

Planet Africa – Archaeological time travel

Pilot project of a traveling exhibition



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An exhibition is planned, which deals with the fascinating archaeology of Africa. The pilot project “Planet Africa”, which started at the end of 2021, is preparing the first elements of the exhibition. “Planet Africa” is being developed under the direction of Jörg Linstädter (KAAK) and Gerd-Christian Weniger (University of Cologne) in cooperation with Wazi Apoh (University of Accra) and the Museum of Prehistory, Berlin. With funding from the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Research Foundation (DFG), the pilot project serves as a “proof of concept” for the traveling exhibition scheduled to start in 2024, which will be enriched by, among other things, the research results of the DFG priority program “Entangled Africa.” The exhibition is conceived in close cooperation with African colleagues. In addition, African street artists will design illustrations for each module.



Fig. 1

Concept of Content

The modules deal with Africa's important role in human history from the first representatives of the genus Homo to more recent technological and nutritional impulses that were carried from Africa to the whole world (Fig. 1). They present a continent that fascinates through its natural diversity and which, with continuous (environmental) changes, triggered adaptation processes, migratory movements and again and again produced new survival strategies. Alongside archaeological finds, images and written signs provide comprehensive testimony to the art, craft, technology and environment of times long past - and to the connections between people across vast distances. The remains of settlements and urban centers reveal social and political structures, adaptation to a life of close coexistence, while at the same time nomadic ways of life remained essential for survival. Additionally, the modern use of old knowledge, the work and interpretation of one's own past by the African researchers and artists involved in the research projects and in the exhibition will be shown.

Figure 1: Thematic modules of the exhibition.

Concept of Museology

In order to reach a large audience in Germany and in Africa, the format of the traveling exhibition was chosen, which can be shown at several venues in serial or parallel with different duration's (Fig. 2). This requires a high flexibility of the exhibition construction and the exhibition element. The main construction element, at least in Germany, is the exhibition box (Fig. 3). It has a size of 1.5 m x 0.7 m x 2.1 m. Electricity can be supplied via ceiling or floor outlets. It can be used on all sides with all kinds of presentation media (from showcases with objects to projection screens). Space equipment for 20 elements is between 500 1,000 m² depending on the distance around each element (2 m or 3 m). There are numerous variations of arrangement possible (Fig. 4).

Figure 2: Exhibition concept for Germany and Africa.
Figure 3-6: Figure 3, upper left: Presentation box. Figure 4-6, upper right and lower left and right: possibilities for the arrangement of the presentation boxes.

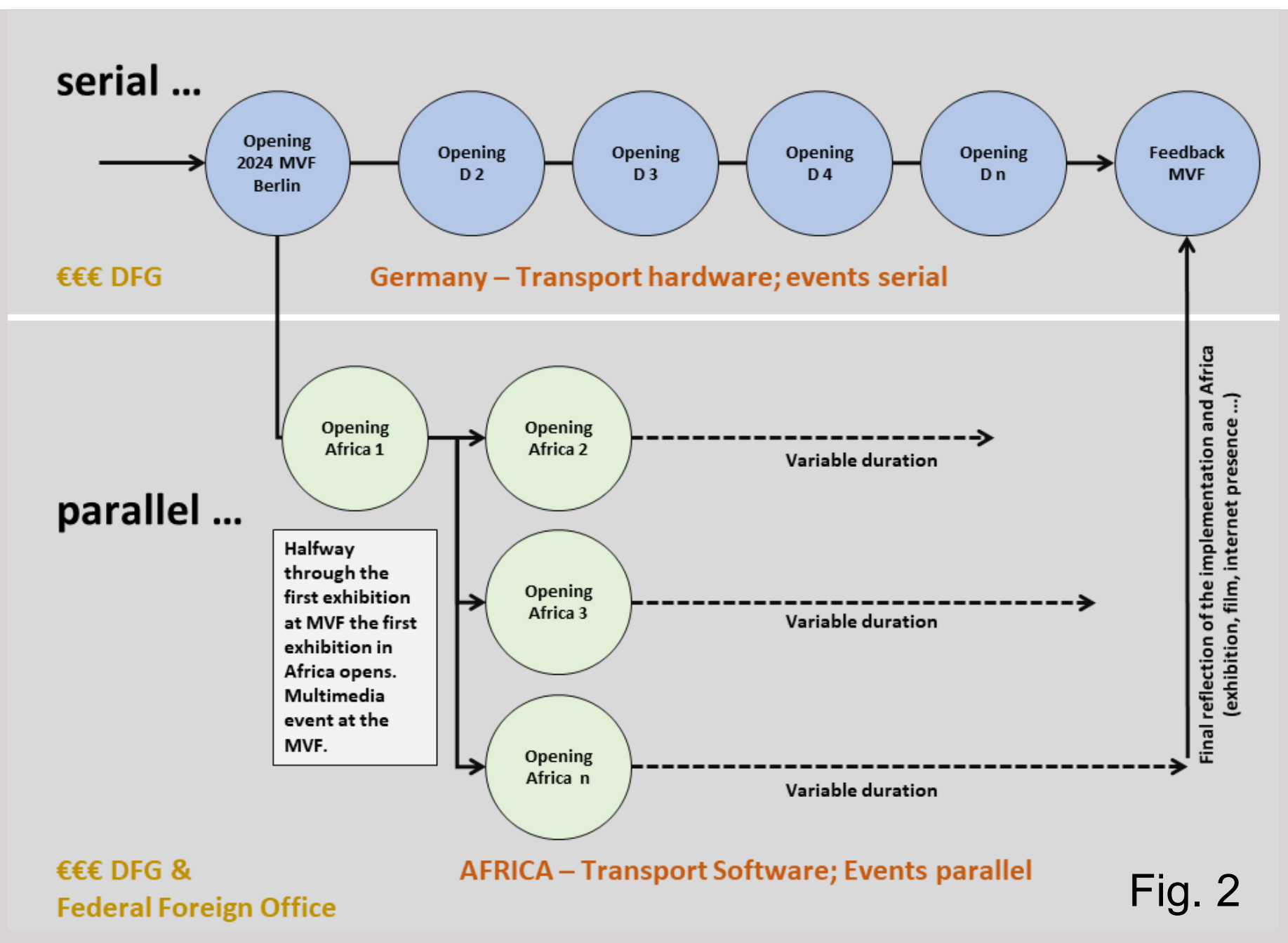


Fig. 2

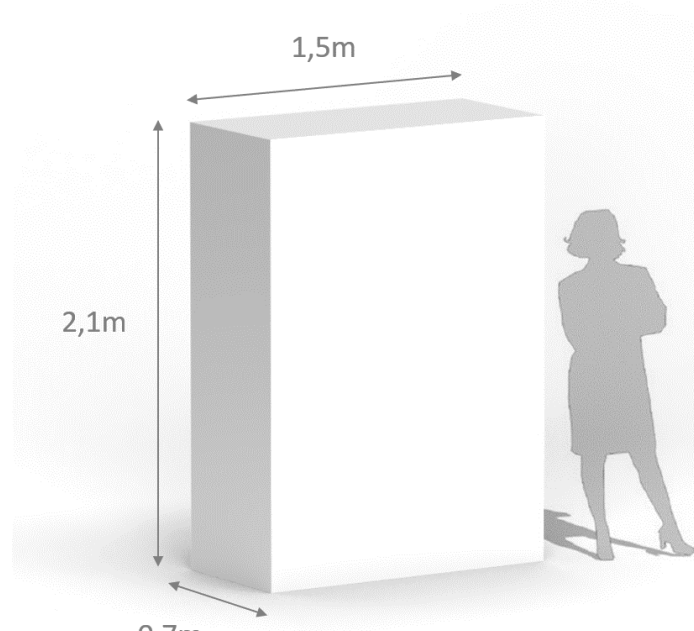


Fig. 3

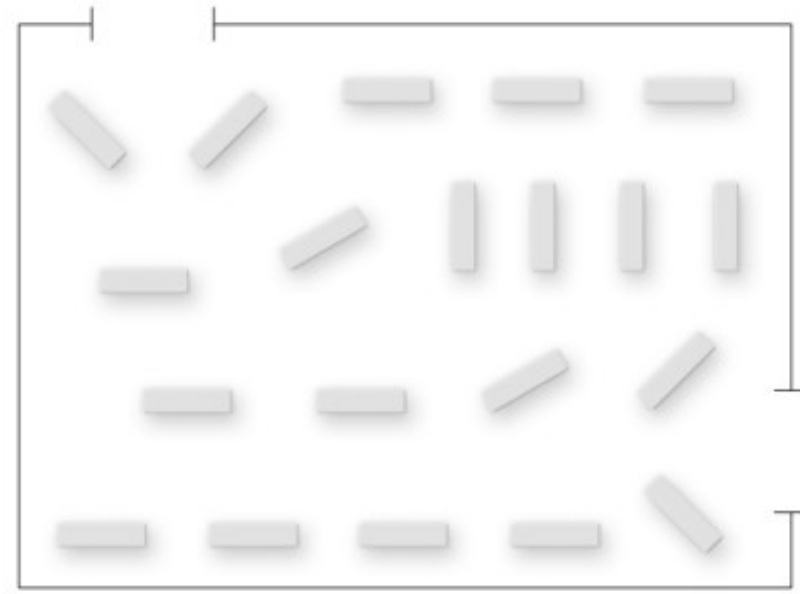


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Visual Concept

Each module receives its very own visual signature through a key visual, which are created by various African artists. These are commissioned works on given themes in the style of the respective artists. For Module 3, "Agile Systems", the key visual was made by "249 Writers" from Sudan. The signature of each module is created by an individual color code, which is generated from the artists' illustrations. This allows visitors to intuitively assign the individual boxes to the modules (Fig. 5).

Figure 5: Wall designs of the presentation boxes of module 3.

Pilot project and status of the exhibition

The pilot project will be complemented in April 2022. It includes a general exhibition trailer and an introductory film, three slideshows, info-graphics and texts for Module 3. As a "proof of concept" two boxes for presentation of Module 3 will be built by 05/06/2022 and will be shown at the DAI annual reception. The next steps are the acquisition of African artists for the design of the five remaining modules and the final determination of the first five African museums. The exhibition is conceived in close cooperation with African colleagues. So far, recourse has been made to the existing network of the SPP. In order to expand this, local committees will be formed in the African partner cities to guarantee a constant exchange. The exhibition will open in 2024 at the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Berlin (Fig. 6) and in parallel in five African museums (Fig. 7).

Figure 6: Opening venue 2024: Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin / Achim Kleuker.
Figure 7: Discussed and planned exhibitions venues in Africa.



Fig. 6

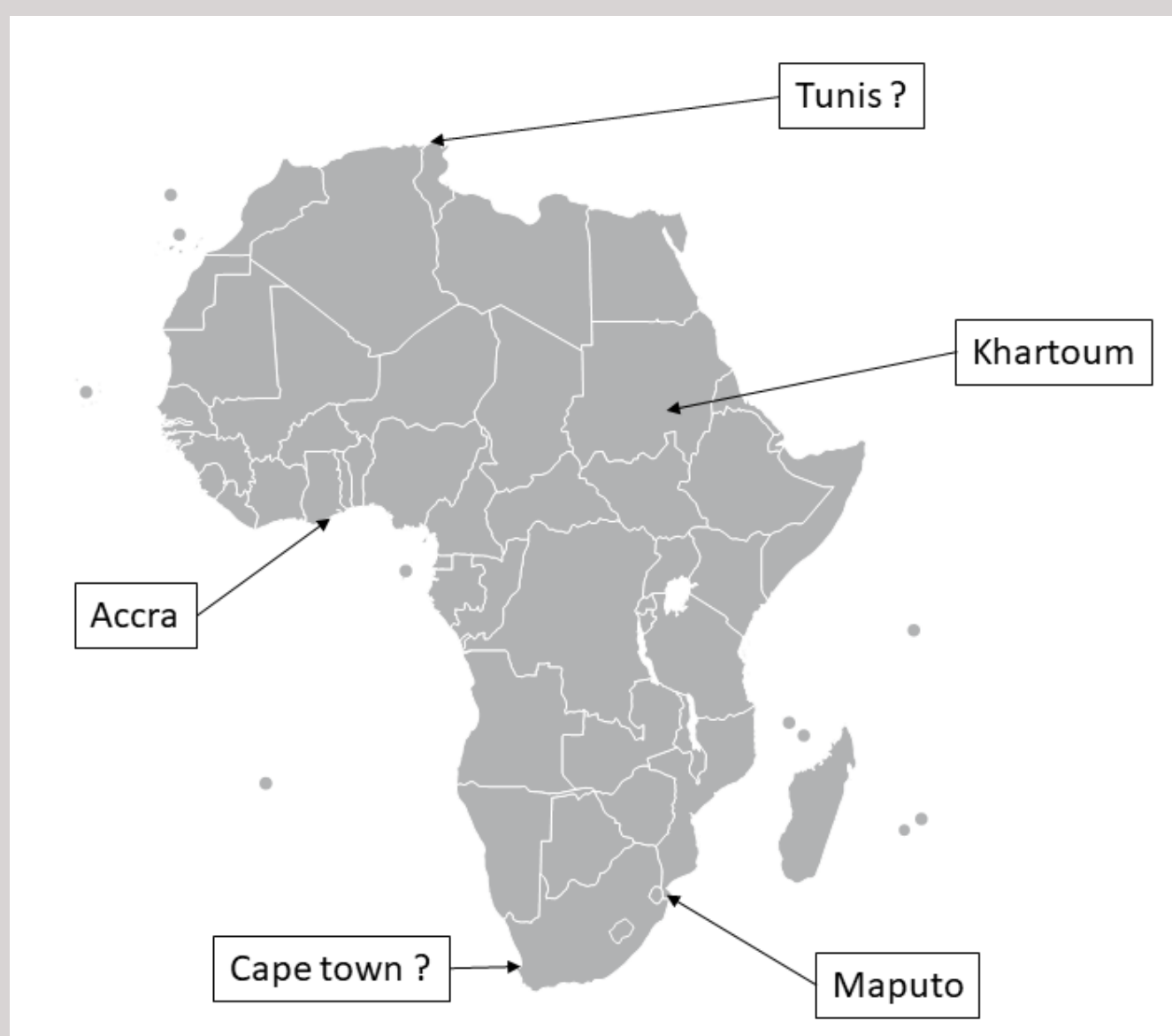


Fig. 7