



## BRIDGING AGES

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION IN  
APPLIED HERITAGE AND TIME TRAVELS

Newsletter  
June 2020

### TURNING THE COVID-19 CRISIS INTO A CATALYST FOR CHANGE AND HOPE?



Nurses and volunteers practicing medical activities to be able to take care of refugees after the end of World War II in 1945. Time Travel event outside the former epidemic hospital in Kalmar, Sweden, where the refugees were placed in quarantine. The end of a disaster gives people hope for change and an opportunity for new directions of life and the world.

Is the COVID-19 pandemic a catalyst for change that outlives, a temporary shift in behaviour? There is consensus that life will never be the same again. There are encouraging signs, however, that it has forced us to **reconnect with what is most important** in times of upheaval there is a greater opportunity to challenge, to think creatively and to entrench a paradigm shift.

But first, let us digest the terrible impact beyond international travel and the funding crisis. There is the **human cost of death**, suffering, collapsing economies, job losses and hunger. This must surely force us to **re-examine the way our world is organised** – a glaring need for a system that shares the world's resources more equitably.

Reports from all parts of the world show how our normal daily practices impact on our planet. One spectacular outcome of the lockdown has brought back a clear vision of the Himalayas from a distance of 200 km. Other spinoffs of lockdown are the return of birdlife to many urban areas, and fish to the canals of Venice. It is a story of humans giving our planet a break, a space to breathe and recover. But for how long? We have to think and act about the impact of climate change. Time travel programmes must focus more on these topical issues.

Although it is unfortunate that the international conference scheduled to take place in Turkey in September 2020 was postponed, the positive outcome of this is that we are instead using the time to accelerate our review of our work and our organisation. We were in the process of **consolidating, strengthening and enhancing the work of Bridging Ages** – towards sustainability. We remain amazed and inspired by the **deep passion and commitment of Time Travel activists**.

It is rooted in our years of implementation of programmes in many countries. I am truly inspired by the volunteerism.

This gives great hope. Our work has not only seeded but also germinated with the real prospect of enduring into the future.

Our task is to persevere and **respond effectively to the new conditions**. Let us maintain our truly internationalist approach – embracing north and south, rich and poor, young and old, formal and informal – to create a better world for all. Our work contributes to keeping these thoughts and questions alive. Every Time Travel program poses questions for critical evaluation. In the COVID 19 crisis of lockdown, death and risk; many sensitive beings re-examine their priorities – consumerism, consumption and accumulation, distance from family and community – **seeking a new value system based on sharing and collective work. In short it embraces the core principle of Ubuntu.**

Finally, our work requires partnerships and collaboration. **Our work adds value.**

***I Am Because We Are***  
***Gulshera Khan***  
***President***



*"People in India can see the Himalayas for the first time in 'decades,' as the lockdown eases air pollution" – Rob Picheta, CNN • Updated 9 April 2020*

**BUT FOR HOW LONG?**

# ADAPTING TO COVID-19

Even though we all must adapt to a new situation, the possibilities and restrictions differ between countries involved in the Bridging Ages network. This is an example of four countries adaptation to their work during the pandemic.

## Latvia



Latvian museums are using virtual tools, like exhibitions, excursions, presentations of collections, and lectures, amongst other tools. Tukums museums has already prepared online material for teachers which could be used in distance learning to study themes of the 1905 Agrarian Revolt and the 1919 Latvian Independence War.

Tukums museum has published several films and teachers can use them free of charge. We have an idea to have translated film texts in English too but we need to look for resources.

Some ideas for the nearest future:

1. Maybe this is a time for documenting stories. These stories could be about today or any historical period.
2. We can invite people to collect and publish photos and documents which illustrate these stories. Museums can publish their own objects.

*Agrita Ozola*  
*Tukums Museum (Latvia)*

## South Africa



The early lockdown in South Africa created the space for the country to complete work long-outstanding. The process of building our country, transforming services and addressing historical imbalances brought into sharp focus the need for speeding up the process in some areas.

Heritage organisations focus during COVID-19 pandemic time were on research, documentation, and revamping of museum displays. Some museums responded by recording the voices and experiences on how the pandemic has affected families and communities – *Andy Peterson, Bridging Ages South Africa*

Port Shepstone Twinning Association embarked on development of the Educational Manuscript based on the Time Travel method. The lockdown created the space to do so. The manual focusses on the educational theories underpinning the Time Travel method, the practical implementation and educational lesson plans.

In addition, after a need assessment, supported 35 families that are part of the Association's programme with food hampers. - *Rueben Gounden, Port Shepstone Twinning Association*



## Finland

### Making of a virtual Time Travel – what the work looks like in 2020

What is the way forward when all Time Travels for the season are cancelled due to the lockdown?? In Finland the schools moved to distance learning at home from the middle of March until the middle of May. In the last two weeks of the school term the schools opened again, but with restrictions. Live Time Travels were out of the question because of this.

The Ostrobothnian Children's Culture Network BARK in Finland usually do Time Travels most weekdays in May, but this year we needed to think outside the box. As we now live in a world, where we are socially distancing ourselves from one another the Time Travels has to find a new format. This year, all 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the region of Ostrobothnia got a link to a virtual Time Travel to 1807 or 1943.

This is new territory and one learns and gets new ideas as one goes along. What I have discovered, is that there can be different kinds of virtual Time Travels. One is a recorded version, with tasks and discussion topics. This can be led by a teacher. This kind of Time Travel can be distributed to many classes through a You Tube-video and is not so dependent on that all in the group have personal access to a social platform like Teams, Zooms or the like.

Another format of the virtual Time Travel is one that is held totally through a social platform like Teams, Zoom or Google, led by a museum professional or other Time Travel educator. Where the group can take part and discuss and perform as if they were on a physical place together. But this of course requires that all participants have access to the social platform and know how to use it.

As in a live Time Travel, this is not a performance or a play, it's an interaction with the past, present and the future. After setting the scene through a video, the activity starts. The easiest point would be to make it just

theoretical and have the students find the answers in documents; however, this would entail activity through film, music and handicraft, just as it would have been in a live Time Travel. And at the end, we reflect.

In both cases the challenge is that if there are manual tasks to be done, activities that everyone can do in the classroom or home surroundings must be planned. It's not an option to write with quill pens and ink for example, as this is not something that is readily available. To do a virtual Time Travel can be interesting and creative. It's a way to challenge the concept and take it to new levels. You need to think outside the box and the interaction will be different compared to the reality of physical Time Travel. The experience, which we often talk about will now take another form, but a form that will still engage and intrigue the participant to reflect on the past, present and the future.

*Annina Ylikoski*

*The Ostrobothnian Children's Culture Network BARK, Finland (Former Bridging Ages President)*



*A socially distanced kitchen task at a Time Travel to 1943*



## Sweden

As has been much highlighted in the international media, Sweden did not close primary and secondary schools during the pandemic. Most municipalities decided that no one except the school staff were allowed to meet the students. This meant that almost all our programs were cancelled. However, when the weather got warmer, two municipalities decided to allow for time travelling. This gave us the opportunity of doing ten time travels this spring.

The daily average of pupil numbers per class was between 20-30 (10 year olds), with their teachers. This made the staff from KLM the only “newcomers” to the group. We travelled back to the Stone Age and the Bronze Age. The Time Travel exercise earned us much praise: here is a sample of the commendations we received:

*“I would like to point out that the teachers paid attention to how you adapted the time travel to the Coronary restrictions - they were impressed and relieved. After all, it is a lot of extra energy and thinking that goes to restrictions these days, and it was nice*



*that someone else had thought and you could lean on that!”*

In Kalmar all time travels are made outside, with or without Covid-19, which of course was necessary at the time. Before the Time Travel, however, we made a risk analysis and made some small changes to the concept.

- We set up a washing station including hand disinfection facilities,
- We used gloves when handling food.
- We chose to give the pupils only hats that were washed between the Time Travels. Full costumes were not used.
- We kept the required distance.

In short, they were performed quite as usual - it was very satisfying.

Now we, as well as everyone else, hope for a normal autumn. We have started to receive bookings for Time Travels after the summer and are prepared to perform them in September and October.

*Linda Liljeberg and Tina Lindström  
Kalmar County Museum Sweden*



Covid-19 Stone Age Time Travel event during restrictions at Mönsterås in Kalmar County

## Tukums Museum (Latvia) "Travel Time to 1919" Programme: An example of competence-based activities



The topic of Latvia's independence war between 1918 and 1920 has been studied at a comparatively small degree. During the 20th century, the topic was hushed up or even altered, so most people do not really understand it. The Tukums Museum has an exhibition at the Durbe Manor House that is titled "For Motherland and Latvia: 1918-1920," and it is meant to help to history teachers and schoolchildren so that they can better understand this topic. The exhibition offers a look at various aspects of the war for independence, particularly focusing on the role of the Baltic Landeswehr aspect.

The Bolsheviks nationalised the Durbe Estate in January 1919. Many wealthy people perished during the period of red terror, including three members of the von der Recke family, the owners of the Estate. The Durbe Manor House stood empty for several months. In July 1919, when the Latvian Army was being organised, a military hospital for the Baltic Landeswehr was installed at the Durbe Elisabeth von Hirschheydt (1898-1945), also known as Lisi. On July 30, 1919, she celebrated her 21st birthday there, and a volunteer from the Landeswehr, German physician Alfred Trost (1891-1953) proposed marriage to her that suggest that the nurse also experienced tragedy.

Once, her seriously injured brother ended up at the field hospital, and later died. These stories inspired the museum to establish the programme "Time Travel to 1919."

The programme has received financing from the State Cultural Capital Fund, in Latvia, which made it possible to create costumes for participants. The fund also made the acquisition of various props and objects, necessary to depict a field hospital, possible. The content was prepared by the Tukums Museum in close partnership with teachers from the Brocēni High School. The team drafted recommendations for history teachers instructing them on how best to explain the war of independence to students, using an interdisciplinary approach. The teachers assisted with the production of a short educational film, "Lisi's Story. 1919," which starred several distinguished Latvian actors.

At the beginning of the museum visit, museum educators lead students to the exhibition so that they can learn by studying objects such as newspapers and documents, and reading fragments of the memoirs of historical people. Visitors also watch the movie "Lisi's Story. 1919". This allows young people to understand more easily the historical situation and understand how tragic that event was. After the film, each student receives an individual role and assignments that must be performed during the process – organising the field hospital, preparing medical materials, awaiting injured people and helping them, and preparing a simple meal for the group. Evidence from historical testimony allows the organisers of the programme to include a situation in which the Hospital of Landeswehr brought an injured left-wing soldier.

This leads to a discussion about whether a person with different beliefs should receive first aid. By engaging in practical assignments, students are encouraged to consider and discuss each situation so as to understand the views and emotions of

various people during a war. Roles, costumes, museum objects and historical interiors differ from the student's everyday life, and that helps to change his or her behaviour so they can better identify with historical individuals from Latvia's war for Independence.



After the programme, the students return to the exhibition, examine objects and photographs of their role prototypes and discuss what they have experienced. Museum pedagogues encourage them to compare the events of the past to the present day, express their views about the future of the country and to talk about their attitudes about the future.

*Inese Schimane*  
*Museum Educator*

# Community Development among Nomads in Northern Kenya

I have lived more than half of my life serving communities in northern Kenya, a majority of it being a teacher in both primary and secondary schools. After visiting Sweden in 2004, everything changed. I took part in the international seminar in Vimmerby, Sweden, the start of the Bridging Ages network. Interacting with people from Sweden and other countries has been a great source of inspiration to me.

When I came home to northern Kenya, I shifted my focus to community development. Together with an organization from the Netherlands, we were able to build several new schools. I became involved in the Bridging Ages work and I was engaged in projects on Heritage, Education, Mathematics and Community building. A highlight was hosting the Bridging Ages conference in Ngurunit in 2014, with 150 guests in this small pastoralist Samburu community.



After another visit to Sweden and Two Sisters' Church in Kalmar a few years ago, this church became involved in building a new school in a small desert village, Civicon, 130 kilometres north of Ngurunit. The village had evolved next to the office of a company constructing a road to a big windmill farm. When the company left the area, 600 people, including 200 children were still around, but without any services. Two Sisters' Church decided to support the

building of a school, with teachers and school. The community set up a school committee, which I coordinated, and which was supported by the church.



The school started in January 2019 with about 50 four to five year old children. Two local teachers were employed, and the children were served a meal every day. The women in the community, mostly illiterate, began attending the school in the afternoons and were taught reading and writing skills by a local volunteer.

In March 2020, the Two Sisters' School, elementary and primary education, was inaugurated. The whole community was engaged in this inauguration. There were visitors from neighbouring villages and even a group from Two Sisters' Church in Sweden. This was a historical day for Civicon, giving hope for the future and establishing a landmark for the development of the community.

The partnership with external organizations like Bridging Ages, Kalmar county museum, Linnaeus University, Two Sisters' Church have given inspiration and support to local organizations and communities in northern Kenya. Through education and development, people have widened their perspectives and have learned to accept changes in life.

*Steven Labarakwe, Kenya*



# “Highlight of the Conference”

## Time Travel based on Human Rights Abuse and the Importance of Oral History



*The Time Travel event is a community meeting held on 2 March 1978 to mobilise support for the stay of execution of Solomon Mahlangu who was found guilty of several charges under the notorious Terrorism Act.*

*Image: Museum Services, Mpumalanga*

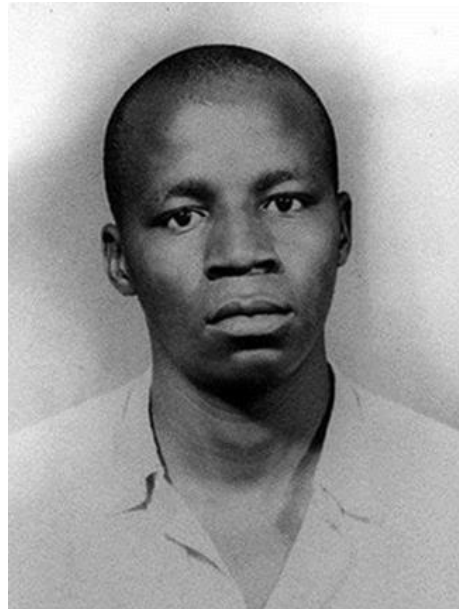
The implementation of the Time Travel method in South Africa since 2006 has contributed to the unearthing and recording of local historical sites. There is a great need to safeguard intangible heritage by recording, collecting, and archiving memories of local communities. These narratives encompass all people, irrespective of race, culture and social status, a need identified in post-democracy South Africa in 1994. To this end, OHASA (Oral History Association of South Africa) was established in the year 2000. The rationale for the establishment of this organisation is summarised:

*As a result of colonialism and apartheid, there are gaps in public records and public knowledge. Such omission concerns various aspects in areas such as politics, economics, social development, health, culture, gender issues and religion. Oral history would provide alternative narratives, fresh information and*

*new insights into our understanding of the past. It would stimulate marginalised and distorted social practices which could enhance the well-being of the people. Oral history would benefit the communities to provide emotional support to people through affirmation and healing. It also assists communities in retrieving traditional support systems in matters such as food conservation and natural medicine. <https://www.ohasa.org.za>*

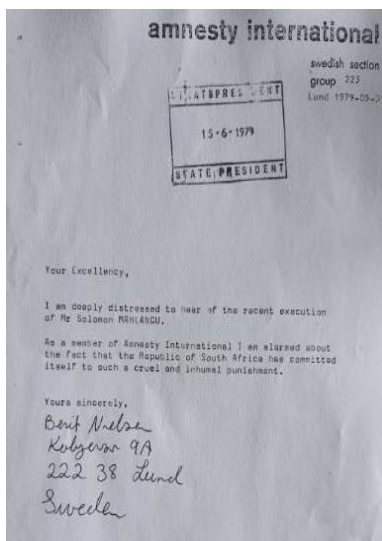
In November 2019, OHASA National Conference was hosted by the Department of Culture, Sport and Recreation in Mpumalanga. Bridging Ages organisation was identified to present Time Travel under the category **New Methodologies on Oral History**. This presentation by Gulshera Khan and Ebbe Westergren drew further attention when participants were engaged in a Time Travel event.

The conference Time Travel event was based on the life of **Solomon Kalushi Mahlangu, 1978**. Narratives from local communities revealed that Solomon Mahlangu was born in Middleburg, a fact relatively unknown, where the conference was hosted. His brother, sister and other relative's' participation made the event so much more meaningful and real. According to the Deputy Minister of Sports, Arts and Culture, Nocawe Mafu, participating in the Time Travel event was the conference highlight.



*Before going to the gallows Solomon Mahlangu said, "Tell my people that I love them and that they must continue the fight, my blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom, Aluta Continua."*

Solomon Mahlangu was a freedom fighter; he was wrongly convicted during the apartheid era and hanged at the age of 22 in 1979. His execution deeply affected people throughout South Africa and the international community. There was protest action in 15 countries against his execution, including Amnesty International. Such Time Travel reflects on the importance of Human Rights Today and its importance, globally.



*Amnesty International- Swedish office Appeal- SA National Archive*



*Protest action in 15 countries against his execution. Above: Germany*

### What are the Trends Today?

We continue to see similar trends. As recently as May 2020, (as this article was being penned). George Floyd, 46, died after being arrested by police outside a shop in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. Footage that went viral on social media shows that on 25th May 2020 a police officer kneeling on his neck while he was pinned to the floor. He pleaded in an agonised voice, 'I can't breathe' and lost his life. As we go by the news media, sensational though it may be, we cautiously accept the allegation that the brutal action of the policeman led to his death. Widespread protest action and racism has come to the fore.



*Both these incidents differ significantly but are connected to issues on Human Rights abuse. While many programmes are addressing Human Rights Violations, Bridging Ages' contribution is the use of the Time Travel method to reflect on the past and address contemporary issues.*

*Themba Shilubane and Gulshera Khan - Bridging Ages South Africa*

## Appreciation

Thulas Mkhize, Chairperson of Port Shepstone Twinning Association hands over a donation to Smangele Memela from Gamalakhe Tin Town. Her home has been used to host Time Travel events.

Our appreciation to Ebbe Westergren, Bo Hellström, Tina Lindström, Emma Holmén, Örjan Molander and Meg Nömgård for their contribution.

Smangele Memela commented, *"Ebbe Westergren and friends, I would like to say thank you very much for thinking of me in this trying time. I appreciate that I am always on your mind and I say I will always open my house for Time Travel."*



## Acknowledgement

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*Editorial Team: Scott Green, Rueben Gounden, Terry Audan, Ebbe Westergren and Linda Liljeberg (Layout)*



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