a family 'day out', or introducing the new generation to a place that was so fondly remembered by their parents and grandparents. The interview extract above details this experience, it also emphasises how the nostalgic memory of the exhibition effects the visitor's expectations. Keeping this memory of the museum and its traditional representations alive was expressed by one woman (over 65) that she *"see(s) the museum more as 'has been', inside is beautiful to mix old and new [but not outside]"*. This reminiscence of the 'old-fashioned' image of the museum not only justifies a redevelopment, but it also emphasises this idea that time has stood still in the Buitenmuseum. It seems that the Afrika Museum will remain in popular memory for certain generations. The visitors, especially of the older generation idealise the exhibition and its representations. This may influence the way the visitors interact and attach meaning to the material culture on display, as it is firmly rooted in the romantic memory of past experiences.

> *"...Lots of people in my family who live in Leiden and Rotterdam are always still thinking about the museum…we liked it as children, it was "the museum" to go to in this area and I think a lot of people would be sad if the outside area wasn't there…"* **Staff interview (23/03/2017).**

This idealised memory of the past was reiterated through conversations with staff members. A receptionist overheard a visitor saying to another family *"first you have to go to the carnival exhibition and then you have to go outside because that is the **best** of the museum"*. The popularity of the Buitenmuseum may be due to the juxtaposition between the indoor and outdoor exhibition styles. The increased visceral and entertaining experience of the Buitenmuseum influences the way the audience interact and understand the material culture on display. One staff informant expressed their concern that the museum holds a prejudice, as an old fashioned and dated museum stating that *"what we really need to do is take care of the accordance between what we sell and what we actually give"*. Referring to

advertisements that are *"hip and young and cool and urban"* which contradict the reality of the exhibitions that are *"...old, dusty and dark"*. The rural architecture and much of the collection remain largely unchanged since the renovation in the 1980's, standing strongly but slightly disheveled in the open air. This lack of change may create a mundane repetition among repeat visitors with comments that it was *"a little boring"* (Man over 65). For example, *"I have seen them now for I think the third time and it is boring. I thought there would be something new" (Woman, 55-65) and "I don't really look at the houses anymore" (Woman over 65)*. The notion of the "old" Buitenmuseum draws a certain amount of return customers. Except how long will it keep enticing them? Why is it enticing them? This is largely due to the unique entertaining experience; however, it seems that some of the repeat audience are getting restless with the lack of change in the representations and this may alter the level of interaction with the exhibition and in turn the formulation of cultural perceptions. This popularity and social significance is highly valuable for the future of the Buitenmuseum. It provides a platform for word of mouth, and access to a new network of visitors. The Buitenmuseum is certainly valued by returning visitors network, first time visitors, staff and the institution.

b) The 'in Africa' Experience.

One of the prevalent themes that I encountered was the desire of a superficial immersion 'in Africa'. I recall the first time I witnessed this experience whilst observing a couple walk out onto the raised entrance of the Buitenmuseum. The husband said to his wife, "Hey, look its Africa" and they stood for a moment seemingly gazing down from the steps across the planes of the continent stretching out before their eyes. This was also reiterated in visitor's interviews:

> *"V1:... But they (the 'houses') are closed now so (it) gives a different experience.*
> *V2: it's nice to see what it's like to be in Africa. Like an "African experience in the Netherlands"...except of course the weather is not African."*
> **Mother (V1) Father (V2) (30-40) with child under 13 (1 years).**

> *"V: I think in summer it will be better with more access into the buildings it looks less real now."*

Couple: Man (V)and Woman (25-35).

"V: we are going by ourselves to South Africa in September and we wanted to have the atmosphere"
Couple 55-65 Woman (V).

"…the warm, almost African weather? Which also (brought) it back to life"
Wim d (2015) on TripAdvisor.

The above interview extracts reveal an underlying desire in the visitors for their experience to feel more "alive". This word was commonly used to refer to a desire to feel submerged 'in Africa', as if they had been transported to the continent. In addition, the limited decoration during winter causes the audience to perceive the representations as "less real" and therefore less entertaining. This highlights the idea that the audience may pursue their cultural curiosity through the Buitenmuseum experience, encouraged by the material culture on display. This was reiterated through my social media analysis, and most significantly apparent on Instagram (See Fig.8-14). Phrases such as *"Visiting Africa"*, *"We're in Africa"* and "*Greetings from Africa*" suggest that the audience experience and desire a sense of cultural transportation. The search for exoticism is embedded within notions of curiosity and wonder that is emphasised on a sensory level through the use of 'replica' material culture. This "magical transportation" through reproductions of the material other in the 'authentic' collection and 'villages' encourages this interiority of being "in Africa" (Pels, 2015: 40, 50). This is arguably an inevitable sensation that occurs in ethnographic exhibitions (see Clifford, 1985: 244 and Greenblatt, 1990 cf Pels, 2015: 35). In the Buitenmuseum, processes of cultural knowledge and meaning making are based on imaginative entertainment formed through a visceral, immersive escape to be "in Africa". These "mock villages" filled with representative material culture creates a feeling of accessibility and geographical proximity, this sense of spectacle encourages the feeling of cultural difference (Coombes, 1988: 59) that may reinforce hierarchical notions of 'culture' (See Karp, 1992a: 6).

Fig.8[6] beineffable (2017).

Fig.9 marykemondria.lovebirds (2016).

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[6] This post in particular emphasises this argument, the use of hashtags such as #village #littleexplorer or #lonelyplanet suggests that the visitor is further submerged into the idea that they are escaping, travelling and exploring the concept of "Africa".

Fig.10 celinbakx (2016).

Afrika Museum

Follow

22 likes   21/09/2016

Afrika is zo dichtbij! en haar familie ontdekt Afrika in Gelderland. Wel zo fijn dat de zon schijnt, het is allemaal net echt hier! #geldersestreken #ontdekgelderland #arnhemnijmegen #afrikamuseum #bergendal

Leuk!!!

Tof! Daar wil ik ook nog wel eens heen! Is dat de moeite waard voor volwassenen ook?

ds ook leuk voor volwassenen?

Ja Lotte!! Hele mooie omgeving! Ik was er zelf niet hoor 😉 Dat zegt

"Africa is so close! (Name removed) and her family discovered Africa in Gelderland. Well I'm so glad the sun is shining, its all just really here!"

Add a comment...   o o o

Fig.11 vettt_veel_plezier (2016).

Follow

Be the first to like this.   19/08/2015

Back in africa #africa #afrikamuseum

Add a comment...   o o o

Fig.12 ellen.lala (2015).

Fig.13 hipenmoeder (2016).

Fig.14 paulinevanoudenallen (2016).

>"V2: maybe make it more interactive, (people) can play music with drums… where the children can play also, music, instruments and maybe making the fire…
>V1: perhaps more (people) who can act… and dance like they are part of a community
>V2: and with the clothes on…African clothes"
>**Woman (V2) over 65 and Man (V1) 55-65.**

"V:.. This is how the people lived in the houses, but you don't see the people themselves, so I think to learn about Africa and African people its (better) when there are really African people. Then the children can ask things (that they) want to know"
Mother (V) 35-45 with child under 13.

"V:...have people near the village telling you about what it is... To make it more lively for the children" **Mother (V) 35-45 and two children (12-13).**

Furthermore, this notion of the Buitenmuseum being "alive" was also expressed alongside a desire to see animals, actors or "African people", fire and food, dancing and music (see above interview extracts). It is necessary to question why a selection of the audience desire to exotify and observe "the African other". For example, when asked how to improve the Buitenmuseum one German lady made a comment about wanting to see *"little black children"* afterwards clasping her hand over her mouth. In addition, this was seen in a TripAdvisor post, *"... I also had (expected) more African people here trying to show their way of life through music and dance…"* (ellie130570, 2015). This response is not necessarily an *expressed* opinion of the majority and may lack representativeness; however, it is concerning that attitudes like this are still engrained in a public opinion. In this case, perhaps the experience of the exhibition encourages some visitors to request further entertainment that may exotify the 'traditional' African "Other". This is not actively strived for by the Buitenmuseum, quite the opposite in fact, but it clearly does not do enough to confront this view. However, maybe this is not the duty of the museum to rectify these opinions that may be formulated externally to the institution. Furthermore, food and daily life appeared a desirable notion amongst many visitors, to understand more about *"the common life of common people"* (Women over 65) and *"how they are living with a fire and food"* (Mother 35-45). There was a request for a sensory and interactive experience surrounding this concept of food; *"how do you make your food, what kind of food do you eat and it would be nice if we could taste it"* (Women over 65) and *"it would be nice if you could eat some African food"* (Woman 35-45). It was a theme that was seen as missing in the Buitenmuseum experience as expressed by this Father (35-45) *"you could add something about the food, that is something that I am missing here…if you look at the cultural part and you have the houses, the food is*

not yet part of it". This desire for a cultural experience through typical features of daily life highlights the expectation for an escape to an 'African' experience. In addition, 'animals' featured heavily on the agenda for improvements. This occurred across multiple generations, suggesting that the animals serve a bigger purpose in the pursuit for an "in Africa" experience. With calls for from children for more "*Dieren*" and "…*more African people, African masks and animals…*", similarly heard from different adults for a safari park experience like with "*…rhinos running around…", "elephant riding"* and "…*more African people and animals, lions and snakes would be nice"*. However, when considering observational data, very few visitors actively interacted with the only animals (a herd of goats) that are present. It is possible that the presence of animals reinforces the desire for an "in Africa" experience, aesthetically and representatively this shifts the Buitenmuseum further towards an entertaining experience like that of a zoo or theme park. Perhaps this is due to expectations moulded by other institutions in the area:

> "…*they would like more interaction and…more stuff in the (houses)… or more people in African clothes…Like the Openlucht museum, or other museums that have that but that's not our purpose…(but) they (the visitors) think it's that (theatrical like The Openlucht)". (Staff member, 25/02/2017)*

The above interview extract highlights how previous experiences and organisations shape the visitor's assumption about their Buitenmuseum experience. The close vicinity of the popular Openlucht museum in Arnhem, and the less popular Orientalis museum may have influenced the expectations of the audience. It seems that they are not only prepared to find "people" and a "real life" experience, but they are actively searching for this (refer to p57-59 for data). There is clearly an association between an "open air" museum and the theatrical reproduction of its subject. Just like the "World Fair" this hyper-reality of the material representations encourages the wondrous spectacle of the exotic 'other' that blurs the lines between "theatre and ethnographic display" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1991: 397, see also Kratz and Karp, 1993: 39). One member of staff expressed their concern regarding this blurring of entertainment with education within the exhibition:

> "…*We're an inch away from being Phantasia Land and from being The Orientalis…So this would be a great time to rethink this entire thing. It hasn't been changed since the 1980s…what do we have to lose."*

This data was collected from visitor's interviews, social media uploads, staff interviews and observations, it suggests that the hyper-reality of the material culture and representations within the Buitenmuseum reinforce and satisfy a desire for an "in Africa" experience. This may affect the perceptions of 'Africa' in the visitors as processes of meaning are achieved through the visceral spectacle of rural African architecture, materiality and social life that exists with it.

c) *Desire for Interactive and Educational Elements.*

"V: You said it was boring didn't you? [Asks eldest child 10-13)
Child: Yeah it was boring!
V: It needs more signing and background information, (make it) more interactive for the kids."
Mother (V) 30-40, 3 children under 13.

"V: I think it needs more information, maybe make it more of an interactive museum. It's very faded the information. I don't think you need to change anything about the layout just add more too it more interactive things for children…" **Mother (V) 35-45 with son under 13.**

"V: Maybe some kind of interactivity for children so they can do something...they are so focused on everything, they want to touch stuff [Asks children if they would like this]…
Children:… yeah!
I: and do you think it is educational for the kids?
V: yeah I think its educational…" **Mother (V) 35-45 with three children (under 13).**

"… I think music would be very good for kids, or any interactive activity…" **Father 35-45 children under 13.**

In terms of the visitor's desires, I experienced a call for increased interactivity in the exhibition. The current exhibition does include the use of videos to engage the audience in audio and visual representations. These are seen in the 'Tindi' house and the 'Ganvie' house, however during the time of research these were closed. Conversely, some of the comments were from return visitors, and issues were increasingly focused on the lack of physical interaction through sensory learning, visual media and modern technologies. One informant stated their desire for; *"...more interactivity, maybe use modern technology like an app or something so you can see what it looks like to live in Africa"* (Man 35-45). This went hand in hand with the theme of education. I asked informants with children whether they thought it was an educational experience for them. Often the child was too young to really appreciate the texts, material culture and meanings on display. For example, *"He's five he's a little young. He's got an impression that people live differently in different countries...I think he just had a nice time playing in his own fantasy world"* (Mother 35-45). It was made clear that there needed to be *"something more exciting to trigger the children"* (Woman over 65). Due to the majority of children being under thirteen, some interactive and educational displays should be aimed at this age range. However, through my observations I found that adults are equally as important to 'educate'. Almost all adults engaged in the display texts, which leaves a lot to be desired as they were significantly sun damaged, dated and concise in detail. The abundance of complaints regarding the faded signs shows that the visitors are actively searching for contextual information, in turn this creates a gap in understanding: *"... we don't know what it all is which is a shame"* (Mother, 35-45). It's clear that all visitors, regardless of age want a certain level of interactivity in their Buitenmuseum experience. Whether this is through video, educative displays, workshops and tours or interactive learning, the desire for education alongside entertainment is clear. It is impossible to "keep sensation out of education" within the museum's walls (Pels, 2015: 4). Arguably the museum, as an institution, is obliged to prioritise educative aspects over entertainment as they hold an obligation to the communities and cultures they represent (Karp, 1992b: 22). However, Pels (2015) claims that those devoted to the educational function of museums become preoccupied with classificatory meanings of the subject and overlook the power of objects (Pels, 2015: 4). This limits our understanding of the processes of compelling curiosity, attraction and effects of this gaze towards the exotic and ethnographic (Ibid.). No doubt the entertainment provided by interactive experiences influences the processes of knowledge and meaning in the audience, this may affect their perceptions of 'Africa' formulated during the exhibition experience

d) ***The Value of the 'Traditional'.***

An inclusive comparative approach containing the opinions of those from the communities that are portrayed is useful to understand the way that cultural representations are perceived by those who can identify to them. Although a poor response rate, my advisory session provided a viewpoint to counterbalance the opinions of much of the audience. Of course, Ibrahim's thoughts cannot be generalised or taken as representative of the entirety of the opinions on the African continent. However, it provides an interesting example of how someone who lived in a city (Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso) in Africa experiences, values and understands the representations in the Buitenmuseum. Ibrahim was positive and full of energy with a love for life, spirituality and religion which he transferred into his writing and lectures. He was born in Burkina Faso, with family ties to Mali and Benin. His grandfather, a village elder, was prominent in his childhood. As one of the oldest out of thirty brothers and sisters Ibrahim passed down his grandfather's knowledge and uses this as a basis for his outlook on life. He moved to Leiden in 2001 and after studying he is now a French teacher, with two children of his own. Ibrahim was in general very positive about the representations in the Buitenmuseum. Criticising it for its lack of descriptive background information. He particularly enjoyed the Dogon 'village' as he immediately recognised the 'Toguna' and placement in the landscape. Annette Schmidt, who lived in Mali for many years also sentimentally recognised the Dogon section: *"That's true, I have (feel) the same thing"*. This is interesting that for both visitors who have never been to the continent and individuals who have been immersed in West African cultures, both express a sense of being transported into a different place. The Dogon village representations are based on extensive research and accurate aesthetic techniques which may evoke a sense of "authenticity" or nostalgia in individuals who have experienced them. The material culture through architecture creates a sense of transportation to an "in Africa" experience amongst the audience, however these are internalised through different processes of meaning making based on prior contextual understanding and perceptions.

Ibrahim recognised the material culture on display in the houses, he expressed that although I may perceive the objects as 'non-African' due to their predominantly Dutch origins, in his eyes the presentation was traditionally African. For example, the display of decorative plates in the Lesotho house symbolised for him the exchange of bridewealth (see Pic.23). He particularly emphasised the links back to the village and rural life, for people

living in the cities traditional and rural society play an important role, invoking a pride in cultural identity. This is significant as it shows the importance and prominence of traditional cultural heritage that needs to be safeguarded and shared to new generations. In addition, he was open to but not overly keen on introducing representations of modern African architecture, saying that it should be diverse in its portrayal of urban social and economic differences. The pride and appreciation of traditional cultural heritage was reiterated through a conversation with a young Ethiopian man (20-25) who was studying in Nijmegen. He had come to the museum with his host family, a middle-aged Dutch couple who were "friends" of the museum. His opinions mirrored Ibrahim's; he embraced the traditional representations stating that his country, and Africa, has many diverse cultural traditions; *"people are proud to show their culture"* and that the *"traditional culture is better than the modern… (if) you see it as a museum about culture it is better to show the tradition"*. He did criticise the exhibition, stating that *"when you say 'Africa' Museum I expect a lot… but there is only a little bit (in the Buitenmuseum) and to say 'Africa' (there) is too little (here)"*. This is significant as although Ethiopia is not portrayed, he still prefers and asks for traditional representations. However, visitors with no ties to African cultures often have limited contextual knowledge of the complexity of African contemporary society. Therefore, portraying only the traditional rural cultures provide an interesting and entertaining perspective that is limited. The 'traditional' is searched for by all audience regardless of race or ethnicity, but is perceived and understood differently. The contextual difference may cause a nostalgic pride in traditional African cultures in people who have experienced these societies, and a curious exotification of 'Africa' through a hyper-real material experience in those with limited contextual understanding.

Picture 23. Lesotho Family House crockery display.

4.3 "But there is only sand in Africa" – The Visitor's Perceptions of 'Africa'.

This section identifies the perceptions of 'Africa' expressed by the visitors and how these are affected by the cultural representations present in the Buitenmuseum, referring to data collected through interviews, observations and social media analysis. It is important to understand how and why these perceptions, which exist within wider historical, political and socio-cultural contexts, are formulated.

a) Traditional 'Africa'.

I first visited the Afrika Museum on a sunny Saturday in October 2016, I used this trip to get acquainted with the exhibition and its audience. With some initial questions in my mind, I decided to test the waters with some visitors. I approached a retired couple from North Holland. They had never been to Africa but wanting "*to get an idea*" of the continent had decided to visit the Afrika Museum. When I asked the man whether the exhibition had changed his opinion about Africa, he stated that he thought it was an "*accurate representation of Africa*". I asked him how we could improve the Buitenmuseum; he expressed his concern over the gravel pathways, it was "*too modern, this is made from German stone… it should be sand as there is only sand in Africa*". Within the context of the rural architectural representations present, the prevalence of "*only sand*" may be applicable. However, the immersive material culture that mimics a traditional representation of rural 'Africa' may encourage this static perception to be homogenised for the continent. In reality, sand is not the *only* form of road in 'Africa' and *only* rural representations may encourage cultural assumptions such as this. This opinion cannot be generalised, but it does shed light on how the audience understand and imagine 'Africa'. It initially confirmed to me the underlying notion of 'Africa' and 'Africans' as uniformly underdeveloped, primitive and traditional that may still be engrained into the thoughts of a public opinion. Of course, these perceptions are based on a wider process of meaning making, however, my data suggests that the wondrous material culture and architecture in the Buitenmuseum encourage this static rural representation to be homogenised for the whole continent.

When I later returned to the 'field' I was confronted again by the pervasiveness of this homogenous traditional assumption of 'Africa'. This may reaffirm hierarchical notions of identity which are set in colonial, social and cultural contexts (See Karp, 1992a: 6,

Macdonald, 2006: 3-4 and Vergo, 1989: 2-4.). Perhaps part of the responsibility lies with the museum as an institution as they inevitably redefine relations between communities (Karp, 1992a: 6). A member of staff expressed their concern that the museum does not actively discourage an "old-fashioned" and homogenous view of 'Africa'. This highlights the influence of the museum's cultural representations that are consumed by the public and regenerated into public thought (See Bennett, 1995: 20-24).

> *"...It's archaic [the Buitenmuseum], that's my main feeling...it's also emphasising what we don't want them [the visitors] to think about Africa. We're showing them its rural it's old-fashioned, there's no electricity, there's no computers, there's no TV's..."*

The prevalence of the 'traditional' stereotype is based upon the prominence of the touristic desire to escape through an 'in Africa' experience. The "tourist gaze", Urry (2002) claims is encountered when we observe an external environment with curiosity, which "is constructed through difference… constructed in relationship to its opposite, to non-touristic forms of social experience and consciousness" (Urry, 20002: 1). This is relevant to the Buitenmuseum experience as it encourages a "departure" by allowing the physical senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and the mundane" (Urry, 2002: 2). Therefore, the architecture and exhibition transport the viewer into a world and mind-set that focuses on curious difference embedded in wonder. I noticed that even the visitors who had been to Africa, were still blind (perhaps consciously) to the urban reality that exists on the continent. One lady (over 65) was slightly confused at the prospect of adding urban representations, exclaiming *"...is there a modern Africa?"* and her husband confirmed that they prefer the traditional houses *"old Africa is doing something for us, the old culture"*. After I had explained that many people live in cities across the continent she justified her statement *"… but we've seen a lot of films, movies on television and documentaries, so we have an impression of the country. We also flew over the country and saw a lot of sand and bush"*. The use of *"country"* shows that 'Africa' may be regarded as a homogenous nation state, with a uniform culture attached. This extract highlights the process of knowledge production and attachment of meaning through semiotics in media which further encourages this "tourist gaze". In addition, another visitor (Man, 35-45) stated that they would not recognise contemporary urban representations as *"African style"* continuing that they would like to see more *"food, nature, national parks, animals and safari"* in the exhibition. The

curiosity of the exotic 'other' is present and is a popular association when visitors imagine 'Africa', which is arguably placed within the context of colonialism. The exhibitions "mock villages" produces a feeling of accessibility and encourages the notion of geographical immersion and reinforcing the cultural divide by the hyperreal spectacle (Coombes, 1988: 59). The Buitenmuseum experience may influence the audience's interactions with the material culture and therefore their perceptions of 'Africa', this cannot be disregarded as it is fundamental sensation that comes with education within museums (Pels, 2015: 4).

b) Contemporary 'Africa'.

Many visitors were consciously aware of the opportunities to represent the complexity of contemporary social reality on the African continent. In some cases, this realisation only occurred after I asked them their opinions about representing contemporary urban 'Africa' in the Buitenmuseum. However, before this question I would ask "how would you improve the Buitenmuseum" or "is there anything missing?" which would not conjure up the same response. The former initiated a reflexive attitude and visitors would often express an enthusiasm for modern representations, for example *"Yes! so you can get a good impression of how they live at the moment"* (Grandfather, over 65), *"modern day life is Africa as well"* (Father 30-45) and *"because this is more like countryside, yeah I would like that...I think it would add something"* (Mother 35-45 with 3 children under 13). These responses (also seen in the extracts below) highlight the desire for contemporary representations which would provide *"a good comparison"* (Mother 35-45 with family). This shows that if urban cultural representations were physically present, this may ignite a critical reflection about the traditional representations and thus the contemporary reality of the continent. This juxtaposition is necessary for the audience to actively address the diversity of contemporary African cultures within their exhibition experience, providing a balanced outlook that questions existing assumptions and traditional stereotypes in the public (Arnoldi, 1999: 718).

> *"...V2: perhaps more up to date, more modern...V1: This is only the old fashioned...from the ancient times and you should take into account the modern way of living..."* **Couple: Man (V1) and Woman (V2) 50-65.**

"V: It's fine as it is now, but I was telling my friend that these days it is only a minority still living in these traditional houses. I would add maybe houses of how it is like to live in the towns because these houses aren't the same…many people in Europe and Netherlands still think that Africans live in mud huts" **Woman (V) 35-45 with child under 5.**

"V:…maybe build some more modern African houses" **Mother 35-45 with child under 13.**

"…It feels like poor Africa and I think Africa is much more than that" **Mother 35-45 and children under 13.**

"…I guess there must be more modern houses to view. Perhaps children think that all Africa live in these kind of houses (like the Buitenmuseum's) …yeah so you can see the difference" **Woman 55-65 alone.**

"V1:… something modern African because this makes it all seem very primitive. Maybe show the divide between the primitive way of living and the modern way…
V2: this give the feeling that there is no development which is not true" **Three female friends, Women 3 (V1) Woman 2 (V2) 30-45.**

"V: … it is educational but it's not fair to make them (the children) think that all people in Africa live like this and that's my problem with it" **Mother 35-45 child under 13.**

This data shows the underlying acknowledgement and appeal to experience the contemporary side of African urban societies. This active request and search for this representation portrays the conscious effect the traditional houses have on some of the visitor's knowledge. It highlights that the traditional representations encourage a conscious cognitive process about what representations are applicable to the continent in contemporary society. In this sense, the knowledge and meaning process is not falsely swayed by the predominantly traditional architecture, however a physical urban representation would

encourage this reflection in a wider audience. The exhibition must cater to both the urban and rural lifestyles that coexist within a global society. However, among this contemporary acknowledgement I also witnessed a reluctance to experience this in the Buitenmuseum. The traditional was *"liked more to see"* (Mother 35-45, one child 4-6) and *"in the buildings, I like the traditional cultures (more)…I think in pictures I would (like to) see more of the modern cities"* (Man over 65). In addition, a grandmother (over 65) with her two grandchildren made this clear *"…Yes I was in Africa, but why? I like this more, the old"*. These responses highlight how some visitors experience the Buitenmuseum by searching for difference in culture. One "friend of the museum" (over 65) expressed in response to suggesting modern or urban representations that if she wanted to see the city she would "*go to Amsterdam not here… because [here] it is something else, we are not used to these kind of houses"*. This reinforces the idea that cultural representations based on difference are preferable due to the innate gaze founded on wonder, curiosity and romantic notion of the "Other". Similarly, *"I have never been in Africa but I think when you see photos of modern houses, it's like here…"(Women, 40-50)*. It was seen that an urban representation would interfere with the idyllic romantic notion of Africa held in some visitors; *"…maybe you could put a big hedge around them so it's a different part. Maybe it would make it look less idyllic than it is now*" (Father 30-45)**.**

c) ***Authenticity and 'sniffing' Culture.***

> *"There is an expression in Dutch, 'cultuur snuiven'. Literally translated: to sniff culture. That's what the tourist wants. Like a drug. A short moment of bliss. The tourist really doesn't care where he is. He just wants to relax and be entertained."* **Jan-Willem Anker** *(n.d.)*[7].

This extract, although referring directly to international tourism applies to the visitor's experiences in the Buitenmuseum, both seen through social media and interviews. This was predominant on Instagram (see Fig.15-18), flaunted as if consuming 'culture' and 'Africa' was a fashionable pastime. It also exemplifies how the audience perceived and promoted static perceptions of African 'culture' to a wider external audience by photographing rural representations in the Buitenmuseum. This was reiterated through social media posts, with

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[7] See https://iwp.uiowa.edu/91st/vol7-num1/stay-and-change for Jan-Willem Anker's account of culture sniffing in Dutch society (Anker, n.d).

ten out of the eighty-six posts 'hashtagging' "*#culture*" and fifteen tagging "*#africa*". These tags alone do not clearly express the idea that consuming 'African culture' is fashionable or desired. However, when you incorporate this data with the captions, photos and visitor interviews and observations it points to an underlying attitude of difference based on wonder in some of the audience.

Fig.15

marykemondria.lovebirds (2016).

Fig.16 jillll86 (2016).

Fig.17 eetpaleo (2016).

Fig.18 ticiaverveer (2016).

This final post (Fig.18) illustrates how the Buitenmuseum representations, with the over filled bike and the "African fashion" paintings (Buitenmuseum Algemeen, n.d.: 20) encourage a consumption of "authentic" culture. The bike and its plastic attire may be an attempt to signify African modernity through material culture. However, this visitor has been drawn towards these representations and classified them using hashtags such as "*#africa in #thenetherlands*", "*#africanculture*", "*#authenticliving*" and "*#exploringtheglobe*". This suggests that these representations, through material culture, architecture and paintings are interpreted by the audience as "authentic" 'Africa', consumed through a touristic gaze fueled by difference and wonder. This is then shared on the internet, accessible to anyone that

searches any of the given 'hashtags'[8]. This "authentic" assembly of material culture creates a perceived represented reality that the audience use to create social meaning (Crew and Sims, 1991: 174). This desire "for the unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional" reinforces western ontology, individualism and the notion of cultures as bounded entities (Handler, 1986: 2). For example, *"...I think it must be realistic to where it comes from... I think if that is the way they live over there then it's ok"* and *"if it's too new it doesn't look authentic so it's good like this"* (Woman 45-55). This shows how the representations provided by the Buitenmuseum are utilised as 'authentic' and reliable cultural information that is then added to the visitor's retina of knowledge. This satisfies the urge for an external reality as the representations of architecture, although 'accurately' replicated structures are present, hold a static rural view of a diverse continent.

Even though the visitors remained firmly in the Netherlands they experienced a touristic fueled escape, in search for authentic 'culture'. There was a relationship between 'Africa' and 'culture' as desirable concepts. This was expressed through interviews, with some visitors sharing that they came to the Afrika Museum for *"the culture"*. One conversation with a gentleman (over 65) expressed his enjoyment of lapping up the 'culture' that was provided by the museum; *"it is interesting to see the culture"*. He was not enthused by the idea of displaying Africa's urban cities, stating that he preferred the current traditional dwellings *"for the culture"*. This implication of a singular traditional 'African' culture encourages the static notion of 'Africa'. This "isomorphism of space, place and culture" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 7) is experienced in the Buitenmuseum, with visitors categorising a fixed African culture onto the continent. This is problematic in a contemporary global world as culture is no longer contained to classical ethnographic mappings, an 'African' culture cannot be generalised for the whole continent or those that extend beyond its borders (Ibid.).

This chapter highlights that the audience have a preconceived idea about traditional African culture that is in the forefront of their expectations and desires during their exhibition experience. The visceral entertaining experience of the material culture in the Buitenmuseum

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[8] Hashtags such as "#instravel" are among the most popular. These hashtags are used with the intent of reaching a wider audience. See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brian-honigman/the-100-most-popular-hash_b_2463195.html for "The 100 most popular "hashtags" on Instagram" by Brian Honigman (May 24, 2017).

emphasises this static, rural and traditional perception of 'Africa' in some of the audience. This is linked to the concept of wonder and western curiosity that exotifies and commodifies 'Africa'. The 'traditional' cultural representations are perceived in different ways to different audiences. From my advisory session, it was clear that the traditional sphere of African society plays a significant role in the constructions of African identities. The interrelationship and diversity between social spheres and its effect on cultural identities needs to be portrayed. The audience were open to more contemporary urban representations, however the traditional 'Africa' was preferred as more "authentic". There was also a call for more interactive and educational material aimed at both children and adults. The sensation and wonder that is experienced, and searched for by the audience influence the way that individuals interact with the material culture on display. This may influence the perceptions of 'Africa' formulated during the exhibition experience.

5. Representing the Diversity of Contemporary Africa.

In this chapter I investigate the possibilities of representing the diversity of African contemporary social reality in the Buitenmuseum through material culture and architecture. This acknowledges the coexisting 'traditional' and 'modern' spheres of society that exist in a multitude of ways within the continent and beyond its physical borders. I also question the role of the Buitenmuseum's representations for local communities with African cultural heritage. This information is gathered from second hand literature sources as well as primary interview and observatory data from staff and visitors.

5.1 Contemporary Vernacular Architecture- Informal and Formal Structures, Style and Identity, "Parpaing and Toles".

Firstly, it is useful to provide an account of the "African city" before discussing its position within the Buitenmuseum. I turn to the work (and subsequent interview data) of Antoni Folkers who focuses on modern African architecture, providing a useful account of the urban situations that exist within the continent. In 2010 about 40% of the African Population lived in cities, a figure that doubled the estimate for 1984 (20%) (Folkers, 2010: 141-42). The poverty in urban areas is substantial, however, compared to rural areas incomes and consumption are much higher (Ibid.). In the "Urban jungle" the traditional African social system has been marginalised to the rural areas, however modern social and civic institutions are difficult to locate within informal sectors of the African city (Folkers, 2010: 143-144). Over 80% of buildings are constructed by the same people that reside in them (Folkers, 2010: 148).

Despite fundamental and rapid changes in building materials and techniques, "at least half of all African homes are still made of mud" (Folkers, 2010: 223). In 2005, 49% of urban residents and 90% of rural residents in Burkina Faso lived in mud homes, however this situation is liable to change (Ibid.). In Ougadougou (Burkina Faso), residents perceived "mud buildings as local and old-fashioned, and therefore associated it with poverty and backwardness, whereas building in cement and corrugated iron represents progress, modern life, growing wealth and a carefree world" (Folkers, 2010: 210). The "corrugated iron roof is the basic component of the modern city home", it requires minimal structural support and is

flexible and resilient, the number of *"Toles"* on a house determines its size and therefore the owner's prosperity (Folkers, 2010: 212). For example, at the start of the 21st century the *"Habitat pistolet"* was the most popular dwelling, consisting of twenty to thirty *"Toles"* in an L-shaped design (Folkers, 2010: 212). These self-build innovations inspire and creatively attempt to improve living standard (Folkers, 2010: 148). For example, the popularity of "shack chic" décor using colourful packaging in the townships of Cape Town, which have even influenced interior stylings of the middle-class (Ibid.) It highlights that within situations of poverty, expressions of (individual) identity and optimism are portrayed through decorative expressions on the home (Folkers, 2010: 217). Antoni expanded on this during our conversation, I asked him about the prominence of African identities when building residential buildings in urban areas, he confirmed:

> *"...Yes, very much so, that search in aspirational expression is very important...There is a definite sense of own heritage and own African symbolism and form and colour and so on... In East Africa sometimes we call this "Swahili Baroque".*

The prevalence of corrugated iron sheets and cement blocks on the continent is "unavoidable and an automatic choice for the individual inhabitant, the city population and the government" (Folkers, 2010: 222). These modern materials are easily accessible, cheap, durable and simple to construct which justifies it as the "first ambition of the new African city dweller" (Folkers, 2010: 222). Now, the contemporary African city is made from cement blocks and corrugated iron (Folkers, 2010: 219), and Antoni confirmed that these materials and techniques can indeed be generalised across the continent:

> *"...Yes incredibly so....but what is by and large ignored is the vernacular itself also modernised over time....African informal modernity has been able to organise itself in an incredibly efficient way....The homogeneity of this over the continent is amazing. The way its organised and the products themselves are standardised, roof sheets are always same length and width, the cement blocks whether you're in Ouagadougou or Dar es Salaam are the same size and same make..."*

These contemporary urban architectural and social developments are not represented in the current exhibition. It may be valuable to the audience (see pp.66-67) to juxtapose the current traditional "mud huts" with a contemporary representation, whether through physical or visual architectural representations. This does not necessarily mean building a skyscraper, as playfully suggested by Antoni, but possible through other interactive means of representation. By doing this it provides a visual and immersive confrontation that the visitors can then apply to processes of meaning acquired from previous and current perceptions of 'Africa'. By demonstrating Africa's dynamic history and contemporary reality this gives a balanced outlook that questions existing assumptions and stereotypes (Arnoldi, 1999: 718). Antoni's suggestion to *"celebrate what is now and what is there tomorrow"* is valuable. By acknowledging the past and providing a positive representation of the contemporary and the future which emphasises both similarities and differences may help to bridge the gap between "the West" and "Africa".

5.2 <u>**Contemporary 'African' Material Culture: Technology and Transport.**</u>

Pictures 24-26. Barber/Contemporary House interior.   Picture 27. Ghana House radio.

Within the Buitenmuseum, 'modern' technology has a narrow representation in the material culture present. For example, the limited 'technologies' range from an 80's style 'boom box' radio, a late 90's PC computer and an electric desk lamp (See Pic.24-27). This is clearly an outdated collection that does not to justice to the presence and prevalence of technological advancements on the continent and worldwide. In sub-Saharan Africa alone, the use of mobile phones has increased from 1 in 50 to 1 in 3 from 2000 to 2008 and one can

only imagine the figure seen today (de Bruijn et al, 2009: 11). Also relevant is the social reliance on increasing transport links in Africa, like Nairobi's semi-formal "Matatus" buses, seen in combination with the "digital Matutus project" mobile app that reconfigured how urban residents and government view and navigate transit (Holm and Kallehauge, 2015: 104). Perhaps these changes should be visible in the Buitenmuseum, as it supposedly portrays 'African' material culture, architecture and the social lives that exist with it.

Fig.19 Jannekevanhooft (2016).

Furthermore, the dated collection that is present may encourage an 'undeveloped' association with "Africa". One Instagram post that demonstrates this exclaims *"....#exploring #cultures #cultureshock #notv #nofridge #noiphone*" (Fig.19). This response highlights how the representations through the material culture (or lack of) affect the meaning making of some of the visitors, leading to production of negative assumptions about the lives of people in 'Africa'. This is not necessary a representative view, but highlights how meaning based on cultural difference is attached to the material culture on display. However, many visitors requested the inclusion of more modern material culture or representations, which highlights the notion of globalised technological advancements. However, many of these statements still

refer to the idea that 'Africa' is lagging behind and relies on "the West" at the forefront of modern developments.

"V:...I would like to see more technological initiative, how they develop to improve their way of living to give an idea that they are really improving out there." **Couple: Man (V) 25-35.**

"V: this gives the feeling that there is no development which is not true" **Woman (V) 30-45.**

"V1: it has changed...the modern world is coming into Africa..." **Couple man (V1) and women (V2) Over 65.**

"V: (add) food, modern culture is integrated into life now, with stuff exported from here, like electronic stuff." **Mother and Father (V) 35-45 with Children 6-2.**

There was also a call from staff members to remove the dated, tired and excessive 'clutter' that decorates the houses and replace it with more personal items and stories to create an experience *about* people, rather than exaggerating their ghostly existence through the collection that is lacking in the voices of those represented.

"get rid of all the stuff, the empty beds and the fake cups. That suggests that we are actually representing something that is real life and we are not…then you know it's authentic and bit more personal for one and it's a story instead of just decoration…"

Using material culture to decorate houses in a way that defines them by geographical located 'cultures' provides issues in understanding "current patterns of social organisation, social structure and human-environment relations" as objects are no longer tied to physical borders (Rotenberg and Wali, 2014: 2). The of "Dutch" objects (see page 34-35) caters to this reference to global market of commodities, perhaps these banal objects simply need updating. The banality of everyday objects and how we embody meaning to them, provides an insight into the nature of contemporary urban life (Mullins, 2014: 47). The limited banal

contemporary material culture present in the Buitenmuseum may hinder the visitor's processes of understanding of contemporary African sociality in their exhibition experience.

5.3 The Interrelationship Between Rural and Urban, Traditional and Modern.

The 'traditional' representations are valuable in showcasing and safeguarding "intangible heritage" set out by UNESCO (n.d.)[9] and the "the outdoor museum is a unique platform to keep this heritage alive*" (Afrika Museum, 2010: 3). It is necessary to actively represent the interrelationship between multiple social spheres in order to leave the audience with a balanced platform that demonstrates Africa's dynamic traditional cultures and contemporary reality for them to apply their processes of meaning that questions existing assumptions and stereotypes (See Arnoldi, 1999: 718). What should be of focus here is the coexistence and diversity of social reality between and within different cultures on the continent (and across its borders). Using a teleological theory of tradition and modernity as a linear trend and sequenced chain of changing events is problematic in contemporary fluid and nonlinear social contexts (Ferguson, 1999: 42). Instead, modernity and cohabiting urban-rural flexibility should be characterised in non-linear "bushy" forms that are continuously adjusted in complex fluid ways (Ibid.).

Fergusons' (1999) work provides a relevant account of the interrelationship of rural and urban, traditional and modern spheres of life on the Zambian Copperbelt. This ethnographic work provides a case study that highlights the transient nature of 'African' social spheres and identities that may be missing in the Buitenmuseum. The classical notion of culture is unsuitable as it is no longer entrenched in tradition and fixed notions. Instead, 'culture' is acted, learnt through a social process of performance, understood within a diverse political-economic social structure (Ferguson, 1999: 231). For example, the "cosmopolitan" use of imported foreign culture like "clear" beer, "Posh Boy" t-shirt and western music is a way of showing off and a signal of "anti-membership" (Ferguson, 1999: 212). On the

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[9] See "What is Intangible Heritage" UNESCO (n.d.) https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003 conference on showcasing and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage *(through portraying both traditional and contemporary, Inclusivity, Representative value and Community-based knowledge)* was requested in the Buitenmuseum redevelopment plans set out in (Afrika Museum, 2010: 3)

contrary, "localists" express traditional loyalty, utilising their ties to rural kin by providing economic support, this later becomes a worthwhile investment as they retire back to rural village social structure (Ferguson, 1999: 164-165). During my advisory session, Ibrahim confirmed this fundamental tie to traditional rural spheres; regardless of religion, modernity or "cosmopolitan" lifestyle everyone recognises and returns to the village of origin and traditional society at some stage. This highlights the coexistence of traditional and modern spheres in which the actors negotiate due to contemporary social, political and economic circumstances (Ferguson, 1999: 217).

> *"…In Africa even if you talk to people from the city, everyone has a link to the village because everybody has a cultural connection to the region that you come from, even if you haven't been born there, maybe even your parents haven't been born there. Normally there is a tradition to go back to the village that you came from, even if you have never lived in it, everybody **knows** it…..also people who are Muslim, Christian, or used to an urban way of living, they always have a connection to what you see here [in the Buitenmuseum]…if you look at modern architecture…there is always a reference to traditional architecture…cultural references are very important and valued…they don't see it as referencing something backwards, but an important part of your cultural identity."* **Ibrahim, Translated by Annette Schmidt (21/4/2017).**

Ibrahim was pleased with the traditional representations in the Buitenmuseum. From the above statement, he confirms the interrelationship between traditional/rural and modern/urban social spheres and the importance this plays for cultural identity formation. Through an anti-teleological account of African social spheres in the Buitenmuseum the fluid and nonlinear nature of African sociality and actors can be portrayed.

5.4 Representations for those with African Cultural Heritage.

> *"… I have all these contacts within the African community in the Netherlands, they don't see the Afrika museum as the place to go when you really want to invest in that mind-set, or research and I don't even invite them over because of the misrepresentation of Africa at our museum…***There are a lot of people researching their heritage right now and they are not going to the Afrika museum….there are a lot of people… trying to find things that they recognise or something that they can relate with…*** A lot of knowledge has been lost and it's really empowering to find out where you're from, or where your cultural roots are…That's also a nice story for our museum, how young people are trying to deal with that, how are collection can help with that… Maybe that should be interactive too, so you're not just putting a bunch of objects in our exhibition… but that you create a way for people to really find something that they like and can explore or learn more about history or tradition…"* **Interview with staff member (13/03/2017)**

Attempts to represent different African cultural identities are present within the Buitenmuseum. However, it begs the question as to what identities *should* be present and for *whom*? The above interview demonstrates the current call for knowledge and representations aimed at those searching for their cultural heritage. This emphasised that local people with African heritage were not coming to the museum to "research" their cultural background. This was also evident by the mainly white audience that attended the museum. Therefore, the museum provides a representation targeted at this specific audience, in turn encouraging assumptions of a homogenous 'Africa'. This idea was reiterated among staff and visitors; "*they think they learn about Africa, yeah to learn about **their** idea of Africa…*". In addition, in an interview with two young (25-30) visitors who expressed their African heritage, I asked their thoughts on representing modern African architecture. This extract shows how the "Dutch" audience are entertained by the traditional representations in the Buitenmuseum (also see pages 64-65).

> *"V: …it might be good to change position to see how they lived here and how they lived there.*
> *I: because it is quite traditional at the moment and quite rural*

V: that is ok but its I think it's...

V2: I think it's what Dutch people would like to see" **Woman (V2) Man (V) 25-35.s**

It would be valuable to reinvent the traditional architectural representations in collaboration with local communities with African heritage to cater for this search for cultural knowledge (see Ames, 1991, Arnoldi, 1999, Macdonald, 2006, Hooper-Greenhill, 2006, Golding and Modest, 2013). Furthermore, the use of traditional architectural representations is frequently used in African countries to honour traditional cultures. This is seen in the national museum of Mali (Musee National du Mali) where scaled down replicas of Dogon dwellings are represented outdoors. Similarly, Antoni Folkers also highlighted that in Dar es Salaam "The Village Museum" showcases similar traditional vernacular architecture, *"Its exactly the same [as the Buitenmuseum] you look at how your grandfathers are living but it has nothing to do with today's reality".* On one hand these museums, and traditional cultural representations are valuable to people with African heritage. This was reiterated by the traditional value and desires expressed by Ibrahim and an Ethiopian visitor. This shows how a visceral exhibition experience can also be utilised to represent African cultural heritage for those that search for it.

This chapter explores the opportunities to represent contemporary urban architecture in the Buitenmuseum; the prevalence and prominence of urbanisation and the building techniques, materials and identities that go with them are valuable to represent in the Buitenmuseum. The current collection portrays limited contemporary material culture, such as technology and transport, which in turn encourages a static view of 'Africa' in the audience. The collection and representations need to portray the interrelationship between urban and rural social spheres that are so important to individual, social, cultural and economic contexts on the continent. In addition, there is a call among younger generations with African heritage to search for their cultural identities. The Buitenmuseum currently does not satisfy this. However, through the collection, personal stories and an inclusive approach to these communities the museum can (and should) provide a platform for multiple communities to learn about African cultures.

6. Proposal for Redevelopment.

I must clarify here that my responsibility as an anthropologist is to provide my findings in a way that reflects the reality that I witnessed. From these findings and with request from the organisation, I am led to form conclusions about the future of the Buitenmuseum. These utilise the opinions of staff members and my own in order to propose possibilities for the future. This concluding chapter will address the positive and negative attributes of the exhibition in relation to the material culture, representations and their influence on the audience's perceptions of Africa based upon my findings set out in this thesis. I will also provide example cases to suggest possible themes for the redevelopment.
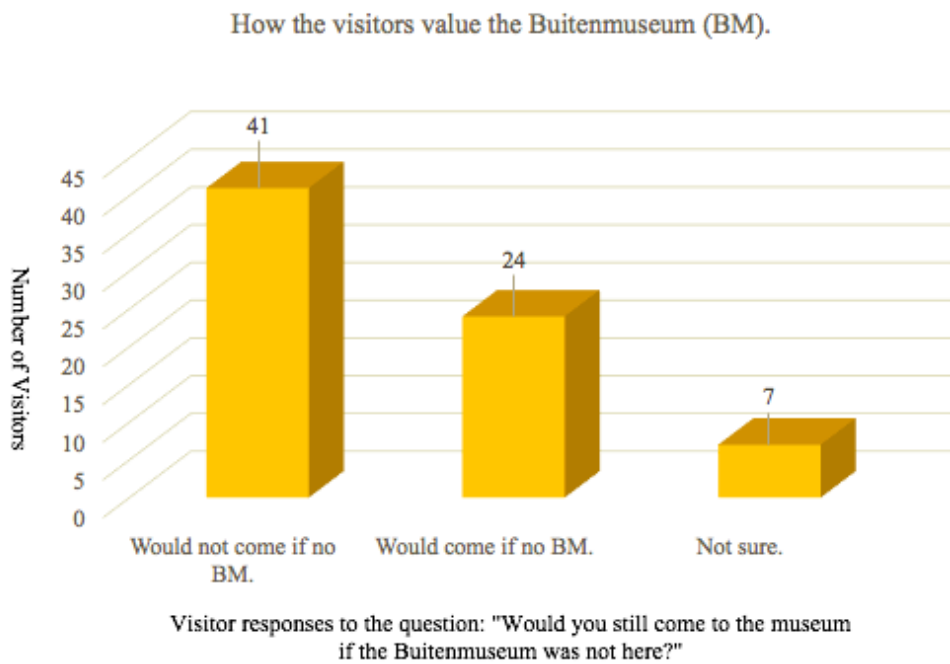
6.1 The Future of the Buitenmuseum.

I have heard many opinions about the future of the Buitenmuseum. Some saying it should be removed altogether, others exclaiming that to do this would be a "sin". However, it is not as simple, or even necessary, as flattening the buildings to the ground. Perhaps with unlimited resources to start afresh would be ideal. However, by eradicating the Buitenmuseum's historic displays that is "layered into the museum's material make-up" and collection may return to haunt those who deny its history (Pels, 2015: 7). Other suggestions of building a replica of contemporary architecture are tempting, however you run the risk of incurring the same static representative issues. Furthermore, this would encourage the 'Disney' like enchantment that creates this wonder and curiosity, however this may objectify 'Africa' and limit educative purposes. Saying that, to keep the current dwellings without adding a contemporary representation through architecture or material culture would not confront the idealised rural perceptions of 'Africa' found in some of the visitors. The possibilities for renovation have been discussed within the organisation. In a recent meeting, various solutions were brought to light, these include expanding the exhibition to show more of "world cultures" like the Tropenmuseum and Volkenkunde. Other themes included religion, cultural heritage, Western perceptions of Africa, addressing key social debates (e.g. "black Pete"), modern art and entertainment through an "African experience". There were also "quick wins" to attempt small, cheap and quick adjustments to improve the Buitenmuseum. These consisted of removing the objects to save time, cleaning and collecting. This also detracts from the theatrical and outdated material representations to increase focus on education through personal stories, video and interactive elements. In

addition, an idea to unite the inside and outside exhibitions through photographs and videos in the "Atrium"[10] connects the outside architecture to contemporary 'snapshots' of reality. "Quick wins" undoubtedly provides a temporary solution, nevertheless to make a sufficient and necessary changes a call for funding is required. The Buitenmuseum has an image problem and needs a new face, therefore a drastic, full redevelopment needs to occur to re-entice the audience and meet the changing needs of today's globalised world.

Fig. 20 Graph of interview data questioning how visitor's value the Buitenmuseum.

How the visitors value the Buitenmuseum (BM).

Visitor responses to the question: "Would you still come to the museum if the Buitenmuseum was not here?"

"...V1: I think this (the Buitenmuseum) really adds to the museum, especially in the summer and for kids" **3 Women friends, 30-45.**

"V: ...I have a child so I really appreciated the outdoor space" **Woman 35-45 with one child age 5.**

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[10] The 'Atrium' is an exhibition in the corridor that leads from the permanent exhibition to either the Buitenmuseum or the exit/reception. It currently houses an exhibition on the Baka Pygmies and an introduction to the Buitenmuseum. This section is often overlooked by much of the audience.

"V: it (the Buitenmuseum) completes the experience. Inside you have the objects behind glass and at a distance and outside there is no distance, you can get right up close to the objects" **Man 35-45.**

"V: ...I like the being outside and think it's good. I prefer both in the museum." **Woman 55-65.**

"V... I think the atmosphere is gone when you take it (the Buitenmuseum) out.
V2: yeah, also for the children it is very nice."
Couple: Man (V) and Woman (V2: woman 50-65.

It is evident that the Buitenmuseum is highly regarded amongst its audience. Within my sample forty-one visitors stated that they would not come to the museum if the Buitenmuseum was not present (see Fig.20). Many emphasised that the Buitenmuseum was often the reason for their visit, that it was a desirable experience for children and families and to take it away a part of the museums identity would be lost. From the above data, it is evident that the Buitenmuseum is valued amongst visitors of all ages, but especially for families with younger children. I did experience complaints about the weather interrupting the visitor's experiences. It would be valuable to expand the exhibitions 'season', incorporating more sheltered activities and opening more 'houses' earlier in the year. The Buitenmuseum is the focal point of the entire museum experience, rooted into the memories and desires of much of the audience. For future redevelopments, an exhibition that incorporates the active and tactile experience that is currently provided outside would satisfy the visitor's desires.
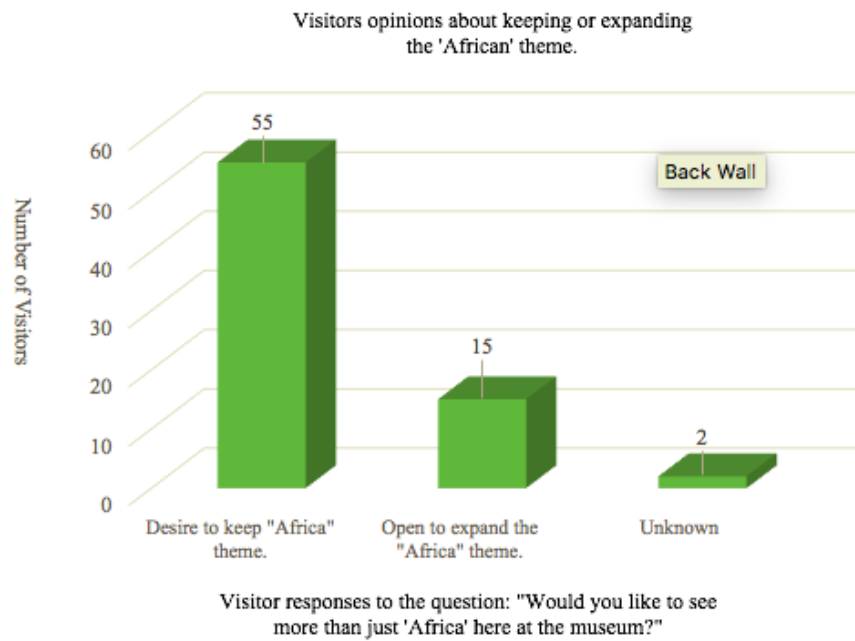
Fig.21 Graph on the visitor's opinions of the 'Africa' theme.

I would discourage changing the theme of the museum to run in line with a more "world cultures" content. With such a prominent history and vivid popular memory in the public, the 'Afrika' Museum provides a unique selling point that attracts visitors from across the country. During visitor interviews I asked whether they would like to see more continents than just Africa. The majority appreciated the 'Africa' theme (See Fig.21), some saying that instead it would be better to increase the diversity of Africa currently shown. Others praising the unique value of the 'Africa' theme which otherwise would lead them to go somewhere else, like the Tropenmuseum. Many expressed their concern for a loss in identity if the African theme was removed:

> *"V: I think there are other museums, like the Tropenmuseum (for other cultures)...it is something unique here"* **Woman over 65.**

> *"V:...no I like it that it's just Africa otherwise you could go to the Tropenmuseum"* **Mother 35-45 with 3 children (under 13).**

> *"V: with the children the Buitenmuseum (is good), the inside is not for kids and I think we would miss something...*
> *I: would you like to see more than just Africa?*

V: I think you would miss a special identity if you took it away"
Mother (V) 35-45 with children (6-2).

"V: no, we came here specifically to see Africa. Especially for the kids as they don't know much about Africa and we wanted to teach them…Don't add more continents…"
Father (V) 30-40 three children (4-10).

6.2 <u>Praise and Criticism of the Buitenmuseum.</u>

The Buitenmuseum provides an experience that engages and encourages people to learn more about other cultures. It provides a desirable day out, especially for families. The outdoor area rekindles memories, ignites new ones and entices both new and returning visitors. The experience is valued amongst visitors of all ages and this holds weight when understanding what is possible in the future. The museum successfully incorporates the Buitenmuseum with the inside exhibition through guided tours and workshops, for example I attended a tour about the Baka Pygmy exhibition in 'The Atrium' with stories and interactive 'games' in the Baka section of the Buitenmuseum. Contemporary environmental impacts to the Baka were discussed alongside the construction processes of the "Mongulu" houses. This highlights how the Buitenmuseum can be (and is) used as a tool to juxtapose contemporary issues and social reality with traditional rural representations.

I had a few responses about the interactive elements that were currently present in the Buitenmuseum. One of these being the ethnographic style film playing in one of the 'Benin' houses. I experienced a lot of praise and educational value of this, with a few chairs, a fishing net and two video screens; *"…what I like the most is that we show the video in 'Benin', because then you really see how the market works…it works on your imagination, you suddenly feel like your also there…it's a connection..."*. Unfortunately, this building is now closed for the foreseeable future due to structural issues. However, it shows how interactive film and technology is more effective in portraying an accurate and 'real' representation that connects with the audience than any of the in-situ material culture does. In the Atrium there is a useful description of the Buitenmuseum outlining the theme of Architecture. Alongside this display are three maquette models from artists such as Bodys Isek Kingelez and a short video that documents scenes from some of the countries represented, both portray themes of

African modernity. This provides essential background information and context to the audience regarding the history and thematic concepts in the Buitenmuseum. However, I noticed that this description, that is essential in underpinning the key themes and history of the Buitenmuseum, is missed by the majority of the audience. Therefore, I would suggest creating a new area, perhaps outside at the beginning of the Buitenmuseum that gives a detailed introduction through written text, video, audio, and interactive screens. Providing a detailed interactive map of the continent would be valuable, with the locations of the 'villages' shown, country names and cities. This is essential in helping visitors understand geographically the locations of these different cultures and the vast expanse and diversity of the African continent. In this 'introductory' area it is also important to provide an account of the history and biography of the Buitenmuseum, detailing its missionary relevance to be upfront about the representations that exist out of an era of imperialism. Providing this area, that is accessible to all ages and interests provides a basis of knowledge and an appropriate context for the visitors to then explore the exhibition.

My main criticism for the Buitenmuseum is the lack of diversity provided from the continent. The Buitenmuseum mainly portrays countries from West Africa and Lesotho. One staff member put it nicely that; "*the main buildings and exhibitions are only focused on sub-Saharan Africa. If we make it broader we could* **at least** *take the entire continent…we're the* **'Afrika'** *Museum, but Africa only starts when people start to get darker in skin…"*. We must move away from classical categorisations of what is 'African' and what is deemed inappropriate to fit into a classic ethnographic way of representing 'Africa'. This has also been noted in some of the visitors, who were calling for more diversity, for example *"…is this all the buildings of Africa? Africa is very big…Is this how all the people live in Africa in the North and in the South?" (Mother 35-45, 3 children under 13).* It is imperative to show a variety of cultural representations from a wider demographic, to truly represent the diversity of Africa's fifty-four countries.

It seems that in recent years collecting, creating and cataloguing of the collection seems to have become lax. I would suggest attempting to regain the knowledge lost by the merger in regard to the collection, more specifically the objects that come from Africa. By cataloguing and understanding the biography of the collection, one can then make informed and appropriate choices when adding objects. Some of the current objects are outdated and this has a knock-on effect to the audience's knowledge processes. Contemporary updates are

required, for example cooking techniques, outdated calendars/newspapers and banal material culture need to reflect the current globalised market and technological advancements. A 'spring clean' so to say, would be worthwhile to remove the objects that are unnecessary, mouldy or outdated. Once the objects are reassessed and removed, this provides ample space to reimagine the 'rooms' as new exhibition spaces. Providing a story of traditional architecture on the exterior with the interior providing a theme with increased interactive educative merit that a bed, a second-hand sofa or random bric-a-brac can never achieve. This provides a space for contrasting representations of social and cultural themes that exist in multiple ways across the continent.

6.3 The Possibilities for Renovating the Exhibition – Example Cases.

Here, I suggest example cases of possible themes that could be envisioned for the future of the Buitenmuseum. From my findings, it is evident that an inclusive approach to representing Africa is required through community collaboration (see Ames, 1991, Arnoldi, 1999, Golding and Modest, 2013, Hooper-Greenhill, 2006, Macdonald, 2006). It must bridge the distance between cultures by celebrating both similarities and differences and providing a narrative of both Africa's history and contemporary social reality that aims to confront negative assumptions and stereotypes (Arnoldi, 1999: 718). We must counterbalance the narrative so readily reinforced in western society that Africa is "abysmal poverty, drought, famine, genocide, Ebola, AIDS and misdirected foreign aid" (Seeberg, 2015: 13). The "AFRICA: Architecture, Culture and Identity" exhibition in the Louisiana Museum of Modern art provides a relevant example of how architecture and identity play a role in African cultures (Tøjner, 2015: 7). This exhibition portrays "alternative stories of the culture and history of Africa that are just as valid as the common one, but are all too rarely told, and which are necessary to the reconsideration and nuancing of the West's gaze at Africa" (Seeberg, 2015: 13). The curators here have specified local examples within local contexts of "The Nigerian, or Kenyans" as opposed to "Africa" or "Africans", whilst also providing cross-regional similarities in the continent that are relevant (Ibid.). It should be emphasised that it is not possible to adequately portray the huge diversity of the African continent, nor attempt to classify the specifically "African" (Ibid.). In terms of what the visitors want to see, the main themes were animals, cooking, food, music and dance, nature and interactive displays. It is useful to acknowledge the desires of the audience, but it is necessary to provide content that ruptures their expectations and opens minds to differing realities. I also

experienced an open attitude to the introduction of 'urban' representations, which is beneficial to challenge static assumptions. Evidently, the theme of architecture and current material culture proves valuable amongst the audience. If this theme was to be continued, the architectural displays should detail construction, materials and life stories of the people who live in them, instead of a mimetic display of an imagined reality.

The museum requested possibilities of representing African contemporary urban spheres in the Buitenmuseum. Africa and Europe both now have three "megacities" (United Nations, 2014)[11]. One possible way of showing this urbanisation is by adding an urban city dwelling. The prevalence and consistency of corrugated iron sheets and concrete blocks in informal urban residential dwellings warrants a space in the exhibition. This provides a stark contrast to the traditional rural architecture that consumes the exhibition experience. When juxtaposed with these rural representations it creates a space for the audience to question their systems of knowledge and assumptions. The possibilities here are vast, it would be interesting to bring in what Folkers labels "Swahili baroque" which incorporates the identity constructions of the urban city dweller (Folkers, 2010: 222). Furthermore, Antoni has expressed interest in being part of any new developments in terms of architecture, and given his extensive knowledge of African architecture this appears appropriate. However, caution is required regarding incurring the same representative issues when constructing life-sized replica architecture, therefore I would not recommend creating the same mimetic effect seen in the other 'houses'. That's not to say there should be no objects, however these should reflect the material culture found in these urban dwellings, be sourced from the country depicted, and should carry a story and description. Using photographs, videos and tactile interactive elements may be more appropriate to portray personal stories, daily life and urban developments which hinders processes of knowledge founded on wondrous imagination.

Formal urban architecture signifies a fundamental part of contemporary African social reality. It also carries with it a relevant story about the modernist architecture movement, independence and contemporary African architects (see Folkers, 2010). A replica shopping

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[11] "Megacities" is defined as a city with at least 10 million inhabitants see *https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/world-urbanization-prospects.html for revision of the world urbanisation prospects 2014 and see https://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Maps/CityDistribution/CityPopulation/CityPop.aspx* for a world map by percentage of urban agglomerations by size class for 2014 and 2030 (United Nations, 2014).

mall or a skyscraper is slightly farfetched, however, using alternative techniques this can be present through visual media such as photographs, video and interactive games. For example, one could provide an interactive touch screen with different images (or segments) of African formal architecture and European/Dutch formal architecture which the visitors have to categorise, with the aim to counteract ethnocentric stereotypes. In addition, this should also detail the difference in construction due to environmental factors, such as shade traps and ventilation bricks (Folkers, 2010: 237-244). Furthermore, this theme could be expanded through the use of maquette models, for example the work of Kingalez. In an interview with Antoni, he emphasised the social importance and meaning that these intricate models have that depict not just todays 'Africa' but also the 'Africa' of the future. Furthermore, Antoni has a large collection of these maquettes that nearly made it into the museum before the disturbance of the merger. However, these do not have the same visual impact as the current 'villages' and therefore I would suggest something that can compete for interest with these dominating structures. This leads me onto another urban theme that is central across the continent; transport. Extensive transport networks are now a global phenomenon. Something that connects people across the world. This is an important contemporary theme that the museum's audience can relate to and counter the hierarchical gap between the perceived idea of the African 'Other' and 'us'. It also connects both the rural and urban spheres of society, and embodies this fluid interrelationship that exists (See Ferguson, 1992). Therefore, providing a representation of an 'African' transport hub that highlights the cultural importance of mobility, creates a synergy between the audience and those that are represented. For example, public and private buses, Nigeria's "Matatus" semi-formal buses (see pp.77), taxis, motorbikes, bicycles, trains, complete with signposts, formal and informal shops, luggage, tickets and the unescapable sensory hustle and bustle of this contemporary conglomeration. This could be achieved by taking a 'Matatus' and transforming it into an interactive space where visitors of all ages can be presented with visual information before starting their 'journey' around the Buitenmuseum. For example, the focus upon a 'journey' creates an 'in Africa' experience, with the seats remaining, an interactive screen at the front, providing 'real life' audio of the horns, sellers, traffic that exists. The 'driver' can then interact with the audience and introduce the different representations in the exhibition. Alternatively, it could provide a 'fly on the wall' recording of a journey between an African city and a rural village. With the addition of personal stories of "going back to visit the village" incorporated, the audience are given an accurate account of the importance and reality that exists between these social spheres. Incorporated into this the 'market' gives an

insight into the formal and informal forms of exchange within contemporary African material culture. Markets were frequently called for by the audience and this theme has also been mentioned by staff. It is now imperative to represent, in some form or another, the contemporary urban sphere that hold such an economic, political, historical, social and cultural importance for countries in Africa that have long been overshadowed.

The repetitiveness of the in-situ collections in the 'houses' appears to create a "boring" and mundane experience for the audience. One way to overcome this is to remove some of the decorated 'rooms' to replace them with exhibition spaces. This could then incorporate social themes of music, art, fashion, technology, environment, education, politics, pre-colonial history (to name but a few) that provides a context that is physically juxtaposed to the traditional structure that it sits within. This then breaks up the mundane experience of observing repeated beds and chairs with contemporary themes that appeal for contradictions and confrontation in the cultural assumptions in the audience. In a bid to move away from static representations, and the increased effect of a lifeless 'ghost town', personal stories are required to make connections between us as human beings. This encourages the celebration and acknowledgement of cultural similarities and differences in todays globalised and modernised world. The distance between people of different cultures should be bridged through everyday personal renditions of material culture that hold cultural and social importance. Ideally this should be through 'face to face' interaction, via video or audio materials. Themes could detail the importance of traditional culture (and how this has adapted to the modern world), daily life, school and education, relationships and kindship, and can be portrayed through an array of 'talking heads' from differing demographics. This provides additional basis for social and cultural contexts, understanding and appreciation within the audience.

Something that a staff informant suggested was using a 'YouTube Vlog'[12]. This would be valuable in providing visual stimuli from 'on the ground' stories, voices and everyday life of a specific city, individual and culture. In addition, social media could be

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[12] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2Wd81teW98&t=22s This is just an example of the many 'vlogs' on YouTube. Here Adedè, who was born in Ghana but now lives in The Netherlands, records series of vlogs documenting a three-week trip in Ghana visiting family, friends and travelling around. Themes include travel, lifestyle, hair and fashion and provides an interesting outlook to the country that is not possible through material culture alone (see Adedè, 2017).

utilised, such as 'Instagram' as a platform for sharing cultural knowledge and personal stories. For example, an interactive touch screen could be provided from an Instagram account that shows key social themes through the lens of an individual. With additional 'twists' whereby the image is flipped to reveal 'life without the filter' which contrasts key social issues. This would be especially effective for younger audience and adults and incorporates a 'contemporary' platform for showcasing social issues that exist on the continent. It is also important to not glorify 'Africa' as 'picture-perfect'; widespread poverty, disease and environmental degradation, issues which are felt worldwide, also needs to be acknowledged. The museum could include a self-instructed workshop that emphasises environmental impacts, allowing visitors, especially those with children a space to create models or art out of recycled goods. The audience called for an "in Africa" experience, by creating this through physical material culture and mimetic representations it encourages the audience to apply meaning through existing knowledge structures and imaginative processes. Therefore, the museum could reformulate this entertaining experience with increased accuracy, representativeness and excitement through a '4D Virtual Reality' headset. This provides a multisensory audio and visual experience of key social themes, environments and scenarios. This may quench the desire for a romanticised escape through an interactive immersive experience of contemporary social themes utilising personal stories, perspectives and voices of those represented. There is much value to the use of interactive video and technology when representing contemporary urban Africa, it provides a relatable context for the audience and brings the display techniques of the exhibition into the 21st century.

It is also imperative to involve local communities going forward. The Buitenmuseum has the potential to provide a space for a variety of communities with different cultural backgrounds to be connected. Especially for younger generations with African cultural heritage it could become a source of learning, community and cultural exchange. As suggested by a staff member this could be implemented by portraying stories through the collection, enabling a platform to delve into the historical stories, traditions and material culture. This could also be achieved through community arts programmes, such as an 'art wall', music, sculpture, traditional skills workshops and heritage lectures. An inclusive museum community that embraces cultural similarities and differences is required, providing those with African heritage a voice and a platform to explore, embrace, learn and share their cultural backgrounds.

Overall the Buitenmuseum provides an experience that is desired by new and returning visitors and engages this audience into an entertaining and educational museum interaction. I would strive to keep this outdoor exhibition, however in general the representations of Africa need to be more diverse and showcase the reality that exists in contemporary global world. There is an abundance of 'spaces' in the Buitenmuseum that could be reimagined to provide the opportunity to host a variety of thematic representations from contemporary to traditional spheres of African cultures. In turn representations that are constantly juxtaposed to each other confront the audiences limited traditional perceptions of a diverse continent.

This concluding chapter outlines the suggestions for possible change in the future of the Buitenmuseum. The visitors value the Buitenmuseum experience as well as the specific theme of 'Africa'', making this a unique selling point for the museum. However, due to the outdated material culture there was an increased call for interactive and educational themes through video, technology, personal stories and voices through collaboration with communities. The highly traditional portrayal of the African continent in the Buitenmuseum may encourage static homogenous cultural assumptions in the audience. Therefore, the complex social diversity of the contemporary African continent needs to now be represented in order to confront certain stereotypes. The Buitenmuseum provides a valuable space for the audience to learn about African cultures, currently this educative aspect is limited, however, reimagining the exhibition spaces through juxtaposing social themes could provide the required rejuvenation.

7. Conclusion.

The agency of the material culture and audience increases the tactility and visceral experience of the Buitenmuseum. The concept of wonder and curiosity is fundamental to the exhibition; however, it encourages some visitors to commodify and exotify a traditional 'Africa'. This creates an entertaining sensation of being immersed "in Africa" which is desired by the audience. The rural traditional material culture, that is predominantly sourced from the Netherlands, leads the visitors to assume authenticity and accuracy. The audience has an idealised image of an 'authentic' traditional 'Africa' that is at the forefront of their exhibition expectations and desires. With limited contemporary material culture in the

Buitenmuseum this encourages cultural assumptions that 'Africa' is homogenously rural in some visitors. Portraying the relationship between African rural and urban social spheres is required, as this plays a central role in the cultural identities of Africans and those with African heritage. By incorporating the dynamic diversity of African social reality, through voices, interactive displays, technology and community collaboration the static exhibition can be reimagined to provide a space for cultural discovery amongst diverse communities.

Appendices.

Appendix A: List of questions used during my visitor's interviews:

1. Where have you come from today?
2. Have you been to the Afrika Museum before?
3. Did you come here today for the Binnenmuseum or the Buitenmusuem?
4. What do you think about the houses in the Buitenmuseum?
4.1 Why do you like them? (used in response to short answers like "yes there nice")
5. How would you improve the Buitenmusuem?
6. Is there anything missing in the Buitenmusuem?
7. Do you think the exhibition was educational?
8. What would you think if we added some African cities here in the Buitenmuseum?
9. What aspects of African cultures would you like to see in the Buitenmuseum?
10. Would you like to see more than just African cultures here at the museum?
11. If we removed the Buitenmuseum would you still come to the museum?

Appendix B: Example of 'map' used for tracking visitors "hot" and "cold" (see Hooper-Greenhill, 2006) spots:
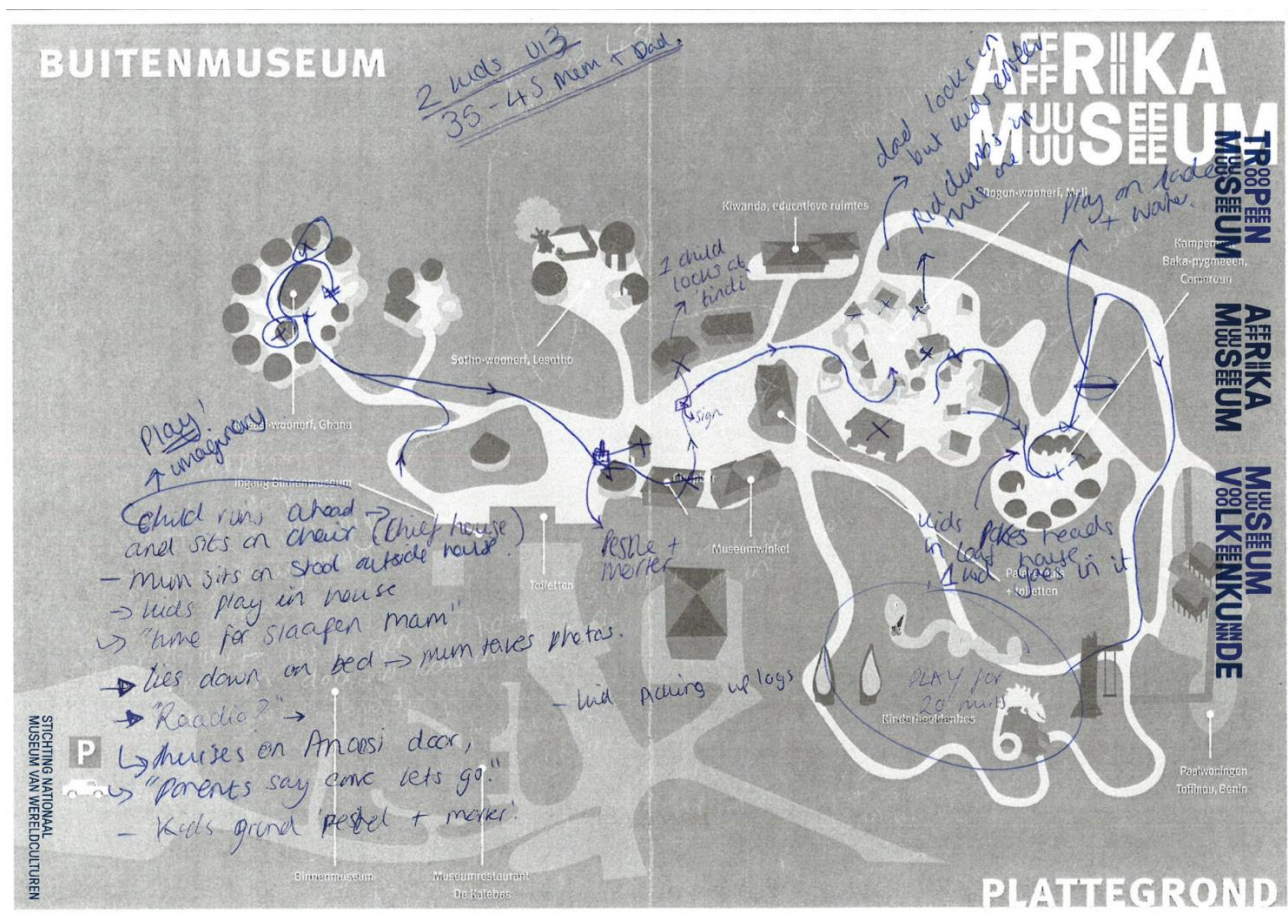
Appendix C: Original exhibition map (Plattegrond, Afrika Museum, n.d.):

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