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## “OBJECTION?!”: The Concept of Sociomateriality and its Consequences for museumised Objects<sup>1</sup>

In their anthology *Curatorial Things*, editors Beatrice von Bismarck and Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer pose a key question in museology research: “[O]ne of the central questions is what the precise process is, the specific feature of the activation of things or people through things in a curatorial situation . . .”<sup>2</sup> I am of the opinion that the concept of *sociomateriality* might shed light on this question and process; it is this question that forms the core focus of this paper.

In this essay, I will present the approach of sociomateriality introduced by Kalthoff et al.<sup>3</sup> as an interwoven interplay of material things, human actions, and social orders. Sociomateriality is found within the context of *new materialism*, and favours a non-anthropocentric perspective of re-symmetrising ‘human – thing – action’. I would like to show that there are different forms of sociomateriality in the various spheres of reality (e.g. in day-to-day life, the field of religion, the museum).

To validate the plausibility of this hypothesis, I begin by providing the theoretical framework on which this line of thinking is based. Building on this, I describe the general concept of sociomateriality. Before the characteristics of a museum-based sociomateriality can be reconstructed, however, it is necessary to address two questions: Firstly, what happens to objects when they are museumised, and what shifts thus take place with respect to the understanding of objects in contrast to ideas in diverging spheres of reality? Secondly, what are the characteristics of museum-related communication? In the subsequent reconstruction of a museum-based sociomateriality, I limit the scope of this essay to “museum things” in an “aggregate state”<sup>4</sup> as exhibits in presentations.

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1 This article was translated by Amy Klement.

2 Beatrice von Bismarck et al., “Curatorial Things: An Introduction,” in *Curatorial Things*, ed. Beatrice von Bismarck et al. (Berlin: Sternberg, 2019), 12.

3 Cf. Herbert Kalthoff et al., “Einleitung: Materialität in Kultur und Gesellschaft,” in *Materialität: Herausforderungen für die Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. Herbert Kalthoff et al. (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2016).

4 Thomas Thiemeyer, “Museumsdinge,” in *Handbuch Materielle Kultur: Bedeutungen, Konzepte, Disziplinen*, ed. Stefanie Samida et al. (Stuttgart/Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2014), 230.

## 1 Theoretical Framework

What is meant by the term ‘spheres of reality’ in this essay? In *The Social Construction of Reality*, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann outline a sociology of knowledge that distinguishes between socially institutionalised spheres, e.g. day-to-day life, politics, economics, art, and religion.<sup>5</sup> In each sphere, different circumstances of communication predominate: their autonomous spatio-temporal contexts, authentic rules, processes, and roles, as well as their forms and media. Differences are also found in vocabulary, e.g. the same thing may be named differently in different spheres. As a result of differences in their respective communicative repertoires, experiences are interpreted differently in each sphere, and particular experiences can also be evoked differently. The communication processes are part of (power-political) discourses and ongoing processes of negotiation, meaning that the areas are both altered and differentiated, and that their boundaries are shifted.<sup>6</sup>

Religious communication has to address the reference problem of representing transcendence, and can be used as an example of one of the specific forms of communication from the different spheres of reality: How can the unobservable be made observable? Religious traditions each deal with this issue via culturally specific communication and media strategies: in comparison to communication in the everyday world, religious communication takes place in specific, selected spaces and at particular, defined times (also frequencies and durations). It follows a prescriptive process of its own, conducted by actors with specified roles, who manipulate specific tools in various forms of communication. An attempt is thus made to address various sensory channels in a multi-medially choreographed ritual, to facilitate sensory experience of the invisible extramundane. Once communication has been established in such a way that, as a result of the religious and ritual paraphernalia, unusual entities from outside of day-to-day life are ‘truly present’ in the conceptual world of religious participants, and their extramundane potentials have been communicated, the religious things become special media of religious communication.<sup>7</sup>

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5 Cf. Peter Berger et al., *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit: Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer-Taschenbuch, 2007).

6 Cf. Hubert Knoblauch, “Transzendenzenerfahrung und symbolische Kommunikation: Die phänomenologisch orientierte Soziologie und die kommunikative Konstruktion der Religion,” in *Religion als Kommunikation*, ed. Hartmann Tyrell et al. (Würzburg: Ergon, 1998).

7 Cf. Mirko Roth, *Transformationen: Ein zeichen- und kommunikationstheoretisches Modell zum Kultur- und Religionswandel; exemplifiziert an ausgewählten Transformationsprozessen der Santería auf Kuba* (Berlin: LIT, 2016), 147–62. This outline of religious communication is ideal-typ-

Objects of the same object class<sup>8</sup> may be found in various spheres of reality, but they generally then have diverging designations, and are subsumed under various meta-terms: a cup can be a commonplace drinking vessel, but, in the religious context, it could also be a chalice for Christian mass – and both are potentially objects that can be collected and museumised. Due to its particular circumstances of, and use in, communication, a commonplace everyday item is a different object to a “sacred object” or a “ritual thing”, and, in turn, a different object to a museum exhibit or “museum thing” or *semiophore*.<sup>9</sup>

Based on the theoretical assumptions just presented, my two-part thesis is thus that similar but distinct forms of sociomateriality are present in different spheres of reality, which in turn lead to different concepts of objects.

## 2 Sociomateriality

The concept of sociomateriality essentially envisions a re-symmetrising of ‘human – thing – action’. The role of objects, which experience a marginal existence in many of the humanities, is thus emphasised. Objects are indispensable to our social practices and physical routines, since they form an integral part of these actions, a role which *cannot* be overestimated. With their “obstinacy”, they present us with challenges in their handling, provide us with ‘offers’ (or ‘affordances’) regarding their use, and are non-intentional ‘co-agents in networks’ or in a structure of *assemblages*.<sup>10</sup> Even if they have no *agency* of their own, their mere

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ical and might be more flexible and fluid, cf. Dorothea Lüddeckens et al., eds., *Fluide Religion: Neue religiöse Bewegungen im Wandel; Theoretische und empirische Systematisierungen* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2010).

- 8 The same objects can change spheres, or their tokens can be found in different spheres at the same time.
- 9 In the same order, cf. Karl-Heinz Kohl, *Die Macht der Dinge: Geschichte und Theorie sakraler Objekte* (München: Beck, 2003); Peter J. Bräunlein, “Ritualdinge,” in *Handbuch Materielle Kultur: Bedeutungen, Konzepte, Disziplinen*, ed. Stefanie Samida et al. (Stuttgart/Weimar: J.B. Metzler, 2014), 245–48; Gottfried Korff, “Zur Eigenart der Museumsdinge (1992),” in *Museumsdinge: Deponieren – exponieren*, ed. Gottfried Korff et al. (Köln/Weimar: Böhlau, 2007) and Krzysztof Pomian, *Der Ursprung des Museums: Vom Sammeln* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2013), 80–85.
- 10 In the same order, cf. Hans Peter Hahn, “Der Eigensinn der Dinge – Einleitung,” in *Vom Eigensinn der Dinge: Für eine neue Perspektive auf die Welt des Materiellen*, ed. Hans Peter Hahn (Berlin: Neofelis, 2015); Karl H. Hörning, *Experten des Alltags: Die Wiederentdeckung des praktischen Wissens* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wiss., 2001); James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979); Bruno Latour, *Wir sind nie modern gewesen: Versuch einer symmetrischen Anthropologie* (Berlin: Akad.-Verlag, 1995) and Sonia Hazard, “The Material Turn in the Study of Religion,” *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 4, no. 1 (2013): 64–68.

physical presence nonetheless alters the action complexes of the co-presence of 'human – thing – action'.

Concretely, the influence of things on human beings and their thinking, action, and experience is shown to be a *dispositif* that can only be controlled to a limited extent: as a result of their "obstinacy", things (from high technology to everyday kitchen appliances) present particular challenges in their handling and use. Equally, they specify particular options for action as a result of their form and ergonomics, for example in the cases of tool handles or chairs. Further, an environment shaped by things channels actions, as movements in space may be confined by spatial arrangements and infrastructures. Finally, some items – heirlooms – may evoke memories, both good and bad, and hence corresponding emotions, linked to their object biographies. Moreover, they present obstacles for us with respect to their temporal dimension: not only when, how many times, and for how long, but also with what frequency we use things is *inscribed* in them. This is evident in the case of toothbrushes, watering cans, or inspection and maintenance work. Equally, things may also bring instructions for their disposal, for their death, along with them.<sup>11</sup> We even use some things, such as hammers, pencils, glasses, hearing aids, or smartphones, as extensions of our bodies and/or our senses, so that they become prostheses embedded in physical routines as fixed components. Without things, many practices would not exist – in any case not in their present form; such things are constitutive of these practices, and form a *dispositif* for, but not determination of, the execution of social action.<sup>12</sup>

The differences between our so-called *cultural performances*<sup>13</sup> and our day-to-day practices are particularly noteworthy in the extent to which they stem from their differentiated forms of communication and their tools. Indeed, it is particularly true of these cultural performances that they could not function at all without material culture. Court proceedings, for example, take place based on a defined procedure, in a building of their own with a specially designed hall. Further, they display a particular chronology, so-called court days, during which judges preside over the court, in the typical regalia of a robe. The same applies, mutatis

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11 Cf. Hans Peter Hahn, *Materielle Kultur: Eine Einführung* (Berlin: Reimer, 2014), 26–49; Hahn, "Eigensinn," 21–54 and Heike Delitz, *Architektursoziologie* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2009), 74–89.

12 Cf. Andreas Reckwitz, "Grundelemente einer Theorie sozialer Praktiken," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 32, no. 4 (2003): 289–93.

13 Cf. Victor Turner, *Vom Ritual zum Theater: Der Ernst des menschlichen Spiels* (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus-Verl., 2009).

mutandis, in the religious field. In Bräunlein’s words: “Rituals do not ‘function’ without things.”<sup>14</sup>

Sociomateriality emphasises the inextricable intertwining of ‘human – thing – action’, and this, in addition to physical and bodily characteristics of objects, that make reference to the context of their use and thus show their functionality, should be considered under additional framing dynamics:<sup>15</sup> 1. ‘Contexts of action’ assign a situative meaning (*sub-code*) to objects. 2. ‘Physical environment’ and concrete material contexts (for instance, relative to other things in a room) add further nuances of meaning to objects, as well as altering them, as they become a building block of spatial-visual codes (*parataxis*<sup>16</sup>). 3. ‘Institutionalised expectations’ attempt to regulate how objects are used, perceived, and received, for which there is generally a more or less comprehensive prescript-code (*protocol*).

Things are thus framed in diverse and dynamic ways, meaning that, despite their physical stability, they remain ambivalent and fluid (i.e., polysemic) from a practical and semiotic perspective. This effect results from both their contexts of action and physical environment, as well as the institutional specifications, being part of ongoing processes of negotiation and transformation. This occurs e.g. through things being shifted to other contexts, their users changing, or the assignation of a different meaning to a thing over time, as a result of, for example, repurposing or wear and tear. During a thing’s object biography, its meaning, significance, and value are altered by users, contexts, time, and contemporary events, in which different codes are objectified in an intersubjective way, and thus become conventionalised in society. The ‘social’ in ‘sociomateriality’ consists particularly of the execution of a code (how it is applied in interpretation and used in a sequence of actions as well as in conventionalisation), as this is the mechanism by which meanings and relationships are constructed.

In summary, it should be repeated: ‘human – thing – action’ are co-present in interwoven sociomaterialities of different scales, whereby this concept aims at a non-anthropocentric view. All elements lie equally on one level in dynamic tension. If one element changes, the entire complex changes. This has consequences both for time-honoured theories of subject as well as for handed-down notions of an object: An *objection* to an outdated dichotomic subject-object relation!

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14 Bräunlein, “Ritualdinge,” 245.

15 For what follows, cf. Kalthoff et al., “Einleitung,” 11–14.

16 Contrasting “syntax” in linear codes.

### 3 Museumisation

What then happens to things when they are museumised? Museumisation is a twofold act of decontextualisation and recontextualisation: a thing is taken out of the spatio-temporal framework of its milieu of origin, in which it had certain uses and was embedded in particular practices – and thus was part of a specific sociomateriality. As a result, the thing is simultaneously classified within a new spatio-temporal framework and becomes part of a sociomateriality specified by the museum. This can be identified by, for example, changes in the physical-spatial, the systematic, the proximity to other things, and by the differing practices conducted by various actors. The thing is now a *musealia*<sup>17</sup> and a document of both its context of origin and its collection context, within which it is now useless. In this next station in its object biography, it is given a new functional context and assumes a new semantic quality and dimension. What takes place is hence a shift in both the function and meaning of the thing: the shift in meaning corresponds to the fact that its transfer to a collection brings it into the vicinity of other things, makes it – in a certain respect – a unique item, and declares it to be of valuable significance. Moreover, it is transferred from a private or rather narrow range of use and restricted communicative memory, to a different and perhaps wider range of use, as well as to the cultural memory of society. A shift in function takes place corresponding to the fact that – insofar as the *musealia* is exhibited and does not land in depot as an *archivalia* – its primary function becomes being looked at.<sup>18</sup>

As an exhibit, *musealia* are generally presented with three logics of visualisation: 1) art/artwork; 2) example/specimen; 3) testimony/witness to a period of time. Particularly in the case of an example/specimen, which is representative of a type, series, or genre, or in the case of a testimony/witness to a period of time, which additionally makes reference to an (historical) event, it becomes clear that an exhibit is no longer merely an object, but is instead a sign that refers beyond itself to the spatio-temporal framework of its context of origin.<sup>19</sup> For this, the historian of museums Krzysztof Pomian coined the term *semiophore*: Semiophores are

17 A term introduced by Zbynek Stránský, cf. Katharina Flügel, *Einführung in die Museologie* (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchges., 2005), 26–27.

18 Cf. Anke te Heesen, *Theorien des Museums zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 2015), 170–76; Flügel, *Museologie*, 25–27, 102; Pomian, *Ursprung des Museums*, 79–86; Kohl, *Macht der Dinge*, 253–56 and Thieme, “Museumsdinge,” 230.

19 Cf. Te Heesen, *Theorien des Museums*, 68. This logics are not inherent in the things, but instead arise from negotiation processes that are part of the tradition of exhibitions and can change based on the situation, cf. Thieme, “Museumsdinge,” 231.

two-sided objects that have both a material and a semiotic aspect: The material aspect is constituted by means of the material, but also by form and colour and so on. It is a semaphore and coordinates its physical relationship to other objects. The semiotic aspect consists of the visible signs on/in the material component of the semaphore, which make reference to an invisible quality. For Pomian, this invisible quality can thus be of many sorts: spatially or temporally absent, culturally alien, or from a different sphere of reality.<sup>20</sup> Considered in this way, exhibits are no longer merely signs, but also media.

Flügel describes the process of museumisation as a drastic intervention with consequences for the corresponding object status: After interrogating the object, identifying its alleged essence and permeating into its structure, one cannot exhibit the same object anymore. “We are only able to communicate the changes we have brought about.”<sup>21</sup>

#### 4 Exhibits in Exhibitions: Museum-based Communication

Presentations in museums are unanimously understood as interpretations via *mise-en-scène* (staging), meaning the arrangement of objects and ensembles of objects in a space. The objects thus form the starting point for the three-dimensional arguments of a curatorial act of communication. As a result, presentations are also addressed as a rhetorical form or, more frequently, as a means of communication and authentic museum media.<sup>22</sup>

Building on the ideas of Jana Scholze, museum communication in presentations takes place in such a way<sup>23</sup> that absent creators of exhibitions strive to impart something about *supposedly* silenced receptacles or mute objects, to visitors who are physically present. However, in doing so, it is not the case that exhibitions reveal information strictly limited to the objects at hand; statements that go beyond the object are also made, whereby the object itself is supposed to stand as proof of the accuracy of the statement. The creators of exhibitions correspondingly develop codes of staging in which the objects and ensembles of objects are organised in a particular spatial arrangement (*parataxis*). Beyond this, the space

20 Cf. Pomian, *Ursprung des Museums*, 38–46, 84, 95.

21 Flügel, *Museologie*, 97.

22 Cf. Flügel, *Museologie*, 105–9; Korff, “Museumsdinge,” 144 and te Heesen, *Theorien des Museums*, 71–72, 190.

23 For what follows, cf. Jana Scholze, “Kultursemiotik: Zeichenlesen in Ausstellungen,” in *Museumsanalyse: Methoden und Konturen eines neuen Forschungsfeldes*, ed. Joachim Baur (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2010), 130–32.

and the arrangement are 'informed' by additional means of presentation such as light, sound, photos, films, accompanying texts, multimedia stations, and so on.<sup>24</sup> The exhibition design can thus work with atmospheres that foreground either the material or the medial character of the semiophore. These atmospheres are designed to give rise to particular behaviours, though it is ultimately up to visitors to decide which aspect, if any, becomes the focus of their attention. What is thus formed in the holistic inspection of multimedia exhibitions staged within museum-based modes of communication, which mediate between sense and sensibility, is a sphere of reality outside day-to-day life.<sup>25</sup> The communication media of such a sphere are both the individual semiophores themselves, and the staging of the exhibition as a whole.

According to Scholze, presentation statements are thus found on three levels: the exhibits themselves, the spatial object arrangements, and the general presentation context. It can analogously be argued that visitors decode the different levels by means of denotation, connotation, and meta-communication. Scholze assumes that such codes serve as a *dispositif* and a limitation of visitors' interpretations, through the targeted steering of attention and perceptions, as well as the staging codes of creators of exhibitions.

On the one hand, museum exhibitions are thus never spaces that are neutral or free of ideology, but are instead complexly coded relationships between signs that constitute a "gesture of showing"<sup>26</sup> and, as a rhetorical form, strive to convince with their statements. Their most important means of persuasion are the exhibits as semiophores. Exhibitions, as museum-based forms of communication, are places and modes for generating knowledge, constructing history, and for constructing worldviews that are typical for the particular time, institution, and society.<sup>27</sup> According to Flügel, new realities are generated in exhibitions, by means of interpretation, staging, and composition: exhibitions are models of reality and the exhibits form parts of this model, as statements and representations of reality. This can result in an experience of meaningful order with exhibitions reducing complexity and contingency.

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24 Cf. Flügel, *Museologie*, 122–27.

25 Cf. Te Heesen, *Theorien des Museums*, 57–58, 163; Jana Scholze, *Medium Ausstellung: Lektüren musealer Gestaltung in Oxford, Leipzig, Amsterdam und Berlin* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2004), 273–75.

26 Bal in Scholze, "Kultursemiotik," 130–32.

27 Cf. Scholze, *Medium Ausstellung*, 35–39, 269–72 and te Heesen, *Theorien des Museums*, 158–59, 162–66, 180–84.



On the other hand, visitors take their own paths through museum exhibitions, and thus gain their own viewpoints and perspectives on the exhibits. In self-selected rhythms between rest and movement, they decode exhibition statements according to the codes available to them. This leads to their having their own personal experiences with polysemic objects, and thus forming individual and subjective interpretations that may deviate significantly from those intended by the creators of exhibitions.<sup>28</sup> The interpretation offered by the creators of exhibitions via staging, by means of a coded exhibition design, is acted out individually and performatively in the physical, bodily co-presence of viewers as actors. This act fulfils all the criteria of Erika Fischer-Lichte’s characterisation of the features of performance, and so can result in the creation of something new.<sup>29</sup>

In this contingent, ambiguous figure, what arises in a mode of communication outside of day-to-day life is a specific, museum-based ‘sociomateriality’.

## 5 ‘Sociomateriality’ in the Museum

What changes occur as a result of things being presented in museums, as opposed to the sociomateriality of the everyday? Objects become semiophores, which can no longer be *grasped*; they are instead organised into groups with other objects, contextualised using additional means of presentation, and arranged in a space. This thus gives rise to spatial-visual codes as parataxis, about which Korff says: “The museum does not illustrate; it is an illustration in itself”.<sup>30</sup> It does, however, form an overall picture, within which visitors can move with relative freedom, with the ‘individual pictures’ silenced in the display cases or on the wall.<sup>31</sup> Museum things can thus generally still only be inspected and decoded. In a museum context, a visitor’s direct physical interaction with, and experience of, an object’s affordances, via its treatment and/or *handling*, is generally reduced to a great extent, or even eliminated entirely. In any case, semiophores no longer become prostheses for a physical routine. Does a renitence towards my primary *objection* occur here, and therefore support the possibility of a subject-object dichotomy after all?

Depending on the exhibition design, the staging can attempt to emphasise either the material or the medial side of an object. Ultimately, however, the individual

28 Cf. Flügel, *Museologie*, 106–9.

29 Cf. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2014); Scholze, *Medium Ausstellung*, note 304 and Scholze, “Kultursemiotik,” 131.

30 Cf. Korff, “Museumsdinge,” 144.

31 Cf. Flügel, *Museologie*, 109.

object stands, along with other objects and additional means of presentation, as a building block of a code in a parataxis. The question regarding the effects of presentation within a museum-based sociomateriality can perhaps only be answered from the perspective of its recipient: on the one hand, it can be said that the item's object character is intensified by both its need to be inspected, and the elimination of its *handling*, which only allows it to be perceived objectively via the more limited act of recognition. However, this alone does not give the full picture. On the other hand, therefore, when its medial references, in particular, are decoded in a museum-based mode of perception and *habitus*, the thing becomes a semiophore, making reference beyond itself.

Where is, then, something like affordance found in museum presentations? A space of perception of an exhibition, as a physical *habitat* filled with objects, is full of codes, parataxis and protocols, creating a space mediating between sense and sensation. This space can generally still be inspected physically, in that the space and arrangement of the objects channel movement, and the aestheticised groups of objects, along with their additional means of presentation, steer attention, perceptions, and interpretations. This gives rise to a synaesthetic and kinaesthetic experience that is reflected physically and generates *habitus*. Establishing a closeness to an object, connecting with its material and/or medial characteristics, and linking it to the exhibition topic, necessitates a particular museum-based *habitus*, practised by repeatedly inspecting diverse exhibitions, and that, when reflected on, can also be differentiated with respect to styles. In the interplay of *habitat* and *habitus*, what arises from museum-based communication is a sphere of reality outside of day-to-day life.<sup>32</sup>

As argued above, exhibitions develop gestures of showing that both prompt looking and strive to persuade with coded statements. They can be regarded as rhetorical figures whose arguments are three-dimensional objects and groups of objects in a space. The material and medial character of affordance in museum-based sociomateriality thus shifts, in my opinion, from the object to the exhibition and its spatial-visual codes of parataxis. An important moment of sociality in museum-based communication lies in implementing and applying such codes, since they position the objects, the arrangements of objects and space, and the exhibition context *vis-à-vis* recipients on the one hand and in a meaningful relationship on the other. Bill Brown seems to concur, when speaking of the “overarching curatorial thing” as an evocation of relations between individuals and

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32 Cf. Scholze, *Medium Ausstellung*, 273–77 and te Heesen, *Theorien des Museums*, 15, 163–64, 184–85.

exhibitions.<sup>33</sup> It is here that a clear indicator is found, with respect to the question posed by von Bismarck and Meyer-Krahmer at the beginning of the paper.

## 6 Conclusion

This paper has argued that, within the theoretical framework, there are many different sociomaterialities, differing significantly if they are located in different spheres of reality. This concept shifts assumptions regarding object notions, and thus challenges traditional subject-object dichotomies. The characteristics of museum-based communication constitute an extraordinary sphere of reality, within which numerous sociomaterialities are located. Museum things undergo shifts in meaning and function during museumisation: As exhibited musealia they are shown in three logics of visualisation and become 'arguments' and 'proof' for exhibition statements. As semiophores they exceed their object status, to become media of museum communication.

The concept of sociomateriality should evoke some ideas for answering the core initial question, by establishing an ongoing interplay between habitat and habitus. The stated references to Brown and Flügel suggest a differentiation: museum-based sociomateriality, in contrast to the day-to-day, cannot presuppose a wholeness in which everything is interwoven, such as in assemblages or networks. Visitors sometimes see only sections of an exhibition – and this on their own paths and with their own rhythm. Further, they may see only parts of the arrangement of objects, whilst using their own codes for denotative, connotative, and meta-communicative decoding of these object arrangements. The application in museology of the theoretical concept of assemblage to exhibitions is problematic, in my opinion, since this concept calls not only for a non-anthropocentric viewpoint, but also for the dissolution of the dichotomies of subject-object and nature-culture. Exhibitions, as museum-based forms of communication, not only place people, as addressees, as a communicative counterpart, but also take them as the "measure of all things" in the design of the exhibition. The experiential character of exhibitions is perceived self-reflexively by the experiencing subject.<sup>34</sup> Subject-object dichotomies are correspondingly continually reconstructed, and museums thus also participate to a significant extent in the key differentiation between nature and culture. *Objection?!*

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33 Cf. Bill Brown, "Toward the Curatorial Thing," in *Curatorial Things*, ed. Beatrice von Bismarck et al. (Berlin: Sternberg, 2019), 92–97.

34 Cf. Brown, "Curatorial Thing," 92 and Flügel, *Museologie*, 106–9, 123.

From a study of religions perspective, one question still remains: What happens to objects from religious spatio-temporal structures and spheres of reality when they are museumised? Building on this paper, I propose an answer to this question on our REDIM-Blog: “OBJECTION?!” – Continuation.<sup>35</sup>

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35 “OBJECTION?!: The Concept of Sociomateriality and its Consequences for Museumized Objects – Continuation,” Religiöse Dinge Blog, posted on March 18, 2021, <https://www.religiöse-dinge.de/?p=675>.

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