



Exploring the engagement practices of museum visitors with digital heritage

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Progression of people's involvement in-and-around museums from the passive public to participants

Participants –people who by invitation or from their own agenda contribute to the museum by changing the power-relations in someway

Users –people whose engagement with the museum goes beyond visiting and viewing, assumes using either museum's resources or part taking in museum activities

Visitors – those who actually come to the museum whether onsite or online

Audiences –those having some online or offline connection to the museum – in the sphere of receiving messages from the museum

Public – everyone out there with the potential to be or to become interested in or connected with the museum

Estonian exhibition Encounters

- Everyday life of ordinary people
- Real stories of real people
- New source materials
- Research based
- Participatory
- Dialogical, polyphonic
- Challenge visitors



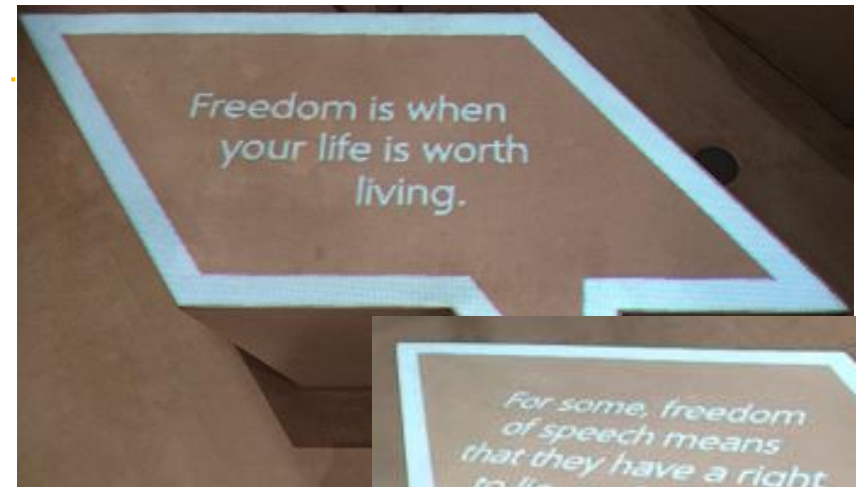
- *„I was hesitating in taking part of the filming, but being in the exhibition and seeing people's reactions, I am honored to be in exhibition“*





Stories of Freedom

- *„Surprising, that Estonians are not offended about the societal diversity in the screen“*



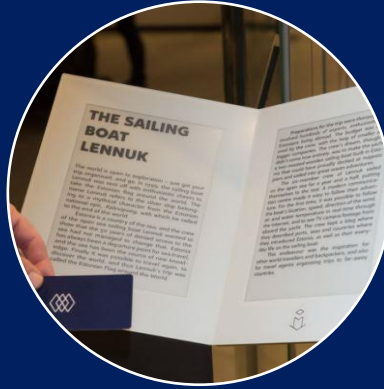
Digital Exhibition Layers



Hands-on
multimedia
exhibits



Interactive
touch screens



Labels on e-ink
screens



AV:
documentaries
and fiction
films



Historical
originals










Audience research

Direct:

- E-mails from visitors
- Social media posts
- Museum guides feedback
- Expert feedback
- etc

Curated:

- Observation
- Interviews
- Usage tests
- Analyze of e-tickets
- etc

PICTOGRAM	WHAT VISITOR DOES ^{DOES}
-----	TRAJECTOR
	LOOKING How long
-	STOPS How long
X	READS How long
	MAKES PHOTOS
	TOUCHES
	LAUGHES
	CRIES
=	TALKS TO OTHERS

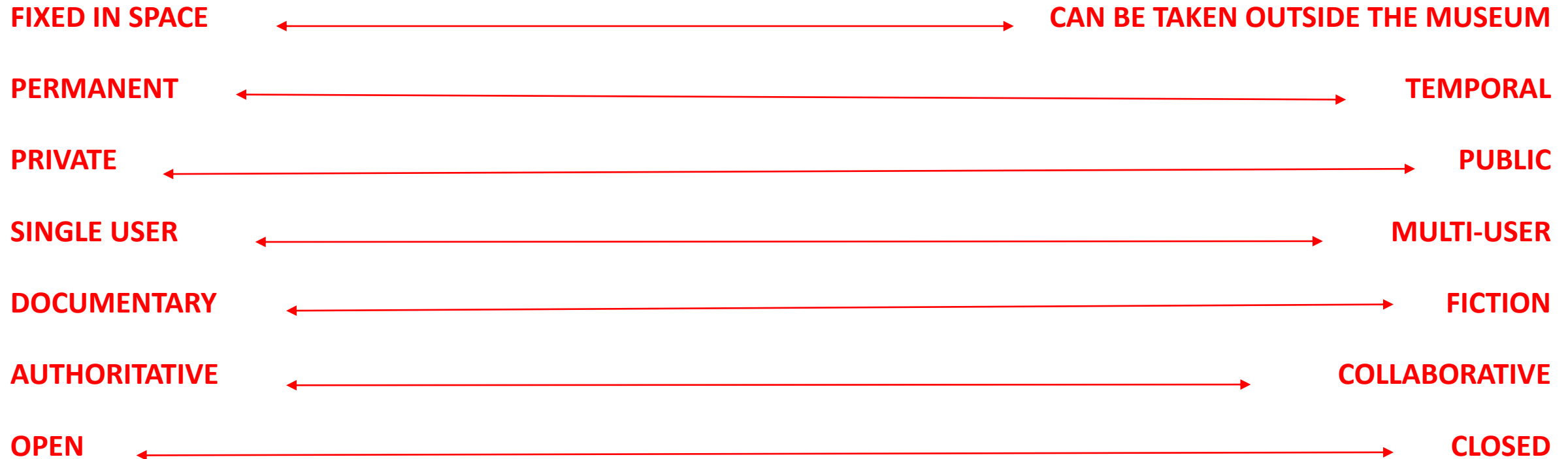


Current ability to use data derived from the digital exhibits

- E-tickets: E-ink system for changing the exhibition texts to 8 different languages
- Data sets from using the digital exhibits based on the e-tickets. The resulting dataset can be exploited for the data visualisation to understand how visitors are using the exhibition space and which digital exhibits are used
- Length of the path, duration of the visit, number of the exhibits used
- How to assess the usage of the particular exhibits and their ability to engage people? To understand their wider meaning, not just the perspective of 'usability' and 'information design'?
- A set of analytical dimensions of digital exhibits onsite



ANALYTICAL DIMENSIONS OF DIGITAL EXHIBITS ONSITE



Ref: Runnel, Pille; Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Pille; Lepik, Krista (2021). Why is this exhibit digital? – dimensions of digital exhibits in the museum space. In: Maria Shehade; Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert (Ed.). Emerging Technologies and the Digital Transformation of Museums and Heritage Sites (47–60). Switzerland: Springer. DOI: 978-3-030-83647-4_4.

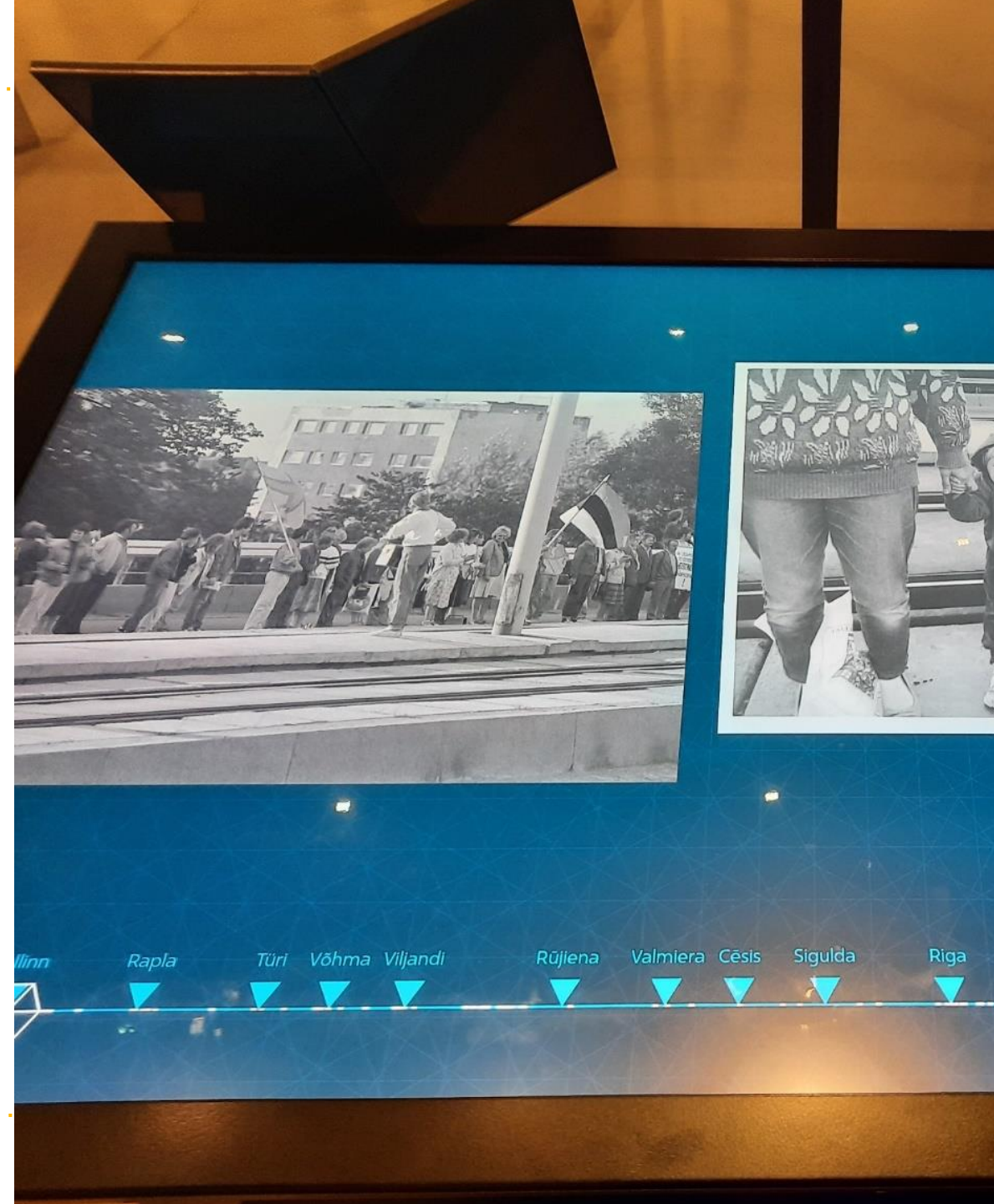
Baltic Way

- In the evening of 23 August 1989, at 7 pm, about 2 million people held hands and formed a continuous human chain 600 km long, from Tallinn to Vilnius
- It was the 50th anniversary of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact which secret protocols divided Europe between Germany and Russia



Design principles

- Large amounts of data that can't be exhibited otherwise (database with 3000 photos from people in the chain)
- Easily usable
- Max 2 layers
- Allows users to engage, freedom to choose



The Baltic Way



FIXED IN SPACE

CAN BE TAKEN OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM

PERMANENT

TEMPORAL

PRIVATE

PUBLIC

SINGLE USER

MULTI-USER

DOCUMENTARY

FICTION

AUTHORITATIVE

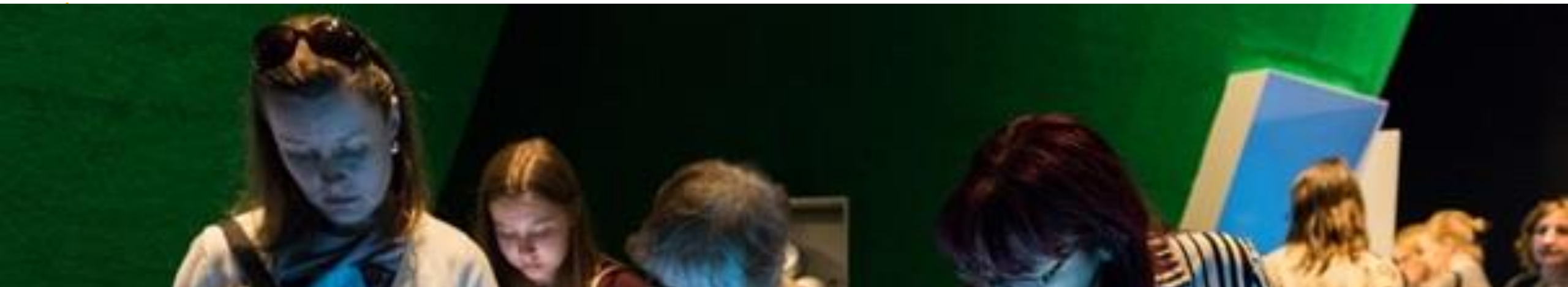
COLLABORATIVE

OPEN

CLOSED



- The Baltic Way: users do not just give their photos to the museum, but rather participate in a process where personal experience and memories participate in creating a collective representation.
- Memory institution not a gatekeeper, but a facilitator, offering format and platform, not curation?
- How to transform this moment of simultaneously personal and collective engagement into a long-term engagement (citizen science, democratic engagement with cultural heritage, etc) for increased impact?



Digital elements: implications for visitor engagement

- How do the choices we make in designing digital exhibits in museums afford engaging with existing audiences onsite, at the exhibition space.
- Apart from educating or informing, the exhibit can be designed with purposes of evoking emotions or socialization/acculturation, as well as inviting the visitor to consult, collaborate, or connect with the museum. **Tweaking different characteristics of the digital objects can support different types of engagement.**
- The seven dimensions of the digital exhibits support one or another of these modes of engagement, facilitating **unique constellations**, yet remaining open to further analysis and comparison