



Diversity and discourse – engaging museum visitors in the 21st century

THE FOURTH CONFERENCE OF
THE LEIBNIZ CENTRE OF EXCEL-
LENCE FOR MUSEUM EDUCATION

WELCOME

Welcome to the 4th International Conference of the Leibniz Centre of Excellence for Museum Education “Diversity and Discourse: Engaging Museum Visitors in the 21st Century”

This event builds on our previous conferences *Museums as Social Institutions – Trust and Communities* (2023), *Audience Development – Theory and Practice* (2021) and *Interdisciplinary Research on Museums as Informal Learning Spaces – New Ways and Concepts* (2019).

For this year’s conference, museum practitioners and researchers from around the world are invited to examine and discuss:

- Museum discourse and museums as places of discourse in the 21st century
- How to welcome and engage all audiences and celebrate diversity

Sessions are designed to provide theoretical and practical input through a keynote and short talks followed by the opportunity to exchange thoughts in plenary discussions. Further conference activities such as a poster session and transfer elements are included.

CONFERENCE ORGANISERS

CHAIRS

Alexandra W. Busch, Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA)

Olaf Köller, Leibniz Institute for Science and Mathematics Education (IPN)

COMMITTEE

Lisa Böhres-Rübeling, Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie, Mainz

Lorenz Kampschulte, Deutsches Museum, Munich

Alexandra Moormann, Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin

Stephan Schwan, Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien, Tübingen

Gun-Brit Thoma, Leibniz Institute for Science and Mathematics Education, Kiel

Monika Uemminghaus, Deutsches Museum, Munich

SUPPORTED BY

This conference is part of the LePAS project, which is funded by the Leibniz Association as part of the Leibniz Competition.

Learn more about the Leibniz Centre of Excellence for Museum Education [here](https://leibniz-bim.de/en/home-en). (<https://leibniz-bim.de/en/home-en>)

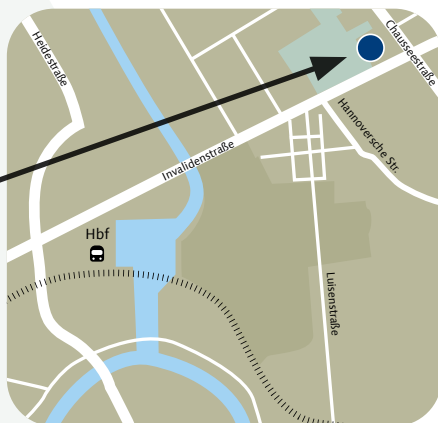
CONFERENCE VENUE



Leibniz-Association
Chausseestraße 111,
10115 Berlin

Flashlight Guided Tour Venue

Museum für Naturkunde
Invalidenstrasse 43
10115 Berlin



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PROGRAMME

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2025: DIVERSITY

13:00 – 13:30	ARRIVAL/REGISTRATION
13:30 – 14:00	WELCOME Alexandra W. Busch & Olaf Köller
14:00 – 14:45	KEYNOTE Marianne Achiam From Truth to Dialogue – Museums in a Post-Normal World
14:45 – 15:30	BREAK & KICK-OFF POSTER-SESSION
15:30 – 17:45	PANEL I „ADDRESSING NEW TARGET GROUPS IN MUSEUMS – A METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE“ Alexandra Busch (chair) <i>Session introduction</i> Orit Ben Zvi Assaraf <i>Multicultural climate change education in informal learning environment</i> Palmyre Pierroux <i>New Voices in the Archives: Memes, Youth and Memory Institutions</i> Eva Roßmanith <i>Learning for All: Tailored Museum Programs for Diverse Audiences at the Senckenberg Natural History Museum</i> Panel I: general discussion
17:45 – 18:00	TRANSFER ELEMENT
18: 00 – ca. 19:30	STANDING RECEPTION/GET TOGETHER
Ca. 19:45	FLASHLIGHT GUIDED TOUR THROUGH THE MUSEUM FÜR NATURKUNDE (only for registered participants)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2025: DISCOURSE

08:30–09:00 ARRIVAL

09:00–09:05 INTRODUCTION
Alexandra W. Busch & Olaf Köller

09:05–09:45 KEYNOTE
Nanna Kann-Rasmussen
*Post-neutrality in Museums: Cultural Communication
Between Expertise, Activism, and Public Value*

09:45–11:30 PANEL II „ADDRESSING TARGET GROUPS –
AN INSTITUTIONAL PERSPECTIVE“

Lorenz Kampschulte (chair)
Session Introduction

Emily Pringle
*„Museum Discourse“: Exploring Relations of Power
and Knowledge*

Giulia Valentina Paglia
*From Custodians of Heritage to Arenas of Civic Dis-
course: How Museums Can Foster Dialogue on Clima-
te Change and Societal Challenges*

David Weigend
*Fresh Approaches to Participation and Co-crea-
tion: How we Involve Diverse Audiences in Shaping
Museum Experiences and Foster Real Dialogue*

Panel II: general discussion

11:30–12:00 BREAK

12:00–12:45 TRANSFER ELEMENT
Discussion groups addressing questions related to
the transfer possibility of our conference theme
“Diversity and Discourse”

12:45–13:00 SUMMARY & CLOSING REMARKS
Alexandra W. Busch & Olaf Köller

LEIBNIZ CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR MUSEUM EDUCATION

In the Leibniz Centre of Excellence for Museum Education museums and educational research institutes from all over Germany have joined forces with the aim of advancing visitor research and empirical educational research on museums as informal places of learning. Together, we discuss central, overarching questions in visitor research and find ways to answer them empirically. The focus is on integrating different disciplines and linking theory and practice: through close cooperation, research findings can be directly implemented in educational practice in museums, evaluated there, and the results in turn influence research.

The Centre of Excellence for Museum Education continuously works to develop and establish common research approaches, thereby contributing to a higher standardisation and comparability of visitor research in Germany in the long run. The Centre also acts as a national contact point for visitor research in museums and specifically promotes the exchange between stakeholders.

OUR PARTNERS:



CONFERENCE ORGANISERS

CHAIRS

Alexandra W. Busch is director general of the Leibniz-Zentrum für Archäologie (LEIZA) and university professor at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. After studying Archaeology of the Roman Provinces, Ancient History and Prehistoric Archaeology at the University of Cologne, she completed her doctorate on the presence of military and paramilitary units in imperial Rome. She then worked as a researcher at the LVR Archaeological Park Xanten, where she was jointly responsible for the design of the permanent exhibition in the LVR-RömerMuseum. In 2008, she became a general assistant and senior researcher and then head of the photo library at the Rome Department of the German Archaeological Institute. In 2014, she joined LEIZA (at that time called RGZM) as research director, where she was responsible for collections, libraries, archives and scientific IT, before becoming LEIZA's director general in 2018. Since 2016, Busch has been involved in the development of research museums as informal learning spaces and the collaboration between educational research and research museums. She is co-founder of and spokesperson for the Leibniz Centre of Excellence for Museum Education, founding member of the Visitor Research Network (NWBF) and spokesperson for the Alliance of Leibniz Research Museums.

Olaf Köller is director of the Department of Educational Research and Educational Psychology at the Leibniz Institute for Science and Mathematics Education (IPN). He is also IPN's managing director of research, and full professor of educational research at the University of Kiel, Germany. He has held positions at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, and Humboldt University, Berlin, where, as full professor of educational research, he was responsible for the national assessment of educational progress in Germany. His research focuses on science and mathematics learning in settings both in and out of schools. Olaf Köller is co-founder of and spokesperson for the Leibniz Centre of Excellence for Museum Education.

COMMITTEE

Lisa Böhres-Rübeling is a studied archaeologist and educator and has been the deputy director of the Education Department at LEIZA since March 2023. Lisa previously worked at numerous archaeological and educational institutions, developing and advising non-formal education venues and various museums, most recently in her role as Deputy Executive Director of the German Limes Commission, the management institution of the UNESCO World Heritage Site "Frontiers of the Roman Empire". Her current work focuses on audience development and the advancement of LEIZA's museum education programme as well as the cooperation with the Leibniz Centre of Excellence for Museum Education.

Lorenz Kampschulte is Head of Education at the Deutsches Museum in Munich, the largest science and technology museum in Germany. His current research focuses on evaluation and visitor research, digital tools and more general learning processes in informal educational settings. Before joining the Deutsches Museum in 2018, he conducted research at the IPN - Leibniz Institute for Science and Mathematics Education in Kiel, where he was coordinator of the Kiel Science Outreach Campus. Lorenz holds a PhD in nanoscience from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich.

Alexandra Moormann is heading the Education at Museum für Naturkunde Berlin together with her colleague. She holds a diploma in biology and is a teacher of biology and physics at secondary school level. Alexandra completed her PhD in biology education at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. During her studies, she worked as an educator in a botanical garden and at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin. Since 2015, she has been responsible for the area of research in museum education at the Museum. Her research interests include learning about evolution in museums, developing museum visitors' understanding of science through visiting exhibitions or participating in citizen science projects, and learning with and about models in museums.

Stephan Schwan studied psychology at the University of Tübingen, obtained his doctorate in 1992. He was Professor of E-Learning and Head of the Department of Social and Organisational Psychology at Johannes Kepler University Linz from 2002 to 2004. Since 2004, Schwan has been head of the Realistic Representations working group at the Leibniz Institute for Knowledge Media (IWM) in Tübingen. His research and main areas of interest include cognitive processing and understanding of dynamic audiovisual representations, as well as learning in virtual realities. He is particularly interested in the role of digital media and authentic exhibits in informal learning in museums and exhibitions.

Gun-Brit Thoma is the scientific coordinator of the Leibniz Center of Excellence for Museum Education. As the scientific project coordinator, she is responsible for data management and visitor research. She took the lead in conducting a visitor structure analysis in 2022/2023 across 22 museums and science centers in Germany and Austria. Her research foci are museum visitors, cognitive learning and attentional processes in formal and informal settings, as well as science communication.

Monika Uemminghaus is project coordinator for the Leibniz Centre of Excellence for Museum Education. As project coordinator, she is responsible for the overall project organisation and the networking activities, supporting museums with their visitor study projects and organising meetings, trainings and conferences amongst other things. She previously worked as project coordination and project management at the department for education and psychology at the Ludwigs-Maximilians-University Munich for various educational and psychological projects. Her main research interests are motivation and emotion in formal and informal didactical settings. Monika holds a PhD in education from the university of the armed forces in Munich.

SPEAKERS AND TOPICS

MARIANNE ACHIAM

Marianne Achiam is Associate Professor and Head of the Science Communication research group at the Department of Science Education, University of Copenhagen. Her research investigates how science communication functions as a societal interface for knowledge production and public engagement, with particular attention to museums, sustainability, and the dynamics of post-normal science.

Diversity and discourse in post-normal times: Re-imagining museum engagement

In a world of contested knowledge and urgent decisions, science centres and museums operate under post-normal conditions, where uncertainty, value conflict, and plurality are the norm. This keynote repositions diversity as an epistemic resource rather than a demographic challenge, drawing on post-normal and deliberative frameworks to propose museums as *infrastructures of dialogue*. Instead of striving for consensus, museums can foster reflexive, inclusive spaces where complexity and disagreement become productive. Drawing on examples from sustainability and art-science collaborations, I outline how museums might methodically engage diverse publics by embracing uncertainty and plurality as conditions for learning and participation in the 21st century.

ORIT ZVI BEN ASSARAF

Orit Ben-Zvi Assaraf is a professor at the Graduate Program for Science and Technology Education at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel. Over the past 20 years, her PhD and master's students have explored various aspects related to informal learning environment, specifically science museum education. Her informal learning environments research is in three domains: (1) exploring family learning in zoos and science museums; (2) understanding and improving interactions and mediation processes in science museums; (3) exploring the cultural dimension of climate literacy and environmental informal education.

Multicultural climate change education in informal learning environment.

Climate change education aims to prepare future citizens for the impacts of climate change, foster awareness, build personal resilience, and cultivate the capacity for proactive action toward a sustainable future. The present study addresses the disconnect between climate education and lived experience of marginalized societies in museums and present the – Third-Space Theory lens for fostering a culturally responsive informal learning environment.

NANNA KANN-RASMUSSEN

Nanna Kann-Rasmussen is a cultural policy researcher based in University of Copenhagen, Denmark with a focus on the relationship between cultural institutions and society. Her work examines how libraries, archives, and museums (LAMs) legitimize themselves through user orientation, social relevance, and even activism. She has contributed to debates on New Public Governance and how it shapes cultural policy rationales. From 2024 to 2028, she leads the Velux-funded project Post-neutrality in Libraries, Archives and Museums.

Post-neutrality in Museums: Cultural Communication Between Expertise, Activism, and Public Value

Museums all over Europe are in the midst of a major transformation from being understood as neutral or strict scientifically grounded cultural institutions to undertaking a more distinct and active position on certain societal issues. Museum professionals today are concerned with contributing to a more inclusive society and drawing attention to past injustices. Simultaneously, museums are increasingly involved in solving new types of tasks in society, e.g. fighting climate change or engaging in issues of health and well-being.

In this talk, Nanna Kann-Rasmussen will describe this development using examples from Denmark and discuss how it can be understood both as a continuation of modern Western cultural policy, long oriented toward val-

ues such as diversity, participation, and inclusion, and as the emergence of a new, more activist practice within museums. The talk will also explore why this shift is occurring now, linking it to broader changes in public governance and the evolving expectations placed on cultural institutions.

GIULIA VALENTINA PAGLIA

Giulia Paglia graduated *cum laude* in Communication and Society at the Università degli Studi di Milano in 2022, with a thesis on the instrumental use of information in postmodern totalitarian movements. She is currently a Master's student in Culture Studies at Universidade Católica Portuguesa in Lisbon, where she is writing her thesis on alternative media and institutional communication for young audiences. In 2024, she published *Fostering Dialogue in Divisive Times*, a research guide commissioned by NEMO's Working Group on Sustainability and Climate Action.

From Custodians of Heritage to Arenas of Civic Discourse: How Museums Can Foster Dialogue on Climate Change and Societal Challenges

Museums are no longer just custodians of heritage; they are increasingly expected to act as civic spaces for dialogue and engagement. Drawing on my research with NEMO's Working Group on Sustainability and Climate Action and the guide *Fostering Dialogue in Divisive Times*, the present keynote explores how museums can organise community forums that make "distant yet crucial" themes such as climate change and sustainability legible and actionable for citizens. At the same time, interviews with museum professionals reveal persistent barriers: reaching beyond niche audiences and truly positioning museums as inclusive meeting places remains challenging. The talk examines both the promise and the limits of this evolving civic role and offers concrete strategies to bridge the gap.

PALMYRE PIERROUX

Palmyre Pierroux is Professor and Head of Research at the Department of Education, University of Oslo. Her research focuses on meaning making and knowledge practices in informal learning contexts, including museums and citizen science / humanities activities. Her research and innovation projects often explore how digital media and new technologies are transforming visitor experiences – and visitor studies – in museums of art, architecture, and design.

Internet memes: cultural heritage objects for young people and memory archives

This presentation explores how internet memes can serve as meaningful objects for engaging young people in the work of memory archives, and expand understandings of what constitutes cultural memory material in

the digital age. Based on design-based research methods and a participatory approach, the study follows secondary school students (aged 16–19) as “meme researchers,” collecting, tagging, and curating memes for the institution’s collections. The study shows how the memes functioned as expressions of identity, cultural commentary, and civic engagement, positioning the young people as experts and co-creators of cultural heritage. The presentation reflects on how participatory digital practices can transform institutional methodologies for addressing new audiences in memory institutions.

EMILY PRINGLE

Emily Pringle trained as a painter and worked for several years as an artist, educator, researcher and programmer. From 2010 to 2019 she was Head of Learning Practice and Research at Tate, developing research-led programming and co-managing the London Learning department. In 2017 Emily was awarded an AHRC Leadership Fellowship to examine research practices in art museums. The publication from this research - ‘Rethinking Research in the Art Museum’ – was published in July 2019. From February 2019 to December 2022 Emily was Head of Research at Tate, nurturing and overseeing research across the organisation. Now working freelance, Emily collaborates with a range of organisations in the UK and internationally in the areas of strategy and programme development, research, mentoring, project and people management. Emily has also returned to her studio, while continuing to write and maintain her Practitioner Research in the Art Museum blog (PRAM – Practitioner Research in the Art Museum).

“Museum Discourse”: Exploring relations of power and knowledge.

Museums are complex institutions with multiple and at times conflicting agendas. This presentation draws on the philosopher Michel Foucault’s concept of ‘discourses of power’ to examine how the relationship between knowledge and power continues to shape museum practices. Specifically the talk focuses on the ‘Four Discourses of the Art Museum’ model I developed in 2019. This model helps to clarify why certain practices and viewpoints can dominate within the museum and ultimately how powerful discourses can operate to reaffirm some activities and perspectives while simultaneously excluding others.

EVA ROSSMANITH

Eva Roßmanith is Head of the Education Department (since 2013) and Acting Head of the Senckenberg Natural History Museum. With a background in biology, her work centers on fostering dialogue between scientists and museum visitors to build trust in science, create inclusive

programs for diverse audiences, and contribute to societal transformation processes.

Learning for All: Tailored Museum Programs for Diverse Audiences at the Senckenberg Natural History Museum

Giving an insight into museum practice, this presentation introduces special educational programs developed at the Senckenberg Natural History Museum. These programs are designed to reach audiences with diverse needs and backgrounds – from people with limited German language skills and young science enthusiasts to elderly visitors seeking social connection. The initiatives aim to inspire curiosity about nature, research, and museums while fostering dialogue between visitors and experts. Through tailored approaches and inclusive learning formats, the museum strives to make natural science accessible, trustworthy, and meaningful for everyone, encouraging participation and lifelong learning across all parts of society.

DAVID WEIGEND

David Weigend is Head of Futurium Lab in Berlin, where he develops interactive formats for creative engagement with the future alongside partners from science, business, and society. With a background in economics, design thinking, and futures research (MA, Freie Universität Berlin), plus several years as a game developer, David specializes in creating new learning and interaction formats that make complex topics accessible and inspire enthusiasm for future-oriented themes. His work focuses on differentiated approaches that take diverse visitor needs seriously while using co-creation and testing as core design elements.

Fresh Approaches to Participation and Co-creation: How we Involve Diverse Audiences in Shaping Museum Experiences and Foster Real Dialogue

David presents innovative approaches to audience participation at Futurium Lab in Berlin, where interactive experiences are co-created with diverse visitor groups. Drawing on insights from game design and futures studies, he demonstrates how analog and digital learning games can break down barriers, making complex topics accessible while fostering genuine dialogue. He shares practical prototyping methods—including generative AI tools—that enable museums to rapidly test and iterate participatory formats based on real visitor needs.

POSTERSESSION

Alexandra Valerie Dicks (IPN), Ricarda Ullrich (IPN), Martin Merkt (DIE), Gun-Brit Thoma (IPN), Kathrin Grotz (IfM), Patricia Rahemipour (IfM) & Olaf Köller (IPN)

Formal x Informal Education on Trust in Scientists

Helen Fischer (IWM), Franziska Schild (DSM) & Birte Stüve (DSM)

Enhancing Metacognitive Insight Through Museum-Based Learning

Franziska Loreit (DBM), Eva Roßmanith (SGN) & Martin Merkt (DIE)

Temporality in a Permanent Exhibition – Visitor Experience & Knowledge Acquisition

Stephanie Moser (TUM), Bärbel Garsoffky (IWM), Stephan Schwan (IWM) & Doris Lewalter (TUM)

Educational Research at Informal Learning Sites: Exploring the Role of Authenticity and 4E Cognition

Azzurra Ruggeri (TUM) & Laura Schlingloff-Nemecz (TUM)

Developmental science in the wild: The iSearch Lab at the Deutsches Museum

Moritz Schmid & Lorenz Kampschulte (DM München)

Trust In and Inside the Museum. Exploring the Correlation between Visitor Characteristics and Trust.

Inga Specht (LIB), Anne Land-Zandstra (Leiden University) & Stephan Schwan (IWM)

Visitors' interpretation of authenticity at a natural history museum

Alexandra Moormann (MfN), Inga Specht (LIB) & Hannah Caroline Schröder (MfN)

What about Nature Connectedness? Searching for a multidimensional Assessment of Connectedness to Nature in Museum Visitors. LePAS Seed Money Project

Gun-Brit Thoma (IPN), Lorenz Kampschulte (DM) & Monika Uemminghaus (DM)

Visitor Structure Analysis 2022/23

Dominik von Roth (GNM), Gesa Büchert (KPZ), Gun-Brit Thoma (IPN), Lorenz Kampschulte (DM) & Monika Uemminghaus (DM)

Schools at the Museum. Evaluation of school programmes.

CODE OF CONDUCT

We want to provide a harassment-free conference experience for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity or religion.

We do not tolerate harassment of conference participants in any form.

Harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- Verbal comments that reinforce social structures of domination
- Deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following
- Sustained disruption of talks or other events
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Openly encouraging, cheering on, or trivializing harassing behavior through words or actions

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Participants asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately. The organizers reserve the right to take appropriate action in case of violations.

It's everyone's responsibility to:

- Maintain a professional environment in an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect
- Abstain from all forms of harassment, abuse, intimidation, bullying and mistreatment of any kind
- This includes intimidation, sexual or crude jokes or comments, offensive images, and unwelcome physical conduct
- Keep in mind that behaviour and language deemed acceptable to one person may not be to another

If you or someone else feels uncomfortable or unsafe, please do not hesitate to contact the event organizers or the contact person for awareness as soon as possible – Harassment and other Code of Conduct violations reduce the value of our conference for everyone.

As a discreet way to ask for help, you can use the codes „Ask for Angela“ or „Wo ist Luisa?“ These signals let us know that you need support without having to explain the situation publicly. These codes can be used at any time during the event.

The contact person during the event is Alexandra Dicks. She can be recognized by the Awareness-Button she is wearing.