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Reviewed Article:

Time travel – a Great Method to Strengthen Cooperation between Museums and Schools. The Experience of Nationwide Time Travels in Estonia.

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Author(s): Kaari Siemer [1] ✉

[1] Estonian National Museum (Eesti Rahva Muuseum), Muuseumi tee 2, 60532 Tartu, Estonia

In Estonia the method of Time Travel has been used for more than 10 years. While the first time travels were conducted in a rather casual and modest way, a change took place in 2016 with the first nationwide project. By today more than 23 000 students have participated in the

nationwide time travel events and it has become an important way of cooperation for museums and schools.

> In eight years, the method has become very widespread, as it is used by both schools and museums, and pedagogical students of the University of Tartu are learning about the method at the Estonian National Museum. The announcement of a new Time Travel topic at the beginning of the school year is an important event for the history teachers, and the accompanying training is considered very necessary.

What is a Time Travel method?

The Time Travel method was developed in the 1980's in Sweden, at the Kalmar läns museum to teach and understand local history and cultural heritage (Westergren, 2018). In 2004, the international time travel organization Bridging Ages was founded. Today, the method is used in more than twenty countries around the world (Bridging Ages, n.d.-a).

Time Travel is a fascinating and playful way to learn more about the events of the past and create connections with the present. It is important to travel back to a certain date and historical place (agreed upon in advance) and play out the past event with role-playing elements. It does not have to be a so-called *big historical event*, but rather a reflection of the experience of an "ordinary person" against the background of 'big history'. A script of the event is written in advance to carry out the journey. With the help of the Time Travel method, one can draw connections between all subjects, find solutions to problems plaguing today's society (by learning from the experience of history), understand the role of an individual in society, and experience the world as a whole (Bridging Ages, n.d.-b).

In Estonia, the method has been used for more than 10 years. In the first years, Time Travel took place casually and modestly, but a significant change took place in 2016 when we started our first nationwide Time Travel project. As of autumn 2023, more than 23 000 Estonian students had participated in nationwide Time Travel events.

Preparation for a nationwide time travel

While a Time Travel event is usually conducted by a local organization (e.g., a museum), in Estonia Time Travels are carried out by local schools and museums independently within the framework of nationwide Time Travel projects. Every year, a historical event is selected, which has an important meaning for everybody – for example, the 100-years celebration of the Republic of Estonia, 150 years from the first Estonian Song Festival, etc.

The nationwide Time Travel is coordinated by the Estonian National Museum and the Estonian History and Civics Teachers' Association, who organize training for teachers and museum educators. For this purpose, the Facebook group "Ajarännak" ('Time Travel') was

created, where the materials on the historical background, as well as organizational, and training information were distributed to those interested. Today we have more than 350 members (teachers and museum educators) in the group.

During training events (3 in a project), a thorough overview of the historical event in question is given (lectures about historical background, everyday life, and the event itself), a basic scenario of Time Travel is created, and the test event is played out together. Trained teachers coordinate the project in their schools/museums, and under their leadership, smaller Time Travels are carried out locally, all over Estonia.

To date, five nationwide Time Travel events have taken place. The important events that have been depicted are the declaration of Estonian independence in 1918, the First Song Festival in 1869, the signing of peace treaty between Estonia and Soviet Russia in 1920, the regaining of independence of the Republic of Estonia in 1991 (a digital version of this topic is also completed (Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 2023)), and the peasants uprising in the Duchy of Estonia in 1343. Currently, preparations are underway for the next nationwide Time Travel event in 2024, the theme of which will be 'the great escape to the West during the Second World War in 1944'. National Time Travels have become an important cooperation project between Estonian museums and schools (Siemer, 2021).

Preparations in schools

Since Time Travel can integrate different school subjects (e.g., history and society, mother tongue and foreign languages, natural sciences, arts and crafts, physical education, etc.), the whole school is interested in holding the event. An experiential history day is a very popular and expected event especially among students. Both students and teachers, and sometimes even the local community in a wider scale, contribute to it.

Every Time Travel is preceded by a thorough research in schools to get familiar with historical sources and literature. One has to take into account what was happening in the politics of the day, as well as what were the norms, rules, and possibilities of the era. It is equally important to study the story of one's neighbourhood – whether and how the played-out historical event is reflected in local newspapers, memories, and sources, – as well as local key figures, places, and problems.

The results of the research are used to enrich the main scenario and create the story of one's own local area. Thematic exhibitions are prepared in several places. To add the atmosphere of the era, the students are introduced to the culture and fashion history of the era, and together they look for or make clothes and accessories adding to the authenticity of the period. In many places, the entire school is decorated in the spirit of a Time Travel.

Depiction of a historical event for a time travel

In the following, I will describe the main scenarios of the first four Time Travels to the years 1918, 1869, 1920 and 1991. They have been prepared cooperatively between teachers and museum educators during the training days of the project. The creation of the scenario is based on a historical event, but the focus is on the so-called ordinary person in their living environment – how the important event was heard of, how it possibly affected the lives of ordinary people, what was talked about it, what concerned them. The most important aspects of the scenario are formulating the problem that will trigger the event, describing the main roles representing different perspectives, and creating discussions and workshops. Based on them, an experiential day can be carried out, in which all those present participate.

Time Travel to 1918 (Siemer, 2018) celebrated 100 years of the Republic of Estonia. Nationwide Time Travel took place on 7 February 2018 all over Estonia. Altogether 8 400 students, and 52 schools and museums participated in the Time Travel.

Historical background:

On 23 February 1918 the Estonian Declaration of Independence (also known as the Manifesto to the Peoples of Estonia) was read out aloud publicly in a small town of Pärnu, in the next day in the Estonian capital city Tallinn. This is the founding act which established the independent democratic Republic of Estonia on 24 February 1918.

Time Travel scenario:

It is 24 February 1918. The students of the local Sunday School and villagers have gathered in the schoolhouse. The church minister reads out the manifesto of Estonian independence, read out in Pärnu the day before, and initiates a discussion – Is an independent Estonian state important to us? With the help of the main roles – a village clerk, a widowed farmer, and a peasant woman – three worldviews are highlighted: patriotic, socialist, and pessimistic conservative. Students divide into groups and discuss the given question based on their chosen world view. Finally, the discussion is collectively summarized.

Time travel to 1869 celebrated the 150th anniversary of the first national song festival. Time Travel took place on 2–4 May 2019. Altogether 6 100 people, 29 schools, 11 choirs, 9 museums, 2 brass bands, and 1 youth centre participated in the Time Travel.

Historical background:

The first national song festival was held in Tartu in the summer of 1869. The festival played a part of the Estonian national awakening movement. Ordinary farmers discovered that their traditions could be a part of modern culture. In the first three festivals only men's choirs and brass orchestras were allowed to perform. Starting with the fourth festival, mixed choirs were also given access (Hellrand, 2019). Today the Estonian Song Festival is one of the largest choral events in the world.

Time Travel scenario:

It is 15 May 1869. The first national song festival is only a month away. The villagers have gathered for a choir rehearsal to discuss whether they are ready to go and perform at the concerts. Participants are divided into three workshops.

The first workshop will discuss where to get horses and carriages for the trip, where to find a place to stay, how much food to take with, etc. Folk clothes are tried on, groceries are weighed, food is cooked and the table is set. In the second workshop, songs are practiced and a discussion is held on why cannot women participate in the event. In the third workshop, the people talk about the politics of the day, read newspapers, and debate whether the song party will be remembered in 150 years?

Together, the discussions are summarized and it is decided whether to go to the song festival or not.

Time Travel to 1920 celebrated the 100 years of the Tartu Peace treaty between the Republic of Estonia and Soviet Russia. Time Travel took place 3–14 February 2020. In all, 3 100 students, 19 schools and 3 museums participated.

Historical background:

The Treaty of Tartu is a peace treaty that was signed in Tartu on 2 February 1920 between the Republic of Estonia and Soviet Russia, ending the 1918–1920 Estonian War of Independence (Republic of Estonia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). The terms of the treaty stated: "Russia unreservedly recognizes the independence and sovereignty of the State of Estonia, and renounces voluntarily and forever all sovereign rights possessed by Russia over the Estonian people and territory" (Leivat, 2020).

Time Travel scenario:

It is 2 February 1920. In this Time Travel, young men and women worked in separate workshops. According to the scenario, the cadet soldiers were waiting for the order of the day in the barracks, practicing marching and reading letters and newspapers sent from home. At the same time, the girls were preparing a social gathering and learning the skills of the Sister of Mercy. In addition, the *reilender* dance was practiced for the evening party, and the questions of whether the Tartu peace agreement really brings a long-standing peace were discussed. How will the peace treaty affect the life of our country and people in the future? At the end of the day young people had a joint discussion and a merry dance party.

Time Travel to 1991 celebrated the 30 years of the regaining of independence of the Republic of Estonia. Time Travel took place 6–16 September 2021. 5 100 students, 26 schools and 4 museums participated.

Historical background:

After more than 50 years of the Soviet occupation Estonian Restoration of Independence was proclaimed on 20 August 1991. The impetus for this was a harsh coup d'état in Moscow, after which the Soviet tanks invaded Estonia, trying to suppress Estonia's efforts to restore its independence. The next day, the coup collapsed in Moscow, and the new Russian leadership officially recognized the independence of Estonia and the other Baltic states two weeks later (Zunes, 2009; Wright, 2019).

Time Travel scenario:

On 21 August 1991 a family or school reunion is taking place. Less than a day has passed since the declaration of Estonia's re-independence. The situation is tense in the whole country – an armoured column of the Soviet Airborne Forces has arrived in Estonia to take control of strategically important civilian objects. The gathered group begins to discuss heatedly how to protect Estonia, what to hope for and what to fear in the situation. Everyday issues such as food (or lack thereof), fashion, and music are also dealt with. What to say in such a critical situation to the future generations after 30 years?

Conclusion

The organization of nationwide Time Travel has fully justified itself in Estonia. In eight years, the method has become very widespread, as it is used by both schools and museums, and pedagogical students of the University of Tartu are learning about the method at the Estonian National Museum. The announcement of a new Time Travel topic at the beginning of the school year is an important event for the history teachers, and the accompanying training is considered very necessary.

What has such a project brought to our museum? Good experience, a stronger network of teachers and museum educators, and exciting opportunities for cooperation both locally and internationally.

Keywords interpretation
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Corresponding Author

Kaari Siemer
Estonian National Museum (Eesti Rahva Muuseum)
Muuseumi tee 2
60532 Tartu
Estonia
E-mail Contact

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FIG 1. TIME TRAVEL 1343. A MOMENT FROM A TEACHER TRAINING DAY IN PADISE MONASTERY. PHOTO: ESTONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM (ENM)

FIG 2. TIME TRAVEL 1869. TIME TRAVELLERS HAVING FUN WITH FOLK GAMES. PARTICIPANTS OF THE BRIDGING AGES CONFERENCE IN 2019 AT THE ESTONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM. PHOTO: BERTA JÄNES

FIG 3. TIME TRAVEL 1869. DURING THE TIME TRAVEL OF THE 8TH GRADE STUDENTS OF JÕGEVA PARISH, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE PALAMUSE MUSEUM, THEY ACTED OUT HOW GOING TO THE FIRST SONG FESTIVAL HAPPENED 150 YEARS AGO. PHOTO: TIINA KULL

FIG 4. TIME TRAVEL 1918. TIME TRAVEL OF THE AUDENTES SCHOOL AND ENM IN THE HEIMTALI MUSEUM. PHOTO: ENM

FIG 5. TIME TRAVEL 1918. JOINT TIME TRAVEL OF THE VILJANDI MUSEUM AND SCHOOLS IN FRONT OF THE VILJANDI COURTHOUSE, WHERE THE INDEPENDENCE MANIFESTO WAS READ ON FEBRUARY 24, 1918. PHOTO: EPP BUHT

FIG 6. TIME TRAVEL 1920. YOUNG SOLDIERS PRACTICING LINE MARCH AT KILINGI-NÕMME GYMNASIUM. PHOTO: MARGIT JAANSON

FIG 7. TIME TRAVEL 1920 IN JÕGEVA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. THE GIRLS ARE PREPARING FOR THE EVENING DANCE PARTY. PHOTO: TIINA KULL. PHOTO: TIINA KULL

FIG 8. TIME TRAVEL 1991 IN HAAPSALU GYMNASIUM. YOUNG PEOPLE AT A DEMONSTRATION. IN THE FOREGROUND, THE MOST FAMOUS SLOGAN OF THE SINGING REVOLUTION "ÜKSKORD ME VÕIDAME NIIKUINII! ONE DAY WE WILL WIN ANYWAY!" (BY HEINZ VALK). PHOTO: MALLE-LIISA RAIGLA

FIG 9. STUDENTS OF PALAMUSE GYMNASIUM ARE PREPARING FOR TIME TRAVEL TO 1991 AT LOCAL MUSEUM. PHOTO: AILI KALAVUS