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The Tourist Gaze and ‘Family Treasure Trails’ in Museums

Key words The tourist gaze, museums, families, children, treasure trails

Introduction

The idea of museums that are open to the public developed in the early nineteenth century. Since then museums have been central to the tourist experience, especially that of city tourism. This might also be the case for those tourists that seldom visit a museum or gallery at ‘home’. Art museums like the Louvre in Paris and Tate Gallery in London are iconic tourism attractions for millions of tourists each year. The Louvre is the world’s most visited art museum, at one point it was calculated that 65% of its visitors were tourists (Businessweek 16 June 2002). Museums depend upon tourists and a significant part of the tourist experience is that of *gazing* upon exhibited objects. The significance of international tourism in turning national museums into global icons cannot be undervalued (Urry and Larsen, 2011a).

Yet museums are largely neglected in the tourist research literature while there is little discussion of tourists and pleasure in the museum literature. This is even more striking given that museums, arguably, are designed for gazing. Indeed Svetlana Alpers (1991) once described the museum as a ‘way of seeing’ where objects are isolated from their world and displayed for attentive and interpretive seeing. Most museums are places of seeing and collecting, places where visitors are still expected to stand in awe of exhibits. A visit to the Louvre or Tate Modern is predominantly designed to be a visual experience where visitors are supposed to walk from one painting or object to another attentively gazing at them. While the notion of the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) has been

critiqued for reducing tourism to visual experiences – to (sight)*seeing* – and neglecting the other senses, bodily experiences and ‘adventure’ (see Edensor 2001, 2006; Haldrup and Larsen, 2009; Pons, 2009; for a response to this criticism and an update of the tourist gaze, see Urry and Larsen, 2011 a, b), the continuing significance of vision in tourism is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the world’s most visited museums.

While most museums – especially the iconic tourist museums mentioned above – are still places of gazing, museums try to incorporate aspects of mediatized, embodied and communal gazing in museum visitor experiences. A crucial aspect of this ‘new museum movement’ is the realization that families and children visit museums in great numbers – especially when they are on holiday. One can find many children in ‘adult’ museums, they are ‘dragged along’ more or less against their will (Mai and Gibson, 2011). Parents may have a burning desire to visit the Louvre or Tate Modern but their younger children are not likely to share that desire. The tradeoff could be a visit to a natural history museum the following day. In wider perspective, this reflects the fact that a family holiday is full of compromises, trade-offs, negotiations, and manipulations even, between family members. Is it the perceived needs of children or the more ‘egocentric’ desires of parents that determine where families travel and what they experience? Some parents book an all inclusive package holiday or camp at a camping site because their children love to play with other kids at the pool and eat ice cream all day (see study by Thornton et al., 1997; Hilbrecht et al. 2010). Or do parents drag children to cities and museums because *they* have a desire to see these places and teach their children the art of gazing? And in the latter case, how do parents ensure that children enjoy the museum at least enough not to ‘sabotage’ the visit?

New museum experience design includes exciting audio guides for both adults and children so that an art history or even fictional soundscape may blend into the tourist gaze. Moreover, museums design separate spaces *for* children where they can create their own art (see Dockett,

Main & Kelly, 2011, for a discussion of the Australian Museum's designated play/learning space), touch replicas or dress up as, say, Vikings as in the Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Denmark (Urry and Larsen, 2011a: 151; see also Pearson, 1984). Lastly, many museums offer printed pamphlets or sheets of paper with 'treasure trails'. They afford a *trail* through the museum that forms a *treasure hunt* for specific objects and correct answers to questions related to the objects. In this study we explore ethnographically how such trails are designed and what they are designed to achieve, and especially how they are used by young families in museums for gazing. This study relates to museum's growing orientation towards the public and, furthermore, to the use of mobile media in museum exhibition communication.

The significance of this study is four-fold. First, despite the popularity of family trails, there is very limited published academic research on their design and use (one exception is Mortensen and Smart, 2007 within a context of science education). Family trails both prefigure and form part of the design philosophy of 'new museology' which seeks to mediate visitor immersion among other things with help from digital technologies and social media (e.g. Tallon and Walker, 2008, Drotner and Schrøder, 2012).

Second, the study shows how gazing takes place with and is formed by a specific technology. Pamphlets successfully mediate desired forms of museum gazing. This is interesting particularly because it stands in contrast to other forms of mobile mediation at museums. Throughout the last decade, museums have experimented with and invested much hope in digital mobile media applications. Yet according to the 2013 'Museums & Mobile' survey from 2500 museums, the number one challenge for museums is to get visitors to use these apps (Tallon 2013). The contrasting success of *printed* material is an example of the 'stubbornness' of the analogue and the printed in an otherwise digital culture (Larsen and Sandbye, 2014).

Third, the study gives insight into how children *learn* to gaze within museums. Research into

the tourist gaze has, more or less implicitly, taken for granted that the gazer is adult. The gazing practices of children have been largely neglected. More broadly, there is a paucity of studies exploring ethnographically how gazing is learned and practiced. This study further contributes to the literature of the tourist gaze by discussing embodied, technical and social aspects of gazing with pamphlets. In this sense, the article follows the call from Urry and Larsen (2011, a, b) in studying the always multimodal and social nature of gazing within particular places.

Fourth, and with regard to the social relations of gazing, given that they are performed within family groups, an analysis of them can bring out some of the small-scale negotiations and conflicts between families gazing. We show how (the technological mediation of) gazing is intertwined with sociality. Families literally negotiate how gazing is timed and spaced, for instance, with regard to pace and rhythm. So this article also contributes to our understanding of how families practice tourism. There are studies that bring out the significance of pleasant family time and togetherness for families vacationing, but none of them highlight the almost inevitable compromises and conflicts that make up visits and holidays (Löfgren, 1999; Haldrup and Larsen, 2003). The existing studies on ‘decision making’ in tourism focus predominately upon the ‘purchase phase’ and largely neglect the lived experiences during the holiday, including those situations where family members argue and get annoyed with each other because they have different preferences and too little time (but see Hilbrecht et al., 2010). Moreover, they have largely emphasized the parent’s decision-making processes. They show that many parents give priority to what they perceive to be their children’s needs and wishes. Such self-effacing parents will be less likely to book a city holiday and drag their children along to an art museum, even if they desired to do so. They may opt for a supposedly more children-friendly holiday with abundant time for play and interaction with other children (Hilbrecht et al., 2010).

Method

So we are concerned with how family trails affect the museum visit. Trails pull visits in specific directions and tone the act of gazing in certain ways. We develop an ethnographic approach that avoids technical determinism and further recognizes the plurality of audience practices (McManus, 1987, 1994; Mai and Gibson, 2011: 361). It is based on extensive participant observation, interviews and video recording of visitor-exhibition interactions at royal heritage center Amalienborg, Denmark (10 days) and the natural history museum *Naturama*, Funen, Denmark (40 days). Altogether we made 29 interviews with families with children and eight with the management (in this article we draw primarily on the former). Parents and children were asked what they thought of the pamphlets and how they went about solving them. Video recordings were carried out with a pair of video glasses worn by a family member; these recordings document what these families look at, talk about and how they move about as they solve the pamphlet exercises. Thirteen families wore these spy-ware video glasses (Gjedde and Ingemann, 2008; Svabo, 2010). In addition, one of us made *auto*-ethnographic studies at the natural history museum, *British Museum*, London, and the art gallery, the royal gallery of art *Rijksmuseum*, Amsterdam (one day in each place). Jonas Larsen visited these museums in treasure trail mode with his partner and son (7 years old at the time). An auto-ethnography presupposes a radical form of participation where the researchers' embodied experiences makes up the empirical material and the idea is to write accounts that foreground bodily responses, emotions and feelings. So the researched museums differ with regard to theme (natural history, history and art) and target audiences (e.g. 'young families' at the science and natural history museums and 'adults' at the art and history museums – with the *British Museum* somewhere in between). In this article we do not make a comparative analysis of the four museums. Our ethnography is about the treasure trails and how these are at play in visitor experiences. The specificities of each museum are of minor importance. The four museums are selected because of their differences.

We begin with a discussion of the tourist gaze in relation to both museums and families and children. The ethnography starts with a 'reading' of family trails available at the museums with regard to their design intention and guiding of visitors and then we examine how they are used in practice.

Gazing

The *Tourist Gaze* (Urry, 1990, 2002; Urry and Larsen, 2011a) is one of the most discussed concepts within tourist studies. It highlights the visual, image and camera-saturated nature of tourism encounters. Through the 'the tourist gaze' tourism is portrayed as a 'way of seeing'. Many tourist buildings, objects, technologies and practices are said to be structured around visualism. The pleasures of much tourism are grounded in gazing or visually consuming extraordinary places or objects of art. While the visual sense is not the only sense, it is the organizing sense. It organizes the place, role and effect of the other senses. The varied gazes of tourists are discursively organised by many professionals over time: romantic poets and painters, photographers, writers of travel books, blogs and guides, local councils, experts in the 'heritage industry', travel agents, hotel owners, designers, tour operators, TV travel programmes, tourism development officers, architects, planners, tourism academics and so on (Urry and Larsen, 2011a: Chap 1.). The tourist gaze developed with the formation of picturesque tourism in late eighteenth-century England. Tourists learned to cultivate an eye of skilled connoisseurship and use Claude Glasses to derive pleasure from landscapes features that resembled works of art. Part of the tourist gaze is the idea that gazing is mediated by specific representations (e.g. guidebooks, poems and paintings) and technologies (e.g. Claude Glasses and cameras) (Urry and Larsen, 2011a: chap. 5).

Moreover, different gazes imply different socialities (Urry and Larsen, 2011a: 19). Tourists gaze upon places in the presence of others, other tourists, tourists and locals, as most tourist places

are busy public places. And who we happen to gaze with can be as important to the quality of the experience as is the object of the gaze. Large numbers of people can indicate that this is *the* place to be. But for others these masses intrude upon and spoil that lonely contemplation desired by romantic gazers. Most tourists do not experience the world as a solitary flâneur but in ‘teams’ of friends, family members and partners. Gazing almost always involves significant others. It is a relational practice that involves negotiations and compromises about what to see, how to see it, and for how long. Individual gazes are enabled and constrained by the presence and gazes of others (Urry and Larsen, 2011a: 201). Consider the ‘parental look’ researched by Degen et al.’s (2008) ethnography of ‘gazing’ within a shopping centre:

When one is in the mall as a carer with children, eyes and bodies are responsively attuned to the bodies and movements of the children. The mall and its sensory stimuli (windows, music, street furniture) fall into the background as the children's bodies are followed and the mall's geography turns into a (sometimes dangerous, other times fun) playground ... with two mobile kids, enjoying being with them, my eyes and ears and hands were tuned into them, focused on them, and not so much on the wider space. Where were they, what were they saying, what were they doing. This was in relation to many material objects, of course, and also to other people. Sometimes it is possible almost to see and sense through the eyes of the children. We attune our perceptions to those of a child and read anew the affordances of a place as we learn that a public sculpture becomes a skeleton to climb on, the edge of a fountain a running track (Degen et al., 2008: 1911).

Children influence the rhythms and gazes of their parents, and parents see an attraction partly through their children’s eyes.

Moreover, and equally overlooked in much literature, the tourist gaze implies different

temporalities and sensuous relationships. Taylor (1994: 14) speaks about travellers/photographers who gaze contemplatively, 'tourists' who accumulate shallow glances, and 'trippers' who see everything in blinks, blurs, or 'snaps'. Degen et al. (2008) unfold different temporal and sensuous practices that make up any type of gazing in a shopping mall. In addition to the 'parental look' they also speak of 'manoeuvring' and the 'shopping look'. Both entail sensory engagements other than vision and intersubjective relations between people, mobility and objects. Thus 'm[M]anoeuvring' enables people to: 'manoeuvre and navigate a way through the mall. This is a broad, surveying gaze which is used to move around objects, which acknowledges objects but does not engage in any depth with them' (Degen et al., 2008: 1919). Touch, smell and immobility are central to the 'shopping look'. 'When shopping, one's vision is more concentrated, actively searching for a desired product. As we look for it, we touch different materials. We sway from a 'thinner', unfocused gaze that helps us to navigate around the shop to a 'thicker', focused stare that involves touching and smelling, especially if the piece of clothing or perfume has a distinctive texture' (Degen et al., 2008: 1919). Gazing is not merely seeing, but involves physical movement and other sense-scapes (Urry and Larsen, 2011b).

Gazing is a socially patterned way of seeing that is tied up with social relations, movement and sensuous relationships. So the 'tourist gaze' is a matter of socially and technologically patterned and learnt 'ways of seeing' (Urry and Larsen, 2011a: 19). Next we discuss what is characteristic of gazing in museums, including how it both resembles and differs from the gazes of the parental look, manoeuvring and shopping described by Degen et al. (2008).

Gazing at Museums

Museums are knowledge institutions contributing to public education and enlightenment (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). And yet museums are also places where people expect an entertaining experience

as they visit them as part of their leisure life. And this is increasingly the case as museums are dependent upon *attracting* (paying) visitors to generate income and justify public and private funding. So museums design exhibitions, communication practices and devices that turn the didactic museum into a form of entertainment where learning takes place through play and interaction. Museums have become part of the ‘experience economy’ (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). As Hughes (2001: 175) writes: ‘Many science museums are promoting themselves as sites where science is a form of entertainment’.

Museums are furthermore legitimised by a discourse of visualism (Bennett, 1998). They are designed and controlled as places where exhibited objects exist in order to be enjoyed and inspected visually and not with the other senses. There is a separation of the senses, especially of vision from touch, smell and hearing. Museums are places of disciplined engagement based upon the ‘unimpeded empire of the gaze’ (Candlin, 2004; Urry, 1992). They are not like shopping malls where people are allowed to engage with the object through touch and smell. Degen et al.’s ‘shopping look’ is strictly forbidden in museums that are strategically designed to prevent always-curious fingers from touching objects, to get to know through feeling. Traditionally, museum design is as much about protecting objects as displaying them. So smaller objects (say coins, weaponry, cutlery, documents) are simultaneously exhibited *and* protected in glass boxes while paintings are protected by prohibitive ropes, regulative signs (‘do not touch the art work’) and museum attendants. The instinct for touching those objects that one gazes upon is forcefully suppressed in museums (exceptions include the *Please Touch Museum* for children in Philadelphia and special exhibitions for children or blind people, Candlin, 2004; Hetherington, 2003). So rarely do visitors ‘step over the line’. Even inexperienced museumgoers know of this no-touch policy. We may say that part of our bodily habitus is to control our hands and senses in museums. Hence the many visitors that hold their curious fingers at bay by folding them at their back (Illustration 1).

Illustration 1. Photo by authors.

Many museums are obviously auratic, concerned with the more elitist – and solitary – appreciation of magnificent art, an appreciation that requires considerable cultural capital especially if particular objects also signify literary texts and tie into historical events (Adler, 1989: 22). The museum gaze involves a contemplative look, of standing in awe in front of a piece of art, which almost always combines an aesthetic, bodily and intellectual appreciation. Gazing is not supposed to be mere passive seeing, spectacle and entertainment, but instead to involve the cognitive work of interpreting, evaluating, drawing comparisons and making mental connections between the objects and their wider cultural and historical context (Bennett, 1998). Such knowledge is often necessary in order to fully appreciate objects in museums (museums supply visitors with information signs, multimedia guides and guided tours).

Another aspect of the museum etiquette is that of bodily composure; museums are, generally speaking, places where one has to manoeuvre and carry one's body and conversations in a cultivated and controlled manner; they are not places for rowdy and rambunctious behaviour, childish play or 'collective gazing'. Appropriate, what Degen et al. call 'manoeuvring' and 'navigating' is essential. The etiquette delineates walking quietly from one object to another, with tranquil intervals, silently shuffling along the gallery walls. The 'museum gaze' prohibits and delegitimizes physical activities such as running, pushing, dancing or playing games. While conversations are allowed, museums are generally 'speaking quiet' places even when big crowds visit them. The whole atmosphere of museums encourages people to use 'indoor voices', so as not to disturb other visitors. Hirschauer (2006) describes this as the 'museum discipline'.

Most museums suppress children's instinct to run around and touch and crawl upon things. Surely, in art museums parents will not be amused by the idea that a sculpture can be used to climb

on as was the case in the shopping mall! The possibility of such alternative use will frighten parents in museums and much of their 'parental gaze' will revolve around preventing it. This is in part due to the 'scopic reciprocity' (Huang, 2007) at play in museums; their spaces 'allow for visitors not only to inspect the exhibits but also to allow for the visitors to be the objects of each other's inspection' (Bennett, 1995: 51-2). Holloway, Green and Holloway (2011) call this 'the intratourist gaze'. Museums require that one learn to appreciate things through the visual sense and have the self-discipline to conduct one's body and family. If not then other tourists will strike back with a blaming 'intragaze'.

Also, a place like Louvre is one thing in the contemplative company of one's affectionate and art-loving partner and something completely different in the hurried company of one's small children who are crying out for ice creams and a wee and do not think much of looking at statues that cannot even be touched. As Debenedetti puts it more generally: 'For museum visitors, the presence or absence of companions is not simply an added social element, extraneous to the actual cultural experience. The visitor's accompaniment plays a part in shaping the visit – cognitively (mutual enrichment, introspection), emotionally (recreation, reassurance, personal relationship with the works) and behaviorally (the ballet of separations and reunions). Accompaniment is thus intrinsic to the museum experience. The museum experience is often a social activity (Coffee, 2007; Debenedetti, 2003: 56). So many museum visitors are not the educated adults that curators, according to McManus (1994), envision as their target audience (see also Borun, 2008).

For adults who are not burdened by the 'parental look' romantic gazing is difficult because museums can be busy public places. It is impossible to gaze when visiting the Louvre and especially upon Mona Lisa, this 'the best known, the most visited, the most written about, the most sung about, the most parodied work of art in the world' (Lichfield, 2005), without being drowned in an annoying sea of those other 'flashing' tourists. A museum visit, similar to being in a shopping

mall as discussed in the previous section necessitates the artful employment of the ‘manoeuvring gaze’, such as postponing the next painting or room until it is less crowded.

Given the sheer scale of objects and the number of other tourists at many museums, the ‘manoeuvring gaze’ involves seeing paintings and objects in passing as well as detecting and locating objects that demand a closer and thicker gaze. Major museums contain an abundance of objects that all reach for one’s attentive gaze. They will dazzle and fatigue the gazer that does not employ *scanning* as part of their ‘manoeuvring gaze’. To paraphrase the ‘shopping look’, the museum gaze is that closer and thicker look at a particular object that initially caught one’s attention while scanning in passing. Yet the museum gaze is directed to ‘valuable’ objects and this rules out the sensations of touching – so essential to the ‘shopping look’.

We may say that most museums are designed for the contemplative ‘romantic gaze’, undertaken by cultivated adults. Yet with new museology (Mass, 2004), where especially the educational and socially inclusive role of museums is highlighted, there has been some change in the nature of museums (Bayne, Ross and Williamson, 2009; Blewitt, 2004; Galloway and Stanley, 2004; Macdonald, 2005). More emphasis is being placed on visitors participating in exhibitions and there is a multi-mediatisation of exhibitions. Museums are no longer the embodiment of a single high culture from which the mass of the population is excluded. Museums are becoming more accessible, especially to the service and middle classes (Merriman, 1989) as well as families (Candlin, 2004; Falk and Dierking, 1992; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000; Urry and Larsen, 2011a). Museums are (re)designed to create a more inclusive atmosphere and sometimes a more multi-sensuous gaze (Mass, 2004; Prior, 2005).

Despite these recent developments museums still stage objects for ‘disembodied’ gazing and ‘museum etiquette’ may make it quite testing for young families to visit them. Treasure trails somewhat compensate for this, because they provide families with a form of ‘touch and do’ gazing.

However trails simultaneously create their own kinds of tension for families during museum visits. We now discuss what treasure trails are designed to do and their impact on family gazing in exhibitions.

Treasure trail pamphlets

A treasure trail is a booklet of exercises to solve during the museum visit. At three out of four of the visited museums, the pamphlets are plain sheets of paper; A4 photocopies, stapled together and perhaps clipped onto a plastic-board. The graphic design is nothing special, and the paper thin. Pamphlets are not for coffee-table exhibition, although the pamphlet from the *British Museum* is an exception with its visually interesting layout and thicker paper. Pamphlets instruct users to find (and perhaps do) certain things, to encounter specific objects and answer questions by filling out blank spaces or tick boxes. Pamphlets are designed for different age groups – some are for children around the age of 4-6 while others target older children.

The treasure trails prescribe movement and tasks. As one pamphlet at Naturama, a museum of natural history, says, impersonating exhibited animals: *'Find me on the computer'*, *'Find me in the exhibition'*, *'Feel how silky my fur is'*, *'Mark what I eat'* etc.

Visitors are instructed to walk, gaze and engage with exhibited objects in specific ways. The content of exercises vary. Some exercises are facts-oriented, others more interpretive, where open questions, for example, ask children to interpret artwork and relate it to their everyday life. At the *Rijksmuseum* 'treasure hunters' are first instructed to find the largest painting in the first room and compare how they and the painted people party (targeted to children aged 4-6). They are also asked to describe and explain who are the most important people in the painting. Children thus have to write their own observations and interpretations. Later again children are instructed to gaze in an embodied and creative fashion: to carefully study a specific painting, learn the technique of

perspective and then employ it to ‘draw two figures and two trees, near and far’ on the painting in the pamphlet. Treasure trails serve educational purposes, which reflect the importance that museums put on education, while they simultaneously entertain. An intention of teaching children science, history or art is built into the fun of following a treasure trail.

An advantage of pamphlets is flexibility. Pamphlets can be ‘started’ and ‘stopped’ at will, and can easily be discarded or stuffed into a bag. They allow families to carry out a social activity at their own pace. This is an advantage when many needs have to be taken into account and coordinated: babies who are hungry, teenagers that are bored, parents who crave coffee, etc. This is also stressed in their promotion:

Would you be interested in travelling independently to the museum with your family, at a time of your own choosing? If so, then the new family treasure trail is just the thing for you. This is a quest for the whole family, one in which children and adults can work as a team. Available for free at the museum’s Information Desk (Rijksmuseum, 2013).

The treasure trail not only affords independent teamwork it also liberates the parents from the task of communicating the exhibition and finding their way through exhibition. When a family embarks on a treasure trail, the idea is that the family delegates the guiding power to the pamphlet (Svabo, 2011: 142). In this sense, pamphlets perform the same role as the human guide in tourism (Larsen and Meged, 2013). This is likely to appeal especially to those that are not familiar with museums.

Having discussed how treasure trails are designed and what they aspire to, we now venture into the four museums and explore how they are variably enacted in embodied performances of (multi-sensuous) gazing. Tourists do not always follow pre-scripted routes and adhere to scripts. All tourist practices are contingent processes and never simply determined by their choreography or

design (Edensor, 2001).

Trails in action: Ethnographic vignettes

In all four museums, our observations and interviews show that such an ‘old school’ medium as a printed pamphlet can still attract and thrill children otherwise immersed into a digital world of smart phones, iPads and much more. Yet they are not equally widespread in the four museums. A key to their use is face-to-face promotion. At *Amalienborg* and *Naturama* the ticket staff automatically promote them; they talk about how much fun they are and that a prize is rewarded on completion. Seemingly all children used them when we did our fieldwork at *Amalienborg Museum* during a mid-term break. They are also very popular at *Naturama* (used by one third of children). They are less common at the other museums where families have to find (out about) them at an adjacent multimedia area.

In all the museums they powerfully engage those children who embark on them. We did not overhear conversations or have interview conversations where children complained about them or detested them. Nor did we witness anyone giving up halfway through. Children eagerly follow in pamphlet footsteps: They walk fast, sometimes almost run, around in the museum, ‘maneuvering’ and scouting, with a pencil in their hands, while their parents try to keep up with the pace.

The ‘magic’ that pamphlets perform is various. In the children-oriented museums they give structure and purpose to the visit (‘we know what to do’) and this makes the museum even more fun. Here they *intensify* the experience. As a mother says: ‘they make children look more into things, instead of just walking around looking at what is going on. They become much more motivated to explore things’. In the ‘adult museums’ their function is *persuasive* and *transformative*. Parents persuade their children that it will actually be fun to go to that art or history museum because a treasure trail is available and a prize can be won. As Jonas Larsen wrote in his

field notes regarding his family visit to the *Rijksmuseum*:

‘Oh no! Not another art gallery, daddy! They are so BORING’.

‘But this one has a treasure hunt, you know. A treasure trail?’

‘Ok then! But after that we go to the playground, promise?’

‘Ok that’s fair. Deal!’

(Jonas Larsen diary extracts).

So the father uses the child’s previous positive experiences with treasure trails in other museums to make the idea of going to a new place bearable. And indeed as our ethnographies and interviews indicate, pamphlets actually do have the power to turn boring adult places into bearable and sometimes even exciting children’s places. For that reason parents in the adult museums tend to endorse them. They can be used as bait in the first place and as entertainment while at the museum. Both children and adults mentioned in the interviews that it would have been difficult to visit the adult museums without the pamphlets. However, this does not mean that pamphlets do not create tensions - as we discuss later.

While pamphlet trails are legitimized because they are in accordance with educational purposes, our ethnographies show that fun and play are prevalent motivations. With the treasure trail the exhibition becomes an adventurous space. It is used as a tool to yield answers and reveal treasures. How does this affect gazing in practice? Two transcribed extracts from our video recordings from *Naturama* highlight this:

Nine-year-old Johannes is doing an Easter egg Hunt. He is ... searching, suddenly he yells

out, and moves forward at a much higher speed. He has the exercise pamphlet in his hands, raised up in front of him. He has seen an animal with an Easter egg next to it. Having marked off the animal, he keeps looking at the exercise board. He flips one page forward, and one page back, then he says “we also have to find...” he doesn’t complete the sentence, he just points to a picture on the sheet.

Mia moves quickly past the animals. She heads straight towards the Arctic podium. “I think it is this one!” she happily exclaims to the others. She seems pleased with herself. She managed to find the answer for Pamphlet’s second question. She made the association between that tiny picture on Pamphlet and the large, brown, longhaired, horned and hoofed animal she is standing in front of now.

Both extracts highlight how treasure trails affect and animate children and intensify the experience. These two children are clearly doing the exhibition in a treasure trail mode and this frames their particular way of gazing. The pamphlets are an optic that allows children to see certain things and in that process overlook other things. So they can provoke action that *counteracts* the intention of teaching children science, history and art history: Those objects that are not included in pamphlet activity are rendered irrelevant. When treasures are about Easter eggs that is what the children scout for. Treasure hunters are not ‘maneuvering’ and ‘navigating’ casually. Their agenda is not just avoiding bumping into people and eventually finding a shop or two as in the shopping mall. Rather their ‘broad, surveying gaze’ is used instrumentally. Children scan the exhibition for relevant signs (indicating where a particular room or object is) and the next object. This game involves considerable ‘navigation energy’, to find that object on the paper in the actual museum. This is not always easy. The relations that treasure trails prescribe are not always seamlessly

designed or without flaws. For instance, this happens when they direct one to rooms that are temporarily closed or objects that are removed.

The exercise pamphlet is thus a place-making device that divides the exhibition into rooms of either ‘attentive gazing’ or quick transit (because they do not hide treasures or feature in the treasure trail). This disrupts the usual manner of museum gazing and pattern of movement. There is an order and sequence to exercises that lead the visitor through specific areas of the museum, and suggest a characteristic rhythm of movement and stops to the user. The treasure trail creates a referential web of associated entities and the visitor performs this web by walking the path between the entities. Treasure trails enact temporal and sensuous practices of moving around in museums. Visitors walk and gaze, there are occasions of focused visual engagement as well as thrusts of energy for moving on.

The two extracts also convey the bodily and verbal excitement displayed when the next object is spotted from a distance. They begin walking or even running towards it and they eagerly inform the others. Once the often up-beat maneuvering and scouting is finalized, a thicker and more sustained museum gaze takes precedence. This involves making the association or the fit – so central to the ‘tourist gaze’ more generally – between the representation in the pamphlet and the real object in front of them (see Illustration 2).

Illustration 2. Photo by authors.

Making this association almost always involves ‘finger pointing’ at the located object or a detail in it. So often, family members are pointing simultaneously as to inform to each other that they have seen it too. Perhaps this ‘pointing finger’ is also a way of reaching out for the object and almost touching it, to embody the gaze? The impossible desire to touch the glass protected antique jars is substituted with a collective-we finger point (see Illustration 3).

Illustration 3. Photos by Authors.

An essential part of ‘treasure trail gazing’ is reading out questions, looking for ‘signs’, answering questions and writing them down. The treasure trail not only acts as an optic; it is also a way of registering what is seen, as an inventory. “There is an Easter egg over here as well.” “Yeah, we’ve seen it, we just haven’t put an x – now we’ve put an x.” “Have you put an x by the walrus?” (video recorded conversation at Naturama). Putting an x or writing text next to an image of an object is a way of registering it. Objects have to be marked or written about in order to really have been seen and be part of treasure trail. This is not unlike sightseeing where photography plays that registering role (Taylor, 1994; Urry and Larsen, 2011a).

This does not rule out a sustained relationship with the object. When treasure trails are successful they provoke a concentrated gaze. One father at *Naturama* says: ‘You see more about the animal, [look] more at the animal, right, instead of, if you just pass by it, right, if you walk past a horse, what the fuck, that’s it. Here they have to answer some questions, so I think they get further, they get more in-depth with the animal’. A father at *Amalienborg* stresses that the treasure trail affects them by slowing them down and concentrating their gaze: ‘They had probably run through it faster if there had not been a treasure trail. It is a very good way to get them engaged. But you also get to see more as an adult as you cannot just skip things’. Indeed the questions that await each time a ‘treasure’ is found can be time-consuming; many of them demand a more sustained look (similar to Degen et al.’s ‘shopping look’) than the usual museum gaze where people silently slide from one object to another, perhaps spending 10-20 seconds on each exhibit (Lehn, 2013). So families spend much time analyzing – counting, comparing, discussing, reading, writing, drawing – specific objects or paintings. We often observed ‘treasure families’ blocking the space and view for drifting adults. This was, for instance, observed at the *Rijksmuseum* at the spot where children are instructed

to draw. This causes confusion and a mild violation of the museum etiquette (see Illustration1):

But daddy, how can I draw properly if there is no table?’ The paper is so soft, Elliot says. ‘I guess you have to draw on the floor then, I reply’. Strange that they hadn’t thought about that; the exhibition and the treasure trail are not in synch, I think out loud. While Elliot takes his time on the floor, absorbed in this creative task, adult gazers constantly pass by. I feel obliged to tell him to move a little backwards from the painting so that he does not block the flow, half-lying there on the floor. For the next five minutes or so Elliot draws with much concentration and that sustained time allows me time to detect an incredible richness and beauty in a painting that I – to be honest – normally would probably only have enjoyed superficially in passing.

The sustained engagement that treasure trails call for can produce a more profound experience for both children and adults. The child learns about the painting and art more generally while the waiting time of the ‘parental look’ affords time to appreciate a richness and beauty that would probably go unnoticed if the father was on his own. So, as a side effect, pamphlets can be beneficial to parents too, for the simple reason that they are temporarily immobilized. At the same time, the extract reveals that museum design does not support the ‘drawing exercise’ properly because of the thin paper and lack of tables.

The same treasure trail earlier on creates another mild – humorous – violation where the tourist gaze becomes embodied in a very surprising way:

I suddenly found myself lying on the floor next to a box that some ‘Hugo de Groot’ escaped

in. I was reading out the text in the pamphlet about his escape and at the end it said: 'would your father fit in this box? Devise a way together with (your parents) to measure this'. Lie next to it! Ha ha that is a brilliant idea, Pernille laughed. So here I am lying on the floor while Elliot measures and Pernille takes a picture.

There is a dark side to this engagement from an adult perspective. Parents may benefit from the time provided by pamphlets, i.e. time for appreciating a painting or engagement in a joint activity with the child. However not all adults enjoy the influence pamphlets have on their visit, but rather detest pamphlet's control over visits as we now discuss.

Conflicts and 'having fun together'

In our interviews and especially the observations we noticed how some adults expressed their annoyance about the pamphlets. Tensions can occur when children are only receptive to the treasure trail. A father gets so sick of his daughters attempts at getting him involved that he exclaims: 'These exercise pamphlets should be banned' (videotaped conversation). We also observed occasions where adults fight for the command of visits with the treasure trail. Based upon recorded observations of a grandmother and her grandchild in *Naturama* we wrote out the following interaction:

"Where are you going Mia?" The ox. Mia points it out to her grandmother ... she tries to get grandmother to go straight to the ox with her. Grandmother won't do it. She is taken in by the exhibition. Grandmother chatters and tries to get Mia to touch a bear, points out how sweet a fox is, and there is a wolf, and a Bambi... She suddenly realizes that her words hang alone in

mid-air. Mia is no longer with her. Now Grandmother is finding that treasure trail annoying. It is disturbing, distracting. It has put a devil into Mia and is making this visit somewhat different than what she had imagined it to be. She had wanted to walk at a quiet and leisurely pace through the exhibition, holding Mia's hand, talking about the animals as they passed by them. Instead she finds her grandchild having run off with that annoying pamphlet, and she herself getting stressed by it.

The commitment of individual family members ranges from cooperation to mild annoyance. They all acknowledge pamphlet's power to engage children and attune their vision, but they are somewhat annoyed that they are too powerful, undermine their own influence or 'hijack' the family. To cite some parents from the adult museum *Amalienborg*:

'It is sometimes the case that the treasure hunt can ruin the experience, I think (Father). Yes it can spoil it (Mother). Because you just chase the next treasure rather than take the time to stroll through the exhibition'.

When we handed in the pamphlet, I said that we ought to take one more tour because we didn't make any other things than those questions. But on the other hand, if it hadn't been there then I don't think they (the two children) would have thought much of the exhibition; because me reading out the signs for them is not much fun.

Some parents get annoyed that their children only want to see things related to the treasure trails and they constantly ask their children to slow down and see things in-between the treasures. So a

phrase like ‘*But remember to look at the other stuff as well, right?*’ *Not only the things we have to fill in, right*’ is constantly heard. In particular, parents are annoyed when their children think that the completion of the treasure trail and the handout of the awarded prize means that the visit is over too. When the treasure trail is done, the museum is done, according to the children but not necessarily so for the parents. We overheard many discussions at the end of trails where parents argued for returning to the rooms that were bypassed. Few children agreed (especially in the adult museums): now they were suddenly in need of the toilet, thirsty, hungry and unruly. Some parents gave up in the name of ‘family bliss’ while others insisted upon ‘dragging them back’ to the bypassed rooms. Now they could finally see *their* things. However, this is a risky strategy as their children may strike back using bad behavior!

Discussion

In the following section we highlight that treasure trails mediate a touch-and-do form of gazing that is both educational and entertaining, and successfully engages families in joint activity, but which also creates negotiation about the course of museum visits.

Negotiated family gazing

Practices of gazing emerge as intertwinements of sociality and technology, where family members negotiate how much influence treasure trail pamphlets should have on visits. Pamphlets offer families ways of attuning their practices of gazing, but at the same time they hold potential for conflict – when parents and children, or sisters and brothers, disagree about what should be seen at which pace.

Much tourism is about being together and having time with one’s family (Haldrup and Larsen, 2003). Treasure trails are promoted as a family – rather than child – activity. The word

family often appears in the title and they are designed in such a way that younger children are dependent upon their parents, for reading out the questions, interpreting and writing the answers. We see how Degen et al.'s 'parental look' can attune parents' eyes to those of their children, and relating to this concept: pamphlets also afford 'attunement' – of seeing and doing together, through a *single-family* gaze. But the literature on gazing is largely blind to conflicts *between* family members. For instance, Degen et al. ignore potential conflicts between the 'parental gaze' and 'shopping look'. These two ways of gazing cannot be practiced simultaneously. If the 'parental look' is too time consuming then there is too little time for the 'shopping look', which might ignore the parents. While the children in the interviews expressed their fondness for the treasure trails, their parents were more ambivalent. Several complained that the 'pamphlet gaze' became so powerful and omnipresent that it structured the whole experience of the museum, and in that process it excluded many aspects that they desired to see.

Pamphlets mediate tactile gazing

Technologies and objects such as Claude Glasses and cameras mediate specific forms of gazing (Larsen, 2005). Similarly, treasure trails mediate and choreograph mobile and, on occasions, multi-sensuous gazing in museums. Visitors are instructed to walk, gaze and write in predefined forms: museum experiences are *pre-formed* like so many other tourism performances (Edensor, 2001; Larsen, 2005). Treasure trails turn movement, actions and tasks into a treasure hunt that is spatially structured along a route, a trail that 'materializes' in the moment when the users follow the instructions and itinerary ('proceed to room x or exhibit y'). Pamphlets operate through visual engagement – by looking. At the same time, the pamphlet is tangible, the gazer holds the pamphlet in his or her hands, and this adds a tactile and enduring dimension to the otherwise fleeting visual engagement. The pamphlet choreographs a tactile gaze as a child is instructed to feel the silky fur of an exhibited animal, for example.

Serious fun

Treasure trails are legitimized by the museum discourse of education, while they simultaneously provide an occasion for family-based fun and play. Children who work on exercises are perceived as being in meaningful interaction with the museum; it looks as though they are learning biology, history and art and pamphlets are therefore endorsed by museums, as our interviews with museum managers reveal. We may say that children are staged as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge: When information is filled into the pamphlet, this symbolically is an act of filling information into the child. The task of transmitting facts, knowledge and skills to children has been delegated to exercise pamphlets and their ‘allies’: exhibited objects, signs and exhibition computers (for more detail see Svabo, 2010). Seen through the optic of Urry’s tourist gaze, the pamphlets are asked to bring about a serious and placid mode of visiting. They are, here-and-now, in charge of producing docile gazers and, in the long run, children that master and appreciate the art of contemplative and interpretive gazing, of being visually absorbed in an exhibited object.

At the same time, however, children and families are *having serious fun*. The paths rolled out require immersion, imagination and intellectual work. The treasure trails aim at content learning by asking for classification and the correct use of terms, but trails also afford finding new discoveries and treasures. The treasure trails combine, we may say, the scholar with Indiana Jones. So the ‘thrill’ relates to finding an object (a bit like playing ‘hide and seek’) and getting the *right* answer to specific questions (so it involves motivating quiz-like teaching). These simultaneous motivations can be seen as an emblematic example of ‘infotainment’, so central to ‘the new museology’.

Conclusion

We have been concerned with exploring aspects of gazing within museums. We noted the paradox that the ‘tourist gaze’ has not been explored in relation to museums, which for long explicitly have

been designed as places for gazing. Touching is (almost) always forbidden. Objects may be behind glass, ropes prevent visitors from getting too close to the paintings while staff tell those off that get too close to objects or behaviour in an inappropriate manner, whether they talk too loud or their children run around in the museum. They are visual spaces where the care and conservation of objects sets limits to visitor's ways of experiencing exhibitions. This is not an easy place to visit with children and yet some parents drag their children to adult museums and children drag their parents to 'children's museums'.

We have discussed how museums are becoming concerned with affording more interactive, entertaining and multi-sensuous ways of gazing, and treasure trails can be seen as part of 'the new museology'. Empirically we have explored how the pamphlets structure the gazes of families and how they are enacted in the practice. Theoretically, we have drawn upon the Urry and Larsen's recent attempt at 'embodying' the tourist gaze and Degen et al.'s ethnographic study of multi-sensuous vision in a shopping mall. Treasure trails participate in the enactment of a specific temporal and sensuous practice in museums, which we have related to Degen et al.'s concepts of 'maneuvering' and 'the shopping look'. 'Maneuvering' highlights the intersections between walking and gazing while the 'shopping look' accounts for more focused visual engagement. Treasure trails enact temporal and sensuous practices of moving around in museums. Visitors walk and gaze. At the same time this museum-based moving-gazing is intertwined with the narrative thread of the treasure trail that provides occasions for focused visual engagement as well as thrusts of energy for moving on.

Treasure trails compensate to some extent for the 'separation of senses' in museums. Treasure trails mediate a tangible locus of vision. The instinct for touching is transposed to (and contained by) pamphlets. We have argued that pamphlets can intensify the museum visiting experience. We have seen examples where they instruct children to feel objects and draw paintings. They

interestingly bring about a sustained and concentrated gaze when children and parents are instructed to analyze or detect specific objects and paintings. In the interviews all the children expressed that they enjoy doing them and that they can *transform* even boring adult museums into somewhat interesting places. We have also shown that they are used in the ‘decision-making’ that families undertake on a journey. Their ‘intensifying’, ‘transformative’ and pervasive qualities explain why they are so popular with children and to a large extent also with parents. But we have also shown that they are, on occasions, contested. Manipulations and conflicts are unavoidable part of visiting museums and family trails themselves create their own family tensions. While the children in the interviews expressed their fondness for the treasure trails, their parents were more ambivalent. Several complained that the ‘pamphlet gaze’ became so powerful and omnipresent that it structured the whole experience of the museum, and in that process it excluded many aspects that they desired to see.

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