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The Decolonisation of Museology: Museums, Mixing, and Myths of Origin

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**The Decolonisation
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FOREWORD

AVANT-PROPOS

PREFACIO

Foreword

Decolonising museology: an ongoing debate

Decolonising a scientific domain involves turning ourselves, the scientists, into the objects of our own critical analysis. For many decades now, ICOFOM has explored different topics as museological subjects of analysis that deserve to be put under the gaze of scholars and critical thinkers within the discipline. In this sense, the study of museology as a branch of knowledge related to museums may involve a decolonial interest in exposing our own colonial roots and their long-term effects on the museum theory and practice we conceive and reproduce. Nonetheless, the scarce literature confronting coloniality in theoretical approaches to museology has led ICOFOM in the past three years to focus on “decolonisation” as a way of reflecting on museum theory in new and compelling ways. Coming from the postcolonial critique of Anglo-Saxon cultural studies and the decolonial theorising of Latin America, the articles in this issue draw on different points of view from various contexts around the globe to reconsider museology and its myths of origin, while suggesting a possible new reflexive turn toward decoloniality within the discipline, one that is already leaving its mark on museums in the 21st century.

This new issue of the *ICOFOM Study Series* brings together the full articles presented at the ICOFOM Annual Symposium of 2021 under the theme “The Decolonisation of Museology: Museums, Mixing, and Myths of Origin”, organised in virtual format by the Université du Québec à Montréal, in Canada, along with ICOM Canada and other academic partners. This symposium was conceived by ICOFOM and its partners, aiming to invite speakers to address decolonisation from various and incongruent points of view, exposing different interpretations and critical understandings in current research, as well as showing some points of friction, dispute, and negotiation within museology today. Our aim was to inspire new critical perceptions of museology and museum theory, reflecting on how our decolonial readings can inform new practices and methodologies for museums and cultural heritage.

I'm grateful to all the members of our Editorial Board and the peer reviewers who have been working hard in the past months so that the *ICOFOM Study Series* could continue as an active publication. This issue was the result of the editorial work of several professionals, among which the guest editors Yves Bergeron, from Université du Québec à Montréal, and Michèle Rivet, from the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, our partners throughout this journey,

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the editorial secretaries Anna Leshchenko, Marion Bertin, Lynn Maranda, Elizabeth Weiser and Scarlet Galindo Monteagudo, and the proof-readers Katherine Sleight and Mélanie Foehn, all of whom have done an outstanding job. To all the authors of the articles here presented, thank you for sharing your enriching research experiences and for paving the way for new perspectives on the decolonisation of museology that will enliven an ongoing debate.

Bruno Brulon Soares

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Avant-propos

Décoloniser la muséologie : un débat en cours

Décoloniser un domaine scientifique implique de faire de nous, les chercheur·se·s, les objets de notre propre analyse critique. Depuis plusieurs décennies, l'ICOFOM a exploré différents sujets d'analyse muséologique qui ont mérité d'être placés sous le regard des chercheur·se·s et des penseur·se·s critiques de cette discipline. En ce sens, l'étude de la muséologie en tant que branche de la connaissance liée aux musées peut impliquer un intérêt décolonial pour exposer nos propres racines coloniales et leurs effets à long terme sur la théorie et la pratique muséales que nous concevons et reproduisons. Néanmoins, la rare littérature confrontant la colonialité dans les approches théoriques de la muséologie a conduit l'ICOFOM, au cours des trois dernières années, à se concentrer sur la « décolonisation » comme un moyen de soumettre la théorie des musées à des réflexions nouvelles et passionnantes. Issus de la critique postcoloniale influencée par les études culturelles anglo-saxonnes, ou basés sur la pensée décoloniale d'Amérique latine, les articles en ce numéro s'appuient sur différents points de vue sur la décolonisation, provenant de divers contextes du globe, pour reconsiderer la muséologie et ses mythes d'origine, tout en suggérant un nouveau tournant réflexif possible au sein de cette discipline – un tournant qui laisse déjà des traces dans les musées du XXIe siècle.

Le nouveau numéro des *ICOFOM Study Series* réunit les présentations du symposium annuel d'ICOFOM en 2021 sur le thème « La décolonisation de la muséologie : musées, métissages et mythes d'origine », organisé en format virtuel par l'Université du Québec à Montréal, au Canada, et par l'ICOM Canada, entre autres partenariats. Ce symposium a été conçu par l'ICOFOM et ses partenaires dans le but d'inviter des intervenants à aborder la décolonisation à partir de points de vue variés et divergents, en exposant différentes interprétations et compréhensions critiques dans la recherche actuelle, ainsi qu'en montrant certains points de friction, de dispute et de négociation au sein de la muséologie aujourd'hui. Notre objectif était d'inspirer de nouvelles perceptions critiques de la muséologie et de la théorie des musées, en réfléchissant à la manière dont nos lectures décoloniales peuvent informer de nouvelles pratiques et méthodologies pour les musées et le patrimoine culturel.

Je remercie les membres de notre Comité de rédaction et les pairs pour les relectures, qui ont travaillé dur dans les mois derniers pour qu'*ICOFOM Study Series* puisse rester une publication active. Ce numéro est le résultat d'un travail éditorial mené par plusieurs professionnel·le·s, parmi lesquel·le·s les éditeur·rice·s

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invité·e·s, Yves Bergeron, de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, et Michèle Rivet, du Musée canadien pour les droits de la personne, qui furent nos partenaires tout au long de ce projet, les secrétaires éditoriales Anna Leshchenko, Marion Bertin, Lynn Maranda, Elizabeth Weiser et Scarlet Galindo Monteagudo, ainsi que les relectrices Katherine Sleight et Mélanie Foehn, qui ont tous et toutes accompli un travail incroyable. Un grand merci à tou·te·s les auteur·rice·s des articles publiés ici pour avoir partagé leurs expériences de recherche et pour avoir ouvert la voie à de nouvelles perspectives sur la décolonisation de la muséologie pour enrichir un débat en cours.

Bruno Bralon Soares

Rio de Janeiro, Brésil.

Traduction par Marion Bertin

Prefacio

Descolonizar la museología: un debate en curso

Descolonizar un campo científico implica convertirnos a nosotros mismos, los investigadores, en objeto de nuestro propio análisis crítico. Desde hace varias décadas, el ICOFOM ha explorado diferentes temas como asuntos de análisis museológico que merecen ser puestos bajo la mirada de estudiosos y pensadores críticos dentro de esta misma disciplina. En este sentido, el estudio de la museología como rama del conocimiento relacionada con los museos puede implicar un interés decolonial por exponer nuestras propias raíces coloniales y sus efectos a largo plazo en la teoría y práctica museística que concebimos y reproducimos. Sin embargo, la escasa literatura que confronta la colonialidad en los enfoques teóricos de la museología llevó a ICOFOM, en los últimos tres años, a centrarse en la “descolonización” como una forma de poner la teoría de los museos bajo nuevas y convincentes reflexiones. Partiendo de la crítica postcolonial influenciada por los estudios culturales anglosajones, o basándose en el pensamiento decolonial de América Latina, los artículos de este número se basan en diferentes puntos de vista sobre la descolonización, procedentes de diversos contextos del globo, para reconsiderar la museología y sus mitos de origen, al tiempo que sugieren un posible nuevo giro reflexivo dentro de esta disciplina, giro este que ya está dejando sus huellas en los museos del siglo XXI.

Este nuevo número del *ICOFOM Study Series* reúne los artículos completos presentados en el Simposio Anual del ICOFOM en 2021, bajo el lema “La descolonización de la museología: museos, mixturas y mitos de origen”, organizado en formato virtual por la Université du Québec à Montréal, por el ICOM Canadá, entre otros organismos académicos. Este simposio fue concebido por ICOFOM y sus colaboradores con el objetivo de invitar a los ponentes a abordar la descolonización desde puntos de vista diversos e incongruentes, exponiendo diferentes interpretaciones y entendimientos críticos en la investigación actual, así como mostrando algunos puntos de fricción, disputa y negociación dentro de la museología actual. Nuestro objetivo es inspirar nuevas percepciones críticas de la museología y la teoría de los museos, reflexionando sobre cómo nuestras lecturas decoloniales pueden informar sobre nuevas prácticas y metodologías para los museos y el patrimonio cultural.

Agradezco a todos los miembros de nuestro Comité Editorial y a los revisores pares que han trabajado arduamente en los últimos meses para que el *ICOFOM Study Series* pueda continuar como una publicación activa. Este número fue el resultado del trabajo editorial de varios profesionales, entre los que se

encuentran los editores invitados Yves Bergeron, de la Université du Québec à Montréal, y Michèle Rivet, del Museo Canadiense de los Derechos Humanos, nuestros socios a lo largo de este viaje, las secretarias editoriales Anna Leshchenko, Marion Bertin, Lynn Maranda, Elizabeth Weiser y Scarlet Galindo Monteagudo, y los correctores de pruebas, Katherine Sleight y Mélanie Foehn, todos los cuales han hecho un trabajo sobresaliente. A todos los autores de los artículos aquí presentados, gracias por compartir sus enriquecedoras experiencias de investigación y por allanar el camino para nuevas perspectivas sobre la descolonización de la museología contribuyendo con un debate en curso.

Bruno Bralon Soares

Río de Janeiro, Brasil.

Traducido por Scarlet Galindo Monteagudo

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCCIÓN

Introduction

Decolonising museology or “re-formulating museology”

Yves Bergeron

Holder of the UQAM Research Chair in Museum Governance and Cultural Law

Michèle Rivet

Secretary of the Board of Directors of ICOM Canada and Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights

The Decolonisation of Museology

The 44th ICOFOM symposium, held March 15-18, 2021, was well attended. Although the meeting was planned in virtual mode, we received nearly 1,000 requests for registration to follow the symposium online on the web platform offered by the technology department of the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). At the same time, the general public was able to follow the scientific papers live, especially the major keynote speeches that opened each day on the ICOFOM Facebook page. Long after the symposium, this page was widely accessed thus indicating that the impact of the symposium was particularly significant. The members of the scientific committee and the organising committee were pleasantly surprised by the interest the professional museum community and the academic world had in the theme proposed by ICOFOM.

These four days have shown that the question of decolonisation is at the heart of the issues that animate and transform the museum world.

The 3 M's of museology: “musées, métissages et mythes d'origine” (in French, or “museums, mixing, and myths of origin” in English).

Let us recall that the call for papers targeted three major themes around decolonisation, i.e., the transformations induced within museums themselves; the delicate question of the mixing of cultures and, more precisely, the place of cultural communities in collections and programming; and finally, the questioning of museum's myths of origin. If we first consider the proposals selected for this symposium, it is clear that questions related to indigenous issues and, more specifically, to the restitution of collections are among the issues raised by the researchers.

The focus of the 44th symposium: questioning the heritage of European museum culture

Well before structuring the texts selected by the scientific committee, a few observations were quickly made at the end of the symposium. When it came time to take stock, we noted how enthusiastic the museum world was. Indeed, there are many questions and complaints about the role of museums in society. Addressing the theme of colonisation has opened the door to a host of criticisms about their fundamental role in social debates. There are many, sometimes bitter, criticisms of museums, as if they were being blamed for not contributing more to a new social order. Indeed, it is often felt that the challenge of social justice falls more to museums than to governments, whose primary obligation it is. On the other hand, one wonders why museums want to take on this disproportionate responsibility. Clearly, culture is becoming a central issue for society and the museum, as an institution that touches on the arts, sciences, and society, seems to be the privileged stage for debating and promoting living together.

To some extent, we had the feeling that we were reliving or simply witnessing the aftermath of the International Council of Museums meeting in Kyoto, which focused the museum world into two diametrically opposed clans. This polarisation seems, at first sight, to be similar to the quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns that spread through the cultural world in Europe in the 17th century. The contestation around the proposed definition of a museum calls into question the museum tradition and in particular those who define themselves as “curators”, in the true sense of the word, i.e., people who are attached to the original mission of European museums centred on material heritage and the validity of learned culture. In a way, it is the heritage of European museum culture that is under attack. In fact, there no longer seems to be a consensus on this common heritage, as mentioned by Krzysztof Pomian in his synthesis on the world history of museums (2020; 2021). Yet, should we

not first of all recognise that without this European contribution to culture we would not be debating the role of the museum today?

In Kyoto, we had the feeling that we were witnessing a kind of trial of classical museology and an indictment of various accusations directed at the large museums that are only just beginning to consider the possibility of returning collections to the communities of origin. It is also important to understand that these criticisms are aimed at the initial cultural and scientific undertakings of museums. If the critical posture is healthy in any discipline, we must acknowledge that the museum world is overflowing with well-being. Beyond the tensions, what does this protest movement reveal? Doesn't it indicate a desire to question the museum institution? Ultimately, we believe that the museum is not doomed to disappear, as some participants in the Kyoto meeting suggested, but there is no longer any doubt that museums are most certainly on the road to reform, while a conservative faction seems to be moving towards counter-reform. In other words, is this protest movement not a rejection of the museum, as one might think, but rather a desire to re-formulate the museum based on new paradigms of emerging museum culture? Is it not a movement that consists in reappropriating the museum in order to give it a new mission and a new integrity? In other words, there is a form of symbolic reappropriation of the museum institution. This is one of the hypotheses that we propose and which deserves to be explored. The meeting of the International Council of Museums in Prague in 2022 will certainly provide us with answers about the future of the international museum network.

What the texts tell us

This thematic issue brings together the proposals selected by the scientific committee, as well as texts by speakers specially invited for the symposium, including Élisabeth Kaine, Ruth B. Phillips and Bruno Bralon Soares. The corpus of these texts selected by the scientific committee has inspired us in this introduction to group them in three sections. The first section brings together four texts that reflect more specifically on the decolonisation of museology as a discipline under the title *Museology in Question*. The second section, *First Peoples*, brings together three texts that address the delicate and sensitive issue of the place of Aboriginal cultures in the North American museum world. The third section, *Some Examples from Different Continents*, consists of five case studies that demonstrate the international character of the decolonization of museums. Finally, the text by Bralon Soares, which closed the symposium, offers a critical synthesis and avenues of reflection for the ICOFOM scientific community based on five major myths of museology.

1. Museology in question

For this section, four texts address the theme of decolonisation from the perspective of questioning museology as a discipline. François Mairesse identifies the major issues from a historical perspective by proposing a return to the history

of museology. As he clearly shows, the decolonisation of museology is more complex than the decolonial process, which is expressed in particular within the international network of museums through the repatriation of objects. He mentions specifically the violent character of colonisation associated with the colonial empires, mainly European, which more particularly concerns Great Britain and France, but also Germany, Belgium, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands or Portugal. Thus, he suggests deconstructing the founding myth of the colonial museum, that is, the museum that fundamentally embodies its link to the Enlightenment and its discourse, the power in place, originating from the metropolis. Rather than considering the problem from the point of view of colonisation, he invites us to analyse the propagation of museology, whose ideas spread progressively, during the interwar period, at a time that was still effectively colonial, from the metropolises towards the peripheries. He reminds us that the postcolonial discourse on museology is above all centred on circuits of diffusion. Mairesse gives the example of John Falk who is the most quoted researcher. Clearly, the distribution of publications in English facilitates the dissemination of his thought. He also cites Tereza Scheiner, who questions the hegemony of thought in the production of Anglophone and Francophone discourses to the detriment of other languages. This point of view seemed to be widely shared at the ICOM meeting in Kyoto, where English occupied all the discussions. Furthermore, Mairesse draws our attention to the *leadership* and influence of certain ideas that are more easily disseminated in certain languages. He highlights the fact that only a small number of researchers aspire to develop exchanges in a more global way. The former, from a research perspective, prospect around the world to discover new ideas in the museum field; the latter seek to make their ideas known to a wider audience (some authors may fall into both categories).

In a way, the *leadership* of the researchers is decisive, but the dissemination of their vision depends on the place of languages in the propagation of knowledge. In this sense, the recognition of the researchers' contribution remains relative. Mairesse suggests that the geopolitical approach, which integrates political and military power (*hard power*), economic power, but also diplomatic and cultural power (*soft power*), makes it possible to question current power relations in a much more relevant way. This perspective would most certainly allow us to take a fresh look at the colonial relations of museology by focusing on hegemonic issues and strategies.

In the same spirit, Fabien Van Geert explores and nuances the terms postcolonial and decolonial museology. His analysis insists on the need to master and nuance these concepts. He also invites researchers not to oppose these two visions of museology. His interpretation of this movement is relevant, as it is based on his dissertation project (2020), which enabled him to analyse in detail the movement of questioning and transformation in the world of ethnographic museums. The fields he has carefully explored allow him to take an enlightening look at the decolonization movement in Europe, North

America, and Latin America. Van Geert agrees with Mairesse's interpretation when he concludes that it is essential to return to the very essence of these theories in order to understand their application to specific contexts (since all knowledge is necessarily situated). He rightly concludes that if we wish to be able to use terms that are heuristically and universally valid for understanding the world of museums, it is therefore important to reflect on these questions, which go far beyond a mere linguistic exercise. This is undoubtedly one of the first intellectual tasks to be undertaken if the project of museology is truly to decolonise itself. The *Dictionnaire de muséologie* project developed within ICOFOM is certainly a convincing example that demonstrates the need to clarify concepts that sometimes seem simple, but which are at the same time complex and require nuances depending on cultural aspects.

Marília Xavier Cury proposes a reflection based on metamuseology using the Kaingang collections that were gathered at the beginning of the 20th century in the context of the colonisation of western São Paulo in Brazil. It questions the concepts of “musealia” and “museality” because of the context of the collection of the objects which, as elsewhere in America and on other continents, took place in a violent manner. The study of these objects makes it possible to re-examine the initial process of musealisation as well as the re-reading of these objects by Kaingang groups, which proposes new interpretations. This type of approach, which can be observed elsewhere in the world, shows that museology must integrate anthropological and sociological perspectives so that museum professionals can avoid ethnocentric or sociocentric approaches that consist of favouring the interpretation of a group to which one belongs to the detriment of the communities concerned. Ethnocentrism tends to lead to misinterpretations that may be similar to forms of racism. On the contrary, museology must include in its general training an openness to the other and to difference. In other words, the anthropological approach would make it possible to become aware that one's own culture cannot be the norm.

In the text from her lecture, Ruth B. Phillips argues that the colonial and decolonial dialectic is too polarising. Instead, she suggests that the museum should adopt a society museum approach, i.e., one that is multidisciplinary and encourages plural interpretations. This change of posture means that museums must break with the Western museological tradition. She argues that museums must revise the value regime that has hitherto governed Western interpretations of culture. In a way, one wonders whether museums should not break with the very idea of interpreting objects and culture. She discusses the problems of “foreignization” and “thick translation”, and recounts examples of translation demonstrating that in some cases it must be recognised that museums are facing cases of untranslatability. Phillips suggests that society museums should, as art museums and especially contemporary art museums do, exhibit objects without mediation on the basis that the work or object speaks for itself and that the museum should not come between the object and the visitor. Here we find the lively debate that ran through the museum and academic world

when the Quai Branly Museum opened in 2006. Ethnographic objects from the Musée de l'Homme were then under the influence and authority of curators who favoured an aesthetic approach that transformed ethnographic objects into works of art. This problem of translation and interpretation does not seem to be new insofar as each generation periodically revisits the collections and proposes new readings.

2. The First Peoples

François Mairesse shows that it is the current structures of power that must be analysed in order to understand the stakes of the decolonisation of museology. In this sense, it is appropriate to focus on the influence of First Peoples, who have not only been involved in the transformation of museums for several years, but also, more generally, in the decolonisation of museology and, to a certain extent, its indigenisation (Phillips, 2011).

Several papers at the symposium attempted to answer the questions posed in relation to First Peoples. These papers, some of which have been selected for publication, and the discussions to which they gave rise throughout the symposium attest to a growing awareness among museums of the need to engage in a critical dialogue about the interpretation of history, to better realize that indigenous peoples from Asia roamed, occupied, and transformed the North American territory for millennia before the arrival of Europeans. All of these reflections are part of a breakdown of the museum as traditionally conceived and even of New Museology as defined in the 1980s. These reflections also indicate that while such structural changes have sometimes been implemented in museums, some answers are only conceptually formulated and questions are still unanswered. These different papers show us that the inversion of these power relations, as Mairesse rightly notes in the conclusion of his text, cannot be analysed simply by studies, whether they be museological or postcolonial.

Museums' awareness of the reality of First Peoples is recent, as is the assertion by Aboriginal people to control their history and culture through international instruments. This phenomenon is reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 13 September 2007. Four countries were opposed to it at the time: Canada, which will accede some three years later, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, countries where the importance of First Peoples is significant. This affirmation necessarily implies the establishment of links between, on the one hand, the First Peoples who claim control over their tangible and intangible heritage and who thus recover their soul, their culture, their identity and, on the other hand, the museum that holds these cultural objects.

In Canada, it was following the Cree boycott of the Glenbow Museum's 1988 exhibition, “The Spirit Sings” (*Le souffle de l'esprit*), that a working group was created, made up of members of the Assembly of First Peoples and the Canadian Museums Association, which submitted a report in 1992: “*Turning the*

Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples” (*Tourner la page : forger de nouveaux partenariats entre les musées et les Premières Nations*). This report arrived at three main sets of recommendations: increased participation of Aboriginal people in the interpretation of their culture and history by cultural institutions; improved access to museum collections for Aboriginal people; and the repatriation of sacred objects and human remains contained in museum collections, as Maranda and Van Geert discuss in this volume. The 1990s marked a heightened awareness of First Peoples in Canada in their relationship with museums. As Andrea Laforêt, a Canadian ethnologist, notes, cultural objects within Aboriginal societies have a meaning that is part of the life of the society itself. They tell the story, they establish the genealogy of the society and the transmission of authority (2004). The First Peoples have an entirely different conception of cultural objects than that traditionally held by a museum that possesses them, Phillips asserts in her text. These cultural objects often have a sacred character and must be treated as such. Over the years, ethnology museums or ethnology departments of history museums as well as society museums and even fine arts museums have learned to work in collaboration with First Peoples. This collaboration has been and still is, however, fraught with difficulties and is far from being completed.

From the outset, as the symposium’s opening speaker and in her text “Narrative of an Aboriginal incursion into museum territory”, Élizabeth Kaine, Aboriginal curator from the Wendake nation, questions the difficulties encountered by First Peoples in achieving real participation in the development of an exhibition that concerns them. Indeed, for Kaine, the exhibition is one of the most powerful tools of empowerment, a tool of self-construction for peoples in a minority position, victims of colonialism. Thus, Kaine led a very broad consultation with the eleven Aboriginal Nations of Quebec in the development of a synthesis and reference exhibition on the First Peoples of Quebec. What power is granted to the First Peoples, she asks, if it does not concern the content, the aesthetics, the circulation of the visitor through the content, the choice of mediums through which it is expressed, or the choice of objects? For Kaine, the control must be over both the message and its expression. How can we ensure that indigenous visitors to an exhibition about them develop a sense of identity? As Hugues de Varine reminds us, we must stop believing that we can talk about the culture of others from our own perspective.

It is in this sense that Lynn Maranda also asks the question: how can we decolonise the museum, a product of colonisation, without removing all the museum structures and their services from the scene? It is necessary, in a spirit of collaboration, to be able to tell the truths, even the most sensitive or painful ones, to convert sites of oppression into places that matter and to share indigenous knowledge. Like Kaine, Maranda wonders why not achieve a partnership where First Peoples not only have a voice but also control aspects of museum activity in matters that affect them. This is a decolonial approach, as Van Geert calls it, which is a radical desire to deconstruct the Western

approach to museums by giving all their places to practices and ontologies, especially indigenous ones.

Despite the obstacles, certain steps have been taken in this inevitable partnership. In Canada, museums have given First Peoples a voice in various ways: shared responsibility for Aboriginal exhibits, inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives, creation of permanent advisory committees or councils, and policies that include at least one Aboriginal representative or decision-maker on the boards of directors. As a symbol, museum institutions in Canada very often include at the beginning of their meetings the recognition of the Aboriginal territory where the meeting is taking place.

But under what conditions can we speak of the decolonisation of museums? Some authors even mention the trap of neo-colonialism. Should we not speak more of a “*site of translation*”, as Phillips proposes in her text, or recognise museums as “*contact zones*” as Clifford (2013) has so eloquently developed in his writings?

Museum relationships with First Peoples must be based on respect and reciprocity, Kaine and Phillips assert in their chapters. Decolonization thus re-establishes the traditional worldview, culture, and ways of life of First Peoples; it replaces Western interpretations of history with Indigenous perspectives by dismantling the power structures that have paralyzed and subjugated First Peoples.

In this sense, the recognition of the validity of different worldviews, knowledge and perspectives of First Peoples and the integration of these ways of knowing and doing in museums can be analysed in terms of museology, which is both a theoretical reflection on the museum fact and, as Van Geert states in his text, a field of interdisciplinary research analysing the museum from different scientific approaches, but also as a reflexive approach developed by institutions regarding their role and practices. At the forefront of this reflexive approach, the role and practices of the Te Papa Tongarewa Museum in New Zealand allow us to push the theoretical reflection on the museum fact further. It brings together, in a bicultural and bicephalous structure, the Māori, the First People, and the Pākehā, the descendants of Indo-European immigrants. *Mana taonga* is an enabling principle that allows Te Papa Museum to recognise the richness of culture, diversity and to design and disseminate models of cooperation, collaboration, and co-creation. *Mana taonga* is first and foremost an indigenous principle to restore Maori rights to their material culture. As a guiding principle, *taonga mana* recognises that *taonga* – which includes objects, stories, and all forms of cultural expression – have ‘*mana*’, meaning power, authority, and prestige. Thus, respecting and expressing the knowledge, worldviews and learning systems formulated by the Māori are important dimensions of *mana taonga*. Over the years, the principle of *mana taonga* has been extended to all museum activities at Te Papa Museum, to facilitate the collaboration of all source communities in the management and use of their cultural heritage, and thus to other non-

Māori collections at Te Papa Museum. This is also a principle extended to other museums around the world (Hakiwai & Schorch, 2014; Hakiwai, et al., 2016). Māori-led changes in governance, management, policy, education and curation have transformed aspects of professional practice and led to interesting museological cross-fertilisations of European and Māori culture. Picking up on Van Geert's analysis, the principle of *mana taonga* as developed at the Te Papa Museum allows us to reflect on the scope and role of indigenous approaches as a vehicle for museum transformation. For McCarthy (2019), these approaches will potentially provide routes to help decolonise and reshape the foundations of museology on a global scale, transcending so-called ethnological and so-called society museums.

In parallel, museums have also established policies for the return, repatriation of cultural objects, such as the restitution of sacred objects or human remains. In the Americas, these requests from First Peoples are on the agenda. Africa and Oceania are also requesting the return of cultural objects from European countries, returns that are sometimes framed in Europe in legislative texts or following reports, including the one submitted in France by Flewine Saar and Bénédicte Savoy in 2018. Whether in the Americas or in Oceania with the First Peoples, or in Europe notably with African or Middle Eastern societies, this phenomenon is based on the same premises; in so doing, the Americas and Europe are coming together, as Van Geert argues in his text.

For Camille Labadie, at the international level, despite the panoply of instruments devoted to the restitution of illicitly exported goods, few have proved useful in regulating the return of cultural objects to First Peoples. Therefore, many restitutions are nowadays the result of alternative processes, voluntary restitution, mediation or arbitration, which are measured against the relevant moral, ethical or deontological principles in order to arrive at equitable solutions adapted to each situation. Maranda also notes, in the absence of satisfactory legislation, the emergence of a practice of restitution that stems from a moral and ethical feeling and the need to repair injustices. These restitutions apply to cultural property as well as to sacred objects and human remains, such as, for example, the repatriation of *toi moko* (tattooed mummified heads) belonging to French and Quebec museums. The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa has been responsible since 2003, on behalf of the New Zealand government, for the repatriation of *Māori kōiwi tangata* (human remains). As Labadie notes in conclusion, when dealing with human remains, sacred objects or objects associated with unique ancestral skills, restitution cannot constitute full redress in the face of dispossession of the very foundations of their culture.

3. Some examples from different continents

The papers presented at the symposium and the discussions that followed show the extent to which the decolonisation of museums is a polymorphous notion with variable geometry. Some are based on empirical studies. Asia,

Africa, South America, and Europe are all involved. Different approaches to a complex question: given societal values, how and to what extent do museums give a voice, a right of citizenship to the populations whose cultural objects they hold in trust?

In China, as Lin Li points out, the return of Chinese cultural objects lost between 1840 and 1949 in an illegal or unethical manner is an important issue for the China Foundation for the Development of Social Culture, while the return of cultural objects within China is not. For Lin Li, based on an empirical study, the return of cultural objects is not part of a decolonisation approach. As a useful propaganda tool for the State, Chinese museums are exactly the kind of institution that should be decolonised – she concludes.

Victor Zaiden and Ana Avelar examine how demands for recognition of plural identities and redress of colonial disposessions are being carried out in Germany and Brazil, two countries with different trajectories and, therefore, two quite dissimilar approaches. While in Germany, demands for the restitution of cultural heritage seem to guide the agenda of historical corrections, in Brazil it is the struggle for the visibility of marginalised groups and the recognition of a failed attempt at cultural homogenisation that is at stake.

This is not far from the conclusion reached by Maria De Simone Ferreira when she examines the role of Brazilian museums in taking into account the reality of the society they serve, analysing how the Archaeological Museum of Itaipu incorporated the claims of fishermen who sought recognition of the importance of their centuries-old traditions. Although the museum may not have considered the fishermen of Itaipu when it was created in 1977, the cultural heritage narratives established by the institution have allowed for a re-characterisation of the historical condition of the indigenous fishermen group, to the extent that today it is the community members themselves who ask to participate in the museum's activities and even in its management, rather than the other way around.

Christine Bluard, who has studied the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium, notes the importance of the part played by the source communities from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi in the process of transforming the museum and the role of contemporary art and artists. She discusses the appropriation of the collections by the source communities, the value added by the contemporary anchoring in old collections and finally the role of artists and external actors in the transformation of a museum institution. Bluard concludes that the diversity of approaches and views is gradually taking precedence over classification and questions the colonial fact at the origin of this categorisation, a process that is now working towards a redefinition of the museum's mission.

Simbarashe Shadreck Chitima analyses the decolonisation of museums in Zimbabwe from the perspective of museum education for primary school children. He notes that the colonial discourse continues to permeate museum

activities. For Chitima, the decolonisation of museum education is about providing balanced narratives and offering realistic and relevant content that contemporary societies can find meaningful. The decolonisation education service of museums must include multiple voices representing a wide range of perspectives and bodies of knowledge.

In conclusion

Providing a synthesis at the end of a symposium is always a challenge. Bruno Brulon Soares has succeeded in synthesising the major issues of decolonisation in an original way. The ICOFOM Chair took the gamble of approaching decolonisation by dealing with the theme of myths, which in a way remained on the side-lines during the four days of the symposium. Without going into an exhaustive summary, let us recall here the main lines of his analysis. He distinguishes the decolonisation of the museum from the decolonisation of museology as a discipline which was created, he recalls, as a means of examining the diversity of museums through a single scientific lens. Behind the assumption that museology could be a science – one that was the basis of this international committee (ICOFOM) – there was the idea defended by some of our founding figures that a single branch of knowledge could be used to study the plurality of museums. It shows that there is an initial founding myth at the origin of ICOFOM. There is the common value that museology is a science with the objective of producing a single conceptual basis with defined theoretical centres for the investigation of museums, both in theory and in practice. Brulon Soares postulates that the decolonisation of museums and that of museology depend on a triple and interdependent process that encompasses deconstruction, reconstruction and redistribution. Rather than the mere restitution of heritage, by considering these threefold processes, he believes that it is better to decolonise the mind, that is, to transform the culture of museums in order to denounce the historical violence produced by these institutions.

Brulon Soares identifies five myths. He proposes to start by deconstructing the founding myths in order to bring about a new conception of museology. In his view, the problem is not to have the museum as an object or the man-reality relationship, but to apprehend the museum. The first myth is that of museology as a science, which has been disseminated by researchers such as Peter van Mensch and Zbyněk Stránský, who have tried to define it as an autonomous scientific discipline whose object of knowledge is a specific approach of man to reality. He suggests that we should abandon the myth of a single museology without taking into account differentiated conceptions of the museum and diversified practices. Echoing Villy Toft Jensen, he points out that there is no such thing as a common museology. In other words, museology in its European conception cannot be universal. The third myth he identifies is that of museum theory separated from practice. He demonstrates that there is a higher form of authorised knowledge, in many ways divorced from practice. The International

Council of Museums community wanted to standardise knowledge, leading ICOFOM to develop concepts and a standard basis for theory. This process was set up by separating theory from practice, thus contributing to the creation of a normative museology, validated in particular by European countries. This reasoning leads him to the myth of the object/visitor dichotomy, which brings us back to the founding myth of European museums and more particularly to the cabinets of curiosities associated with colonialism. Museology quickly became rooted in the artificial separation between subjects and objects so that we still find ourselves faced with the old dichotomy of the museum's focus on material objects and its focus on visitors. Finally, the fifth myth is that of decolonisation. In a way, a significant part of the international museum community has started to denounce “post-colonialism” and to claim “decolonization” of museology as if it were an antidote to colonialism in museums, when in fact the decolonial project wants to propose a critical look at colonization and modernity, perceiving them as irreversible phenomena. The president of ICOFOM asks pertinent and unavoidable questions: “Is it possible to reverse slavery in the Americas? Is it possible to reverse genocide in Africa? Or the exploration of limited resources through imperial expansion and plunder?” Are we going to solve the question of colonisation once and for all by inventing the idea of a post-colonial museum and getting rid of the remains of this haunting past? Clearly, it seems that these objectives must be shared by both the museum world and the scientific community. This is a common responsibility, since it requires profound changes in museum culture. Moreover, shouldn't these changes be adapted to each cultural context and take into account geopolitical factors?

Furthermore, several examples show that First Peoples' museum approaches are part of museum transformation strategies. Following the example of the *mana taonga* principle developed at the Te Papa Museum, these approaches are part of itineraries that allow for the decolonisation and remodelling of the very foundations of contemporary museology. Wouldn't museums, as well as museology, do well to draw inspiration from these approaches to openness?

The dark side of the symposium: reform and counter-reform of the museum world

Although the ICOFOM symposium in 2021 was rich in research avenues, it left two themes in the shade. There was very little mention of cultural mixing and this theme deserves to be revisited. Furthermore, considering that the status of cultural communities in public collections remains a highly topical issue, especially in the perspective of museums rethinking their social role, we believe that it would be appropriate to propose a new ICOFOM scientific meeting on this theme, which deserves to be discussed collectively. The same goes for the question of the founding myths of museology, which were not discussed much in this symposium. Brulon Soares was one of the few to consider decolonisation and foundation myths. As he well demonstrates, decolonisation implies, among other things, a re-examination of the founding myths of European museology

that have been exported around the world and adapted to new geopolitical contexts.

If the decolonisation of museology consists of breaking with the straitjacket of a borrowed model, it is also a question of adapting the principles of museology to specific cultural contexts. It should be remembered, however, that the process of breaking with the dominant culture is always difficult and takes time. This is what the history of the New Museology movement, which emerged half a century ago, tells us. We can also think of the position of Jacques Hainard of the Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel, who tried to decolonise ethnographic museums by freeing themselves from the objects and questioning the role of curators. Let us mention in passing the collective work *Le musée cannibale* (Gonseth, et al., 2002) which proposes a reflection that is still relevant today on the role of ethnographic museums in the world. Although his vision of museology has inspired a generation of museologists, the museum world has been careful to keep him on the sidelines.

In tackling a subject that has long remained taboo, one has the impression that a movement is taking shape that bears similarities to the Protestant Reformation movement, which in the 16th century proposed a profound transformation of Catholic Christianity. If it was the dogmas of the Church that were questioned then, today it is the fundamental values of museums that were thought to be universal that are being challenged. There no longer seems to be a shared museum culture. By forming a common front at the Kyoto meeting, the countries that have remained faithful to the original values, i.e. collections, research and preservation, are embarking on what could look like a counter-reform of museology. Many national associations cannot conceive of the museum without its primary mission being to preserve the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity. One thing is certain, however: museums are indeed undergoing a transformation. This is why it is necessary to look beyond the debate on decolonisation to the real issues at stake in the value system of museums, for is it not precisely the common culture of museums that is at stake behind the debate on decolonisation?

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Introduction

Décoloniser la muséologie ou « re-fonder la muséologie »

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La décolonisation de la muséologie

Le 44^e symposium d'ICOFOM qui s'est tenu du 15 au 18 mars 2021 a mobilisé un large auditoire. Bien que la rencontre ait été planifiée en mode virtuel, nous avons reçu près de 1 000 demandes d'inscriptions afin de suivre en ligne le colloque sur la plateforme web proposée par le service des technologies de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). En parallèle, le grand public a pu suivre en direct les communications scientifiques et notamment les grandes conférences qui ouvraient chaque journée sur la page Facebook de l'ICOFOM. Bien après le colloque, cette page a été largement consultée de sorte que l'impact du symposium s'est révélé particulièrement significatif.

Les membres du comité scientifique et du comité organisateur ont été agréablement surpris par l'intérêt du milieu professionnel des musées et du monde universitaire pour la thématique proposée par l'ICOFOM. Ces quatre journées ont permis de constater que la question de la décolonisation est au centre des problématiques qui animent et transforment le monde des musées.

Les 3 M de la muséologie : musées, métissages et mythes d'origine

Rappelons que l'appel à communication ciblait trois grands thèmes autour de la décolonisation, c'est-à-dire les transformations induites au sein même des musées ; la délicate question du métissage des cultures et plus précisément la place des communautés culturelles dans les collections et la programmation ; et enfin la remise en question des mythes d'origine des musées. Si nous considérons dans un premier temps les propositions retenues pour ce symposium, force est de constater que les questions liées aux problématiques autochtones et plus particulièrement à la restitution des collections figurent parmi les enjeux soulevés par les chercheurs.

État des lieux du 44^e symposium : remise en question de l'héritage de la culture européenne des musées

Bien avant de structurer les textes retenus par le comité scientifique, quelques constats se sont rapidement esquissés à la fin du symposium. Au moment de faire le bilan, nous notions à quel point le monde des musées était effervescent. En effet, les remises en question sont nombreuses tout comme les doléances quant au rôle que jouent les musées dans la société. Aborder le thème de la colonisation a ouvert la porte à une foule de critiques sur leurs missions fondamentales dans les débats de société. Les reproches sont nombreux et parfois acerbes à l'endroit des musées comme si on leur en voulait de ne pas contribuer davantage à un nouvel ordre social. D'ailleurs, on finit par croire que le défi de la justice sociale incombe davantage aux musées qu'aux gouvernements dont c'est pourtant la première obligation. En contrepartie, on peut se demander pourquoi les musées souhaitent assumer cette responsabilité démesurée. Manifestement, la culture devient un enjeu central de société et le musée, comme institution qui touche à la fois aux arts, aux sciences et à la société, semble la scène privilégiée pour débattre et promouvoir le vivre-ensemble.

Dans une certaine mesure, nous avions le sentiment de revivre ou tout simplement d'assister à la suite de la rencontre du Conseil international des musées à Kyoto qui a focalisé le monde des musées en deux clans diamétralement opposés. Or cette polarisation semble, à première vue, s'apparenter à la querelle des Anciens et des Modernes qui a traversé le monde de la culture en Europe au XVII^e siècle. La contestation autour de la proposition de la définition de musée remet en question la tradition muséale et notamment ceux qui se définissent comme des « conservateurs », au sens propre du terme, c'est-à-dire les personnes qui sont attachées à la mission originale des musées européens centrés sur le patrimoine matériel et la valorisation de la culture savante. C'est en quelque

sorte l'héritage de la culture européenne des musées qui se retrouve au banc des accusés. En fait, il semble ne plus y avoir de consensus sur cet héritage commun évoqué notamment par Krzysztof Pomian dans sa synthèse consacrée à l'histoire mondiale des musées (2020, 2021). Pourtant, ne devrait-on pas avant tout reconnaître que sans cette contribution européenne à la culture on ne débattrait pas aujourd'hui du rôle du musée ?

À Kyoto, nous avions le sentiment d'assister en quelque sorte au procès de la muséologie classique et à un réquisitoire d'accusations diverses adressées aux grands musées qui commencent à peine à envisager la possibilité de restituer des collections aux communautés d'origine. Il faut par ailleurs comprendre que ces critiques s'adressent du même souffle au projet culturel et scientifique initial des musées. Si la posture critique se révèle saine dans toute discipline, on doit reconnaître que le monde des musées déborde de santé. Au-delà des tensions, que révèle ce mouvement de contestation ? Est-ce que ça n'indique pas une volonté de remettre en question l'institution muséale ? Ultimement, nous croyons que le musée n'est pas voué à disparaître comme le laissaient entendre des participants à la rencontre de Kyoto, mais il ne fait plus aucun doute que les musées sont très certainement engagés sur la voie de la réforme, alors qu'une faction conservatrice semble s'engager plutôt sur la voie de la contre-réforme. En d'autres termes, n'y a-t-il pas dans ce mouvement de contestation non pas un rejet du musée, comme on serait porté à le croire, mais plutôt une forme de volonté de refonder le musée à partir de nouveaux paradigmes de la culture muséale émergente ? Ne s'agirait-il pas d'un mouvement qui consiste à se réapproprier le musée pour lui confier une nouvelle mission et une nouvelle vertu ? En d'autres termes, il y a là une forme de réappropriation symbolique de l'institution muséale. C'est une des hypothèses que nous proposons et qui mériterait d'être explorée. La rencontre du Conseil international des musées à Prague en 2022 nous apportera certainement des réponses sur l'avenir du réseau international des musées.

Ce que nous révèlent les textes

Ce numéro thématique regroupe les propositions retenues par le comité scientifique auxquelles s'ajoutent des textes de conférenciers invités spécialement pour le symposium, dont Élisabeth Kaine, Ruth B. Phillips et Bruno Bralon Soares. Le corpus de ces textes sélectionnés par le comité scientifique nous a inspiré un regroupement en trois temps dans le cadre de cette introduction. La première section regroupe quatre textes qui réfléchissent plus spécifiquement à la décolonisation de la muséologie comme discipline sous le titre *La muséologie en question*. La seconde partie, *Les Premiers Peuples*, rassemble trois textes qui abordent la problématique délicate et sensible de la place des cultures autochtones dans le monde des musées nord-américains. La troisième section, *Quelques exemples de différents continents*, est constituée de cinq études de cas qui démontrent le caractère international de la décolonisation des musées. Enfin, le texte de Bruno Bralon Soares qui clôturait le symposium propose une

synthèse critique et des pistes de réflexion pour la communauté scientifique de l'ICOFOM à partir de cinq grands mythes de la muséologie.

1. La muséologie en question

Pour cette section, quatre textes abordent le thème de la décolonisation dans la perspective d'une remise en question de la muséologie comme discipline. Ainsi, François Mairesse identifie les grands enjeux dans une perspective historique en proposant un retour dans l'histoire de la muséologie. Comme il le montre bien, la décolonisation de la muséologie se révèle plus complexe que le processus décolonial qui s'exprime notamment au sein du réseau international des musées par le rapatriement des objets. Il évoque notamment le caractère violent de la colonisation associé aux empires coloniaux, principalement européens qui concerne plus particulièrement la « Grande-Bretagne et la France, mais aussi l'Allemagne, la Belgique, l'Espagne, l'Italie, les Pays-Bas ou le Portugal. » Ainsi, il suggère de déconstruire le mythe fondateur du musée colonisateur, c'est-à-dire le musée qui incarne fondamentalement son lien avec les « Lumières et son discours, le pouvoir en place, issu de la métropole. » Plutôt que d'envisager la problématique à partir de la colonisation, il invite à analyser plutôt la « propagation de la muséologie, dont les idées se diffusent progressivement, durant l'entre-deux-guerres, à une époque effectivement encore coloniale, depuis les métropoles en direction des périphéries. » Il nous rappelle que le discours postcolonial sur la muséologie est avant tout centré sur des circuits de diffusion. Mairesse donne en exemple John Falk qui est le chercheur le plus cité. Manifestement, la diffusion des publications en anglais facilite la dissémination de sa pensée. Il cite par ailleurs Tereza Scheiner qui remet en question l'hégémonie de la pensée de la production des discours anglophones et francophones au détriment d'autres langues. Ce point de vue semblait d'ailleurs largement partagé lors de la rencontre de l'ICOM à Kyoto où l'anglais a occupé tous les débats. Par ailleurs, Mairesse attire notre attention sur le *leadership* et l'influence de certaines idées qui sont plus facilement diffusées dans certaines langues. Il met en lumière le fait que seul

« un petit nombre de chercheurs aspire à développer des échanges de manière plus globale. Les premiers, dans une perspective de recherche, prospectent à travers le monde afin de découvrir de nouvelles idées sur le plan muséal ; les seconds cherchent à faire connaître leurs idées au plus grand nombre (certains auteurs pouvant s'inscrire dans les deux catégories). »

D'une certaine manière, le *leadership* des chercheurs est déterminant, mais la diffusion de leur vision dépend de la place qu'occupent les langues dans la propagation des connaissances. En ce sens, la reconnaissance de la contribution des chercheurs demeure quant à elle relative. Mairesse suggère d'ailleurs que « l'approche géopolitique, qui intègre à la fois les pouvoirs politiques et militaires (*hard power*), le pouvoir économique, mais aussi diplomatique et culturel (*soft power*), permet d'interroger les rapports de force actuels de manière bien plus pertinente. » Cette perspective permettrait très certainement de poser

un regard neuf sur les rapports coloniaux de la muséologie en se centrant sur les enjeux et les stratégies hégémoniques.

Dans le même esprit, Fabien Van Geert explore et nuance les termes de muséologie postcoloniale et décoloniale. Son analyse insiste sur la nécessité de maîtriser et de nuancer ces concepts. Il invite d'ailleurs les chercheurs à ne pas opposer ces deux visions de la muséologie. L'interprétation qu'il propose de ce mouvement est pertinente, car elle repose sur son projet de thèse (2020) qui lui a permis d'analyser finement le mouvement de remise en question et de transformation dans le monde des musées d'ethnographie. Les terrains qu'il a explorés avec soin lui permettent de jeter un regard éclairant sur le mouvement de décolonisation tant en Europe, qu'en Amérique du Nord et en Amérique latine. Van Geert rejoint l'interprétation de Mairesse, lorsqu'il conclut qu'il est essentiel de revenir à « l'essence même de ces théories, pour en comprendre l'application à des contextes précis (puisque toute connaissance est nécessairement située). » Il conclut avec justesse que si « l'on souhaite pouvoir utiliser des termes qui soient heuristiquement et universellement valides pour comprendre le monde des musées, il importe donc de réfléchir à ces questions qui vont bien au-delà d'un simple exercice linguistique. C'est d'ailleurs sans doute l'un des premiers chantiers intellectuels auquel s'atteler si le projet de la muséologie consiste véritablement à se décoloniser. » Le projet de *Dictionnaire de la muséologie* qui s'est développé au sein de l'ICOFOM constitue certainement un exemple probant qui démontre la nécessité de préciser des concepts qui semblent parfois simples, mais qui se révèlent à la fois complexes et qui demandent des nuances selon les cultures.

Marília Xavier Cury propose pour sa part une réflexion fondée sur la métamuséologie à partir des collections Kaingang qui furent rassemblées au début du XX^e siècle dans le cadre de la colonisation de l'ouest de São Paulo au Brésil. Elle questionne les concepts de « muséalia » et de « muséalité » en raison du contexte de collecte des objets qui s'est déroulé, comme ailleurs en Amérique et sur d'autres continents, dans la violence. L'étude de ces objets permet de réexaminer le processus de muséalisation initiale ainsi que la relecture de ces objets par des groupes Kaingang qui propose de nouvelles interprétations. Ce type de démarche que l'on observe ailleurs dans le monde montre bien que la muséologie doit intégrer des approches anthropologiques et sociologiques afin que les professionnels des musées puissent éviter des approches ethnocentristes ou sociocentristes qui consistent à privilégier l'interprétation d'un groupe auquel on appartient au détriment des communautés concernées. L'ethnocentrisme a tendance à conduire à des interprétations erronées et qui peuvent s'apparenter à des formes de racisme. Il faut, au contraire, que la muséologie intègre dans sa formation générale une ouverture à l'autre et à la différence. En d'autres termes l'approche anthropologique permettrait de prendre conscience que sa propre culture ne peut être la norme.

Dans le texte tiré de sa conférence, Ruth B. Phillips défend l'idée que la dialectique coloniale et décoloniale se révèle trop polarisante. Elle suggère que le

musée adopte plutôt une démarche propre aux musées de société, c'est-à-dire multidisciplinaire favorisant ainsi des interprétations plurielles. Ce changement de posture signifie que les musées doivent rompre avec la tradition muséologique occidentale. Elle défend l'idée que les musées doivent revoir le régime de valeurs qui a présidé jusqu'ici aux interprétations occidentales de la culture. D'une certaine manière, on se demande si les musées ne doivent pas rompre avec l'idée même d'interpréter les objets et la culture. Elle évoque les problèmes de « *foreignization* » et de « *thick translation* ». Elle relate des exemples de traduction et démontre que dans certains cas on doit reconnaître que les musées se retrouvent devant des exemples d'intraductibilité. Phillips suggère que les musées de société devraient, comme le privilégient les musées d'art et notamment les musées d'art contemporain, exposer des objets sans dispositifs de médiation en partant du principe que l'œuvre ou l'objet parle de lui-même et que le musée ne doit pas s'interposer entre l'objet et le visiteur. On retrouve ici le débat animé qui a traversé le monde muséal et universitaire lors de l'ouverture du musée du quai Branly en 2006. Des objets ethnographiques du musée de l'Homme se retrouvaient alors sous l'influence et l'autorité de conservateurs favorisant une approche esthétique transformant des objets ethnographiques en œuvres d'art. Ce problème de traduction et d'interprétation ne semble pas nouveau dans la mesure où chaque génération revisite périodiquement les collections et en propose de nouvelles lectures.

2. Les Premiers Peuples

François Mairesse montre que ce sont les structures actuelles de pouvoir qui doivent être analysées pour comprendre les enjeux de la décolonisation de la muséologie. En ce sens, il convient de s'arrêter sur l'influence des Premiers Peuples, qui non seulement participent depuis plusieurs années à transformer les musées, mais plus généralement aussi, à la décolonisation de la muséologie et dans une certaine mesure à son autochtonisation (Phillips, 2011).

Plusieurs communications lors du symposium ont tenté de répondre aux questions posées relativement aux Premiers Peuples. Tant ces communications, dont certaines ont été retenues pour publication, que les discussions auxquelles elles ont donné lieu tout au long du symposium témoignent d'une prise de conscience des musées à vouloir s'engager dans un dialogue critique sur l'interprétation de l'histoire, à mieux réaliser que les peuples autochtones venus d'Asie ont parcouru, occupé et transformé le territoire nord-américain pendant des millénaires avant l'arrivée des Européens. Toutes ces réflexions s'inscrivent à l'aune d'un éclatement du musée tel que traditionnellement conçu et même de la Nouvelle muséologie telle que définie dans les années 1980. Ces réflexions indiquent aussi que si de tels changements structurels ont pu parfois être mis en place dans les musées, certaines réponses ne sont que conceptuellement formulées et des questions sont encore sans réponse. Ces différentes communications nous montrent bien que l'inversion de ces rapports de force,

comme le note fort justement Mairesse en conclusion de son texte, ne peut pas s'analyser simplement par les études, qu'elles soient muséales ou postcoloniales.

La prise de conscience par les musées de la réalité des Premiers Peuples est récente comme l'est encore davantage l'affirmation des Autochtones à contrôler leur histoire et leur culture au niveau des instruments internationaux. Ce phénomène trouve son écho dans la Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones, adoptée par l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies, le 13 septembre 2007. Quatre pays s'y étaient alors opposé, soit le Canada, qui donnera son adhésion quelque trois années plus tard, les États-Unis, l'Australie et la Nouvelle-Zélande, pays où l'importance des Premiers Peuples est significative. Cette affirmation implique nécessairement l'établissement des liens entre, d'une part, les Premiers Peuples qui réclament le contrôle de leur patrimoine matériel et immatériel et qui retrouvent ainsi leur âme, leur culture, leur identité et, d'autre part, le musée détenteur de ces objets culturels.

Au Canada, c'est à la suite du boycott par les Cris de l'exposition du Musée Glenbow en 1988, *Le souffle de l'esprit*, qu'un groupe de travail a été créé, composé de membres de l'Assemblée des Premières Nations et de l'Association des musées canadiens qui remet un rapport en 1992 : *Tourner la page : forger de nouveaux partenariats entre les musées et les Premières Nations*. Ce rapport arrive à trois grandes séries de recommandations : une participation accrue des Autochtones à l'interprétation de leur culture et de leur histoire par les établissements culturels ; un meilleur accès aux collections muséales pour les Autochtones ; le rapatriement des objets sacrés et des restes humains contenus dans les collections muséales (Maranda, Van Geert). Les années 1990 marquent, au Canada, une prise de conscience aigüe des Premières Nations dans leurs relations avec les musées. Comme le note Andrea Laforêt, ethnologue canadienne, les objets culturels à l'intérieur des sociétés autochtones ont une signification dont la portée s'inscrit dans la vie de la société elle-même. Ils racontent l'histoire, ils établissent la généalogie de la société et la transmission de l'autorité. Les Peuples Premiers ont une conception tout autre de l'objet culturel que celle que retient traditionnellement un musée qui les possède (Phillips). Ces objets culturels ont souvent un caractère sacré et doivent être traités comme tels. Au fil des ans, les musées d'ethnologie ou les départements d'ethnologie des musées d'histoire comme les musées de société et même les musées de beaux-arts ont appris à travailler en collaboration avec les Premiers Peuples. Cette collaboration a été et demeure encore aujourd'hui toutefois parsemée d'embuches et est loin d'être achevée.

D'entrée de jeu, en tant que conférencière d'ouverture du symposium et dans son texte « Récit d'une incursion autochtone en territoire muséal », Élisabeth Kaine, commissaire autochtone, de la nation Wendake, s'interroge sur les difficultés que rencontrent les Premiers Peuples pour arriver à une participation réelle dans l'élaboration d'une exposition qui les concerne. En effet, pour Kaine, l'exposition est un des outils les plus puissants d'autonomisation, un outil d'autoconstruction pour les peuples en position minoritaire, victimes

du colonialisme. Ainsi, Kaine a dirigé une très large concertation auprès des onze Nations autochtones du Québec dans le cadre du développement d'une exposition de synthèse et de références portant sur les Premiers Peuples du Québec. Quel est le pouvoir accordé aux Peuples Premiers, se demande-t-elle, s'il ne concerne ni le contenu, ni l'esthétique, ni la circulation du visiteur à travers les contenus, ni le choix des médiums par lesquels ceux-ci sont exprimés, ni le choix des objets ? Pour Kaine, le contrôle doit être tant sur le message que sur son expression. Comment arriver à ce que les visiteurs autochtones d'une exposition les concernant développent un sentiment de reconnaissance identitaire ? Comme le rappelle Hugues de Varine, il faut cesser de croire que l'on peut parler de la culture des autres à partir sa propre perspective.

C'est en ce sens que Lynn Maranda pose aussi la question : comment décoloniser le musée, produit de la colonisation, sans retirer de la scène toutes les structures muséales et leurs services ? Il faut, dans un esprit de collaboration, savoir dire les vérités, même les plus sensibles ou les plus pénibles, convertir les sites d'oppression en lieux qui comptent et partager les connaissances autochtones. À l'instar de Kaine, Maranda s'interroge quant à savoir pourquoi ne pas parvenir à un partenariat où les Premiers Peuples auraient non seulement voix au chapitre, mais contrôleraient également les aspects de l'activité muséale dans les questions qui les concernent. Il s'agit alors d'une approche décoloniale, comme la qualifie Van Geert, qui est une volonté radicale de déconstruction de l'approche occidentale des musées en donnant notamment toutes leurs places à des pratiques et des ontologies, notamment autochtones précise-t-il.

Malgré les embûches, certaines étapes ont été franchies dans cet inéluctable partenariat. Au Canada, les musées ont donné droit de cité aux Premiers Peuples et ce, de différentes manières : responsabilité partagée pour des expositions autochtones, inclusion des perspectives autochtones, création de comités ou de conseils consultatifs permanents, politiques comprenant au moins un représentant ou un décideur autochtone au sein des conseils d'administration. Valeur de symbole, les institutions muséales au Canada intègrent très généralement au début de leurs réunions, la reconnaissance du territoire autochtone où se déroule la rencontre.

Mais à quelles conditions pouvons-nous parler de décolonisation des musées ? Certains auteurs mentionnent même le piège du néocolonialisme. Ne devrions-nous pas parler davantage de « site de traduction », « *site of translation* » comme le propose Phillips dans son texte, ou reconnaître les musées comme des « zones de contact » ainsi que Clifford (2013) l'a développé de manière si éloquente dans ses écrits ?

Les relations des musées avec les Premiers Peuples doivent avoir comme fondements le respect et la réciprocité (Kaine, Phillips). La décolonisation rétablit ainsi la vision du monde, la culture et les modes de vie traditionnels des Premiers Peuples ; elle remplace les interprétations occidentales de l'histoire

par des perspectives autochtones en démantelant les structures de pouvoir qui ont paralysé et soumis les Premiers Peuples.

En ce sens, la reconnaissance de la validité des différentes visions du monde, du savoir et des perspectives des Premiers Peuples et l'intégration dans les musées de ces façons de savoir et de faire s'analysent à l'aune de la muséologie, qui est à la fois une réflexion théorique sur le fait muséal et, comme l'énonce Van Geert dans son texte, un « champ de recherche interdisciplinaire analysant le musée depuis différentes approches scientifiques, mais aussi comme une approche réflexive développée par les institutions quant à leur rôle et leurs pratiques ». À l'avant-garde de cette approche réflexive, le rôle et les pratiques du musée Te Papa Tongarewa en Nouvelle-Zélande permettent de pousser plus loin la réflexion théorique sur le fait muséal. Il réunit ensemble, dans une structure biculturelle et bicéphale, les Māori, le Premier Peuple, et les Pākehā, les descendants d'immigrants indo-européens. Le *mana taonga* est un principe habilitant qui permet au musée Te Papa de reconnaître la richesse de la culture, de la diversité et de concevoir et de diffuser des modèles de coopération, de collaboration et de cocréation. Le *mana taonga* est en premier lieu un principe indigène destiné à restituer aux Maoris leur droit à l'égard de leur culture matérielle. Principe directeur, le *mana taonga* reconnaît que les *taonga* – qui comprennent des objets, des récits, ainsi que toutes les formes d'expression culturelle – ont du « *mana* », c'est-à-dire du pouvoir, de l'autorité, du prestige. Ainsi, respecter et exprimer les connaissances, les visions du monde et l'apprentissage des systèmes formulés par les Māori sont des dimensions importantes du *mana taonga*. Au fil des ans, le principe de *mana taonga* s'est étendu à l'ensemble des activités muséales du musée Te Papa, afin de faciliter la collaboration de toutes les communautés sources dans la gestion et l'utilisation de leur patrimoine culturel, et donc à d'autres collections non māori du musée Te Papa. C'est également un principe étendu à d'autres musées à travers le monde (Hakiwai et Schorch, 2014 ; Hakiwai, McCarthy et Schorch, 2016). Les changements menés par les Māori dans la gouvernance, la gestion, les politiques, l'éducation et la conservation ont transformé des aspects de la pratique professionnelle et ont conduit à d'intéressants métissages muséologiques de la culture européenne et māori. Reprenant l'analyse de Van Geert, le principe du *mana taonga* tel que développé au musée Te Papa permet de réfléchir à la portée et au rôle des approches autochtones comme vecteur de transformation muséale. Pour McCarthy (2019), ces approches fourniront potentiellement des itinéraires pour aider à décoloniser et à remodeler les fondements de la muséologie à l'échelle mondiale, transcendant ainsi les musées dits ethnologiques et les musées dits de société.

En parallèle, les musées ont aussi établi des politiques pour le retour, le rapatriement d'objets culturels, comme la restitution d'objets sacrés ou de restes humains. Dans les Amériques, ces demandes des Peuples Premiers sont à l'ordre du jour. L'Afrique et l'Océanie requièrent aussi des pays européens le retour d'objets culturels, retours parfois encadrés en Europe dans des textes législatifs

ou faisant suite à des rapports, dont celui remis en France par Flewine Saar & Bénédicte Savoy en 2018. Que ce soit dans les Amériques ou en Océanie avec les Premiers Peuples, ou en Europe notamment avec les sociétés d'Afrique ou du Moyen-Orient, ce phénomène participe des mêmes prémisses ; ce faisant, Amériques et Europe se rejoignent (Van Geert).

Pour Camille Labadie, au niveau international, malgré la panoplie d'instruments consacrés à la restitution des biens illicitement exportés, peu s'avèrent utiles pour régler le retour d'objets culturels aux Premiers Peuples. Aussi, nombre de restitutions sont aujourd'hui le résultat de processus alternatifs, restitution volontaire, médiations ou arbitrages, qui s'inscrivent à l'aune des principes moraux, éthiques ou déontologiques pertinents pour en arriver à des solutions équitables adaptées à chaque situation. Maranda note elle aussi, en l'absence de législations satisfaisantes, l'émergence d'une pratique de restitutions qui relève d'un sentiment moral et éthique et de la nécessité de réparer des injustices. Ces restitutions s'appliquent tant aux biens culturels, qu'aux objets sacrés et aux restes humains, comme, à titre d'exemple, les rapatriements des *toi moko* (têtes momifiées tatouées) ayant appartenu à des musées français et québécois. Le Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa est responsable depuis 2003, au nom du gouvernement néo-zélandais, du rapatriement des *kōiwi tangata* (restes humains) *māori*. Comme le note Labadie en conclusion, lorsqu'il s'agit de restes humains, d'objets sacrés ou d'objets associés à un savoir-faire ancestral unique, la restitution ne peut constituer une réparation complète face à une dépossession des fondements même de leur culture.

3. Quelques exemples de différents continents

Tant l'ensemble des communications présentées lors du symposium que les discussions qui s'en sont suivies montrent combien la décolonisation des musées est une notion polymorphe, à géométrie variable. Certaines sont menées à partir d'études empiriques. L'Asie, l'Afrique, l'Amérique du Sud, et l'Europe sont au rendez-vous. Approches différentes sur une question complexe : compte tenu des valeurs sociétales, comment et jusqu'où les musées donnent-ils droit de parole, droit de cité aux populations dont ils détiennent comme fiduciaires, les objets culturels ?

En Chine, comme l'indique Lin Li, le retour d'objets culturels chinois perdus entre 1840 et 1949 de manière illégale ou contraire à l'éthique, est une question d'importance dont se préoccupe la Fondation chinoise pour le développement de la culture sociale, alors que ne se pose pas la question de retour d'objets culturels à l'intérieur de la Chine. Pour Lin Li, qui s'appuie sur une étude empirique, le retour d'objets culturels ne s'inscrit pas dans une approche de décolonisation. Elle conclut ainsi : « C'est exactement le genre d'institution qui devrait être décolonisée [...] En tant qu'outil de propagande utile de l'État, les musées chinois peuvent difficilement être modifiés. »

Victor Zaiden et Ana Avelar examinent comment les demandes de reconnaissance des identités plurielles et de réparation des dépossessions coloniales sont menées en Allemagne et au Brésil, deux pays aux trajectoires différentes et, donc, deux approches tout à fait dissemblables. Alors qu'en Allemagne, les demandes de restitution du patrimoine culturel semblent guider l'agenda des corrections historiques, au Brésil, c'est la lutte pour la visibilité des groupes marginalisés et la reconnaissance d'une tentative ratée d'homogénéisation culturelle dont il s'agit.

C'est d'ailleurs la conclusion à laquelle en arrive Maria De Simone Ferreira lorsqu'elle se penche sur le rôle des musées brésiliens dans la prise en compte de la réalité de la société qu'ils desservent, analysant comment le Musée archéologique d'Itaipu a intégré les revendications des pêcheurs qui cherchaient à faire reconnaître l'importance de leurs traditions séculaires. Bien que le musée n'ait peut-être pas envisagé les pêcheurs d'Itaipu lors de sa création en 1977, les récits du patrimoine culturel établis par l'institution ont permis une requalification de la condition historique du groupe de pêcheurs autochtones, à telle enseigne qu'aujourd'hui, ce sont les membres de la communauté eux-mêmes qui demandent à participer aux activités du musée et même à sa gestion, et non l'inverse.

Christine Bluard, qui a étudié le musée royal de l'Afrique centrale en Belgique, note l'importance de la part prise par les communautés sources originaire notamment de la République démocratique du Congo, du Rwanda et du Burundi dans le processus de transformation du musée et le rôle de l'art contemporain et des artistes. Elle évoque notamment l'appropriation des collections par les communautés sources, valeur ajoutée par l'ancrage contemporain dans des collections anciennes et enfin le rôle des artistes et des intervenants extérieurs dans la transformation d'une institution muséale. Bluard conclut que : « La diversité des approches et des regards prend peu à peu le pas sur la classification et interroge le fait colonial à l'origine de cette catégorisation [...] ce processus travaille désormais à une redéfinition de la mission du musée ».

C'est à partir de l'éducation muséale aux élèves du primaire que Simbarashe Shadreck Chitima analyse la décolonisation des musées au Zimbabwe. Il constate que le discours colonial continue d'imprégnier les activités muséales. Pour Chitima, la décolonisation de l'éducation muséale consiste à fournir des récits équilibrés et à offrir un contenu réaliste et pertinent que les sociétés contemporaines peuvent trouver significatif. Le service d'éducation à la décolonisation des musées doit comprendre plusieurs voix représentant un large éventail de perspectives et d'ensembles de connaissances.

En guise de conclusion

Proposer une synthèse à la fin d'un colloque représente toujours un défi de taille. Bruno Brulon Soares a réussi à synthétiser les grands enjeux de la décolonisation de manière originale. Le président de l'ICOFOM a fait le pari d'aborder

la décolonisation en traitant du thème des mythes qui est en quelque sorte resté en marge pendant les quatre journées du symposium. Sans entrer dans un résumé exhaustif, rappelons ici les grandes lignes de son analyse. Il distingue la décolonisation du musée de la décolonisation de la muséologie comme discipline qui a été créée, rappelle-t-il, « comme un moyen d'examiner la diversité des musées à travers une seule lentille scientifique. Derrière l'hypothèse que la muséologie pouvait être, une science – celle qui était à la base de ce comité international (ICOFOM) – se cachait l'idée défendue par certaines de nos figures fondatrices qu'une seule branche du savoir pouvait servir à l'étude de la pluralité des musées. » Il montre bien qu'il existe un premier mythe fondateur à l'origine d'ICOFOM. On retrouve cette valeur commune voulant que la muséologie soit une science ayant pour objectif la « production d'une base conceptuelle unique avec des centres théoriques définis pour l'investigation des musées, à la fois en théorie et en pratique. » Brulon Soares pose comme postulat que la décolonisation des musées et de la muséologie dépend d'un « processus triple et interdépendant qui englobe la déconstruction, la reconstruction et la redistribution ». Plutôt que la seule restitution du patrimoine, en considérant ces processus triple, il croit qu'il vaut mieux décoloniser l'esprit, c'est-à-dire transformer la culture des musées afin de dénoncer la violence historique produite par les musées.

Bruno Brulon Soares identifie cinq mythes. Il propose de commencer par déconstruire les mythes fondateurs afin de faire émerger une nouvelle conception de la muséologie. À ses yeux, le problème n'est pas d'avoir le musée comme objet ni la relation homme-réalité, mais d'appréhender le musée.

Le premier mythe étant celui de la muséologie comme science qui a notamment été diffusé par des chercheurs comme van Mensch et Stránský qui ont tenté de la définir comme « une discipline scientifique autonome dont l'objet de connaissance est une approche spécifique de l'homme à la réalité ». Il suggère de renoncer au mythe d'une muséologie unique sans tenir compte de conceptions différencierées du musée et de pratiques diversifiées. Reprenant les propos de Villy Toft Jensen, il souligne qu'une « muséologie commune n'existe pas ». En d'autres termes, la muséologie dans sa conception européenne ne saurait être universelle. Le troisième mythe qu'il identifie est celui de la théorie muséale séparée de la pratique. Il démontre qu'il existe « une forme supérieure de savoir autorisé, à bien des égards dissociée de la pratique. » La communauté du Conseil international des musées a souhaité normaliser les connaissances, conduisant l'ICOFOM à développer des concepts et à normaliser les connaissances. Ce processus s'est mis en place en séparant la théorie de la pratique contribuant ainsi à créer une muséologie normative, validée notamment par les pays européens. Ce raisonnement le conduit au mythe de la dichotomie objets/visiteurs qui nous ramène au mythe fondateur des musées européens et plus particulièrement aux cabinets de curiosités associés au colonialisme. La muséologie s'est rapidement enracinée sur « la séparation artificielle entre sujets et objets » de sorte que l'on se retrouve encore aujourd'hui devant « la

vieille dichotomie qui oppose la focalisation du musée sur les objets matériels et celle sur les visiteurs. ». Enfin, le cinquième mythe est celui de la décolonisation. D'une certaine manière, une partie significative de la communauté muséale internationale a commencé à dénoncer le « post-colonialisme » et à revendiquer « la décolonisation » de la muséologie comme s'il s'agissait d'un antidote au colonialisme dans les musées, « alors qu'en fait le projet décolonial veut proposer un regard critique sur la colonisation et la modernité, perçevant comme des phénomènes irréversibles. » Le président de l'ICOFOM pose des questions pertinentes et incontournables : « est-il possible d'inverser l'esclavage dans les Amériques ? Est-il possible d'annuler un génocide en Afrique ? Ou l'exploration de ressources limitées par l'expansion impériale et le pillage ? Allons-nous résoudre une fois pour toutes la question de la colonisation en inventant l'idée d'un musée postcolonial et en nous débarrassant des restes de ce passé qui nous hante ? » Manifestement, il semble bien que ces objectifs doivent être partagés à la fois par le monde des musées et la communauté scientifique. Il s'agit d'une responsabilité commune puisqu'elle nécessite des changements en profondeur de la culture des musées. D'ailleurs, ces changements ne doivent-ils pas s'adapter à chaque contexte culturel et tenir compte de facteurs géopolitiques ?

Par ailleurs, plusieurs exemples démontrent que les approches muséales des Premiers Peuples s'inscrivent dans des stratégies de transformation muséale. À l'instar du principe de la *mana taonga* développé au musée Te Papa, ces approches s'inscrivent dans des itinéraires qui permettent de décoloniser et de remodeler les fondements même de la muséologie contemporaine. Les musées, ainsi que la muséologie, n'ont-ils pas avantage à s'inspirer de ces démarches d'ouverture ?

La part d'ombre du symposium : réforme et contre-réforme du monde muséal

Bien que riche en pistes de recherche, le symposium de l'ICOFOM en 2021 a malgré tout laissé dans l'ombre deux thèmes. Il a été très peu question de métissage culturel et cette thématique mériterait d'être revisitée. De plus, considérant que le statut des communautés culturelles dans les collections publiques demeure une question d'une grande actualité, surtout dans la perspective où les musées repensent leur rôle social, nous croyons qu'il y aurait lieu de proposer une nouvelle rencontre scientifique de l'ICOFOM sur ce thème qui mérite d'être discuté collectivement. Il en va de même avec la question des mythes de fondation de la muséologie qui ont été peu abordés dans le cadre de ce symposium. Bruno Bralon Soares a été un des rares à envisager la décolonisation et les mythes de fondation. Comme il le démontre bien, la décolonisation implique notamment de réexaminer les mythes fondateurs de la muséologie européenne qui ont été exportés un peu partout dans le monde et qui ont été adaptés à de nouveaux contextes géopolitiques.

Si la décolonisation de la muséologie consiste à rompre avec le carcan d'un modèle emprunté, il s'agit du même souffle d'adapter les principes de la muséo-

logie à des contextes culturels spécifiques. Rappelons cependant que le processus de rupture avec la culture dominante demeure toujours difficile et demande du temps. C'est ce que nous révèle l'histoire du mouvement de la Nouvelle muséologie qui est apparu il y a un demi-siècle. On peut également penser à la posture de Jacques Hainard du musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel qui a tenté de décoloniser les musées d'ethnographie en s'affranchissant des objets et en remettant en question le rôle des conservateurs. Mentionnons au passage l'ouvrage collectif *Le musée cannibale* (Gonseth, Hainard Kaehr, 2002) qui propose une réflexion toujours d'actualité sur le rôle des musées d'ethnographie dans le monde. Bien que sa vision de la muséologie ait inspiré une génération de muséologues, le monde des musées a pris soin de le garder dans la marge.

En abordant un sujet longtemps resté tabou, on a l'impression de voir se dessiner un mouvement qui présente des similitudes avec le mouvement de la Réforme protestante qui au XVI^e siècle proposait une transformation en profondeur du christianisme catholique. Si ce sont les dogmes de l'Église qui étaient alors remis en question, ce sont aujourd'hui les valeurs fondamentales des musées que l'on croyait universelles qui sont contestées. Il semble ne plus y avoir ce partage d'une culture commune des musées. En faisant front commun lors de la rencontre de Kyoto les pays restés fidèles aux valeurs originales, c'est-à-dire aux collections, à la recherche et à la préservation, s'engagent sur la voie de ce qui pourrait ressembler à une contre-réforme de la muséologie. De nombreuses associations nationales ne peuvent concevoir le musée sans que sa mission première soit de préserver les éléments du patrimoine matériel et immatériel de l'humanité. Une chose est cependant certaine, les musées sont bel et bien en voie de se transformer. C'est pourquoi il faut bien voir au-delà du débat sur la décolonisation les véritables enjeux qui se jouent autour du régime de valeurs des musées, car n'est-ce pas précisément la culture commune des musées qui est en jeu en filigrane derrière le débat sur la décolonisation ?

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Introducción

Descolonizar la museología o “reformular la museología”

Yves Bergeron

Titular de la cátedra de investigación de la UQAM sobre la gobernanza de los museos y el derecho cultural

Michèle Rivet

Secretaria del Consejo de Administración del ICOM Canadá y Vicepresidenta del Consejo de Administración del Museo Canadiense de Derechos Humanos

La descolonización de la museología

El 44º simposio del ICOFOM, celebrado del 15 al 18 de marzo de 2021, contó con una gran participación. Aunque la reunión se planificó en modo virtual, recibimos cerca de 1.000 solicitudes de inscripción para seguir el simposio en línea en la plataforma web ofrecida por el departamento de tecnología de la Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). Al mismo tiempo, el público en general pudo seguir en directo las ponencias científicas, especialmente los principales discursos de apertura de cada día en la página de Facebook del ICOFOM. Mucho tiempo después del simposio, esta página fue ampliamente

consultada, lo que indica que el impacto del simposio fue particularmente significativo.

Los miembros del comité científico y del comité organizador quedaron gratamente sorprendidos por el interés que la comunidad profesional de los museos y el mundo académico mostraron por el tema propuesto por ICOFOM. Estos cuatro días han demostrado que la cuestión de la descolonización está en el centro de las cuestiones que animan y transforman el mundo de los museos.

Las 3 Ms de la museología: «musées, métissages et mythes d'origine».

Recordemos que la convocatoria de ponencias se centraba en tres grandes temas en torno a la descolonización, es decir, las transformaciones inducidas en el seno de los propios museos; la delicada cuestión del mestizaje de las culturas y, más concretamente, el lugar de las comunidades culturales en las colecciones y la programación; y, por último, el cuestionamiento de los mitos de origen de los museos. Si consideramos en primer lugar las propuestas seleccionadas para este simposio, es evidente que las cuestiones relacionadas con los temas indígenas y, más concretamente, con la restitución de las colecciones, figuran entre los temas planteados por los investigadores.

El eje del 44º simposio: cuestionar la herencia de la cultura museística europea

Mucho antes de estructurar los textos seleccionados por el comité científico, se hicieron rápidamente algunas observaciones al final del simposio. A la hora de hacer balance, constatamos el entusiasmo del mundo de los museos. En efecto, hay muchas preguntas y quejas sobre el papel de los museos en la sociedad. Abordar el tema de la colonización ha abierto la puerta a un sinfín de críticas sobre su papel fundamental en los debates sociales. Hay muchas críticas, a veces agrias, a los museos, como si se les culpase de no contribuir más a un nuevo orden social. De hecho, a menudo se considera que el reto de la justicia social recae más en los museos que en los gobiernos, cuya obligación principal es. Por otro lado, uno se pregunta por qué los museos quieren asumir esta responsabilidad desproporcionada. Está claro que la cultura se está convirtiendo en un tema central para la sociedad y el museo, como institución que toca las artes, las ciencias y la sociedad, parece ser el escenario privilegiado para debatir y promover la convivencia.

Hasta cierto punto, tuvimos la sensación de revivir o simplemente ser testigos de las secuelas de la reunión del Consejo Internacional de Museos en Kioto, que centró el mundo de los museos en dos clanes diametralmente opuestos. Esta polarización parece, a primera vista, similar a la querella entre Antiguos y Modernos que se extendió por el mundo cultural europeo en el siglo XVII. La contestación en torno a la propuesta de definición de museo pone en tela de juicio la tradición museística y, en particular, a quienes se autodefinen como “conservadores”, en el verdadero sentido de la palabra, es decir, personas apenadas a la misión original de los museos europeos centrada en el patrimonio

material y la vigencia de la cultura erudita. En cierto modo, es el patrimonio de la cultura museística europea el que está siendo atacado. De hecho, ya no parece haber consenso sobre este patrimonio común, como menciona Krzysztof Pomian en su síntesis sobre la historia mundial de los museos (2020, 2021). Sin embargo, ¿no deberíamos reconocer en primer lugar que sin esta contribución europea a la cultura no estaríamos debatiendo hoy el papel del museo?

En Kioto, tuvimos la sensación de asistir a una especie de juicio a la museología clásica y a una acusación de diversa índole dirigida a los grandes museos que apenas empiezan a considerar la posibilidad de devolver las colecciones a las comunidades de origen. También es importante comprender que estas críticas se dirigen a las empresas culturales y científicas iniciales de los museos. Si la postura crítica es saludable en cualquier disciplina, hay que reconocer que el mundo de los museos rebosa bienestar. Más allá de las tensiones, ¿qué revela este movimiento de protesta? ¿No indica un deseo de cuestionar la institución museística? En última instancia, creemos que el museo no está condenado a desaparecer, como sugirieron algunos participantes en la reunión de Kyoto, pero ya no cabe duda de que los museos están sin duda en vías de reforma, mientras que una facción conservadora parece avanzar hacia la contrarreforma. En otras palabras, ¿este movimiento de protesta no es un rechazo al museo, como podría pensarse, sino un deseo de reformular el museo a partir de los nuevos paradigmas de la cultura museística emergente? ¿No es un movimiento que consiste en reappropriarse del museo para darle una nueva misión y una nueva integridad? En otras palabras, existe una forma de reappropriación simbólica de la institución museística. Esta es una de las hipótesis que proponemos y que merece ser explorada. La reunión del Consejo Internacional de Museos que se celebrará en Praga en 2022 nos proporcionará sin duda respuestas sobre el futuro de la red internacional de museos.

Lo que nos dicen los textos

Este número temático reúne las propuestas seleccionadas por el comité científico, así como los textos de los ponentes invitados especialmente para el simposio, como Élisabeth Kaine, Ruth B. Phillips y Bruno Brulon Soares. El corpus de estos textos seleccionados por el comité científico nos ha inspirado para agruparlos en tres secciones en esta introducción. La primera sección reúne cuatro textos que reflexionan más específicamente sobre la descolonización de la museología como disciplina bajo el título *Museología en cuestión*. La segunda sección, *Premiers Peuples (Pueblos Originarios)*, reúne tres textos que abordan la delicada y sensible cuestión del lugar de las culturas aborígenes en el mundo museístico norteamericano. La tercera sección, Algunos ejemplos de diferentes continentes, consta de cinco estudios de caso que demuestran el carácter internacional de la descolonización de los museos. Por último, el texto de Bruno Brulon Soares, que cerró el simposio, ofrece una síntesis crítica y pistas de reflexión para la comunidad científica del ICOFOM a partir de cinco grandes mitos de la museología.

1. La museología en cuestión

En este apartado, cuatro textos abordan el tema de la descolonización desde la perspectiva del cuestionamiento de la museología como disciplina. François Mairesse identifica las grandes cuestiones desde una perspectiva histórica proponiendo un retorno a la historia de la museología. Como muestra claramente, la descolonización de la museología es más compleja que el proceso descolonial, que se expresa en particular en la red internacional de museos mediante la repatriación de objetos. Menciona concretamente el carácter violento de la colonización asociada a los imperios coloniales, principalmente europeos, que concierne más particularmente a Gran Bretaña y Francia, pero también a Alemania, Bélgica, España, Italia, Países Bajos o Portugal. Así, propone deconstruir el mito fundacional del museo colonial, es decir, el museo que encarna fundamentalmente su vínculo con la Ilustración y su discurso, el poder en el lugar, procedente de la metrópoli. Más que considerar el problema desde el punto de vista de la colonización, nos invita a analizar la propagación de la museología, cuyas ideas se difundieron progresivamente, durante el periodo de entreguerras, en una época todavía efectivamente colonial, desde las metrópolis hacia las periferias. Nos recuerda que el discurso poscolonial sobre la museología se centra sobre todo en los circuitos de difusión. Mairesse pone el ejemplo de John Falk, que es el investigador más citado. Es evidente que la distribución de las publicaciones en inglés facilita la difusión de su pensamiento. También cita a Tereza Scheiner, que cuestiona la hegemonía del pensamiento en la producción de discursos anglófonos y francófonos en detrimento de otras lenguas. Este punto de vista pareció ser ampliamente compartido en la reunión del ICOM en Kioto, donde el inglés ocupó todos los debates. Además, Mairesse llama la atención sobre el liderazgo y la influencia de ciertas ideas que se difunden más fácilmente en determinadas lenguas. Destaca el hecho de que sólo un pequeño número de investigadores aspira a desarrollar los intercambios de forma más global. Los primeros, desde el punto de vista de la investigación, prospectan por todo el mundo para descubrir nuevas ideas en el ámbito museístico; los segundos tratan de dar a conocer sus ideas a un público más amplio (algunos autores pueden pertenecer a ambas categorías).

En cierto modo, el liderazgo de los investigadores es decisivo, pero la difusión de su visión depende del lugar que ocupan las lenguas en la propagación del conocimiento. En este sentido, el reconocimiento de la contribución de los investigadores sigue siendo relativo. Mairesse sugiere que el enfoque geopolítico, que integra el poder político y militar (*hard power*), el poder económico, pero también el diplomático y el cultural (*soft power*), permite cuestionar las relaciones de poder actuales de forma mucho más pertinente. Esta perspectiva nos permitiría, sin duda, dar una nueva mirada a las relaciones coloniales de la museología, centrándose en las cuestiones y estrategias hegemónicas.

Con el mismo espíritu, Fabien Van Geert explora y matiza los términos museología poscolonial y decolonial. Su análisis insiste en la necesidad de dominar y matizar estos conceptos. También invita a los investigadores a no oponer

estas dos visiones de la museología. Su interpretación de este movimiento es relevante, ya que se basa en su proyecto de tesis (2020), que le permitió analizar en detalle el movimiento de cuestionamiento y transformación en el mundo de los museos etnográficos. Los campos que ha explorado minuciosamente le permiten echar un vistazo esclarecedor al movimiento de descolonización en Europa, América del Norte y América Latina. Van Geert coincide con la interpretación de Mairesse cuando concluye que es imprescindible volver a la esencia misma de estas teorías para entender su aplicación a contextos concretos (ya que todo conocimiento es necesariamente situado). Concluye, con razón, que si queremos ser capaces de utilizar términos heurísticos y universalmente válidos para comprender el mundo de los museos, es importante reflexionar sobre estas cuestiones, que van mucho más allá de un mero ejercicio lingüístico. Se trata, sin duda, de una de las primeras tareas intelectuales que hay que emprender si el proyecto de la museología quiere realmente descolonizarse. El proyecto del *Dictionnaire de muséologie* desarrollado en el seno del ICOFOM es sin duda un ejemplo convincente que demuestra la necesidad de aclarar conceptos que a veces parecen sencillos, pero que al mismo tiempo son complejos y requieren matices según la cultura.

Marília Xavier Cury propone una reflexión basada en la metamuseología a partir de las colecciones Kaingang reunidas a principios del siglo XX en el contexto de la colonización del oeste de São Paulo en Brasil. Cuestiona los conceptos de “musealia” y “musealidad” por el contexto de la recogida de los objetos que, como en otras partes de América y en otros continentes, se produjo de forma violenta. El estudio de estos objetos permite reexaminar el proceso inicial de musealización, así como la relectura de estos objetos por parte de los grupos kaingang, que propone nuevas interpretaciones. Este tipo de enfoque, que puede observarse en otras partes del mundo, demuestra que la museología debe integrar los enfoques antropológico y sociológico para que los profesionales de los museos puedan evitar los enfoques etnocéntricos o sociocéntricos que consisten en favorecer la interpretación de un grupo al que se pertenece en detrimento de las comunidades afectadas. El etnocentrismo tiende a conducir a interpretaciones erróneas que pueden asemejarse a formas de racismo. Por el contrario, la museología debe incluir en su formación general una apertura al otro y a la diferencia. En otras palabras, el enfoque antropológico permitiría tomar conciencia de que la propia cultura no puede ser la norma.

En el texto de su conferencia, Ruth B. Phillips sostiene que la dialéctica colonial y decolonial es demasiado polarizadora. En su lugar, sugiere que el museo debería adoptar un enfoque de museo de sociedad, es decir, multidisciplinar, que fomente las interpretaciones plurales. Este cambio de postura significa que los museos deben romper con la tradición museológica occidental. Sostiene que los museos deben revisar el régimen de valores que hasta ahora ha regido las interpretaciones occidentales de la cultura. En cierto modo, uno se pregunta si los museos no deberían romper con la idea misma de interpretar los objetos y la cultura. La autora aborda los problemas de la “extranjerización”

y la “traducción gruesa”. Relata ejemplos de traducción y demuestra que en algunos casos hay que reconocer que los museos se enfrentan a ejemplos de intraducibilidad. Phillips sugiere que los museos de sociedad deberían, como hacen los museos de arte y especialmente los de arte contemporáneo, exponer los objetos sin mediación sobre la base de que la obra o el objeto hablan por sí mismos y que el museo no debe interponerse entre el objeto y el visitante. Aquí encontramos el vivo debate que recorrió el mundo museístico y académico cuando se inauguró el Museo del Quai Branly en 2006. Los objetos etnográficos del Musée de l’Homme estaban entonces bajo la influencia y la autoridad de conservadores que favorecían un enfoque estético que transformaba los objetos etnográficos en obras de arte. Este problema de traducción e interpretación no parece ser nuevo en la medida en que cada generación revisa periódicamente las colecciones y propone nuevas lecturas.

2. Los primeros pueblos

François Mairesse demuestra que son las estructuras de poder actuales las que deben analizarse para comprender lo que está en juego en la descolonización de la museología. En este sentido, conviene centrarse en la influencia de los Pueblos Originarios, que no solo han participado en la transformación de los museos desde hace varios años, sino también, de forma más general, en la descolonización de la museología y, en cierta medida, en su indigenización (Phillips, 2011).

Varias ponencias del simposio intentaron responder a las cuestiones planteadas en relación con los Pueblos Originarios. Estas ponencias, algunas de las cuales han sido seleccionadas para su publicación, y los debates a los que dieron lugar a lo largo del simposio dan fe de una creciente conciencia entre los museos de la necesidad de entablar un diálogo crítico sobre la interpretación de la historia, para comprender mejor que los pueblos indígenas de Asia vagaron, ocuparon y transformaron el territorio norteamericano durante milenios antes de la llegada de los europeos. Todas estas reflexiones se inscriben en una ruptura del museo tal y como se ha concebido tradicionalmente e incluso de la Nueva Museología tal y como se definió en la década de 1980. Estas reflexiones también indican que, si bien estos cambios estructurales se han implementado a veces en los museos, algunas respuestas sólo se formulan conceptualmente y las preguntas siguen sin respuesta. Estos diferentes trabajos nos muestran que la inversión de estas relaciones de poder, como señala acertadamente Mairesse en la conclusión de su texto, no puede analizarse simplemente mediante estudios, ya sean museísticos o postcoloniales.

La toma de conciencia por parte de los museos de la realidad de los Pueblos Originarios es reciente, al igual que la reivindicación por parte de los aborígenes de controlar su historia y su cultura en los instrumentos internacionales. Este fenómeno se refleja en la Declaración de las Naciones Unidas sobre los Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas, adoptada por la Asamblea General de la ONU el 13 de septiembre de 2007. Cuatro países se opusieron a ella en ese momento:

Canadá, que se adherirá unos tres años más tarde, Estados Unidos, Australia y Nueva Zelanda, países donde la importancia de los Pueblos Originarios es significativa. Esta afirmación implica necesariamente el establecimiento de vínculos entre, por un lado, los Pueblos Originarios que reclaman el control de su patrimonio material e inmaterial y que recuperan así su alma, su cultura, su identidad y, por otro lado, el museo que custodia estos objetos culturales.

En Canadá, fue a raíz del boicot de los Cree a la exposición de 1988 del Museo Glenbow, “El Espíritu Canta” (*Le souffle de l'esprit*), que se creó un grupo de trabajo formado por miembros de la Asamblea de los Pueblos Originarios y de la Asociación Canadiense de Museos, que presentó un informe en 1992: “Pasar página: Forjando nuevas asociaciones entre museos y *Pueblos Originarios*” (*Tourner la page: forger de nouveaux partenariats entre les musées et les Premières Nations*). Este informe llegó a tres conjuntos principales de recomendaciones: una mayor participación de los aborígenes en la interpretación de su cultura e historia por parte de las instituciones culturales; un mejor acceso de los aborígenes a las colecciones de los museos; y la repatriación de los objetos sagrados y los restos humanos contenidos en las colecciones de los museos (Maranda, Van Geert). La década de 1990 marcó una mayor conciencia de los Pueblos Originarios de Canadá en su relación con los museos. Como señala Andrea Laforêt, etnóloga canadiense, los objetos culturales de las sociedades aborígenes tienen un significado que forma parte de la vida de la propia sociedad. Cuentan la historia, establecen la genealogía de la sociedad y la transmisión de la autoridad. Los Pueblos Originarios tienen una concepción de los objetos culturales totalmente diferente a la que tradicionalmente tiene un museo que los posee (Phillips). Estos objetos culturales suelen tener un carácter sagrado y deben ser tratados como tales. A lo largo de los años, los museos de etnología o los departamentos de etnología de los museos de historia, así como los museos de sociedad e incluso los de bellas artes, han aprendido a trabajar en colaboración con los Pueblos Originarios. Sin embargo, esta colaboración ha estado y está plagada de dificultades y dista mucho de haberse completado.

Desde el principio, como ponente inaugural del simposio y en su texto “Narrativa de una incursión aborigen en el territorio del museo”, Élisabeth Kaine, conservadora aborigen de la nación Wendake, se cuestiona las dificultades que encuentran los pueblos originarios para lograr una participación real en el desarrollo de una exposición que les concierne. En efecto, para Kaine, la exposición es uno de los instrumentos más poderosos de empoderamiento, una herramienta de autoconstrucción para los pueblos en posición minoritaria, víctimas del colonialismo. Así, Kaine dirigió una consulta muy amplia con las once naciones aborígenes de Quebec para la elaboración de una exposición de síntesis y de referencia sobre los Primeros Pueblos de Quebec. ¿Qué poder se concede a los Pueblos Originarios, se pregunta, si no se trata del contenido, de la estética, de la circulación del visitante a través del contenido, de la elección de los soportes a través de los cuales se expresa, o de la elección de los objetos? Para Kaine, el control debe ser tanto del mensaje como de su expresión. ¿Cómo

conseguir que los visitantes indígenas de una exposición sobre ellos desarrollen un sentimiento de identidad? Como nos recuerda Hugues de Varine, debemos dejar de creer que podemos hablar de la cultura de los demás desde nuestra propia perspectiva.

En este sentido, Lynn Maranda también se pregunta: ¿cómo podemos descolonizar el museo, producto de la colonización, sin eliminar de la escena todas las estructuras museísticas y sus servicios? Es necesario, en un espíritu de colaboración, ser capaz de contar las verdades, incluso las más sensibles o dolorosas, convertir los lugares de opresión en lugares que importen y compartir el conocimiento indígena. Al igual que Kaine, Maranda se pregunta por qué no lograr una colaboración en la que los Pueblos Originarios no sólo tengan voz, sino que controlen aspectos de la actividad de los museos en asuntos que les afectan. Se trata de un enfoque decolonial, como lo llama Van Geert, que es un deseo radical de deconstruir el enfoque occidental de los museos dando todo su lugar a las prácticas y ontologías, especialmente las indígenas.

A pesar de los obstáculos, se han dado algunos pasos en esta inevitable asociación. En Canadá, los museos han dado voz a los Pueblos Originarios de diversas maneras: responsabilidad compartida de las exposiciones aborígenes, inclusión de perspectivas aborígenes, creación de comités o consejos consultivos permanentes y políticas que incluyen al menos un representante o responsable aborigen en los consejos de administración. Como símbolo, las instituciones museísticas de Canadá incluyen muy a menudo al principio de sus reuniones el reconocimiento del territorio aborigen donde se celebra la reunión.

Pero, ¿en qué condiciones se puede hablar de descolonización de los museos? Algunos autores mencionan incluso la trampa del neocolonialismo. ¿No deberíamos hablar más bien de un “sitio de traducción”, como propone Phillips en su texto, o reconocer a los museos como “zonas de contacto”, como Clifford (2013) ha desarrollado tan elocuentemente en sus escritos?

Las relaciones de los museos con los Pueblos Originarios deben basarse en el respeto y la reciprocidad (Kaine, Phillips). La descolonización, por tanto, restablece la visión tradicional del mundo, la cultura y las formas de vida de los Pueblos Originarios; sustituye las interpretaciones occidentales de la historia por las perspectivas indígenas, desmantelando las estructuras de poder que han paralizado y subyugado a los Pueblos Originarios.

En este sentido, el reconocimiento de la validez de las diferentes cosmovisiones, conocimientos y perspectivas de los Pueblos Originarios y la integración de estas formas de conocer y hacer en los museos puede analizarse en términos de museología, que es a la vez una reflexión teórica sobre el hecho museístico y, como afirma Van Geert en su texto, un campo de investigación interdisciplinaria que analiza el museo desde diferentes enfoques científicos, pero también como un enfoque reflexivo desarrollado por las instituciones respecto a su papel y sus prácticas. En la vanguardia de este enfoque reflexivo, el papel y las prácticas del Museo Te Papa Tongarewa de Nueva Zelanda nos permiten impulsar la

reflexión teórica sobre el hecho museístico. Reúne, en una estructura bicultural y bicéfala, a los maoríes, el Primer Pueblo, y a los pākehā, los descendientes de los inmigrantes indoeuropeos. Mana taonga es un principio habilitador que permite al Museo Te Papa reconocer la riqueza de la cultura, la diversidad y diseñar y difundir modelos de cooperación, colaboración y cocreación. Mana taonga es, ante todo, un principio autóctono para restablecer los derechos de los maoríes sobre su cultura material. Como principio rector, taonga mana reconoce que los taonga -que incluyen objetos, historias y todas las formas de expresión cultural- tienen “mana”, que significa poder, autoridad y prestigio. Por lo tanto, respetar y expresar los conocimientos, las visiones del mundo y los sistemas de aprendizaje formulados por los maoríes son dimensiones importantes del mana taonga. A lo largo de los años, el principio de mana taonga se ha extendido a todas las actividades museísticas del Museo Te Papa, para facilitar la colaboración de todas las comunidades de origen en la gestión y uso de su patrimonio cultural, y por tanto a otras colecciones no maoríes del Museo Te Papa. Este es también un principio que se extiende a otros museos del mundo (Hakiwai y Schorch, 2014; Hakiwai, McCarthy y Schorch, 2016). Los cambios dirigidos por los maoríes en la gobernanza, la gestión, la política, la educación y la conservación han transformado aspectos de la práctica profesional y han dado lugar a interesantes fecundaciones cruzadas museológicas de la cultura europea y maorí. Retomando el análisis de Van Geert, el principio de mana taonga tal y como se ha desarrollado en el Museo Te Papa nos permite reflexionar sobre el alcance y el papel de los enfoques autóctonos como vehículo de transformación de los museos. Para McCarthy (2019), estos enfoques pueden proporcionar vías para ayudar a descolonizar y remodelar los fundamentos de la museología a escala global, trascendiendo los llamados museos etnológicos y de sociedad.

Paralelamente, los museos también han establecido políticas de retorno, de repatriación de objetos culturales, como la restitución de objetos sagrados o de restos humanos. En las Américas, estas peticiones de los Pueblos Originarios están a la orden del día. En África y Oceanía también se solicita la devolución de objetos culturales de los países europeos, devoluciones que a veces se enmarcan en Europa en textos legislativos o a raíz de informes, como el presentado en Francia por Flewine Saar y Bénédicte Savoy en 2018. Ya sea en América o en Oceanía con los Primeros Pueblos, o en Europa, especialmente con las sociedades africanas o de Oriente Medio, este fenómeno se basa en las mismas premisas; con ello, América y Europa se unen (Van Geert).

Para Camille Labadie, a nivel internacional, a pesar de la panoplia de instrumentos dedicados a la restitución de bienes exportados ilícitamente, pocos han resultado útiles para regular la devolución de objetos culturales a los Pueblos Originarios. Por ello, muchas restituciones son hoy en día el resultado de procesos alternativos, de restitución voluntaria, de mediación o de arbitraje, que se miden con los principios morales, éticos o deontológicos pertinentes para llegar a soluciones equitativas adaptadas a cada situación. Maranda constata

también, a falta de una legislación satisfactoria, la aparición de una práctica de restitución que nace de un sentimiento moral y ético y de la necesidad de reparar las injusticias. Estas restituciones se aplican tanto a los bienes culturales como a los objetos sagrados y a los restos humanos, como, por ejemplo, la repatriación de *toi moko* (cabezas momificadas tatuadas) pertenecientes a museos franceses y quebequenses. El Museo de Nueva Zelanda Te Papa Tongarewa es responsable desde 2003, en nombre del gobierno neozelandés, de la repatriación de los *kōiwi tangata* (restos humanos) maoríes. Como señala Labadie a modo de conclusión, cuando se trata de restos humanos, objetos sagrados u objetos asociados a habilidades ancestrales únicas, la restitución no puede constituir una reparación plena ante el despojo de los fundamentos mismos de su cultura.

3. Algunos ejemplos de diferentes continentes

Las ponencias presentadas en el simposio y los debates posteriores muestran hasta qué punto la descolonización de los museos es una noción polimorfa de geometría variable. Algunas se basan en estudios empíricos. Se trata de Asia, África, América del Sur y Europa. Diferentes enfoques de una cuestión compleja: teniendo en cuenta los valores de la sociedad, ¿cómo y en qué medida los museos dan voz, un derecho de ciudadanía a las poblaciones cuyos objetos culturales custodian?

En China, como señala Lin Li, la devolución de los objetos culturales chinos perdidos entre 1840 y 1949 de forma ilegal o poco ética es una cuestión importante para la Fundación China para el Desarrollo de la Cultura Social, mientras que la devolución de los objetos culturales dentro de China no lo es. Para Lin Li, basándose en un estudio empírico, la devolución de objetos culturales no forma parte de un enfoque de descolonización. Llega a la conclusión de que este es exactamente el tipo de institución que debe ser descolonizada, ya que, como instrumento de propaganda útil del Estado, los museos chinos difícilmente pueden ser cambiados.

Victor Zaiden y Ana Avelar examinan cómo se están llevando a cabo las demandas de reconocimiento de las identidades plurales y de reparación de los despojos coloniales en Alemania y Brasil, dos países con trayectorias diferentes y, por tanto, con dos enfoques bastante disímiles. Mientras que en Alemania las demandas de restitución del patrimonio cultural parecen guiar la agenda de las correcciones históricas, en Brasil lo que está en juego es la lucha por la visibilidad de los grupos marginados y el reconocimiento de un intento fallido de homogeneización cultural.

Esta es la conclusión a la que llega Maria De Simone Ferreira cuando examina el papel de los museos brasileños a la hora de tener en cuenta la realidad de la sociedad a la que sirven, analizando cómo el Museo Arqueológico de Itaipú incorporó las reivindicaciones de los pescadores que buscaban el reconocimiento de la importancia de sus tradiciones centenarias. Aunque el museo

no haya tenido en cuenta a los pescadores de Itaipú cuando se creó en 1977, las narrativas sobre el patrimonio cultural establecidas por la institución han permitido una recualificación de la condición histórica del grupo de pescadores indígenas, hasta el punto de que hoy son los propios miembros de la comunidad los que piden participar en las actividades del museo e incluso en su gestión, y no al revés.

Christine Bluard, que ha estudiado el Museo Real de África Central en Bélgica, señala la importancia del papel desempeñado por las comunidades de origen de la República Democrática del Congo, Ruanda y Burundi en el proceso de transformación del museo y el papel del arte y los artistas contemporáneos. Habla de la apropiación de las colecciones por parte de las comunidades de origen, del valor añadido por el anclaje contemporáneo en las colecciones antiguas y, por último, del papel de los artistas y de los actores externos en la transformación de una institución museística. Bluard concluye que la diversidad de enfoques y puntos de vista se está imponiendo gradualmente a la clasificación y cuestiona el hecho colonial que está en el origen de esta categorización [...] este proceso está trabajando ahora hacia una redefinición de la misión del museo.

Simbarashe Shadreck Chitima analiza la descolonización de los museos en Zimbabue desde la perspectiva de la educación museística para los niños de la escuela primaria. Observa que el discurso colonial sigue impregnando las actividades de los museos. Para Chitima, la descolonización de la educación museística consiste en proporcionar narrativas equilibradas y ofrecer contenidos realistas y relevantes que las sociedades contemporáneas puedan encontrar significativos. El servicio educativo de descolonización de los museos debe incluir múltiples voces que representen una amplia gama de perspectivas y cuerpos de conocimiento.

Conclusión

Ofrecer una síntesis al final de un simposio es siempre un reto. Bruno Brulon Soares ha conseguido sintetizar los grandes temas de la descolonización de forma original. El presidente del ICOFOM ha apostado por abordar la descolonización tratando el tema de los mitos, que en cierto modo ha permanecido en un segundo plano durante los cuatro días del simposio. Sin entrar en un resumen exhaustivo, recordemos aquí las principales líneas de su análisis. Distingue la descolonización del museo de la descolonización de la museología como disciplina que fue creada, recuerda, como un medio para examinar la diversidad de los museos a través de una única lente científica. Detrás de la suposición de que la museología podía ser una ciencia -la que sirvió de base a este comité internacional (ICOFOM)- estaba la idea defendida por algunas de nuestras figuras fundadoras de que una única rama del conocimiento podía servir para estudiar la pluralidad de los museos. Esto demuestra que hay un mito fundacional inicial en el origen de ICOFOM. Existe el valor común de que la museología es una ciencia con el objetivo de producir una base conceptual única con centros teóricos definidos para la investigación de los museos, tanto

en la teoría como en la práctica. Brulon Soares postula que la descolonización de los museos y la museología depende de un proceso triple e interdependiente que abarca la deconstrucción, la reconstrucción y la redistribución. Más que la mera restitución del patrimonio, al considerar estos tres procesos, cree que es mejor descolonizar la mente, es decir, transformar la cultura de los museos para denunciar la violencia histórica producida por los museos.

Bruno Brulon Soares identifica cinco mitos. Propone empezar por deconstruir los mitos fundadores para dar lugar a una nueva concepción de la museología. En su opinión, el problema no es tener el museo como objeto o la relación hombre-realidad, sino aprehender el museo.

El primer mito es el de la museología como ciencia, que ha sido difundido por investigadores como van Mensch y Stránský, que han intentado definirla como una disciplina científica autónoma cuyo objeto de conocimiento es una aproximación específica del hombre a la realidad. Sugiere que se abandone el mito de una museología única sin tener en cuenta las concepciones diferenciadas del museo y las prácticas diversificadas. Haciéndose eco de Villy Toft Jensen, señala que no existe una museología común. En otras palabras, la museología en su concepción europea no puede ser universal. El tercer mito que identifica es el de la teoría museística separada de la práctica. Demuestra que existe una forma superior de conocimiento autorizado, divorciada en muchos aspectos de la práctica. La comunidad del Consejo Internacional de Museos quería normalizar el conocimiento, lo que llevó al ICOFOM a desarrollar conceptos y normalizar el conocimiento. Este proceso se puso en marcha separando la teoría de la práctica, contribuyendo así a la creación de una museología normativa, validada en particular por los países europeos. Este razonamiento le lleva al mito de la dicotomía objeto/visitante, que nos remite al mito fundacional de los museos europeos y más concretamente a los gabinetes de curiosidades asociados al colonialismo. La museología se arraigó rápidamente en la separación artificial entre sujetos y objetos, de modo que todavía nos encontramos con la vieja dicotomía del enfoque del museo en los objetos materiales y su enfoque en los visitantes. Por último, el quinto mito es el de la descolonización. En cierto modo, una parte importante de la comunidad museística internacional ha comenzado a denunciar el “poscolonialismo” y a reivindicar la “descolonización” de la museología como si fuera un antídoto contra el colonialismo en los museos, cuando en realidad el proyecto decolonial quiere proponer una mirada crítica sobre la colonización y la modernidad, percibiéndolas como fenómenos irreversibles. El presidente del ICOFOM plantea preguntas pertinentes e incluidas: “¿Es posible revertir la esclavitud en las Américas? ¿Es posible revertir el genocidio en África? ¿O la explotación de recursos limitados mediante la expansión imperial y el saqueo? ¿Vamos a resolver la cuestión de la colonización de una vez por todas inventando la idea de un museo poscolonial y deshaciéndonos de los restos de este pasado inquietante? Evidentemente, parece que estos objetivos deben ser compartidos tanto por el mundo de los museos como por la comunidad científica. Se trata de una responsabilidad

común, ya que requiere cambios profundos en la cultura museística. Además, ¿no deberían adaptarse estos cambios a cada contexto cultural y tener en cuenta los factores geopolíticos?

Además, varios ejemplos muestran que los enfoques museísticos de los Pueblos Originarios forman parte de las estrategias de transformación de los museos. Siguiendo el ejemplo del principio mana taonga desarrollado en el Museo Te Papa, estos enfoques forman parte de itinerarios que permiten descolonizar y remodelar los propios fundamentos de la museología contemporánea. ¿No harían bien los museos, así como la museología, en inspirarse en estos planteamientos de apertura?

El lado oscuro del simposio: reforma y contrarreforma del mundo de los museos

Aunque el simposio del ICOFOM de 2021 fue rico en vías de investigación, dejó dos temas en la sombra. Se mencionó muy poco el mestizaje cultural y este tema merece ser revisado. Además, teniendo en cuenta que la situación de las comunidades culturales en las colecciones públicas sigue siendo una cuestión de gran actualidad, especialmente en la perspectiva de que los museos se replanteen su papel social, creemos que sería conveniente proponer una nueva reunión científica de ICOFOM sobre este tema, que merece ser debatido colectivamente. Lo mismo ocurre con la cuestión de los mitos fundadores de la museología, que no se discutió mucho en este simposio. Bruno Brulon Soares fue uno de los pocos que consideró la descolonización y los mitos fundacionales. Como bien demuestra, la descolonización implica, entre otras cosas, un nuevo examen de los mitos fundacionales de la museología europea que se han exportado a todo el mundo y se han adaptado a nuevos contextos geopolíticos.

Si la descolonización de la museología consiste en romper con la camisa de fuerza de un modelo prestado, también se trata de adaptar los principios de la museología a contextos culturales específicos. No obstante, hay que recordar que el proceso de ruptura con la cultura dominante siempre es difícil y lleva tiempo. Esto es lo que nos dice la historia del movimiento de la Nueva Museología, surgido hace medio siglo. También podemos pensar en la posición de Jacques Hainard, del Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel, que intentó descolonizar los museos etnográficos liberándose de los objetos y cuestionando el papel de los conservadores. Mencionemos de paso la obra colectiva *Le musée cannibale* (Gonseth, Hainard Kaehr, 2002) que propone una reflexión que sigue siendo actual sobre el papel de los museos etnográficos en el mundo. Aunque su visión de la museología ha inspirado a una generación de museólogos, el mundo de los museos se ha cuidado de mantenerlo al margen.

Al abordar un tema que durante mucho tiempo ha sido tabú, uno tiene la impresión de que se está gestando un movimiento que guarda similitudes con el de la Reforma Protestante, que en el siglo XVI propuso una profunda transformación del cristianismo católico. Si entonces se cuestionaron los dogmas de la Iglesia, hoy se ponen en tela de juicio los valores fundamentales de los

museos que se creían universales. Ya no parece haber una cultura museística compartida. Al formar un frente común en la reunión de Kioto, los países que han permanecido fieles a los valores originales, es decir, las colecciones, la investigación y la conservación, se embarcan en lo que podría parecer una contrarreforma de la museología. Muchas asociaciones nacionales no conciben el museo sin que su misión principal sea la de preservar el patrimonio material e inmaterial de la humanidad. Sin embargo, una cosa es cierta: los museos están sufriendo una transformación. Por ello, es necesario mirar más allá del debate sobre la descolonización, hacia las verdaderas cuestiones que están en juego en el sistema de valores de los museos, pues ¿no es precisamente la cultura común de los museos lo que está en juego tras el debate sobre la descolonización?

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PAPERS

ARTICLES

ARTÍCULOS

Réorganisation

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RÉSUMÉ

L'AfricaMuseum est un ancien musée colonial qui a rouvert ses portes en décembre 2018 après une rénovation en profondeur. Les collections du musée représentent un patrimoine important hors Afrique et qui manque en RDC, au Rwanda et au Burundi. L'accès aux collections pour les communautés sources et les artistes fait désormais partie des missions du musée. Le transfert de l'autorité curatoriale auprès de commissaires directement concernés par les collections est aussi discuté. Cet article montre que la décolonialité est un processus et que pour les communautés sources, elle convoque la relation au patrimoine, l'appartenance. L'accès au patrimoine peut être vu comme l'un des outils relationnels potentiels pour cette appropriation. Cet article examine aussi la part prise par les communautés sources dans le processus de transformation d'un musée et le rôle de l'art contemporain et des artistes.

Mots clés : décolonialité, RDC, communautés sources/diaspora, co-création, appartenance, patrimoine relationnel

ABSTRACT

Réorganisation

The AfricaMuseum is a former Belgian colonial museum which reopened in December 2018 after an extensive renovation. The museum's collections represent a significant heritage out of Africa that is missing in the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi. To enable source communities and artists to access these collections is now part of the museum's mission. The transfer of curatorial authority to curators who are directly concerned with the collections is also discussed. This paper demonstrates that decoloniality is a process and that it involves, to the source communities, a sense of belonging. Cultural heritage will

be discussed as a potential relational tool for such a belonging. In addition, the part played by the source communities in the process of a museum's transformation and the role of contemporary art and artists will also be considered herein.

Keywords: decoloniality, relational heritage, source communities/diaspora, co-creation, belonging, DRC



Introduction

L'accès aux collections par et pour les communautés sources s'inscrit dans le processus d'ouverture et de décolonialité des musées dépositaires de collections liées à l'histoire de ces communautés. Le Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale, ancien musée colonial rebaptisé AfricaMuseum, situé à Tervuren en Belgique, fait partie de ces musées. Pour les institutions, l'ouverture et l'accès aux collections demandent des moyens et impliquent une transformation en profondeur ; cela prend du temps et ne peut se faire sans une volonté institutionnelle marquée. En bref, c'est souvent long, lent et lourd¹. Du côté africain, cette demande d'appartenance est plus ancienne et parfois moins formelle. Voilà vingt ans déjà que le peintre populaire Chéri Samba (Kinto M'Vuila, 1956), résumait nombre des questions et des revendications actuelles des communautés d'Afrique sub-sahariennes, en Europe et en Afrique. Dans son tableau intitulé *Réorganisation*, il rappelle la nécessité de définir les artistes comme artistes contemporains autant qu'africains ; le droit de regard sur ce qui est montré et sur la présentation des collections ; l'accès aux archives ; la co-création et le transfert de l'autorité curatoriale.

Le titre de cette contribution, *Réorganisation* rend hommage au tableau du même nom, réalisé par Chéri Samba pour le Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale en 2002. Le tableau se trouve régulièrement publié dans les articles qui traitent de la rénovation du musée (Bonnet, 2018). Au centre du tableau² se trouve une statue en plâtre peint, *L'Homme Léopard* du sculpteur belge P. Wissaert (1885-1951). Cette sculpture de 1934 est aussi célèbre que controversée³. Un

1. Le lecteur trouvera ici des références clés, parues dans la presse et les ouvrages spécialisés pour comprendre l'enjeu de la transformation de ce musée et qu'il serait trop long de développer. Van Beurden, S. (2015) ; Bonnet, F. (2018) ; Bernhard, M. (2019). Van Bockhaven, V. (2019) ; Ariese-Vandemeulebroucke, C. (2019) ; Zian, Y. (2020) ; Hochschild, A. (2020)

2. Chéri Samba, *Réorganisation*. 2002. Acrylique sur toile. Coll. RMCA. Tableau présenté dans les collections permanentes Africamuseum, Tervuren. Invitation au lecteur à visualiser en parallèle le tableau sur le web, par ex. Bonnet, F. (2018). Le tableau fait aussi la couverture du livre de Sarah Van Beurden. Van Beurden, S. (2015).

3. *L'Homme Léopard* de Wissaert est une représentation des sociétés secrètes congolaises, les Anioto,

homme armé de griffes s'apprête à tuer un autre homme endormi. Les deux hommes sont africains.

Au moment de sa création, cette sculpture était présentée comme une icône de la violence et de la sauvagerie africaines (Van Bockhaven, 2013). Chéri Samba souhaite voir cette sculpture sortir du musée. Dans le tableau, le groupe en plâtre est posé sur un matelas et descend les marches du musée, tiré au-dehors par des représentants des communautés congolaises. En haut de l'escalier, scientifiques et/ou gardiens du musée cherchent au contraire à garder la sculpture à l'intérieur et s'insurgent : « *Vous n'allez pas nous priver de ce qui a fait la notoriété du musée !* ». En d'autres termes, ils rappellent que ces représentations fausses et datées attirent encore du public. A mi-parcours, le directeur, Guido Gryseels croise les bras et dit : « *vous avez raison, c'est dommage, ceci a fait notre histoire mais il faut réorganiser* ». A noter que l'éléphant empaillé, lui, est déjà dehors. Comme dans beaucoup de toiles de Chéri Samba, un texte accompagne l'image. Les Congolais représentés sur le tableau disent souhaiter ne plus voir au musée ces représentations dégradantes pour l'Afrique et les Africains. Ce tableau, longtemps resté dans les réserves, est visionnaire et, en une image, il décrit la tension qui fut à l'œuvre lors de la rénovation de ce musée.

Les questions posées par le tableau sont nombreuses et d'actualité : *que montrer et aussi comment le montrer ? Que faut-il garder dans les salles ? L'Homme Léopard et ces représentations stéréotypées ont-elles encore leur place au musée, et plus généralement dans l'espace public ? Ne faut-il pas enlever définitivement les animaux empaillés ? Qui prend la parole au sein du musée ? Qui a le dernier mot pour la présentation des collections, l'écriture et les cartels ? Que raconter ? Que faire des notices en prise directe avec l'époque coloniale ? Comment mettre en avant le savoir, la parole des communautés sources ? Un compromis est-il possible, souhaitable, souhaité ? Polyphonie ou cacophonie ? Qui tranche, et où sont les voix africaines ? En 2002, elles étaient cantonnées en dehors du musée. Aujourd'hui, ces voix sont multiples, diversifiées et souvent en colère.*

Dans un autre tableau intitulé *Hommage aux anciens créateurs* (1999-2000), Chéri Samba interroge la provenance des objets. Il s'étonne que le conservateur qui a réuni une collection de si beaux objets n'en connaisse pas les auteurs. Il interroge cette fois la provenance, le statut de l'artiste et la reconnaissance des objets comme œuvres d'art. Ce tableau a été récemment exposé à Zurich⁴, au

qui se mobilisaient pour agresser des compatriotes un peu trop conciliants avec le colonisateur. Ils agissaient la nuit, armés de griffes et laissaient derrière eux des traces de léopard pour faire croire à l'attaque de l'animal. Aujourd'hui, ils seraient considérés comme des résistants mais, dans les années 1930, ils ont été condamnés à mort et exécutés. Cette histoire tragique pour les Congolais a laissé dans la culture populaire, belge et congolaise, l'image d'un homme noir, sauvage et dangereux. On la retrouve en particulier dans la bande-dessinée de *Tintin au Congo* et certains épisodes de Tarzan (dans la BD autant qu'au cinéma).

4. Chéri Samba, *Hommage aux anciens créateurs*. 1999. Acrylique sur toile. CAAC - The Pigozzi Collection, Genève. Tableau présenté dans l'exposition *Congo as Fiction*, Musée Rietberg, Zurich, tenue du 22 nov 2019 au 15 mars 2020. Il existe plusieurs versions de ce tableau, également visibles

musée Rietberg (Oberhofer & Guyer, 2019, p.10) et à Paris⁵ au musée du quai Branly (Dagen, 2021, p.115).

En deux tableaux Chéri Samba pose de bonnes questions. Il montre les rapports de force en présence, de même qu'il identifie les liens nécessaires et conflictuels entre les créateurs africains (ici des Congolais) et les musées occidentaux. Chéri Samba relève aussi, en filigrane, combien ce patrimoine est unique, montrant qu'il est dommage que la plupart de ces objets se trouvent hors d'Afrique et que les Africains n'aient aucun droit de regard sur la présentation de ces objets.

Colonialité / décolonialité

Le terme en usage actuellement « décoloniser la muséologie » mérite un temps d'arrêt. La *décolonisation* renvoie à une période historique, celle des indépendances des ex-pays colonisés. Aujourd'hui, ce terme est aussi généralement utilisé pour désigner la politique mise en œuvre par des musées et des centres d'art pour changer les regards sur les patrimoines liés à l'histoire coloniale. Il y a confusion. La décolonialité, qui implique l'idée de processus, serait peut-être un terme plus approprié. Le terme « décolonialité » est en premier la traduction d'un concept en langue espagnole⁶, la « *decolonialidad* » (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). La colonialité (distinct de la colonisation) montre comment individus et pratiques sont encore influencés par des formes de pensées directement issues du colonialisme, de la modernité et de la pensée dominante eurocéno-centrée. Malgré des avancées notoires, le regard des publics qui visitent les musées est toujours déterminé par des siècles d'imageries coloniales. Le colonialisme a produit des fictions puissantes dont un complexe de supériorité eurocéno-centré à l'œuvre dans nos sociétés globalisées. Il est utile de rappeler que le concept même de décolonialité a été défendu d'abord dans les pays du sud et, dans les pays du nord, par les communautés sources. En Belgique, ces communautés se désignent elles-mêmes souvent sous le nom de « diaspora » mais cette appellation ne fait pas l'unanimité. Afropéens, Afrodescendants, Afropolitains, membres de communautés ou de diaspora, il y a autant d'appellations que d'auteurs. A retenir que le choix des mots (inclusif) est important. L'idée n'est pas ici d'en choisir un mais de rappeler qu'ils sont multiples.

Méthodologie et structure

Notre article repose principalement sur du vécu, des rencontres : l'accueil et l'organisation des résidence d'artistes à l'AfricaMuseum, des conversations nourries et un travail en co-création avec des créatrices, des créateurs et des

sur le web.

5. Tableau (ou autre version de ce même thème, ce qui est courant dans l'œuvre de Chéri Samba) présenté dans l'exposition Ex Africa, du 9 fév. au 11 juillet 2021 et repris dans le catalogue.

6. Au départ, ce concept politique avait des ramifications dans l'enseignement et la culture. Il a été pensé et construit à la fin des années 1990, et au début des années 2000 en Amérique du Sud autour du *Grupo Modernidad / Colonialidad*.

commissaires africaines et africains lors des expositions. Ce travail s'accompagne d'une veille scientifique consacrée à l'accès aux collections, l'appartenance par et pour les communautés sources et les questions de translocation et/ou restitution. L'expérience, qui est la miennne, menée à l'AfricaMuseum au sein des services aux publics depuis plus de dix ans, permet de relever et de proposer trois champs d'actions et de recherches qui seront développés ici : le premier repose sur l'appartenance (*belonging*), ou la nécessaire appropriation des collections, archives et photographies par les communautés sources ; le deuxième s'intéresse à la valeur ajoutée d'un ancrage contemporain, voire d'une activation par l'art contemporain dans des collections anciennes, et le troisième interroge le rôle des artistes et plus généralement des intervenants extérieurs dans la transformation d'une institution muséale (la relation dans/hors musée).

« Réorganiser » le Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale

Pour celles et ceux qui ne le connaissent pas, il est sans doute utile de revenir – même brièvement – sur l'histoire de cet ancien musée colonial, la rénovation dont il a fait l'objet et le rôle que ce musée et l'institut de recherche qui y est rattaché ont joué auprès des communautés sources en tant que symbole et symptôme du passé colonial mais aussi comme outil potentiel pour l'accès aux collections et aux archives. Le Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale ou Musée de Tervuren a été fondé par Léopold II (1835-1909), pensé dès le début comme institut de recherche sur l'Afrique centrale et comme un instrument de la propagande coloniale. Léopold II imaginait même plus largement en faire le cœur d'une *École Mondiale* pour former des hommes d'affaires, des explorateurs et des aventuriers à une carrière coloniale. Ce projet ne verra pas le jour mais le musée, lui, prospérera.

Plus de 85.000 pièces des arts classiques principalement du Congo, et des objets en provenance du Rwanda et du Burundi seront intégrés aux collections entre la fin du 19^e siècle et les années 1960. Ces objets sont accompagnés d'archives (rédigées par les occidentaux) qui parfois situent les provenances, les données scientifiques et les conditions de préemption ou d'acquisition. Comme beaucoup d'institutions de l'époque, le musée et l'institut proposaient aux publics une représentation de l'Afrique centrale qui se voulait « totale », incluant richesses naturelles, culturelles et économiques (Couttenier, 2021). A côté des objets, des centaines de milliers de spécimens d'animaux, une large collection d'échantillons de bois et des minéraux rejoignent les collections. La visée des collectes est clairement économique. L'objectif est de promouvoir les richesses de l'Afrique centrale, d'inviter les investisseurs à s'y rendre et à contribuer à l'exploitation des ressources avec d'importants profits à la clé.

Dans les années 1960, après les indépendances du Congo (RDC), du Rwanda et du Burundi, l'institut poursuit activement les recherches partout en Afrique tandis que le musée peine à se réinventer. Pendant plus de cinquante ans, la muséographie restera en l'état. Le musée est alors considéré comme étant l'un des derniers exemples de musée colonial : un musée du musée, pétrifié. En 2002,

le projet de rénovation voit le jour. Rapidement, les communautés congolaises, rwandaises et burundaises de Belgique mais aussi en Afrique centrale sont consultées. La définition de cette participation pose problème et n'est toujours pas résolue (Busselen, 2019). Ceci engendre des frustrations de part et d'autre. Les communautés évoquent des défauts dans la communication du musée, une instrumentalisation et un manque de volonté du musée pour une participation effective. De son côté, le musée met en avant l'absence de professionnels du côté des interlocuteurs africains et une mise en œuvre trop rapide pour être bien communiquée. La consultation des communautés s'est poursuivie durant tout le processus de rénovation.

Malgré des efforts des deux côtés et l'intervention d'experts africains (le groupe des six), la tension s'est maintenue. Il reste que l'invitation aux communautés et aux experts s'est inscrite tardivement dans le processus au lieu d'avoir été pensée comme préalable. S'ajoute à cela un malentendu de base : la participation concernait la forme (la scénographie) et pas le fond (la mission du musée). Cette participation en demi-teinte va générer un clivage entre celles et ceux qui sont hors du musée et celles et ceux qui y travaillent. Une polarisation largement relayée dans la presse, qui donne l'image de deux camps homogènes et opposés et l'idée fausse qu'il y a d'un côté une communauté africaine (hors du musée) et de l'autre une communauté belge (dans le musée). Or il n'y avait ni opposition, ni surtout consensus au sein des deux groupes, dans et hors musée. Les critiques hors du musée ne parlent pas d'une seule voix et ne sont pas qu'africaines ou/et activistes et, à l'intérieur de l'institution, le personnel est tout autant critique et pas plus homogène mais il a un devoir de réserve. Cette complexité n'a jamais été relevée. Or, pour comprendre la nécessité d'un processus relationnel, intégrer la complexité a son importance.

L'ouverture du musée rénové était attendue, elle a provoqué une grande affluence et des réactions contrastées. A noter que d'anciens coloniaux et des activistes des diasporas, qui font partie des publics directement concernés et sont « hors-champ » l'un et l'autre, se sont trouvés les moins satisfaits : une visée trop critique sur le colonialisme pour les uns et pas assez pour les autres. Symptôme plutôt que symbole de cette histoire, ce musée est en fait la part visible de l'iceberg. L'AfricaMuseum est vu par les publics comme le lieu où se concentre le fait colonial. Or, en Belgique, les musées d'histoire naturelle, d'arts anciens et d'art moderne, les universités et leurs musées, les institutions, tous, sont marqués par le fait colonial, même si, au premier abord, c'est moins visible.

Pour clore cette brève synthèse, il est utile de rappeler que l'ouverture de l'AfricaMuseum en décembre 2018 coïncidait avec la publication du rapport Sarr et Savoy (2018) sur les restitutions. Ce rapport va marquer un temps d'arrêt, une rupture dans l'histoire des musées dépositaires de collections coloniales. La « réorganisation » d'un ancien musée colonial, c'est donc bien plus qu'un ravalement de façade. L'ouverture du musée était loin de signifier la fin du chantier. C'était au contraire le début d'un chantier plus vaste qui devait

engager de nouvelles façons de travailler avec des communautés sources, des chercheurs – dont les artistes -, des activistes et des publics.

Appartenance/Belonging

Dans un article récent, Wayne Modest (2019) rappelle que les musées d'ethnographie et des cultures du monde font face à une double contrainte (*double bind*) : objet de critiques en raison de leur passé, de ce qui les a fondés et dans le même temps lieu d'une nécessaire reconnaissance, d'un travail d'appartenance (*belonging work*) auprès des communautés sources.

Que représente ce patrimoine aujourd'hui dans une Europe postcoloniale ? Déplacé d'Afrique vers la Belgique, conservé dans un musée, ce patrimoine est témoin à charge d'une histoire violente et de relations inégalitaires. Muni de ses archives, ce patrimoine est aussi objet d'études et matière de référence pour de nombreux chercheurs, dont les artistes. Pour des Congolais, Rwandais et Burundais, il est le patrimoine qui manque au pays. Pour des Belges d'origine congolaise, rwandaise et burundaise, il est aussi symbole d'un récit national (colonial et dominant) dont ils sont exclus. L'institution muséale a été et demeure toujours un outil puissant qui produit des fictions européо-centrées et dominantes. Bambi Ceuppens (2016) évoque même la nécessaire « colonisation » des musées par des représentants des communautés sources. Largement critiqués, les musées d'ethnographie européens et les anciens musées coloniaux mettent ces questions au travail avec les communautés sources depuis au moins deux décennies. Ils sont bousculés, critiqués, pris à parti, et ils prennent aussi du temps pour se penser, se *réorganiser*. L'accès aux inventaires, les recherches de provenances, la co-création font désormais partie des nouvelles missions. Concrètement, les expositions de demain s'envisagent aussi avec un transfert de l'autorité curatoriale vers les parties prenantes (Bofane, Tsimba & Bluard, 2021) et invitent les publics à une démarche participative : ouverture des réserves, expositions, résidences d'artistes. Autrement dit, le déplacement (physique) des objets peut prendre du temps : c'est un processus. Il y a aussi en parallèle un déplacement des mentalités tant en Europe qu'en Afrique. L'ère des restitutions/translocations (Savoy, 2019) ne doit pas faire oublier l'accès immédiat aux collections. Ce moment fait appel à la « créativité » des équipes de musées et les invite à travailler ensemble (services aux publics, gestion des collections, recherches scientifiques) pour mettre en place de nouveaux protocoles. Le terme « créativité » est employé à dessein car il engage nécessairement de nouvelles pratiques. La conservation des collections, argument mis en avant pour limiter leur accès, ne constitue pas une raison suffisante pour empêcher l'accès aux collections et l'objectif « restitution » ne peut être l'arbre qui cache la forêt (Deliss, 2019).

À l'AfricaMuseum, l'appropriation des collections par des communautés dont sont issus ces objets s'inscrit dans un programme prioritaire appelé FORUM⁷. Ce programme est porté par les services aux publics du musée. Dans des limites raisonnables et en fonction de la disponibilité du personnel, les collections sont accessibles⁸ avec une attention particulière pour les communautés dont l'histoire et la culture sont directement liées à ces collections. A cette demande d'accès aux objets s'ajoute l'accès aux contenus, aux archives : provenances, transactions, conditions et méthodes d'acquisition. Le travail est largement participatif. Les musées en Afrique, en RDC et au Rwanda sont parties prenantes⁹ et les communautés sources apportent un savoir qui complète, actualise et bien souvent corrige des données collectées à l'époque coloniale. De ce fait, la participation « active » les collections ; elle rend les collections vivantes et utiles.

Si la construction du verbe « décolonialiser » porte un présupposé négatif par l'emploi d'un préfixe privatif, « dé », on peut lui substituer celle d' « appartenance » et envisager certains patrimoines – à condition que toutes les parties soient d'accord - comme patrimoines relationnels¹⁰. Les préalables utiles sont donc la mise à disposition des inventaires et les recherches de provenances. Ces préalables ne sont pas des conditions nécessaires au transfert d'objets, mais le fait de bien connaître l'histoire et la provenance d'un objet ou d'une collection évite les récits fantasmés. L'idée de patrimoine relationnel n'est pas loin des réflexions portées par l'éthique et l'esthétique relationnelle, présente dans la recherche et les arts contemporains depuis les années 1990 (Bourriaud, 1998). Ce n'est pas la seule, mais c'est une voie parmi d'autres pour (r)établir un dialogue respectueux, gage d'échanges et de transfert d'informations et pour les communautés sources, l'occasion de (re)prendre la parole sur leur patrimoine.

Certains représentants des communautés sources qui vivent en Belgique et en Europe sont généralement en faveur d'un transfert immédiat. Derrière la demande de restitution, il y a demande de réparation. La perspective est souvent différente depuis le continent africain. En Afrique, les recherches sur les

7. Voir le site au lien suivant : https://www.africamuseum.be/fr/get_involved.

8. Pour faciliter l'accès aux collections et aux archives, la numérisation est inscrite dans les priorités du musée depuis 2002. Beaucoup de collections (objets, archives, films, photographies, enregistrements de musique) sont digitalisées et prochainement accessibles en ligne.

9. La priorité est aussi mise sur les inventaires, ce qui amène à identifier avec des collègues en Afrique centrale les inventaires qui leur sont prioritaires. Voir projet *Rwanda Archives*, le programme SHARE avec l'Institut des Musées Nationaux du Congo (IMNC). Résidence de recherche organisée l'été 2021 dans les collections pour le Dr Placide Mumbembele de l'Université de Kinshasa (UNIKIN) et actuel directeur de l'IMNC.

10. L'idée de patrimoine relationnel convoque un écosystème (artiste, commissaire, public, musée, patrimoine) où le patrimoine devient le point de départ de rencontres. Ces rencontres ne sont pas forcément consensuelles, elles peuvent être conflictuelles et se distinguent par une attitude respectueuse face au savoir et aux paroles de chacun. Notion proche de la philosophie *Ubuntu/Humanité* employé par Nelson Mandela pour promouvoir la réconciliation et mise en œuvre également lors des Ateliers de la pensée à Dakar et dans le Rapport Sarr-Savoy déjà cité. Cela présuppose un accord sur le protocole mis en place, d'où l'idée que toutes les parties doivent être d'accord.

musées et l'héritage culturel dans le contexte colonial et postcolonial existent depuis longtemps. En République démocratique du Congo, les universitaires du pays parlent de « reconstitution » pour évoquer le retour des objets¹¹ : reconstitution des archives, des connaissances et des collections.

Activation des collections et art contemporain

Singulièrement, ces dix dernières années, le patrimoine conservé dans les musées dits « d'ethnographie » est mis en avant, actualisé et activé par des artistes. Le programme des résidences d'artistes à l'AfricaMuseum¹² s'inscrit donc dans une ouverture à l'art contemporain commune à de nombreux musées mais ici il s'agit d'un musée dont les collections ont été constituées dans un contexte colonial. Les collections et le bâtiment lui-même constituent un terrain de recherche pour des artistes. La première résidence s'intitulait *Rencontre entre artistes et scientifiques autour des collections* et a eu lieu en 2009 (Lagae, 2011). Depuis 2013, une bourse de résidence est attribuée chaque année (Bluard, 2016). Les frais du séjour, honoraires et coûts de production sont pris en charge. La durée de la résidence est de 1 à 3 mois (selon le terme des visas) mais peut être plus longue ou se dérouler sur deux années. Le programme s'adresse aux artistes résidant en Afrique et intéressés par les collections. Douze artistes sont déjà venus en résidence¹³, et un musicien est arrivé à l'automne 2021. En effet, les résidences concernent les plasticien.ne.s, mais aussi les musicien.ne.s, opérateur.trice.s culturel.le.s, cinéastes, écrivain.e.s.

Ces dix dernières années, à la faveur des réflexions autour de la rénovation et de la conception de la nouvelle exposition permanente, la collaboration avec les artistes et la présence de l'art contemporain dans le parcours du visiteur sont devenues des évidences. Mais la majorité des œuvres créées par les artistes au départ des collections de l'AfricaMuseum ont été ou sont exposées plutôt hors du musée, dans des galeries, musées des arts contemporains, foires et biennales (Venise, Cassel, Berlin, Lubumbashi, Jinan)¹⁴. Le choix en revient à l'artiste qui est et reste propriétaire de son œuvre.

11. Exprimé lors d'un Forum national organisé à Kinshasa en juin 2020, le principal objectif poursuivi par les organisateurs était de réfléchir sur la possibilité de reconstituer en priorité les archives et le patrimoine culturel se trouvant d'abord sur le sol congolais. Ils considèrent en outre que, la restitution est un des moyens de reconstitution et non une finalité. Forum National de la Reconstitution des Archives et du patrimoine culturel de la RDC 60 ans après, organisé du 25 au 29 juin 2020 (en cours de publication).

12. https://www.africamuseum.be/fr/get_involved/artists.

13. Depuis 2008, le musée invite des artistes en résidence, et intègre leur travail dans des expositions temporaires ou l'exposition permanente. Ce fut le cas avec le travail de Sammy Baloji et de Patrick Mudekereza et l'exposition Congo Far West (2011). Iviart Izamba (2014-2015), Freddy Tsimba et Eddy Eteke (2016), Jean Kamba, Eddy Kamuanga et Jean Katambayi (2017), Ganza Buroko (2018), Géraldine Tobe (2019), Ghislain Ditshekedi (2019), Hadassa Ngamba (2020), Lenyema Okiteke (2021).

14. Par exemple : Sammy Baloji 56e Venice Biennale (2015) ; Pélagie Gbaguidi 11th Berlin Biennale (2021) ; Géraldine Tobe 1st Jinan Art Biennale (2020).

Avec les résidences, l'objectif n'est pas - du moins pour le moment - de créer une collection d'art contemporain d'artistes africains ou afrodescendants au musée. Ces œuvres doivent être achetées et non plus collectées, et idéalement accrochées aux cimaises d'un musée des arts contemporains et non dans un musée de l'Afrique.

L'accès aux données, aux collections, aux archives permet aux artistes de nommer, de définir et de produire du contenu et cela sans contrôle ou interférence du musée. Accompagner une résidence consiste à ouvrir les portes et laisser faire. Ce qui en apparence peut sembler simple est en fait le plus compliqué. Il faut être pédagogue pour expliquer aux équipes du musée - et aux artistes - le fonctionnement de chacun et la nécessité de laisser du temps et de l'espace au travail. En fonction de leurs intérêts propres, ou de questions portées par des communautés, les artistes cherchent bien souvent là où l'on ne les attend pas. Les intérêts sont multiples et la priorité ne va pas toujours vers les collections d'art classique africain. Les collections d'histoire naturelle, les archives et les photographies qui retracent les collectes et l'implantation coloniale en Afrique intéressent parfois plus que les objets eux-mêmes. Les artistes en résidence partagent des problématiques communes avec les scientifiques du musée et proposent d'ouvrir de nouveaux terrains de recherches (cf. Baloji & Coutennier, 2014). De ce fait, ce travail produit également un décentrement et un décloisonnement des pratiques scientifiques. Il met en chantier de futures collaborations avec les centres d'art et les musées d'art contemporain.

Le monde de l'art contemporain et le marché s'intéressent depuis longtemps aux artistes qualifiés à tort « d'émergeants ». Les musées ont mis le temps mais offrent désormais un terrain de recherche indépendant. Les artistes sont avertis et conscients des effets de stigmatisation et de catégorisation, et refusent systématiquement de se laisser enfermer dans ces catégories. Il y a dans la pratique de ces artistes quelque chose qui résiste à l'identification, à la classification (Labar, 2021).

Dans et hors musée : vers une politique relationnelle

Le troisième point à l'étude est le rôle des artistes et des communautés sources comme vecteur de changement dans les institutions muséales. Cela peut sembler trivial mais c'est au niveau relationnel que tout se joue. Le musée en tant qu'"institution fait partie de ces espaces « autres » : les hétérotopies/hétérochronies¹⁵

¹⁵. Michel Foucault introduit le concept d'hétérotopie lors d'une conférence en 1967 intitulée : « Des espaces autres ». Cette conférence sera publiée pour la première fois en 1984. L'hétérotopie est une localisation physique de l'utopie, un espace concret qui héberge l'imaginaire. Les musées font parties de ces espaces : un lieu clos, l'accès y est contrôlé ou payant, un lieu qui obéit à des règles qui lui sont propres. L'hétérotopie produit des différences de comportements, des écarts à la norme ou la fabrique de nouvelles normes, règles ou contraintes. Au sein d'une hétérotopie il y a rupture avec le temps réel, d'où l'hétérochronie (un temps autre). Dans un musée, le temps est suspendu, raccourci ou dilaté, selon les cas.

décrises par Michel Foucault (1967/2001). Le musée est une institution totale ou totalisante qui inclut l'exclusion, toujours aujourd'hui. Au musée, l'autre est inclus mais comme « autre » (Preciado, 2019). Il lui est demandé alors de se fondre dans le fonctionnement de l'institution, de comprendre et d'en accepter les codes. Par exemple, au début du programme des résidences, il était demandé aux artistes de définir parfaitement le cadre de leur recherche avant même d'avoir mis les pieds au musée. Il leur était demandé de prendre des rendez-vous plusieurs semaines à l'avance alors qu'elles et ils ne sont sur place que deux mois. Le cadre existant pour une résidence était celui des scientifiques ou des stagiaires, et il était demandé aux artistes de s'y conformer. Mais le cadre de travail d'un atelier n'est pas toujours celui d'un bureau.

Depuis 2013, l'expérience a montré que la recherche, sur le terrain des arts comme sur celui des sciences, se construit précisément là où on ne l'attend pas. Dans le cadre qui nous occupe, elle se co-construit en partenariat avec les chercheurs du musée et autour des collections et la priorité est sur l'accès aux collections : les connaître, les commenter, les revisiter, les activer. La résidence tient de l'accompagnement (*fellowship*). Chacune des résidences d'artiste à l'AfricaMuseum a permis d'interroger ou de modifier un ou plusieurs points dans la relation avec le musée, avec les équipes, dans les protocoles et le volet administratif (les contrats, payements, droits d'auteur, etc.). Par exemple, les résidences sont des moments de recherches, sans obligation de produire ; l'artiste, s'il produit une œuvre en reste propriétaire et s'il le souhaite, peut la proposer en dehors du musée ; un défraiement est toujours prévu dans le cadre de la recherche – car le temps que l'artiste passe au musée, il ne le passe pas dans son atelier. Après dix ans de travail participatif, l'expérience montre que le plus difficile est de mettre en place un cadre de travail ouvert, transparent et bienveillant. Laisser de l'espace et du temps implique pour l'institution, de la disponibilité, des moyens financiers, un cadre de discussions et d'échanges ouvert à la critique et au changement et d'inclure la participation comme constitutive de la relation.

Cette mise au travail porte ses fruits et généralement, les rencontres et les mises en réseau débouchent sur des collaborations qui dépassent la durée et le programme de la résidence. La plupart des artistes ont ainsi poursuivi leurs recherches, participé à des expositions ou co-écrit des articles suite aux rencontres menées lors des résidences (Ekete, Tsimba & Bluard, 2018).

La recherche est une démarche commune aux artistes et aux scientifiques. C'est en visitant les collections, lors des rencontres avec les scientifiques et les gestionnaires des collections du musée que les sujets de recherche et de la résidence s'élaborent. La relation qui se tisse avec les artistes qui ont travaillé au musée est durable.

Aujourd’hui, les artistes sont toujours plus nombreux à s’emparer des collections des musées, à regarder l’art produit et collecté à l’époque coloniale et à le remettre en perspective, en contexte et en question. Artistes et chercheurs ont en commun de s’intéresser aux collections, formes et contenus. Les modes d’action sont variés, d’où leur intérêt. Les collections sont utilisées par certains artistes pour nourrir leur pratique. Les objets d’art classique deviennent sujets de films, de peintures ; donnent naissance à de nouveaux objets et à des créations contemporaines. La musique traditionnelle est aussi réappropriée en *revival*, vivifiée et utilisée dans des compositions nouvelles. Photographies et documents d’archives sont inscrits dans des installations. D’autres étudient le mode d’acquisition des collections, les archives et les photographies pour analyser le fait colonial et inscrire cette critique dans leur pratique artistique. Ces réflexions sont partagées avec des publics toujours plus nombreux, intéressés par la décolonialité.

Comme dit précédemment et pour l’heure, le musée ne cherche pas à constituer une collection d’art contemporain mais invite les artistes à activer les collections. Leur travail interroge un espace chargé et revisite le contenu colonial. De nouveaux liens se tissent entre scientifiques et artistes. Cette rencontre est évidemment riche pour les deux parties et vise le décloisonnement des collections. Les registres tels qu’ethnographie, histoire coloniale, art africain classique / art touristique / populaire / moderne ou contemporain se réinventent ou disparaissent. La diversité des approches et des regards prend peu à peu le pas sur la classification et interroge le fait colonial à l’origine de cette catégorisation. Sous l’impulsion des *postcolonial studies*, ce processus travaille désormais à une redéfinition de la mission du musée, revisite les collections et nourrit des réflexions sur les dispositifs d’exposition et de réception des objets par les publics.

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Decolonizing museum education

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ABSTRACT

When Zimbabwe attained political independence in 1980 it was anticipated that national museums would decolonize all colonial epistemologies, taxonomies, iconography, and infrastructure. However, the pace of decolonizing colonial frameworks and operational culture in museums has been painfully slow. This study examined the effectiveness of colonial frameworks employed in museums, particularly the behaviorist educational philosophy in facilitating effective learning of curriculum content among the current primary school students in Zimbabwe. This study employed qualitative and hermeneutic research approaches. It is revealed that in the post-colonial period national museums in Zimbabwe continue to mimic the colonial behaviorist educational framework that is restrictive to effective learning hence creating a situation where students become epistemological slaves. So far very little has been done to refocus colonial permanent exhibitions, narratives and interpretations as well as methods of content delivery. It is concluded that there are few opportunities for school students to learn curriculum content. Thus, there is need to decolonize museum education service.

Keywords: behaviorism, curriculum, epistemological slaves, decolonization of museum, education.

RESUMEN

Descolonizando la educación en museos

Cuando Zimbabwe logró la independencia política en 1980, se anticipó que los museos nacionales iban a descolonizar todas las epistemologías, taxonomías, iconografía e infraestructura coloniales. Sin embargo, el ritmo de descolonización de los marcos coloniales y la cultura operativa en los museos ha sido laboriosamente muy lento. Este estudio examinó la efectividad de los marcos coloniales empleados en los museos, particularmente la filosofía educativa conductista para facilitar el aprendizaje efectivo del contenido del plan de estudios entre los estudiantes de primaria actuales en Zimbabwe. Este estudio empleó enfoques de investigación cualitativos y hermenéuticos. Se revela que en el período poscolonial, los museos nacionales de Zimbabwe continúan imitando el marco educativo conductista colonial que restringe el aprendizaje efectivo, lo que crea una situación en la que los estudiantes se convierten en esclavos epistemológicos. Hasta ahora se ha hecho muy poco para reenfocar las exposiciones, narrativas e interpretaciones coloniales permanentes, así como los métodos de entrega de contenido. Se concluye que hay pocas oportunidades para que los estudiantes de la escuela aprendan el contenido del plan de estudios. Por tanto, es necesario descolonizar el servicio educativo de los museos.

Palabras clave: behaviorismo, currículo, esclavos epistemológicos, descolonización del museo, educación.

**Background – setting the stage**

This study is about the decolonization of museum education. Since museums are information centers, the study establishes the areas of museum education service that need to be decolonized in order to facilitate effective learning among school students. Using five national museums in Zimbabwe as case studies the data used to inform this study is based on a longitudinal study carried out by the researcher from 2013-2019. The study involved primary school students who visited Zimbabwean national museums under Structured Class Visits (SCV) and School-Museum Visits (SMV) educational programs.

National museums in Zimbabwe are a colonial inheritance. Zimbabwe is a former British colony that was annexed in 1890, after which the colony was administered by several white settler regimes until 1980 (Mataga, 2014; Zvobgo, 1994). The colony was named after Cecil John Rhodes whose British South

African Company's (BSAC) administration spanned from 1890–1922, followed by the Responsible government from 1923–1953, the federation from 1953–1963 and the Rhodesian front headed by Ian Douglas Smith from 1964–1979 (Fisher, 2010; Mataga, 2014; Zvobgo, 1994). During the colonial period white settlers controlled the levers of political and economic power and this resulted in the construction of infrastructure and, from 1901, the formation of museums. Museums were used as strategic vehicles to perpetuate colonialism that strategically otherized indigenous people and their cultures. Otherization is a process implemented by the colonizer with the intent to separate and denigrate a person or people so that they are seen as barbaric, backward, evil and uncivilized (Chipangura, 2020). Museum education services during the colonial period were an extension of colonialism whose aim was to elevate dominant cultures at the expense of indigenous cultures (Chipangura, 2014; Ucko, 1994).

With the use of real objects in exhibitions there is great potential for museums to contribute towards the realization of national education standards, as well as some of the 2030 United National Sustainable Development Goals. Museums can provide accessible inclusive quality education to children, and lead in research, innovation and economic regeneration, hence promoting sustainable development. The Zimbabwean government in 1980 initiated several educational reforms which saw an 80% increase in the number of Black children utilizing museums for educational purposes (Pwiti, 1994). As a result of these reforms, the largest audiences for national museums in Zimbabwe are school students. For example, from 2010–2015 national museums received 320,560 junior school students (Chitima, 2019). In fact, the primary and secondary education curriculum in Zimbabwe obligates school teachers and students to visit museums for educational purposes. However, not all museum trips end up with school children learning effectively, as this is dependent on a number of factors including the nature of museum educational programming and the manner in which it is delivered. Chitima (2019) indicates that national museums in Zimbabwe continue to mimic and employ the colonial behaviourist educational framework in its museum education service. Therefore, the specific and major research questions probed by the study are: how, and to what extent, are Zimbabwean national museums based on the behaviourist educational framework facilitating effective learning of curriculum content among school students? Which parts of museum education can be decolonized?

The primary school curriculum in Zimbabwe covers several subjects, including: Languages, Information Communication Technology, Visual and Performing Arts, Physical Education, Sport and Mass Display, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Family, Religion and Moral Education, Agriculture, Heritage, and Life Skills (Social Studies). The curriculum is a combination of instructional practices or course outlines, and students' performance assessments and learning experiences that are designed to bring out and evaluate the target learning outcomes of a particular course.

The colonial legacy

Colonization occurs between two entities that are: the colonizer who is usually a dominant group or society and the subaltern (weak social groups and these have mainly been indigenous cultures). Colonization is conceptualized as a worldview, process, and practice (Ahuja, 2017; Böröcz & Sarkar, 2012; Oliver & Oliver, 2017). As a worldview, colonization is defined as a doctrine and belief grounded in a feeling of racial superiority, existing particularly in the powerful dominant groups (Böröcz & Sarkar, 2012). As a process and practice colonization denotes a principle of statecraft that involves dominating a colony within the spheres of economics, politics, religion, and education as well as cultural life (Ahuja, 2017; Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). This study discusses the legacy of colonialism in the cultural and education sector.

Colonialism has its roots in the imperialistic tendencies of Western or European countries that sought to colonize African and Asian countries in the 18th century. The colonizer knew well that the major weapon to colonize indigenous people was the imposition of Western ontologies (nature of being) and knowledge systems (Fanon, 1963; Freire, 1972; Wa Thiong'o, 1986). In order to control and influence issues of identity and knowledge production, Western colonialists in Africa built formal schools, vocational training centers and museums to advance notions of European civilization and modernity. Colonial settler administrations, particularly those under British rule, developed educational systems that were grounded in racial segregation and a curriculum that promoted epistemicide and linguicide. Epistemicide and linguicide are words derived from epistemology and linguistics. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the study of knowledge whilst linguistics is concerned with understanding and analyzing languages. Thus, in order to brainwash and colonize indigenous people, white settler colonizers employed epistemicide which involved the suppression and destruction of the indigenous knowledge systems that existed before colonization (De Villiers, 2018; Hall & Tandon, 2017), whilst linguicide involved a systemic drive to eradicate indigenous languages in favor of English (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). This involved emphasizing Western ontologies and knowledge as the only valid world views and methodologies whilst placing little emphasis on indigenous knowledge, methods, and culture. The colonial administration implemented a racialized curriculum where indigenous children were given vocational training with the aim to produce laborers for white industries and enterprises. Thus, colonial education for natives only served to brainwash them into discarding their own cultures, education and knowledge systems whilst embracing Western ontologies and epistemologies.

During the colonial period museum displays advanced the notion of indigenous cultures being backward, evil, and barbaric whilst Western museology that elevated white dominant cultures as superior deployed. Thondhlana (2015) posits that national museums in Zimbabwe are ‘old wine in new wine skins’. Even after attaining political independence in 1980 Zimbabwean museums

still operate in a colonial shell. Educational frameworks, methods of content delivery and some operational cultures still display colonial tendencies. Colonial systems have, thus, been found to linger in the current education systems. There is a need to decolonize museum education so that content and the manner in which it is delivered speaks to the educational needs and learning styles of current museum audiences.

Methods

This study employed qualitative and hermeneutic research approaches. Qualitative research enabled a full understanding of the perception, breadth, and depth of students' learning in museums. Hermeneutic phenomenology was the research design; hermeneutic phenomenology is a human science which studies individuals and the way they view things (Sloan & Bowe, 2014), and seeks to understand how primary school students learn from museums that are phenomenological enterprises (Roberts, 2013). The study made use of the generic learning outcomes to measure students' learning (Research Center, 2003). The study was done from 2013–2019 at five national museums in Zimbabwe: the Zimbabwe Military Museum (ZMM), the Natural History Museum (NHM), the National Museum of Transport and Antiquities (NMTA), the Zimbabwe Museum of Human Sciences (ZMHS) and the Great Zimbabwe World Heritage Site (GZWHS). The primary school education system in Zimbabwe is constituted by early childhood development (children aged 3–7 or ECD up to Grade 2) and junior school students (Grades 3–7 or 8–12 years). The study population included 800 ECDs, 1500 school students, 1700 school teachers, 38 museum tour guides, 6 museum education officers, 8 curators and 3 Provincial Education Officers from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Permission to involve school students was obtained from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), school heads and teachers, as well as from parents via a letter distributed by teachers on behalf of the researcher, and this worked effectively with schools that booked museum visits in advance. Research methods employed included interviews, observations, focus group discussions, listening to students' gallery conversations and analyzing students' 'after the museum visit written compositions', as well as the accessibility of museum facilities and educational activities. Student learning was analyzed through two major museum educational programmes which are the structured class visits and the school-museum visits because these are provided throughout the year.

Students' learning of curriculum content

Students' learning from museums is influenced by primary and secondary factors. Primary factors are the quality of school teachers and museum tour guides, the nature of destination site (physical orientation, exhibitions, facilities and equipment) and educational activities done. Secondary factors influencing

students' learning included the parental context, student attitudes and post-trip scaffolding experiences.

It was revealed that school teachers influenced student learning at different levels. First, enthusiastic school teachers who researched in advance what their students were going to learn from museums prior to the actual trip contributed to effective learning. From a population of 1700 teachers only 63 confirmed that they made reconnaissance visits to museums in order to establish what and how their students would learn. Second, teachers who revised curriculum topics prior to a museum tour contributed to strong indicators of learning. Third, school teachers who provided pre-orientation, including explaining to students what they were going to see, how they were going to use museum knowledge and how it linked with their curriculum, which prepared students for learning. This provided physical and intellectual orientation contributing to students displaying strong indicators of knowledge gain and understanding as well as enjoyment outcomes. From a population of 2300 students only 252 students indicated that they received teacher pre-orientation. School teachers who accompanied students and actively participated during guided tours contributed to effective learning among students, unlike those who did not. Passive and opportunist teachers only managed to leave students in the hands of tour guides whilst they sat in reception, marked assignments or conducted private business in the central business district. Passive and opportunist teachers assumed that students would learn from tour guides and museum exhibitions.

It was also gathered that museum tour guides regarded school students as blank slates in their approach which negatively affected student learning. For example, 34 Grade 7 students at the GZWHS and 57 Grade 5 students at the NHM mentioned that tour guides determined the pace taken, the features and stories to explain about and there was little room for students to view displays of their choice. Students felt they did not have any choice or control over the learning process. Observations done show that the majority of tour guides control the learning process whilst students become passive recipients of information. Only three tour guides perceived the knowledge gap that existed between them and students which facilitated the provision of relevant explanations. The majority of students in the study were repeat museum visitors and thus, there was a likelihood of tour guides repeating explanations and making assumptions that students were learning from the stories they provided. MoPSE mainly approves field trips at the end of school terms and hence this overwhelmed and understaffed museum education department found it difficult to satisfactorily provide guided tours and assistance to students. Further, tour guides struggled to provide guided tours to mixed groups of students because of their different cognitive, physical, emotional, and communicative capacities. As a result, many students simply took the tours for sightseeing.

National Museums in Zimbabwe have expended little effort on refocusing and changing museum exhibitions. Out of eight galleries the ZMM only refocused some display units in the Zimbabwe Military History gallery and the Zimbabwe Republic Police gallery. The NMTA managed to change and replace the geology exhibition with the Eastern Districts cultures while some vintage vehicles were re-stored. Post-independence displays at the ZMHS include an open habitat display, while parts of the Stone Age and Iron Age exhibitions were refocused to avoid the racist narratives that were there before 1980. The NHM has changed and refocused the Hall of Chiefs gallery to Hall of Kings, the snake exhibitions by adding live snakes. The NHM has also enlivened the mammalogy gallery to have a display of hippos in the wetland and wildlife in the wet as well as dry seasons. Although museums in Zimbabwe have done some work to try and change a few museum displays, the majority of permanent displays remain colonial, inaccessible and out of sync with the current needs of students. The majority of permanent exhibits are typical 18th-century cabinets of curiosity where some displays are mounted one meter above the ground, containing haphazardly and mixed objects and without adequate documentation. Thus, such displays were physically and intellectually inaccessible, causing visual discord and, in some instances, information overload. Students bemoaned the use of scientific language, jargon and captions utilizing small texts as detrimental to effective learning. The most marginalized audience are students with disabilities. There are very few facilities for students with disabilities, such as Braille captions and tour guides trained in sign language in museums, hence they spend little time before proceeding to other destination sites. However, it was observed that students enjoyed and learned effectively through live snakes at the NHM and NMTA. Students also learned more from life-sized artifacts and those which they were able to handle or operate, such as the train engines at the NMTA and Vickers Viscount as well as the armored vehicles at the ZMM. Museum films were also cited as contributing to effective learning because they involved motion picture and sound that captured students' attention, except for films that lasted more than one hour. Films are only provided at the ZMM and NMTA. Thus, educational activities that sought to actively involve students were recorded as effective in facilitating learning, but these opportunities are very few in museums.

Secondary factors cited and observed as influencing student learning are the perceptions of parents, the student's disposition and post-visit scaffolding experiences. Students whose parents or close relatives had negative perceptions about heritage and museums negatively influenced their learning. For example, a Grade 6 student interviewed at the ZMM mentioned that his parents perceived the museum as a Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) political party institution because of the exhibitions that seem to celebrate ZANU PF heroes and party members. The student came to the museum with negative perceptions. Contrary to that, another student in the same group indicated that he enjoyed learning from the police gallery because his father was a member of the Zimbabwe Republic Police hence had interests

in joining the force himself. Thus, parents are children's first life teachers and when they pass negative or positive comments about heritage and museums children tilt towards these biases. Students who were intrinsically motivated to learn and prepared learned effectively. Students willing to learn had all the necessary stationery like notebooks and pens, cameras and other equipment used to document what they learned. In some instances, these students were observed asking questions, actively participating in guided tours and logically engaging in critical thinking and answering questions. The majority of students observed treated the tours as sightseeing adventures because they did not bring with them any stationery or equipment used in the learning process.

It was also revealed that students who received scaffolding experiences after museum trips learned effectively through reinforcement. A sample survey from Gweru district indicated that out of 30 schools that visited the ZMM only 5 provided post-visit scaffolding experiences. This included making students write reports, compositions, give presentations and have tutorials. Post-visit scaffolding is important because some students forget what they learned after a few weeks. Museums may develop teacher study packs to help them to reinforce what students have learned after field excursions. Generally, it was revealed that the majority of students displayed more affective outcomes, such as enjoyment, compared to hard outcomes such as knowledge gain and understanding. Museums in Zimbabwe are to a large extent promoting soft outcomes (change in attitudes, perceptions, inspiration, enjoyment, creativity) more than hard outcomes (knowledge gain and understanding, skills, activity). The primary school curriculum in Zimbabwe is tested at the end of the Grade 7 level. The Grade 7 Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) examines the competence of students on hard outcomes (knowledge gain and understanding) of curriculum issues and concepts. ZIMSEC is biased towards the display of hard outcomes as an indicator of excellence in academia. Therefore, the educational programs in Zimbabwean museums are not effective in facilitating the achievement of hard outcomes. Therefore, national museums in Zimbabwe are mainly impacting on the social and environmental studies subjects. There are fewer opportunities for students to learn content related to Mathematics, local languages, English, Visual and Performing Arts, Information Communication Technology, Physical Education, Sports and Mass Display and Agriculture subjects from museums.

Decolonization of museum education service

Decolonization does not happen by magic, naturally or by natural understanding but through the action of citizens (Fanon, 1952/2008). Decolonization has been conceptualized as an engagement in projects that aim to dismantle relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that generate racial, gender and geo-political hierarchies that came into being during colonization (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). During the colonial period museums were used as vehicles to project the Western museology which sought to validate Western

ontologies and epistemologies whilst denigrating local or indigenous cultures and their knowledge systems. Thus, decolonization advocates an inclusive and pluriversal approach to knowledge production where indigenous people should be part and parcel of that knowledge production. It involves redefining knowledge from the vantage point of indigenous people who have experienced epistemicide and linguicide.

The first port of call is to decolonize the mind (Brenner, 2020; Fanon, 1963, Freire, 1972; Wa Thiong'o, 1986). Some museum personnel such as tour guides have a belief that students are blank slates who need to be educated about cultural heritage issues. This mentality is colonizing because it places students in the periphery where they have no control over the learning process. This is the same mentality that white colonial curators had when they created the current permanent exhibitions and delivered museum content. However, it has been gathered that exhibitions which are developed without the inclusion and involvement of target audiences are ineffective (Chitima, 2019). Dascal (2007) posits that the primary aim of colonization was to introduce new thought patterns about reality: to twist the logic of the colonized so that they were not resistant to colonial rule and ideologies. Colonization of the mind had several impacts that included affecting the psyche and mental sphere of the colonized and to think of themselves as inferior, and this thinking was enduring and hard to remove. Colonization of the mind robbed the colonized of their common purpose, dignity and identity; hence they became rootless and nameless as well as thinking of Western epistemologies as the only valid world view (Hotep, 2008; Mveng, 1994). The only way out of the colonization of the mind is to inculcate change in the minds of the colonized so they can embrace self-determination, self-affirmation, and self-definition in new positive terms and rediscover themselves (Hotep, 2008; Wa Thiong'o, 1986). Biko (2004) proposes that the decolonization of the mind can also occur when the colonized remove the fear and shackles of colonial images in their minds. Those once oppressed should never be afraid to review colonial systems, introduce relevant forms of knowledges and practices that speak to the needs of their lives and current generations.

The second port of call is to review colonial educational philosophies underpinning museum education. As Mbembe (2015) points out, there is something wrong if museums continue to provide educational content designed to meet the needs of the colonialist in the post-colonial era. National Museums in Zimbabwe employ the behaviorist educational framework and this is seen by tour guides taking centre stage while students are relegated to passive recipients of information; exhibitions are used as stimuli and were created without the input of students as target audience, hence promoting operant conditioning. Museum exhibitions are typical cabinets of curiosity that utilize the 17th-century Carl Linnaeus documentation system and educational activities that promote rote learning. The behaviorist framework could have been effective during colonization because it was intentionally deployed so that

Western museology was maintained and promoted. It was deployed because the colonial administration intentionally wanted to portray indigenous people as backward, hence it was the responsibility of the white man to spread European modernity, civilization and knowledge. The behaviorist educational philosophy is a late 1920s educational framework that was popularized by psychologists and physiologists such as Edward Thorndike (1874–1949), John Watson (1878–1958), Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936) and Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904–1990). This framework argues that learning is observed when there is change in behavior produced by a learner's response to stimuli (Carbonell, 2012). Behaviourism views children as born blank slates or 'tabula rasa' and hence the primary role of an instructor is to teach children who are assumed to lack knowledge (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1979). Learning is assumed to occur through conditioning where a stimulus is paired with a response. Responses to stimuli can be reinforced with positive or negative feedback to condition desired behaviors; therefore undesired behaviors are punished whilst desired behaviors are rewarded. Behaviorism works with rewards where students who behave positively and predictably are complimented, given good grades and certification. The behaviorist educational framework has been widely employed in formal educational establishments where students go through a structured course of study, bound by a code of conduct and after completing the course are given course certificates and awards. Thus, behaviorism places the curator and tour guide at the helm of the teaching process whilst museum visitors are to be educated about the exhibits and artifacts in the museum.

Behaviorism is similar to Freire's banking concept where the teacher is seen as depositor whilst students are containers (1972). This analogy mirrors an oppressive society where the teacher knows everything while students are blank slates, the teacher chooses content and students adapt to it, the teacher is the subject in the learning process while students are mere objects. Progressive educationist Giroux (2004) indicates that behaviorism teaches one world view and objective truth as unchanged yet there are many factors that influence learning among students in museums. Museums that employ behaviorism promote the idea that the centre of power lies in the tour guide or curator and this leads to students becoming epistemological slaves, subject to the pedagogy of indoctrination. Epistemological slavery is a condition where learners are subject to the biases and indoctrination of tour guides and curators. When students are subjected to a behaviorist museum they end up being slaves of knowledge from tour guides and curators hence this make them become colonized, subjugated and disenfranchised. When students are treated as passive recipients they are seen as objects that need indoctrination to understand the information about museum objects (Carbonell, 2012). Further, behaviorism assumes that students will understand the messages in the same way yet students have diverse learning styles (Chitima, 2019; Carbonell, 2012; Gardner, 1993).

In the 21st century, knowledge is supposed to be shared among students in the learning situation (Giroux, 2004; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Hein, 1998). The ins-

tructors (in this case tour guides) should be facilitators in the learning process (Carbonell, 2012). There are other learning frameworks suitable in facilitating effective learning among students during museum trips. The socio-cultural framework is a suitable basis for museum education as compared to behaviorism. The socio-cultural framework is an educational theory whose roots can be traced from the writings of Lev Vygotsky (1978), Falk and Dierking (2000), Bangura (2005), Hooper-Greenhill (2007) and Illeris (2009). The premise of this framework is that learning is a social construct, a process and a product. Learning in museums occurs with others through interaction, discussion, collaboration, problem solving, experimentation, exploration and active handling of material (Bangura, 2005; Chitima, 2019; Falk and Dierking, 2000; Griffin, 1998). Unlike behaviorism that relies on stimuli and the teacher's ability to teach, the socio-cultural framework employs multi-modal formats and active methods of content delivery such as handling of artifacts, song and dance, games, poetry, music, visual art, video and audio as well as interactive displays. The socio-cultural educational framework refutes the fact that learning is only an individual process or simply change in behavior. Unlike behaviorism that offers limited opportunities for effective learning, the socio-cultural framework has been shown to lead to hard and soft outcomes such as knowledge gain and understanding, skills, enjoyment, inspiration, creativity, and a change in attitudes and values (Research Center, 2003).

The third aspect in decolonizing museum education is to review the methods of content delivery. Currently, Zimbabwean national museums provide limited methods of content delivery and these are study sheets, guided tours and films. Guided tours and study sheets have been cited as providing little room for students to view exhibits of their choice and give students little control of the learning process. Semi-structured educational activities, hands on-minds on activities, activities that involve play, dance, song and performance arts are effective in facilitating the learning of curriculum content. Museum educational programming is mainly provided in English and this is a barrier to effective learning because students have been observed to learn meaningfully through indigenous languages (Chitima, 2019; Chipangura, 2014).

The fourth stage is to decolonize museum exhibitions, narratives and interpretations. Datta (2018) indicates that the only way to have balanced narratives is to include all citizens, especially having on board indigenous cultures to re-interpret their histories and heritages. This avoids controversies and promotes inclusivity and cultural rights in a nation. Although museums in Zimbabwe have managed to refocus a few displays the majority of permanent exhibitions remains and tells colonial stories. The pace of redesigning exhibitions is very slow and requires museums to be proactive at resourcing and fundraising in order to manage change. Museums can also engage in contemporary collecting which may facilitate the acquisition of new and relevant collections that can be used for study and public exhibitions. Contemporary collecting has

the potential to ensure that museums have relevant and diverse collections promoting sustainability issues.

Many colonial exhibitions and artifacts lack adequate documentation and hence are often found haphazardly piled in storerooms and in displays. Many African museums are characterized by having inadequate documentation on displayed artifacts. For example, many permanent exhibitions in Zimbabwe only provide the name of the displayed artifact which is not enough to learn in detail about it. The reality is that many public museums utilize the Carl Linnaeus type of categorization used during the late 17th and 18th centuries and this is associated with cabinets of curiosity displays. There is now a need to follow conventional documentation standards such as those provided by AFRICOM, CIDOC, SPECTRUM and ICOM among others. There may be room to develop indigenous documentation standards that can be implemented. There is also a need for museums to consider using advanced computer records management systems. The colonial documentation schemes such as the Linnaean system and card catalogue have yielded weak outcomes and are ineffective. For museums to have updated documentation there is a need to conduct extensive research. Another area suggested for decolonization are the methods used for research. Decolonizing research methods is about providing indigenous people with space and a voice, following their protocols and recognizing them as stakeholders in research outputs (Zavala, 2013). In most cases, as Datta (2017) observes, indigenous people are treated as subjects of study and usually given a token of appreciation when research about them is conducted. Datta highlights that since research outputs benefit scholars academically and financially there is a need for indigenous people to share in these benefits.

Conclusion

Since national museums in Zimbabwe developed during the colonial period, educational programming was formulated for the white settler and founded on racist principles. During the colonial period the mission of national museums was to cater for the preferences and tastes of the colonial administration. Museum education in Zimbabwe utilizes the behaviorist educational framework that is a barrier to effective learning among students. Thus, the museum education service is obsolete and out of sync with the realities and learning needs of primary school students. Decolonization of museum education is not only about restoring indigenous people's rights to and control over the management of museums and in redefining narratives. It is about providing balanced narratives at any period of time and offering realistic as well as relevant content that contemporary societies may find meaningful. Decolonization of the museum education service includes multiple voices, representing a broad range of perspectives and bodies of knowledge. School students stand to learn effectively when museum education in Zimbabwe is decolonized and when it is grounded in socio-cultural learning frameworks that afford learning through multimodal formats.

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Metamuseology and InterMuseologies – the Kaingang people and their collections (São Paulo, Brazil)

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ABSTRACT

Based on the Metamuseology, this article explores the Kaingang collections gathered at the beginning of the 20th century during the colonization of the West of São Paulo. What determined the interpretation analyses made about these *musealia* items was the museality as part of the violent procedures applied to collect and gather collections of objects that witness a relationship full of conflict and the records loaded with past musealities that are included in the Museological Documentation. One element has key importance in the article, the participation of the Kaingang groups in the new contextualization and signification of the objects inherited from their ancestors and that they met at MAE-USP. To that end, we have chosen some museological objects and, resorting to InterMuseologies, we showed how musealization can be used to challenge the former musealities and to make new propositions while respecting the rights of indigenous people to musealization.

Keywords: Kaingang (São Paulo, Brasil), Metamuseology, InterMuseologies, Social Museology, Museological Documentation, decolonization in the museum.

RESUMEN

**Metamuseología e InterMuseologías: los Kaingang y sus colecciones
(São Paulo, Brasil)**

Partiendo de la idea de la Metamuseología, el artículo explora las colecciones Kaingang formadas a principios del siglo XX durante la colonización del oeste de São Paulo. Lo que motivó los análisis interpretativos realizados sobre estos *musealia* fue la musealidad como parte de los violentos procesos de recolección, la formación de colecciones de objetos que dan testimonio de una relación conflictiva y los registros cargados de musealidades del pasado presente en la Documentación Museológica. Un elemento determinante en el artículo es la participación activa de los grupos Kaingang en la recontextualización y resignificación de los objetos que heredaron de sus ancestros y que encontraron en MAE-USP. Se eligieron algunos objetos museológicos y, con la intermuseología, exemplificamos como la musealización puede operar para el cuestionamiento de antiguas musealidades y para nuevas propuestas, con respecto de los derechos indígenas a la musealización.

Palabras clave: Kaingang (São Paulo, Brasil), Metamuseología, Inter-museología, Museología Social, Documentación museológica, decolonización en museos.



Introduction – Metamuseology and museologies

Museology – Science or just practical museum work?

This question underpinned the discussions held at the ICOFOM Annual Meeting in 1980. A group of renowned museum researchers and professionals could not imagine how this question would be discussed at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century, 42 years later. At that time, Stránský, one of the leaders of the discussion, stated that the major issue was metatheoretical, i.e. museology meeting the criteria of scientific theory. Stránský addressed the issue based on the term museology (A) the idea of science (B) and on work as a practice (C).

“The above question can be answered in the following way: A is at the stage of detaching, i.e. becoming B. However, A is in no case identical or identifiable with C. A is in specific relation to C, but due to the fact that it is approaching B, it necessarily recedes from C. But

the closer A is to B or the more they become identical, the more it will reapproach C, in other than the original plane, i.e. in the plane of theoretical interpretation." (Stránský, 1980, p. 44)

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Despite the fact that ICOFOM discussions have evolved (and they have certainly evolved), museological theory has never ceased to be a topic of discussion and one of Stránský's major contributions has been Metamuseology. Informed by theory, museology and museography continue to be discussed, thus updating the scientific, social and political circumstances involved in the effort.

Some museum collections were gathered decades and centuries ago, among which the ethnographic collections consisting of indigenous peoples' *musealia*. These objects were collected according to different criteria, as spoils of war, plunder, lootings and seizures of property, land grabs and expropriation of natural resources during colonization initiatives, and also by first settlers on land that would form national states, by travelers and during funded scientific expeditions. Moreover, collections are gathered from an anthropological standpoint in different times and under different visions. The museums that keep these collections face the contemporary challenge, according to the manner in which the collection was formed, of updating the *museality* concept behind these *musealia* through musealization.

Many centuries or decades have passed, reasons, criteria and guidelines have been adopted and put aside, showing many faces of the colonialist *modus operandi*. Scientific views have also changed, requiring theoretical interpretations based on up-to-date museology parameters.

This article is about the Kaingang collection gathered at Museu Paulista (São Paulo, Brazil) at the beginning of the 20th century that was transferred to the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology of the University of São Paulo – São Paulo, Brazil (MAE-USP). The article is centered around the decolonial agenda by offering collections to contemporary interpretations. That means embracing the knowledge and wisdom of indigenous peoples and calling for the participation of the Kaingang people in *museality* and musealization.

If Metamuseology is the theory required for museology to be science, theoretical interpretation in turn requires several museologies to give it its methodological foundations, i.e. intermuseologies. InterMuseologies, the concept that supports this article, is the intersection between theory and methodology required for experimental and interpretative research about ethnographic museums. We consider that Museological Communication is part of the theory with respect to the dialogical relations inherent in the indigenous peoples' *musealia*, *museality* and the musealization process, including the relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous agents. Therefore, Museological Communication cuts across the different museologies, which will be presented below.

Critical museology exposes hegemony, but also types of participation and the absence of discourse at museums (Lorente, 2011; Lorente, 2015), including the social and cultural cancellation, silencing and suppression of different groups, and the suppression of the author of the discourse who hides himself or herself in anonymity. Critical museology's contribution consists of the manners in which the indigenous peoples' *musealia* have been (de)contextualized and represented and of how collections formed in the past suppressed the indigenous peoples' historical narratives at the ethnographic museums, but also, and particularly, of how self-representation plays an increasingly important role in museums.

Social museology, within the theoretical framework of Latin America's New Museology, supports the autonomy of groups and communities and promotes indigenous protagonism in the museum (Roca, 2019); in other words, the protagonism of indigenous people in controlling their lives, histories, memories, narratives and heritage, cultural affirmation within their own identity processes and political participation (Cury, 2020c). Indigenous museology is social museology with its own and new choices, criteria, logic, *musealia*, museality and musealization, in connection with an agenda of indigenous peoples' fights and counter-hegemonic and decolonial processes. Social museology is at Indigenous museums, but also at ethnographic museums (Cury, 2020c).

Collaborative museology is based on the collaboration method, processes developed between museum professionals and communities of interest, such as the indigenous peoples who had part of their heritage collected in the past at ethnographic museums. The items of these collections are objects made by their ancestors, but are part of their present. Under the collaborative museology approach, museums become the place where discussions and negotiations are held for the donation of contemporary collections formed by indigenous groups (Cury, 2021b; Cury, 2020b). Collaborative museology strikes a balance between common actions and common purposes of museums and indigenous groups that come into contact again and reinterpret their heritage, bringing it to their current lives and intergenerational cultural transmission processes. Collaborative museology is a methodological milestone for social museology to play a role in the ethnographic museum, but indigenous groups make use of it to establish their partnerships with indigenous museums (Cury, 2020c).

Musealia, museality and musealization

This article discusses Metamuseology through a range of deployed and interconnected museologies, the InterMuseologies. A given reality is described, that of the Kaingang people in the state of São Paulo (Brazil) and of the collections formed in the past. The first issue to be addressed is the territory of the Kain-gang in São Paulo, the colonization of the western part of São Paulo and the gathering of the Kaingang collections by Museu Paulista, subsequently added to the MAE-USP collections.

According to Horta Barbosa (2019, p. 7), who gave a lecture in 1913 that was published in 1914, the Kaingang territory in the western part of the state of São Paulo is bounded by the “lower course of the Tietê river, the valleys of the Feio or Aguapeí river and of the Do Peixe river, and extended to the Paranapanema river”. This vast territory is also recorded in the *Mappa Ethnographico do Brazil Meridional* (Ethnographic Map of Southern Brazil), published by H. von Ihering (1911) and prepared by Curt Nimuendaju¹, an ethnologist who provided services to Museu Paulista around 1908. Bearing out this information, *Fragmentos Históricos da Localização Kaingang na Bacia do Rio Feio / Aguapeí* (Historical Fragments of the Location of the Kaingang Land in the Basin of the Feio/Aguapeí river, part of the dissertation written by Rodrigues (2007), describes part of the occupation of the land by the Kaingang based on archeological discoveries.

The West of São Paulo, a vast territory where the Kaingang people had lived for a thousand years, according to archeological data, was a target of colonization initiatives and the expansion of coffee growing. Settlers started to arrive at the beginning of the second half of the 19th century, and they gathered around the fringes of the forest. At first there were no conflicts with the Kaingang people, who did not find the arrival of settlers a cause for concern (Ribeiro, 1988, p. 94). However, the settlers left the fringes and advanced through the forest, getting closer to Kaingang villages. “Instead of mere individual hunters, or groups of two or three hunters, large groups started to get into the sites where the Kaingang lived; they were the engineers in charge of surveying the region for the state and for private individuals who claimed tracts of forest land” (Ribeiro, 1988, p. 95). The first attack on surveyors occurred in 1905, followed by others.

“An inquiry committee set up to study the conflicts found that in all those attacks less than fifteen civilized people were killed. However, at the same time several mass killings were reported of the inhabitants of whole Kaingang villages, rekindling hate and leading to new reprisals.” (Ribeiro, 1988, p. 95)

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In the same period, more than 500 railway workers died from diseases, a fact that was covered and encouraged the portrayal of the indigenous people as “the major obstacle to continuing the construction of the railway and the opening of the farms, because of the hostility shown by the Coroados [Kaingang]” (Ribeiro, 1988, p. 95). Terror was a weapon used by both sides, but the indigenous people did not have plenty of guns and ammunition at their disposal.

¹. “*Mappa Ethnographico do Brazil Meridional*” (“Ethnographic Map of Southern Brazil” and its author, Ribeiro, 2012). Available at: <https://bit.ly/2LyFbwV>. Accessed on June 26, 2020.

“All people felt threatened; nobody ventured alone into the forest, certain that it would be filled with Indians; they never dropped their guns. People worked, ate and slept with their carbine within the reach of their hands.” (Ribeiro, 1988, p. 95)

”

Many non-indigenous people wanted to spread terror in order to acquire land at low prices, to explore the mass killings in Kaingang villages for political purposes and to cover the deaths of workers from epidemics. *Bugreiros*² were those people who dedicated themselves to exterminating whole villages of indigenous people. Their largest attacks were carried out in 1908, 1909 and 1910 with the support of Estrada de Ferro Noroeste do Brasil, the railway company.

Estrada de Ferro Noroeste do Brasil (the Northwestern Railway of Brazil), a railway that connected the east (city of Santos) to the west (Corumbá) up to the border with Bolivia, “ran along the waterline between the Feio and the Tietê [rivers]” (Barbosa, 2019, p. 23) and went through Kaingang territory, “without causing conflicts. Railway workers saw many times indigenous people crossing the rail track in a peaceful, although fearful manner” (Ribeiro, 1988, p. 94). Despite that, and as explained before, the construction of the railway

“was a new source of hostilities; the raids of the bugreiros were followed by increasingly more violent assaults of the indigenous people against railway workers. Terror was widespread in the hinterlands, where nobody went without an automatic carbine discharged day and night randomly to scare off the “bugre”.” (Barbosa, 2019, p. 23)

”

The engineers and surveyors mentioned above were part of the expeditions to the Feio or Aguapeí river (1905) and to the Do Peixe river (1906) sponsored by the Geographical and Geological Commission of the State of São Paulo (CGGSP). The work “had to be carried out at gunpoint.” (Barbosa, 2019, p. 23)

The intensification of the attacks prompted the recently created Service for the Protection of Indigenous People (SPI) to make contact with the Kaingang by implementing a pacification plan. Questioning the use of the word “pacification” in relation to the Kaingang people is of key importance. After all, as argued in this article, the modus operandi of the colonization effort consisted of violence and killing. According to Barbosa, newspapers and books played

2. “Those that chase the *bugres* to kill and enslave them”. *Bugres*, “vulgar term used by non-indigenous people to refer to the Kaingang people”, according to the glossary that is included in the second edition of the book (Barbosa, 2019), first published in 1914. According to the publisher of the 2nd edition, Juliano Meneghelli (2019), the glossary explains words with specific meanings or words rarely used nowadays.

a role in establishing a relationship between indigenous peoples and terror: “We, in the cities, have been reporting their killings and we continue to ignore the suffering inflicted on them” (2019, p. 18). For that reason, the idea that the Kaingang “are particularly ferocious, to the point of deserving no other treatment from the civilized people than their complete extermination – at gunshots” is false (Barbosa, 2019, p. 8). Pacification is a colonialist term that put the Kaingang people living in the state of São Paulo in an unfavorable, unfair, inhumane and deceitful position at the start of the 20th century.

The intervention by the SPI in the west of São Paulo caused the Kaingang to be gathered (settled) in Ribeirão dos Patos in 1912. Afterwards, the Kaingang people were moved to the Vanuire Indigenous Land and to the Icatu Indigenous Land, where they remain to date.

Museu Paulista was created in 1895 as a State Museum linked to the CGGSP (Meneses, 1994). The CCGSP made it possible to collect many *musealia* items by sponsoring expeditions. Collections were gathered with a high level of museality and integrated with Museu Paulista, leading to a musealization based on the *modus operandi* of the colonization effort. Several objects were also collected by CGGSP during the construction of the Estrada de Ferro Noroeste do Brasil (Northwestern Railway of Brazil) and by the SPI.

Part of the history of the colonization of São Paulo’s Western region is materialized in the museum’s collections. In other words, the museality of the *musealia* items that we will address in this article occurs within the framework of colonialism, which was reinforced by musealization. This process is being revised according to the contribution made by InterMuseologies, which we exemplify below.

Musealities in document records

Museological Documentation is part of applied museology, museography, and we cannot ignore its importance in musealization for the recording of the museality of *musealia* items.

In the case of old collections, document records can be changed according to other museum models and interests. The course taken by the collection management policy is imprinted on the museological documentation. That was the case of the documentation about the Museu Paulista’s ethnographic collections formed until the end of the first half of the 20th century. They consist of several inventories (re)taken for decades, from the oldest to the most recent (Cury, 2021a; Cury, 2020a). These (new) preparations of documents require careful analysis, because each change may cause information loss and/or gain or a change in language (Cury, 2020a, p. 356). In such cases museality also changes. Many musealities are present in each record, inventory, catalog and catalog card, etc.

Below is an analysis of the Kaingang *musealia* items, considering the several analyzed documents that show the musealities. To that end, we resort to Inter-Museologies, highlighting the direct participation of the Kaingang people living in the Icatu and the Vanuíre Indigenous Lands in the effort to requalify the collections that they have inherited from their ancestors (Cury, 2021a; Cury, 2021b). It is important to highlight that, despite Kaingang's participation in Collaborative Museology, this article does not intend to expose indigenous narratives, but is based on them, on the wishes of the legitimate heirs of the *musealia* and on their political agendas regarding the role of museums. The presentation of the objects moves from the CGGSP to the Estrada de Ferro Noroeste do Brasil (Northwestern Railway of Brazil), the SPI for discussion.

The expeditions organized by CGGSP mentioned here are those to the Feio, or Aguapeí, and Do Peixe rivers. The Kaingang elderly woman Ena Luisa de Campos explained to us that the river is “feio” (“ugly”) because of the Kaingang blood spilled on it.

- “Arrows of the Kaingang Indians of the Feio river. Offered by the Geographical and Geological Commission of São Paulo, and collected by the expedition made to the Feio river in 1905.” (Museu Paulista, 1914)

Three arrows are displayed with the information about their donation and collection registered in the 1914 Museum Accession Book. In Inventory No. 7 (from 1932) one of the pieces is described as an “Arrow with an iron tip” (Museu Paulista, 1932). Despite the lower information content in Inventory No. 7 when compared with the 1914 Museum Accession Book, the record including the “iron tip” description shows a museal emphasis on the “technique, the industry and raw material”, according to the same principle applied by Roquette-Pinto in the National Museum of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) (Carvalho, 2021, p. 5). Therefore, the two documents should be read in a complementary manner. On the other hand, the metal tip of the arrow is evidence of the contact between the Kaingang and non-indigenous people and of the adaptation of a metallic object to be used as an arrow tip for hunting and defense purposes. The track record of these objects uncovered to date has not yet shown any of these three arrows in the most recent documentation because of the changes in the pieces’ descriptions and control number. This impairs a new contextualization of the pieces, because it disconnects the information initially given about the arrows from the current number.

- “Skull of a sixty-year-old Kaingang Indian, a captain killed during the assault carried out by the Indians on July 31, 1906 . . . city of Baurú, São Paulo . . . Otto Dreher.” (Museu Paulista, 1914)

The information about this human remain is in the 1914 Museum Accession Book. The description is clear about the dead Kaingang, the date, the city and collector who had a relationship with the director of Museu Paulista at the time, Hermann von Ihering, according to the 1904 Museu Paulista report (Ihering, 1907, pp. 4–5). However, one aspect is worth mentioning: the word

“assault” that in this context means an attack by the Kaingang. Curiously, the attacks carried out by the non-indigenous people, such as the *bugreiros*, are referred to using another word, “raid”. This difference has been confirmed by the glossary prepared by publisher Juliano Meneghello, available in Barbosa (1914/2019). Below is an example of the different use:

“To reinforce the impression of terror that is linked in the cities to the indigenous people, newspapers and books, which never fail to make detailed comments about the fierceness of their assaults, always remain absolutely silent about the raids that usually precede and cause the former, and which lead to the terrible massacre of whole populations.” (Barbosa, 2019, p. 17, author’s italics³)

”

The mentioned captain, impossible for the museum to identify but who perhaps could be identified as by shaman in rituals, is allegedly a chieftain (*rekakê*) or group leader, whose skull, loaded with museality, became a “war trophy” when the chieftain was killed and musealized, and marked the victory of the settlers over the Kaingang. However, we should not declare the Kaingang’s defeat, because they exist and resist to date, transmitting their mother tongue and other traditions.

About human remains in museums, *kujá* (shaman in the Kaingang language) Dirce Jorge Lipu Pereira teaches us, based on her group’s memories and her knowledge about spirituality, that:

“Regarding the digging of our remains, we also ask these researchers who come to make research about our ancestors to consider that they are not merely bones they are human beings. They are persons. Our ancestors have already suffered a lot and deserve our respect.”

(Pereira & Melo, 2020, p. 32)

”

Discussing the display of human remains in exhibitions, the *kujá* explains the following to us:

“I took part in an exhibition in São Paulo, and I was very sad when I saw the skull of an indigenous person on display. Gosh, I was really

3. In Portuguese, “assaltos” and “batidas”.

horrified when I saw that. That is why I said “what a lack of respect to our people”. (Pereira & Melo, 2020, p. 33)

”

The documentation of Museu Paulista shows that the ethnographic and archeological collections were separated in 1958. We believe that in that year the collections of human remains were also separated, because they do not appear in the same inventories and records. In this sense, there was a separation of human remains from the original collections.

- “War arc used by Kaingang Indians and found after the attack against the group on the Peixe river 23.IX.06 [September 23, 1906], offered by the Geographical and Geological Commission SP [of São Paulo].” (Museu Paulista, 1914)

Arcs are weapons used for hunting, fishing and defense purposes, when necessary. This is the reason why one record has called our attention, when “war” and “attack” are associated with victims: the “group” that carried out the expedition to the Do Peixe river.

- “Pan of the Kaingang Indians, found by the group that carried out the expedition to the Do Peixe river on September 23, 1906, offered by the Geographical and Geological Commission SP [of São Paulo]” (Museu Paulista, 1914).

What calls our attention is that the ceramic, daily objects, left behind was found on the same date as that of the “attack against the group that carried out the expedition to the Do Peixe river on 23.IX.23 [September 23, 1906]”, when an “arc” was found, described as a “war arc”, which leaves us wondering/questioning who attacked who and why. The ceramic pan (RG 2554) was exchanged by the Museu Paulista with the American Museum of Natural History of New York in 1950–1951 (Catalog No. 40.0/ 6675). The piece was identified using an internet image according to the number painted with white paint on the piece (1152), the same number as the 1914 Museum Accession Book. This piece of information is relevant to the Kaingang people, because it is part of their cultural heritage collected in their original territory. On the other hand, it is up to the American Museum of Natural History, and other museums⁴ that received objects in these circumstances, to keep such information from 1906 as part of the piece’s history.

- “An iron-tipped arrow of the Kaingang Indians collected after the attack carried out in Araçatuba, a station of the Northwestern Railway of Brazil, against a group of agricultural workers, of whom six died, this arrow was offered to the Agriculture Department by Engineer Victor Lima [?] VIII [August] 1915” (Museu Paulista, 1914). Document No. 78 is a letter sent on August 25, 1915 by

4. Other Kaingang objects were exchanged with European museums, such as the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam, Netherlands (1956–1957), and Switzerland.

the State Department of Internal Affairs to the “Director of Museu Paulista” (MAE-USP, n.d.).

The description reinforces the negative portrayal of the Kaingang people in São Paulo by weakening and victimizing the six “agricultural workers” killed during the indigenous attack in a place and on a date clearly identified, a description tool similar to that analyzed by Carvalho:

“The narrative in the Museum Accession Book focuses on the descriptive parts: on the correct date, on the well-described place, on the event, . . . on who carries out and who is the object of the action and on the appropriate collection. The words are very well chosen, so that records have an impact and become the key points of the narrative.”
(Carvalho, 2021, pp. 24–25)

“ ”

– “‘Cocron’ pan of the Kaingang people living on the margins of the Feio river, Vauhin tribe. Pacified on March 19, 1912, and offered to the Museum by the Inspectorate of the Service for the Protection of the Indigenous People in São Paulo” (Museu Paulista, 1914, RG 2566).

Among so many descriptive details, the use of the Kaingang word “cocron” is worth mentioning, showing that the author of the description had some knowledge of the Kaingang people, and control/power over that people. On the other hand, the recording of Vauhin, the name of one of the several Kaingang chieftain (rekakê) who lived in the original territory and were settled in a single place before the creation of the Icatu and the Vanuíre Indigenous Lands. The name of Vauhin was only possible in this situation as a villager, that is, a situation of control and victory over an indigenous chief. The piece is contemporary with the “pacification”, a colonialist expression. That, as we have been saying, diverts attention from the violence inflicted on the Kaingang.

– “‘Curú’ or mantle of the Caingang Indians in the shape of a sleeveless shirt (*Camisa sem manga*) and made of fibers from wild urtica” (Museu Paulista, 1914, RG 3285).

In Inventory No. 7 (1932) the textile is described as a “urtica fiber shirt” (*Camisa*). In another inventory taken in the 1950s, the piece is described as a “night shirt” (*Camisolão*) (Museu Paulista, 1950s). This is an example of the possibility of following the course of a piece over the years, without losing information, because changes have been minimal and the emphasis has been on the “technique, manufacturing and raw material” (Carvalho, 2021, p. 5). However, the meaning of the textile became known to José da Silva Barbosa de Campos (Zeca), a Kaingang who got to know the piece in 2016, when his mother Ena Luisa de Campos informed him that it was a midwife’s attire, a detail not known by the museum staff (Cury, 2021a, p. 29).

José da Silva Barbosa de Campos and Kujā Dirce Jorge Lipu Pereira, both living in the Vanuíre Indigenous Land, gave their testimonies about the midwife's attire, which became a part of the exhibition called Resistência Já! Fortalecimento e União das Culturas Indígenas Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena (Resistance Now! Strengthening and Uniting Indigenous Kaingang, Guarani Nhandewa and Terena Cultures)", Archeology and Ethnology Museum of the University of São Paulo (MAE-USP).

In his testimony, Zeca recalled memories of his grandmother, Maria Cecilia de Campo, known by the name of Candire:

The Kujā [the midwife] had the same understanding as the shaman, she blessed people for protection. Because of that act, all children that were born were blessed. They believed so. Grandma [Candire] was a midwife, but she never wore [this cloth]. (Campos, José da Silva Barbosa de, Kaingang, lives in Vanuíre Indigenous Land, oral testimony, 2017)

”

Kujā Dirce Jorge Lipu Pereira, who delivered five babies, gave her testimony:

“A midwife has a gift given by God. Helping a person give birth, bringing a child to life is a virtue, you become part of all that. When you help to bring a child to life he or she is your son or daughter. That is the way we consider them, our children. The first face the baby sees is that of the midwife, the first thing the baby feels is the midwife's hands, she is a second mother. It is a great virtue and also a great emotion. This attire is sacred and can only be made by a Kujā.” (Pereira, Dirce Jorge Lipu, Kaingang, lives in Vanuíre Indigenous Land, oral testimony, 2018)

”

Final Considerations

We assumed that Stránský, the pioneer of Metamuseology, could help us with his philosophical framework to think about the triad – *musealia*, museality and musealization – applied to the contexts and meanings of indigenous peoples' collections, but in line with a decolonial agenda that focuses on the indigenous peoples assuming a leading role. If he were still with us and reflecting on musealization practices, his first effort would be to devise a theory from the standpoint of the “other”, a change in the point of view, shifting the museum's and the *musealia*'s methodological locus to the indigenous peoples and their centuries-old political processes. It is this methodological locus that Museo-

logical Communication has been addressing currently, a shift of the museum to cultural settings that mediate man's relationship with reality as the subject matter of museology.

Based on the idea of InterMuseologies, the purpose of this article has been to explore the Kaingang collections gathered at the beginning of the 20th century during the colonization of the western part of the state of São Paulo. What determined the interpretation analyses about these *musealia* items was the concept of museality as part of the violent procedures used to collect and gather collections of objects that witness a relationship full of conflict, and the records loaded with past musealities that are included in the Museological Documentation. However, one element has key importance: the active participation of the Kaingang groups in the new contextualization and signification of the objects inherited from their ancestors and that they met again at MAE-USP.

To that end, we have chosen some museological objects and, resorting to InterMusealities, we showed how musealization can be used to challenge the former musealities and to make new propositions while respecting the rights of indigenous people to musealization.

Indigenous participation brings to the museum other epistemologies, which are new to professionals but millenary for indigenous peoples. This is a challenge for the museum – to recognize these thousand-year-old epistemologies that have resisted colonization, the passage of time and so many pressures from capitalism up to the present, as well as to get to know them without intending to understand them as if they were their own, which requires dialogue, respect, and ethics.

We do not decolonize the museum, but museological thoughts and museography, which is why the Museological Documentation demands attention. Decolonization is a dynamic process that takes place in different forms: complementary, different, continuous, synchronic and diachronic. We do not decolonize all at once, from a single procedure and in the same way in different contexts and circumstances. There is a confrontation of a matrix of thought, but there are different forms of decolonization and *modus operandi*, because colonialism is itself diversified and must be dealt with locally, revealing relations of control that in the museum are expressed through museality and musealization.

We do not offer any conclusions, rather new approaches that put museums in another scientific, social and educational position, in an ongoing dialogue with those groups that were forced in the past to distance themselves from their cultural heritage.

Museological thinking and museum practices cannot be decolonized if the indigenous people are not only present in museums, but are also autonomous, playing a role far beyond that of mere consultants and proposing counter-hegemonic narratives. What we currently need at museums, as proposed by Lorente (2011), are challenging narratives instead of closed discourses; self-re-

flection, open and uncertain positions of museum discourses; transparency about authorship, i.e. uncovering of hidden voices – who speaks and where they speak from.

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Itaipu Archaeology Museum: A paradigm shift in museology

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze a paradigm shift in museology through the case study of the Itaipu Archaeology Museum (MAI), located in the city of Niterói, Brazil. For over 40 years, the MAI has disseminated narratives about the Itaipu prehistoric heritage. Concurrently, members of the Fishermen Village of Itaipu have struggled politically to legitimize their hundred-year-old fishing culture. This resistance movement will demand the MAI to acknowledge their identity discourses and practices, so that both the museum and the community can align their heritage perspectives.

Keywords: Itaipu Archaeology Museum, artisanal fishing, community, narrative, cultural heritage, museology.

RESUMEN

Museo de Arqueología de Itaipu: un cambio de paradigma en Museología

Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar un cambio de paradigma en Museología a través del estudio de caso del Museo Arqueológico de

Itaipu (MAI), ubicado en la ciudad de Niterói, Brasil. Durante más de 40 años, el MAI ha difundido narrativas sobre el patrimonio prehistórico de Itaipu. Al mismo tiempo, los miembros de la Villa de Pescadores de Itaipu han luchado políticamente para legitimar su cultura pesquera centenaria. Este movimiento de resistencia exigirá al MAI que corrobore sus discursos y prácticas de identidad, para que tanto el museo como la comunidad puedan alinear sus perspectivas patrimoniales.

Palabras clave: Museo de Arqueología de Itaipu, pesca artesanal, comunidad, narrativa, patrimonio cultural, Museología.



Introduction

Decolonizing Museology demands revisiting museological concepts and their transformations over time to not only rearrange the discipline, but also to consolidate it. This paper aims to analyze how cultural and natural heritage narratives, produced directly and indirectly by the *Museu de Arqueologia de Itaipu* (MAI) (Itaipu Archaeology Museum), came to be a part of the resistance discourse of the traditional fishing colony of Itaipu, in the city of Niterói, Brazil. This discourse modified the role the MAI played in the community as well as the museum's own readjustment towards decolonization.

How can an archaeology museum have contributed to the struggle of a minority group seeking to remain in and make use of the territory of Itaipu? The unstable context of the social order in Itaipu at the time of the creation of the MAI in 1977 should be explained. In the 1970s, the local population was facing a series of threats regarding their occupation of that space, despite their hundred years of fishing culture in the area.

The concepts of museology examined here are those closely related to the *Round Table of Santiago of Chile* (1972) and how they helped define the MAI at its creation. In particular, it was influenced by an *integral museum* perspective associated with the archaeological nature of the museum's collections and also with the geography of its mandate. This original project will gain new definitions throughout the evolution of the MAI. The last decade seems to have concluded with a more meaningful agreement between the institution's aspirations and those of the local community.

The museum and the community

"The beauty of [Itaipu's] beaches and the panoramic view over the city of Rio de Janeiro, and the aforementioned monument [the Great Dune Site] constitute

one of the mandatory visits" (Arquivo Central do Iphan/RJ, n.d.).¹ In these words, Renato Soeiro, president of the *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional* (Iphan) (National Historic and Artistic Heritage Institute of Brazil), along with the architect Edgard Jacobinho, defined the basic purpose of the MAI. The main goal of the new museum was to stimulate Itaipu participation in the tourist economy, but integrated with its other mandates, which included prehistoric archaeological sites, dating back 8000 years, identified with the *sambaqui*² culture (Kneip, 1979). The MAI was also to physically occupy the Iphan protected ruins of the 18th-century Retreat of Saint Teresa (Arquivo Central do Iphan/RJ, 1946), which had been the home of a few fishermen families up to 1969, when they were evicted by the Iphan. This was in accordance with the Brazilian legislation that in 1955 recognized the colonial building as a protected monument (Arquivo Central do Iphan/RJ, 1969).

Soeiro and Jacobinho sought to capitalize on the economic and touristic potential of the Fishermen Village of Itaipu, which was "in a process of rapid dismantling caused by the modernization of the fishing industry"³ (Arquivo Central do Iphan/RJ, 1977, p. 1). The intended collection for the MAI "constituted of archaeological objects from the region plus elements from the *caíçaras*⁴ that in their current primitivism . . . were reminiscent of the *sambaqui* builders"⁵ (Arquivo Central do Iphan/RJ, 1977, p. 1). The first objects to join the MAI collections came from Itaipu: a collection of reminiscences and artifacts from the Sambaqui of Camboinhas and the Small Dune Site, both excavated by Professor Lina Kneip and her team in 1979 (Kneip, 1979); the acquisition of a centenary canoe from the fishermen, previously used for dyeing fishing nets (Arquivo MAI, 1979b); and, finally, a collection composed of 966 prehistoric artifacts, randomly collected since the 1950s from the Itaipu archaeological sites - the Great Dune Site, in particular - by the local fishing inspector Hildo de Mello Ribeiro (Arquivo MAI, 1979a).

Edgard Jacobinho defined the Great Dune Site as a "necessary didactic contemplation for the dissemination of the foreseen scientific and cultural activities planned for the institution [the MAI]"⁶ (Jacobinho, 1988, as cited in Najjar, 1997, p. 21) regarding the "common interest in disseminating popular culture,

1. Author's translation.

2. *Sambaqui* (Shell mound): prehistoric sites of fishermen-hunters-gatherers who inhabited almost the entire Brazilian coast, dating back to 6000 BC. The shell mounds are rounded elevations, which can reach up to 30 meters in height, built from the accumulation of shells of mollusks, bones of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, in addition to fruits and seeds, with food remains, artifacts, raw material fragments, bonfire marks, housing, sculptures and burials (Gaspar, 2000).

3. Author's translation.

4. *Caiçaras*: descendants of the indigenous people and the Portuguese colonizers who live in coastal areas of Brazil and practice small-scale fishing.

5. Author's translation.

6. Author's translation.

through the knowledge and the exhibition of the entire chain of facts related to the national prehistory”⁷ (Jacintho, 1988, as cited in Najjar, 1997, p. 21).

Soeiro and Jacintho seem to have incorporated into the MAI the concept of an integral museum, as envisioned at the Roundtable of Santiago (Ferreira, 2017). The integration of the well-preserved Great Dune Site as an extension of the museum, as well as the ancestral fishing community as a living component of the local heritage, can both be perceived as an outcome of the discussions held in Santiago, which searched for possible solutions to the real economic and social issues of its region (Mesa Redonda de Santiago do Chile, 1972).

The MAI was settled in the middle of the Fishermen Village of Itaipu, which was socially and economically organized around its tradition of trawling (Kant de Lima, 1997). The 200 Itaipu fishermen were the foundation for the interpretation and transmission of traditional fishing to the next generation. The social reproduction of a communal identity among these fishermen was manifested every year, during the period of the mullet fishing when the natives recognized themselves as belonging to one of the seven fishing companies of Itaipu (Pessanha, 2003). From April to August, group values related to the mastering of the fishery art transmitted by the elders, the appropriation of natural resources, and the respect for the local social rules were cyclically updated (Kant de Lima, 1997; Pessanha, 2003).

In the late 1970s, the customary social order in Itaipu began to unravel with the advent of “so called” progress. The threat to the historical condition of the fishing colony caused the community to organize a resistance movement to preserve their traditional fishing lives. In 1979, the Veplan construction company permanently opened an artificial canal between the Itaipu lagoon and the beach, dividing the beach in two pieces, destroying thousand-year-old archaeological sites (Kneip, 1979), and promoting the gentrification of Itaipu. The growing urbanization of the area, the expansion of industrial fishing, and the pollution of water systems led to the scarcity of natural resources, all of which inevitably affected the annual migration route and spawning grounds of the mullet (Kant de Lima, 1997). The fishermen faced the loss of both their territory and their identity.

Conflicting temporalities

The MAI was also perceived as a key element in local problems since it deprived the community of their homes, their religious, and their working spaces inside the ancient Retreat of Saint Teresa. Seu Chico, a fishermen leader, regarded the eviction from the historical building as cowardly: “This type of violence was enforced by the museum, so we’ve always been sure that the museum had

7. Author’s translation.

arrived to disrupt our lives, to create nothing”⁸ (J. N. Souza, personal communication, July 11, 2016).

On the other hand, the fishing master Cambuci was more equivocal: “The museum was left to its own fortune... The Iphan gave [the families] a stability to leave, so they could transform that into a museum, a historic preservation. Otherwise, it would have been destroyed too⁹ (A. M. Souza, personal communication, July 12, 2016).

Hildo de Mello Ribeiro, an agent of the Brazilian State, authorized to inspect not only the fishing colony, but also the protected ruins and the Itaipu archaeological sites, was considered a controversial character in the area. In addition to assisting Iphan with the eviction of the families from the ruins, Mello Ribeiro is also frequently accused of being authoritarian due to his collecting methods of the archaeological artifacts (Ribeiro, 2007). The locals reported that the inspector would require them to hand over the objects found by chance at the archaeological sites: “No one, no fisherman should be colonized”¹⁰ proclaims Érika (as cited in Ribeiro, 2006, p. 206), the daughter of Seu Chico. The restricted use of the Great Dune Site imposed by the law was also a reason for discontent, since it used to be both a play space for the children and a fishing spot for the fishermen (Ferreira, 2017).

In those first years, the MAI had turned into a target of resistance for the residents of Itaipu. Hildo de Mello Ribeiro, the state officer, and Professor Lina Kneip, in charge of the excavations and the opening of the museum’s exhibition, were severely criticized. Kneip’s exhibition, *Aspects of the Rio de Janeiro prehistory along the coastline between Niterói and Cabo Frio* (1982), included only 10 objects out of 54 directly related to Itaipu. Furthermore, the majority of the objects had been borrowed from the National Museum, Kneip’s home institution (Arquivo MAI, 2010b). Eight objects were identified as a *Didactic collection/No reference*, and these objects happened to belong to the Hildo de Mello Ribeiro Collection. The credits at the exhibit did not do the MAI’s main collection justice (Ferreira, 2017).

This exhibition ended up disappointing the residents of Itaipu. Kneip had decided to display objects from her other archaeological research contradicting the museum’s original purpose as outlined by Soeiro and Jacintho. The exhibition contained few references to the archaeological heritage of Itaipu and no references to the Itaipu artisanal fishing at all (Araújo, 2015; Saladino, 2010). At the time, the native fishermen and their families did not feel represented in that long-term exhibition. They demanded that the “museum should tell our history”,¹¹ says Érika (as cited in Ribeiro, 2006, p. 206), or, as Seu Chico

8. Author’s translation.

9. Author’s translation.

10. Author’s translation.

11. Author’s translation.

puts into words: “We don’t have the history of Itaipu [there], . . . the museum doesn’t know the truth”¹² (J. N. Souza, personal communication, July 11, 2016).

However questionable the development of the exhibition, it must be acknowledged that the museum provided the declining community with arguments for the preservation of the ancient practices of fishing dating from the prehistoric *sambaquis* period (Ferreira, 2017). The fishing colony would appropriate, from then on, the museological language to mobilize their own material culture so as to represent their history and to prove their connections to that territory. Those Itaipu *subterranean memories* (Pollak, 1984), made partially possible thanks to the MAI, would later on, in 2010, become part of the official discourse of the museum from the moment that everyday fishing objects were musealized to compose the institution’s new long-term exhibition called *Paths of time: Revealing Itaipu*.

If I knew that things were going to get where they got, I would have saved a lot of things that belonged to my father, eighty-year-old stuff, . . . there's only this pot now, which is pretty old, it's probably a hundred years or so. First of all, it is important to hold on to documentation. . . . If the human being's words were valid, you wouldn't need a document¹³
(A. M. Souza, personal communication, July 12, 2016).

“ ”

Master Cambuci, who donated some of his family objects to the MAI in 2010, expressed his understanding of these objects as corroborating the fishing tradition passed on to him by his father. This statement by one of the last fishing masters of Itaipu – there are only two fishing companies nowadays – is indicative of the new lives the native fishermen had to forge for themselves, in the four decades since fishing had largely disappeared in Itaipu. The MAI played an important supporting role in solidifying the authenticity of the community by means of exhibiting its related material culture. Had it not been for the thousands of years of archaeological materials of Itaipu, on which the MAI shed light, the ancient fishing culture would not have resonated as a local heritage worthy of preservation.

Furthermore, Seu Chico as the president of the Fishing Colony of Itaipu noted in a 1996 letter to the Ministry of Agriculture of Brazil that:

“The Southern Corner of Itaipu is not only important for its beautiful sunset or for its significant historical and architectural heri-

12. Author’s translation.

13. Author’s translation.

tage. Artisanal fishing helped to preserve this physical and cultural landscape, projecting at the same time its own way of life, which still enchants visitors today. A style of living that in a country that counts its hungry in millions has food production as its main axis. Reserving the vital space for fishing in Itaipu is to protect a food-producing region, it is our duty¹⁴." (Colônia de Pescadores de Itaipu, 1996, as cited in Pereira, 1997, p. 313).

" "

It is clear from this that while the threat to the traditional fishing life of Itaipu was proportional to economic progress, the life of the fishing community was increasingly responsible for representing the local cultural and natural heritage. To preserve the fishing space meant the preservation of the whole surrounding area of Itaipu, regardless of the museum.

The void left by the MAI in its first decades, since it could not go through with its original concept of a kind of *territory/community museum*, can be justified. The difficulties faced by the museum were countless and included inadequate budgets and staffing (Ferreira, 2017). Although the power of the museum to act was limited by the Iphan, still some efforts were made towards its original mandate such as the opening of the protection process of the Great Dune Site by the Iphan (Arquivo Central do Iphan/RJ, 1987) and the inscription of the Itaipu Landscape, the Fishermen Village included, on the heritage list of the State Institute of Cultural Heritage of Rio de Janeiro (Inepac, 1987).

A common ground

It is undeniable that the debates concerning Itaipu heritage converged in one way or another on the MAI. The continuation of local traditions and the defense of the permanence of the fishing community on the Itaipu beach were sustained by the argument of an ancient identity rooted in the territory, to which both archaeology and the museum contributed. In the 1970s and 1980s some shifts in social and environmental values echoed in Brazilian laws should also be mentioned. The *Brazilian Constitution of 1988* legally promoted the organization of minority groups to demand their right to a space within the narratives of the national history (Abreu & Chagas, 2009). A large number of different ethnic peoples – especially the indigenous and the African-descendants – were incorporated into the new legislation. Apart from the acknowledgement of their right to memory and to cultural identity, these social groups were encouraged to protect and to promote Brazilian cultural heritage.

The conservation of biodiversity through traditional knowledge of the indigenous and non-indigenous communities is included in the legislation concer-

¹⁴. Author's translation.

ning the *National System of Conservation Unities* (Brasil, 2000). It will regulate the creation of protected areas with sustainable use of renewable resources and with low impact agriculture. Moreover, the *National Policy on Sustainable Development of Traditional Peoples and Communities* (Brasil, 2007) will support culturally diversified groups to claim a differentiated identity built on their traditional knowledge and their self-recognition as a culture inside Brazilian society.

Currently still threatened by extinction, the fishing community of Itaipu has conceived of three main survival strategies based on their ancestral knowledge and on the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of Itaipu. In the mid-1990s, the first of these strategies was the legal struggle against municipal and state public authorities to ensure the preservation and retention of the Siqueira da Silva family residence on the Swallow Hill in Itaipu. This family of farmers and fishermen were accused of invading the Swallow Hill environmental protection area (Costa, 2011; Lobão, 2006). As a way to prevent their removal from the area, which the family had allegedly been occupying since the 19th century, the main argument used to prove their case was the framing of the family as native farmers and fishers (Lobão, 2006). Besides, in 2007 the residents of Swallow Hill were integrated into the State Park of Serra da Tiririca and, once again, they were validated as a traditional population whose rights to occupy that area rested on a hundred years of contributing to the fishing culture and on a limited use of the land for their subsistence (Rio de Janeiro, 2007).

The second strategy was the inscription of the artisanal fishing community of Itaipu in 2011 on the intangible cultural heritage list of the city of Niterói. The municipal law defines the Itaipu artisanal fishing as an intangible cultural heritage:

“Practiced as the main way of life, where the fisherman works autonomously in the capture and sale of aquatic species, individually, in a family economy regime, or with the occasional help of partners without employment relationship, exploring the environment located close to the sea coast, by the peculiarity of the vessels and techniques used.”¹⁵ (Niterói, 2011)

”

Despite the significant mobilization of civil society alongside the city councilor Gezivaldo de Freitas, aka Renatinho do Psol, and their support for this piece of legislation, community members like Seu Chico question the extent to which it actually will work (J. A. Silva, personal communication, July 12, 2016; J. N. Souza, personal communication, July 11, 2016). Even considering the

¹⁵. Author's translation.

weak governmental act, Jairo da Silva, fisher, believes that the protection of Itaipu cultural heritage functions as a legal act of resistance: “The protection acts make things hard for contractors. . . . For them, this here is politics which is an obstacle”¹⁶ (J. A. Silva, personal communication, July 12, 2016). As far as the community is concerned, if the legislation does not contribute much to the local development, at least it slows down the erosion of Itaipu.

The last strategy was the establishment in 2013 of the Itaipu Marine Extractive Reserve by the State Environment Institute of Rio de Janeiro. This process had begun in 1999 and it only became a reality as a result of the participation of the local fishermen who, despite some episodes of dispute among the leaderships of the community, had struggled for over 20 years for recognition as a traditional population. This strategy stands out among the tools of fishing resistance and has reshaped the identity of the community more than the amount of fish it produces. The historical demand of the fishermen of Itaipu not only values artisanal fishing, but also “contributes to the permanence and the protection of the way of life of the claiming beneficiary population, as well as the traditionally managed natural resources and the region as a whole”¹⁷ (SEA, 2013).

If the threat of extinction prompted the fishermen to generate a new collective memory as a tool for survival, the same strategy will be required from the MAI: the distance between museum and community will have to be significantly narrowed. The 2000s will demand that Brazilian museums put into practice participative and socially engaged discourse. In Brazil, the *National Museum Policy* (2003) and the *Statute of Museums* (2009), the fruits of a collective work of museum professionals and civil society, are responsible for the establishment of guidelines for a more democratic management of museums. These two documents will encourage the ideals sown in the museology field in the early 1970s to finally grow strong in Brazil through national policies which see museums becoming inclusive spaces in service of the development of society (Brasil, 2009; PNM, 2003).

Aligned with these new political, economic and social directions for the Brazilian museums, the MAI will be able to reassess the museum’s original project and compensate for the long frayed relationship with the fishing colony. In spite of the museum, the community was already organized in its search of government supported public identity policies. Having said that, the MAI’s performance in the last decade has been dedicated to bringing the museum closer to the community through collaboration. The temporary exhibition *Faces of Itaipu: Expressions of the past through the lenses of Ruy Lopes* (2015) is a worthwhile example of the MAI’s community collaboration. This temporary exhibit is a radical landmark in the MAI’s history in terms of listening and respecting the will of the community that it has become the symbol for a new MAI-Fishermen relationship.

16. Author’s translation.

17. Author’s translation.

This exhibition was a shared curatorial process between the community and the MAI. The fishermen along with the museum staff decided which of the pictures taken in Itaipu by the photographer Ruy Lopes in the 1960s and 1970s should be exhibited (M. L. Araújo, personal communication, December 14, 2016). The MAI placed itself in the *contact zone* (Clifford, 1997, p. 192) once the interpretation and the authority over the photographs were shared with the native fishermen of Itaipu who in turn required, in addition to Lopes' pictures, that their family pictures be included in the exhibit as well. The collective identity of the fishing colony, as it was supposed to be displayed through Lopes' lenses, was overcome by a nominal exhibition of each individual who participated in the curatorial process with his/her deliberately chosen photo images.

The purpose of *Faces of Itaipu* was to emphasize the creation of a museum exhibition with the community as a decision-making agent. The museum's narrative capacity seems to have been appreciated by the local community for the first time since the foundation of the MAI. The fishermen of Itaipu as a group are now conscious of their right to a part in the official history of Brazil. They are now also aware of the fact that they are the ones who should formulate what they consider to be their collective memory instead of delegating this task to the State. An interesting aspect observed in the curatorial process was the *auto-archeologization of the self* (Sarlo, 2007, p. 38) whose prominent place in the exhibit confirms a self-centered facet of the cultural heritage narratives in the 21st century. Cultural heritage becomes the mirror to the image the fishermen wish to represent of themselves.

Conclusion

A paradigm shift in museology towards decolonization can be seen in the case of the fishermen of Itaipu in relation to the MAI. In the 1970s the promotion of ethical awareness in a museum's community was one of the principles of an *integral museum*, such as conceived then by museology professionals (Scheiner, 2012). Nowadays, it is the community members themselves that demand participation in the museum's activities and even in its management, not the other way around. Although the MAI may not have contemplated the fishermen of Itaipu back when it was founded in 1977, the cultural heritage narratives established by the institution have allowed a requalification of the historical condition of the native fishermen group. The risks of fishing extinction in Itaipu alongside the not-so-well received novelty of a museum in that territory have enabled the local fisher community to make use of cultural heritage vocabulary.

In other words, this hundred-year-old fishing community soon realized that the political use of the remains of the past was a central argument for them as a subjugated culture to be able to enunciate their understanding of the memory of Itaipu. This is the paradigm shift in museology this paper has identified with the case of the Itaipu Archaeology Museum. It demonstrates the inverse process of constructing an identity discourse that occurred in parallel with the

MAI. This discourse was, in the end, based on the cultural heritage references the MAI brought to the local scene.

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Récit d'une incursion autochtone en territoire muséal

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Il faut que je me pince quand j'entre dans un musée pour être bien certain que je suis vivant. Tout me dit que je suis mort.

John Cree, Kanienkehaka

RÉSUMÉ

Être partie prenante du travail d'élaboration d'une exposition est une occasion privilégiée de valorisation pour les autochtones et pour leur culture. Le caractère immersif, la multiplicité des canaux et des médiums de communication et la présence de langages artistiques se conjuguent pour que l'exposition devienne un outil d'auto-construction pour les peuples victimes du colonialisme, mais ce à certaines conditions et selon certains paramètres. Décoloniser les rapports entre institutions muséales et peuples autochtones implique de considérer ces derniers comme parties prenantes à part entière, de changer en profondeur les façons de faire, d'être attentif et assidu à faire ce qu'exige ce changement car une démarche incomplète fera plus de mal que de bien.

Mots clés : Décolonisation, muséologie autochtone, gouvernance collaborative, concertation.

ABSTRACT

Story of an indigenous incursion into museum territory

Being part of the development of an exhibition is an occasion of valorization for Native peoples and for their cultures. The immersive character, multitude of communication channels and mediums, and the presence of many artistic languages put together become a tool for the self-construction of identity for people in a minority position, but under specific conditions. To decolonize relations between institutions and Native peoples implies the need to consider these groups as partners, to change methodologies, to be attentive to what it takes to make that change because an incomplete process would do more harm than good.

Keywords: Decolonization, Indigenous museology, collaborative governance, concertation.



J'ai participé à différents projets d'exposition, soit à titre de commissaire autochtone, de directrice de projet ou de responsable de la collaboration avec les Premières Nations et les Inuit. Comme directrice du projet de recherche *Design et culture matérielle* (DCM, 1991 à ce jour) et de l'organisme à but non lucratif La Boîte Rouge Vif (2001 à 2017), qui œuvrent à la valorisation et à la transmission des riches cultures autochtones et des porteurs de ces cultures, j'ai réalisé plusieurs projets de transmission culturelle en communautés autochtones au Québec et au Brésil. Alors que DCM travaille au développement de méthodologies collaboratives, La BRV crée les contextes d'expérimentation sur le terrain de co-création de vecteurs de transmission culturelle avec les membres des Premières Nations et les Inuit. Chacune de ces deux entités a mis en place une structure de gouvernance autochtone : direction pour DCM et conseil d'administration pour La BRV.

Le choix du titre de ma communication au 44^e symposium annuel d'ICOFOM (2021), « Récit d'une incursion autochtone en territoire muséal », exprime l'émotion qui m'habite quand je pense aux quelques expériences en contexte muséal que j'ai vécues : *incursion* comme un moment un peu volé, temporaire, accidentel peut-être ; et *en territoire muséal*, car le musée est véritablement un territoire dans lequel il faut savoir entrer et se mouvoir. L'impression de

l'expérience vécue en ce territoire Autre peut se décrire ainsi : même quand je me suis sentie écoutée au début du mandat, cette écoute s'est rarement concrétisée dans l'exposition. J'ai dû, pour chacune de ces expériences, entrer dans une véritable guerre d'embuscade une fois arrivée à l'approbation finale du scénario pour pouvoir *sauver* ce que je voulais dire, et, une fois arrivée aux étapes de la production, *sauver* la manière avec laquelle je voulais le dire. Le « je » est ici inclusif des voix des centaines de membres des Première Nations que j'ai rencontrées dans le cadre de mes actions de recherche.

Pourquoi le médium Exposition est-il au cœur de mes recherches ?

Être partie prenante du travail d'élaboration d'une exposition est un outil privilégié de valorisation pour l'individu et pour sa culture. Le caractère immersif, la multiplicité des canaux et médiums de communication et la présence de langages artistiques se conjuguent pour que l'exposition devienne un outil d'auto-construction pour les peuples en position minoritaire, victimes du colonialisme, mais ce à certaines conditions et selon certains paramètres. Pour les participants aux ateliers de création *Design et culture matérielle*¹, exposer son travail de création par une mise à vue progressive, d'abord parmi ses pairs, ensuite auprès de sa famille puis de sa communauté et, enfin, au sein d'autres communautés autochtones puis allochtones, fait en sorte que la confiance, les compétences et l'assurance face aux autres augmentent à chaque étape. Dans un contexte où je peux m'assurer de ne jamais perdre de vue cet objectif d'épanouissement, je reste convaincue que ce médium demeure l'un des outils les plus puissants d'*empowerment* et de rencontres interculturelles. Les projets d'exposition menés en mode collaboratif avec les Premiers Peuples aide ces derniers à mieux nommer leur propre culture, à la valoriser et à la transmettre.

Dans les musées avec lesquels j'ai contribué à la création d'expositions, les expériences de collaboration déjà réalisées se résumaient à de courtes consultations où l'on demandait un avis sans se sentir obligé de le suivre. À la consultation souvent menée à la hâte, s'ajoutent parfois, dans le meilleur des cas, des commandes d'œuvres à des artistes autochtones et l'offre de petits contrats à des personnalités autochtones connues permettant à ces dernières d'apparaître dans l'exposition mais dans une formule très cadée et encadrée. Si au départ la volonté de travailler dans une dynamique d'action collective avec les Premiers Peuples m'a semblé réelle, elle finissait toujours par s'effriter pendant le processus. Nombre de décisions se prennent finalement à l'interne, l'institution retombant à la première occasion dans la conformité de ses anciens réflexes : la centralisation des décisions, le « tout faire à la place de ».

1. Ces ateliers de design sont offerts aux artisans autochtones expérimentés dans le but de créer de nouveaux produits arrimés à leur culture afin de transmettre celle-ci par l'innovation plutôt que par la reproduction de modèles.

Lucien St-Onge, membre du comité des Sages de la Chaire UNESCO *La transmission culturelle chez les Premiers Peuples comme dynamique de mieux-être et d'empowerment*², s'adresse ainsi aux chercheurs universitaires de la chaire dans le cadre d'une réflexion collective portant sur la recherche autochtone : « Pour y arriver, tu dois d'abord désapprendre ce que tu sais. Présentement, ce n'est pas toi qui m'écoutes, c'est tout le conditionnement que tu as reçu ». Ce propos résume parfaitement ma conclusion : pas de décolonisation des musées sans changements quasi complet des façons de faire, ce qui implique d'abord de « désapprendre ».

D'abord vouloir

Depuis de nombreuses années, j'ai la volonté de réaliser un travail de collaboration le plus vrai possible pour transmettre les visions des Premières Nations et des Inuit. Pour y arriver, sur l'échelle de niveaux de collaboration développée par Beuret (2006) et adaptée au contexte de *Design et culture matérielle* (Kaine et al., 2016a), les interventions doivent se situer entre le niveau du dialogue et le niveau de l'action collective, puisque c'est là que l'*empowerment* ou autonomisation tel que défini par Le Bossé (2003) et Ninacs (2008) devient possible. L'action collective, l'idéal des démarches de collaboration, implique que le promoteur permette au partenaire de prendre toutes les décisions, ce qui ne devrait pas être perçue par le Musée comme une perte de pouvoir mais plutôt comme une occasion d'engendrer une expérience d'accomplissement pour tous, autant pour la direction que pour tous les membres du personnel que pour le ou les partenaires : l'objectif ultime est que tous puissent vivre l'expérience transformatrice de la véritable rencontre par le projet de mise en exposition.

2. Rattachée à l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, cette Chaire a pour mission de promouvoir un système intégré de recherche, de formation, de transfert de connaissances et de documentation dans les domaines de l'éducation, du mieux-être et de la culture chez les Premières Nations et les Inuit. Elle facilite la collaboration entre les experts culturels, les détenteurs de savoirs autochtones, les chercheurs des universités et des établissements d'enseignement supérieur du Québec, du Canada, des Amériques et du monde. Élisabeth Kaine et Mathieu Cook en sont les co-titulaires.

Objectifs Ce qu'on cherche	Types d'implication	Niveau d'implication de l'Autre
Un accomplissement pour tous, l'autonomie (empowerment)	Actions collectives ++++	Par
Des apprentisages de part et d'autre, un projet accompli, une expérience de rencontre	Concertation +++	Avec/par
Une décision par le compromis	Négociation ++	Avec (rapport de force)
Réaliser un projet de coopération	Coopération ++	Avec
Une confirmation, une approbation	Consultation ++	A la place de/avec
Faire comprendre des enjeux	Information +	Vers
Passer un message	Communication +	Vers (l'objectif de l'émetteur prime)
Conserver le pouvoir	Conformité	A la place de

Le niveau 0 de collaboration est l'absence de communication et le niveau supérieur est l'action collective où le promoteur remet entièrement la prise de décisions et l'action entre les mains de la communauté, qui devient par le fait même promoteur du projet. Entre ces deux extrémités, les niveaux de communication, d'information, de collaboration, de consultation, de cooptation (lorsque la consultation vise la manipulation), de coopération, de négociation et de concertation ponctuent l'échelle de collaboration. Le réel pouvoir pour le partenaire autochtone débute avec le niveau de la coopération.

Mais pourquoi est-ce si difficile ?

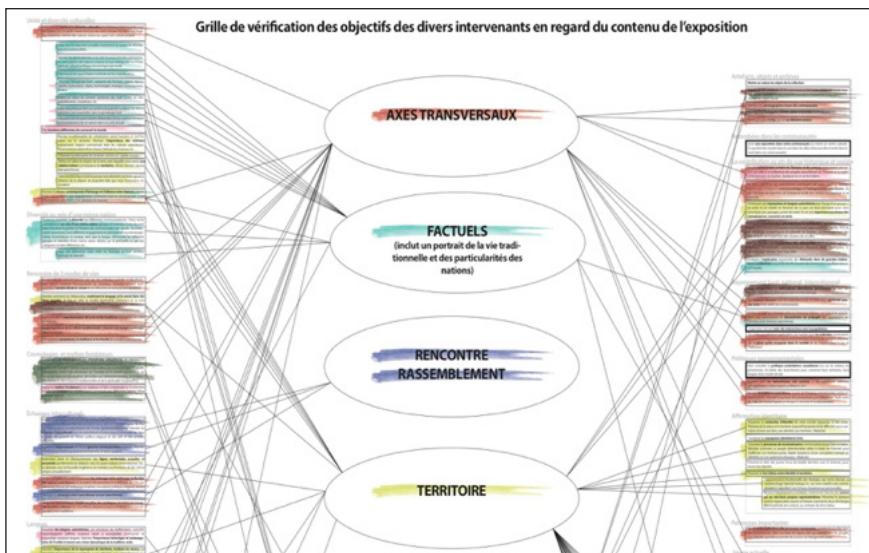
Pour moi, il s'agit d'une façon de travailler tellement simple et organique que je ne comprends jamais pourquoi elle ne s'inscrit pas tout aussi facilement dans un musée. Dans un esprit de décolonisation, quand un promoteur muséal met en branle le projet de parler d'une autre culture, la première chose à faire n'est-elle pas de demander aux porteurs de cette culture « que voulez-vous dire à propos de vous ? ». Tout aussi important est de demander « comment voulez-vous transmettre ce message ? », c'est-à-dire par quelles méthodologies allons-nous travailler ensemble et par quels langages muséographiques allons-nous transmettre le fruit de notre réflexion commune puisque la matérialité de l'exposition est porteuse du message au même titre que les textes. Au final, si je ne contrôle ni le contenu, ni l'esthétique³, si je ne contrôle ni la circulation du visiteur à travers les contenus ni le choix des médiums par lesquels ceux-ci sont exprimés, ni le choix des objets; si je n'ai, finalement, aucun contrôle sur le message et sur son expression : quel réel pouvoir m'a été accordé ?

3. Un diktat du bon goût limite la capacité d'expression dans les musées, les normes esthétiques muséales s'accrochant à des référents culturels qui ne sont pas partagés par l'ensemble des cultures.

Entendre et mémoriser : l'un ne va pas sans l'autre

Les processus collaboratifs s'étendent souvent sur deux à quatre ans, dépendant de l'ampleur du projet. Sur de si longues durées, la mémorisation est la clé de voûte du respect de l'engagement pris. Si à l'année 2 on ne se souvient plus de la première étape réalisée, celle de la concertation, le contenu originel perdra de sa pertinence tout au long des étapes de la réalisation. Il faut développer les outils pour mémoriser et il faut surtout mettre en place ce qu'exige le total respect de la réponse donnée à la question posée pour ne jamais en déformer la teneur. Il s'agit d'un point sensible auquel j'ai toujours porté une attention que d'aucun pourrait qualifier d'obsessionnelle, une compulsion maniaque à porter le message jusqu'au bout en le gardant intact. Face à la nonchalance que j'ai rencontrée sur ce respect de la parole donnée, je me suis souvent sentie désarmée puisque dans une totale incompréhension. Je n'ai jamais pu comprendre que des employés du musée qui avaient assisté à toutes les rencontres de concertation, aux nombreuses conversations souvent très émouvantes, qui avaient comme moi entendu les souhaits exprimés pour retrouver la dignité, suivi le développement des concepts dans les ateliers de création avec différents experts autochtones (artistes, experts culturels, archéologues), et constaté l'émotion palpable des représentants de chaque nation face à des artefacts issus de leur culture⁴; comment, suite à ces trois années consacrées à l'écoute la plus totale, ne pas vouloir absolument tout faire pour y répondre ? C'est comme si, tout au long de ce processus, ils avaient été dans une salle d'attente avant de reprendre les rênes quand les choses devenaient sérieuses, c'est-à-dire quand les étapes de production se mettent en branle et qu'il n'y aura plus de retour possible. La pression devient alors très forte pour réaliser l'exposition *qu'ils* (direction, conservateur, chargé de projet, designer interne au musée, production audio-visuelle, etc) avaient en tête.

4. Des représentants des onze nations autochtones furent invités à choisir les artefacts. Ils furent réunis soit dans la réserve du musée soit dans leur communauté, le choix des artefacts se faisant alors à l'aide des fiches des objets. Si ce ne sont pas les porteurs de culture qui choisissent les artefacts qui seront exposés, ce n'est plus eux qui parlent à travers ces objets mais les conservateurs.



Tout au long du développement de l'exposition, différents outils permettent de vérifier que rien n'est perdu du message à livrer. Par exemple, est-ce que les objectifs exprimés par différents intervenants seront rencontrés par le biais des thématiques retenues ? Quatre des neufs thématiques sont ici visibles.

À titre de chercheuse partenaire invitée par le musée, j'ai dirigé une grande concertation auprès des onze Nations autochtones du Québec dans le cadre du développement d'une exposition de synthèse et de références portant sur les Premiers Peuples du Québec. Cette démarche se voulait exemplaire, une expérience pour aller le plus loin possible⁵ pour atteindre le niveau de l'action collective en milieu muséal. Six mois furent consacrés à la définition des approches, du programme de concertation et du cadre éthique, deux années à la tournée de concertation (2010-2012) et une autre année à la co-création collaborative (2013). Le Mamo (ensemble), un comité consultatif composé d'un représentant par nation, fut constitué afin de nous assister pour l'organisation des séjours sur le terrain et de nous aviser tout au long du processus. La tournée de concertation aura permis d'aller à la rencontre de plus de 700 personnes et de collaborer avec plus d'une soixantaine d'artistes et d'experts culturels de chaque Nation. C'est par le biais de différentes activités menées sur cinq jours dans chacune des dix-huit communautés visitées par une équipe de cinq personnes, que 2000 pages de verbatim, 250 heures de matériel vidéographique et

5. C'est grâce à des subventions obtenues auprès de différents organismes dont le CRSH, le MDEIE, le Conseil des arts et lettres du Canada, Conseil des arts du Québec et Patrimoine CANADA que La BRV et DCM financèrent en grande partie la tenue de la concertation, l'analyse des contenus, les ateliers de création, la production audio-visuelle et les publications dont deux livres et une archive numérique. Un investissement de près de 1,000,000\$.

plus de 10,000 photographies furent récoltées. Cette tournée nous a également permis de constituer un répertoire de près de 200 personnes-ressources dans les domaines artistique et culturel. Un rapport fut remis à chaque communauté ainsi que tout le matériel concernant chaque participant (verbatim, photos, entrevues filmées). Un solide réseau de personnes soudées par la confiance mutuelle a résulté de cette grande aventure et les collaborations se poursuivent encore à ce jour. Cet imposant dispositif commandait un réel changement de paradigme de la conduite des projets d'exposition pour le musée promoteur. Par exemple, des rapports historiques avaient été commandés à des chercheurs universitaires, pour la grande majorité non autochtone, avant le début de mon mandat et je n'ai jamais voulu les lire. Mon intérêt allait aux porteurs de culture, à ce qu'ils avaient à dire de leur propre histoire mais surtout de leur réalité contemporaine. C'est par la conversation, fondement des sociétés à tradition orale, initiée avec de petits groupes d'aînés, d'adolescents et de jeunes adultes, que nous avons exploré les multiples facettes d'une simple question : que voulez-vous dire ? Pour des institutions qui misent sur les connaissances académiques écrites pour donner la crédibilité à leurs expositions, une telle prise de position dès le début de ma collaboration au projet était déstabilisante.

La réponse à la question posée s'est exprimée sur 2000 pages de verbatim. Il était impératif que ce soit les porteurs de culture qui condensent et organisent cette information, travail qui fut réalisé lors de deux ateliers de trois jours chacun tenus en territoire autochtone avec des représentants des onze nations. Le matériel fut organisé en trois grands axes, neuf thématiques et une soixantaine de sous-thématiques avec, au centre, l'Être autochtone, défini comme étant une énergie dynamique de relations entre toutes les entités de l'univers. Les ateliers de création qui ont suivi⁶ ont profilé l'exposition souhaitée : un parcours non dirigé et non linéaire, le visiteur doit être totalement libre de déambuler à sa guise à travers les contenus organisés en îlots, en fait des installations de nature artistique immersives qui nous font ressentir le monde autochtone, disposées de façon organique, sans début ni fin. Les artefacts sont au centre de ces installations qui les mettent en scène comme éléments centraux du discours. Une forte présence de la vidéo permet de rendre vivante et actuelle la parole autochtone.

À l'étape du concept, le document déposé ne tiendra pas compte des thématiques qui avait été retenues lors de la concertation. Le comité scientifique du musée, à parité autochtone, exprimera fortement son désaccord en soulignant que rien dans ce document ne correspondait à ce qui avait été exprimé par les deux années de concertation. On me dira alors que le musée n'est pas tenu de suivre les recommandations de son comité scientifique, celui-ci étant consultatif.

6. Trois ateliers de création (concept, objets, espace) ont eu lieu impliquant une trentaine d'artistes, concepteurs, archéologue et experts culturels des onze nations. Pour une description complète de la méthodologie et des résultats voir l'annexe Ateliers créatifs de Voix, Visages, Paysages : *Les Premiers Peuples et le XXI^e siècle*.

Je me rends compte maintenant qu'alors que je me considérais partenaire à part entière de ce projet, pour le musée j'étais probablement tout aussi « consultative » que son comité scientifique. Sur 300 objets qui avaient été choisis par les membres des Premières nations et des Inuit, seulement 30 seront dans l'exposition. J'ai rédigé une centaine de vignettes-témoignages pour accompagner les objets à partir de ce que les gens avaient dit à propos des objets qu'ils avaient choisis, aucune ne sera utilisée. Très peu des recommandations des groupes de créateurs ont été suivies. Celles de Claude Kistabish, archéologue anishnabe nous ayant conseillé sur la mise en espace des objets archéologiques, n'ont pas été retenues, bien que le dispositif correspond parfaitement à ce qu'il nous avait demandé d'éviter : présenter les objets sans mise en contexte. Bataille épique, aussi, pour imposer l'emploi du « nous » dans la rédaction des textes : la direction des expositions me dira alors que « c'est le musée qui parle et nous ne sommes pas un musée autochtone ». Pourtant le musée recevra à la même époque une exposition Maori où tous les textes étaient rédigés en employant cette forme. Là encore le comité scientifique tentera d'inverser cette décision, une lettre sera même écrite, mais sans succès. L'exposition n'est pas celle que tous ces gens rencontrés pendant trois ans avaient réfléchie. Une situation des plus problématiques lorsque certains d'entre eux sont venus voir l'exposition et n'ont pas reconnu leur participation. Situation qu'il m'a fallu gérer.

Guérison

Suite à cette expérience, j'avais le sentiment d'avoir trompé les 700 personnes rencontrées dans leurs communautés et les penseurs et créateurs avec lesquels j'avais travaillé qui avaient cru que cette fois-ci ce serait différent. La guérison ne serait pas possible si tous ces contenus restaient dans des boîtes, invisibles, jamais diffusés. Une dernière rencontre de concertation sur trois jours sera tenue à Wendake (Design, 2014) avec la participation d'une soixantaine de représentants autochtones pour décider ensemble de ce qui devait advenir de tout le matériel recueilli. Il fut alors demandé que des outils de transfert soient conçus pour donner accès au matériel surtout aux membres des Premières Nations et aux Inuit, mais que pour l'instant aucune analyse ne soit initiée. En tant que groupe de recherche nous aurions en effet pu développer nombre de projets d'étude sur ce riche matériel mais ne le ferions pas. Trois années supplémentaires de travail seront nécessaires pour répondre à cette demande de transfert : la production de deux livres (un sur les contenus l'autre sur la méthodologie), d'une archive numérique où la parole est livrée tel que donnée ainsi que d'une tournée de dix-huit communautés réalisées sur une période de deux ans, communautés qui avaient été visitées lors de la concertation. Ce retour vers ceux qui nous avaient fait confiance et qui avaient peu de chance de visiter l'exposition nous a permis de leur présenter les livres, l'archive numérique sur internet et une projection 360 de l'exposition. Toujours dans notre objectif d'*empowerment*, nous avons offert des formations aux enseignants, aux conseils de bande, aux centres culturels sur comment utiliser l'archive et les témoignages à des fins de transmission culturelle.

En fait, le livre « *Voix Visage Paysages* » (Kaine, et al., 2016b) constitué uniquement de témoignages, est à l'image de notre idée de ce qu'aurait dû être cette exposition, il n'est en aucun cas le catalogue de l'exposition inaugurée en 2013. Il s'agit d'une réparation après coup dans la mesure de ce que je pouvais faire. Je n'ai pas baissé les bras face aux engagements que j'avais pris. Ma parole est absente de cet ouvrage sauf pour la préface. Mon travail, avec la collaboration de Jean Tanguay, Jacques Kurtness et Carl Morasse, a été de constituer une trame narrative à partir des 2000 pages de verbatim et des archives photographiques. Les objets présentés sont ceux qui avaient été sélectionnés par les participants aux ateliers et ce sont leurs commentaires qui tiennent lieu de vignettes. En annexe, les gens qui ont participé au choix des objets, aux ateliers de réflexion et de création, les gens qui ont thématisé le contenu, tous sont nommés et les résultats de leur travail présenté. J'avais enfin le sentiment de la mission accomplie, rassurée de savoir que tout cela existerait quelque part : non, nous ne serions pas encore une fois les Indiens anonymes, le peuple invisible⁷.

Comment

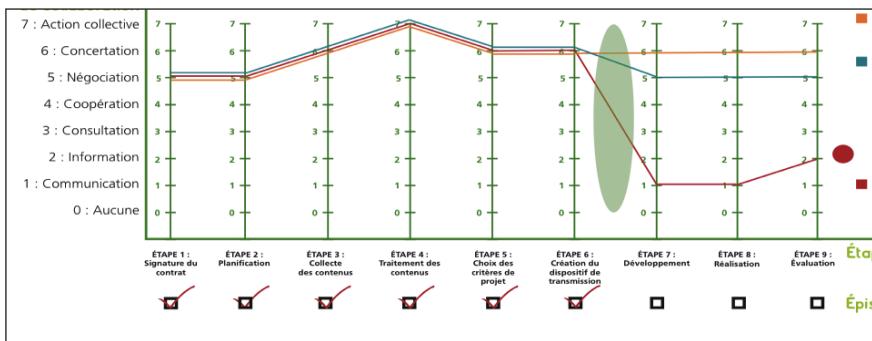
Comme je l'ai exprimé plus haut, l'exposition est pour moi un médium d'émanicipation. Dans cet esprit, il faut utiliser toutes les étapes de production comme un potentiel lieu d'*empowerment*. Pour ce faire, la formation est essentielle, non seulement auprès des collaborateurs autochtones mais aussi du personnel du musée. La formation permet aux membres des communautés de prendre pouvoir sur comment leur culture est transmise ; et elle est essentielle au sein du musée pour être en mesure de relever le défi de la décolonisation. Lorsqu'on est seul comme commissaire autochtone, c'est une responsabilité énorme d'à la fois mener la concertation, veiller à ce que les étapes de développement lui répondent et de devoir former les membres du personnel du musée qui n'adhèrent pas d'emblée à ces méthodes qui sont étrangères à leur formation. Il est impératif de former le personnel avant plutôt que pendant les travaux d'une telle ampleur qui s'inscrivent dans un autre paradigme de la culture muséale. Cette responsabilité doit être prise et inscrite par la direction, elle ne peut incomber à une seule personne.

C'est une position difficile à tenir que de vouloir sincèrement maintenir de bonnes relations avec le personnel du musée et, à titre de chercheur, que d'observer et de relever leurs erreurs qui, en fait, n'en sont pas selon leur paradigme. Si d'avoir participé activement à la démarche a pu sensibiliser plusieurs employés, la direction elle n'est pas avec nous sur le terrain et n'accumulent aucune de ces expériences formatrices et transformatrices vers une sensibilité nouvelle. D'après mes observations, très partielles puisque je n'ai pas accès à ce qui se joue à l'intérieur du musée, ce dernier applique un système hautement

7. En référence au très beau documentaire de Richard DesJardins et Robert Monderie, qui racontent l'histoire de la nation anishnabe du Québec et dénoncent ses conditions de vie actuelle. Office National du Film.

hiérarchisé de prises de décisions qui reviennent en bout de ligne à la direction des expositions.

La position d'écoute plutôt que de prescription qu'exige la collaboration par concertation demande de s'adapter continuellement au contexte et de créer les méthodes au fur et à mesure que le projet avance. Le seul projet auquel j'ai participé qui peut être qualifié d'action concertée fut celui de la maison de la culture innue d'Ékuanitshik. Si au départ la coordonnatrice du projet m'avait avisée qu'il y avait beaucoup de dissension, différents groupes familiaux s'affrontant en étant pour ou contre le projet et d'autres accusant un groupe en particulier de s'en approprier pour son propre profit, le projet fut un succès en tant qu'agent de changement communautaire. Nous avons développé une méthode de travail nous permettant d'atténuer graduellement les effets de ce conflit : en commençant par travailler avec des membres d'un même groupe familial avec lesquels la confiance s'est installée rapidement, et ensuite avec des groupes constitués autour d'expertises, lesquelles avaient été identifiées lors de l'étape d'inventaire des ressources de la communauté : ceux qui aiment écrire, ceux qui aiment documenter, faire de la recherche, de la photo, du dessin, les artisans maîtrisant les techniques traditionnelles, etc. Ces équipes d'experts regroupaient donc des gens des différentes familles partageant une même passion, un même savoir-faire. Cette approche participa à opérer un changement positif dans la communauté comme nous le démontrèrent plusieurs témoignages : « C'est un projet qui nous a réuni, on ne se parlait plus avant ». Dans le contexte muséal, il me semble que les méthodologies de travail des différents corps de métier impliqués soient trop rigides, trop linéaires pour travailler avec des cultures ayant un autre mode de pensée. À mon avis, la méthodologie standard de design d'exposition est dépassée, et à revoir complètement pour le contexte des projets interculturels.



Échelle d'évaluation des niveaux de collaboration atteints selon les étapes de développement d'une exposition en contexte communautaire (ligne bleue) et en contexte muséal (ligne rouge). Quand arrive le moment de la production, il y a une volonté manifeste de reprise de pouvoir, ce qui engendre une terrible perte d'énergie et de fonds, mais surtout de confiance

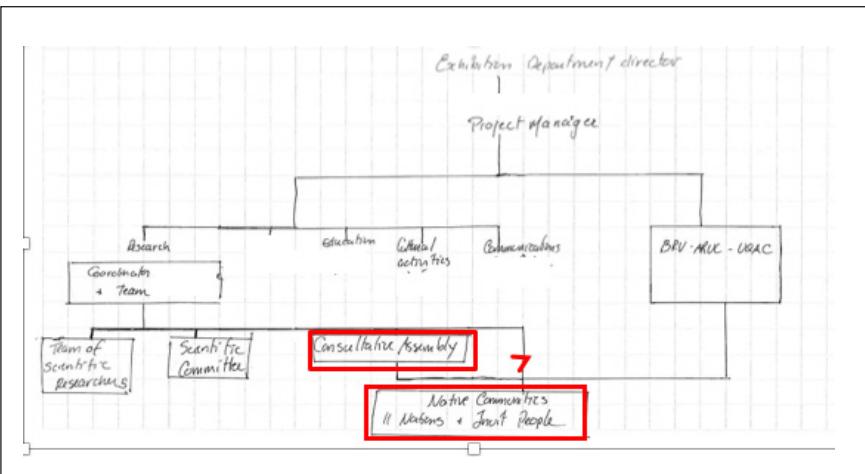
en la démarche pour les partenaires autochtones à qui, au départ, nous avions offert une page blanche.

Mais que s'est-il passé ?

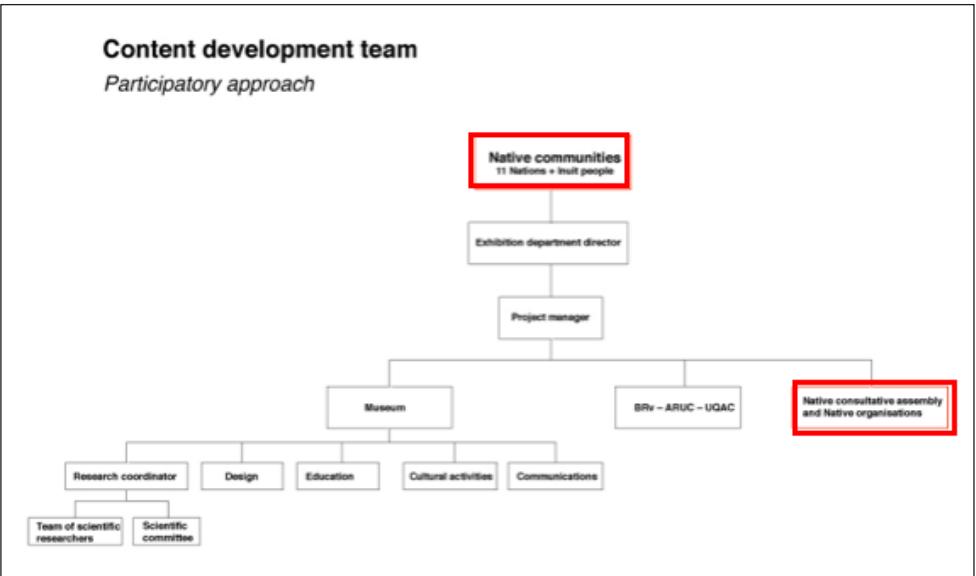
J'étais littéralement obsédée par le besoin de trouver des réponses, des raisons suite à cet échec de ce que je voulais être une démarche totale et exemplaire de concertation. J'aurais voulu identifier une seule grande cause fondamentale, celle qui expliquerait tout. Mais c'est plutôt un ensemble de petits facteurs accumulés qui font échec, et cela m'est d'autant plus difficile à accepter qu'elles sont, somme toute, assez faciles à résoudre : la personnalité de certains, le manque de sensibilité envers la cause autochtone et les méfaits du colonialisme pour d'autres, la méconnaissance des cultures autochtones, la méconnaissance des approches de concertation, mais aussi et surtout peut-être, le manque d'humilité pour rester derrière ceux que nous aidons à se représenter (Kaine et al., 2017). Le roulement de personnel a aussi été un obstacle de taille, l'apprentissage d'une autre façon de faire ayant été à recommencer à de multiples reprises. Un manque de leadership à l'interne pour maintenir le cap sur la collaboration entière avec les Premiers Peuples s'est fait cruellement sentir lorsque le chargé de projet ayant initié le projet avec nous a quitté pour d'autres fonctions.

La vision que le musée a de son rôle est tout aussi problématique, car il se perçoit comme autorité suprême en termes de transmission du patrimoine. En résulte un manque de confiance envers nos compétences comme autochtones : plusieurs membres du personnel des musées croient qu'ils détiennent Le savoir, que leur système de connaissances occidentales est supérieur au nôtre, ce qui fera naître une attitude paternaliste et condescendante difficile à supporter. On me dira par exemple « toi tu veux travailler pour les autochtones mais ce n'est pas ça qu'il faut que tu fasses ici, il faut que tu travailles pour le musée ». Je me suis demandée à l'époque, encore aujourd'hui d'ailleurs : cet ensemble de « petites raisons » est-il en fait la manifestation d'un racisme systémique, un parasite qui imprégnerait tellement profondément le corps muséal qu'il ne serait que difficilement identifiable ?

Bien des obstacles à contourner donc pour une mission qui s'avèrera impossible sans l'implication totale de l'institution muséale. Une des façons de le faire est de manière incontestable d'identifier un porteur et gardien de l'intention collaborative à l'intérieur du musée et que cette personne soit partie prenante des décisions. Une des pierres d'achoppement importantes à la création de cet espace de rencontre est la posture diamétralement opposée des uns et des autres, des ententes de collaboration solides doivent donc être négociées au départ. La question centrale en sera : qui décide ?



La gouvernance « Top Down » des musées limite assurément la possibilité du travail collaboratif. Voici l'organigramme type de ce type de gouvernance : l'assemblée consultative autochtone et les Premières nations sont dans le bas du schéma et n'ont aucun pouvoir décisionnel, ils sont considérés comme étant consultatifs.



Il faut inverser la structure de gouvernance pour la réalisation d'une exposition par l'approche collaborative de concertation : travailler avec les onze nations pour leur représentation par l'exposition, ce qui implique nécessairement que le comité consultatif autochtone et le comité scientifique à majorité autochtone

soient décisionnels au même titre que la direction des expositions et que les organisations de recherche qui ont fourni l'argent, la méthodologie et l'énergie pour réaliser la concertation.

Auhourd'hui

Pour moi c'est la prochaine action qui est la bonne jusqu'à preuve du contraire, c'est elle qui me permet de répondre à certaines questions générées par l'action précédente, c'est l'action qui réfléchit. Cette prochaine action s'est avérée être la création d'une Chaire UNESCO qui m'a offert le contexte pour réfléchir en collectif sur ce que serait une véritable gouvernance autochtone de la recherche (Chaire UNESCO-UQAC, 2020). Ce sont d'abord quarante experts culturels autochtones qui sont venus réfléchir avec nous en mai 2018 pendant quatre jours à ce que devrait être cette chaire. Puis trois comités, autochtone ou à majorité autochtone, les comités de gestion, des Sages et scientifique, ont travaillé conjointement à développer des approches, des modèles de travail et des outils de gestion en recherche autochtone qui soient arrimés à la pensée autochtone. Le Comité des Sages a proposé le concept de *Nuitshimakan* (langue innue), une dynamique relationnelle au sein de la chaire où les co-marcheurs ou co-voyageurs, chercheurs communautaires et chercheurs universitaires, collaborent d'égal à égal, marchent côte à côte, se soutiennent mutuellement et donnent sans retenue.

Ce modèle de gouvernance autochtone de la recherche est-il applicable en muséologie ? Dans une volonté de décolonisation, la question *comment aller plus loin pour perfectionner notre travail avec les Premiers Peuples* doit continuellement nous préoccuper. Comment arriver à ce que les visiteurs autochtones d'une exposition les concernant aient un sentiment de reconnaissance identitaire tel qu'exprimé par ce commentaire d'Anastasia Nollin (innue) en regard de la nouvelle exposition du centre culturel de sa communauté : « C'est nous qui est là, j'entre chez moi quand j'entre dans la salle, je reconnaiss notre monde... J'ai été très touchée, très valorisée, je suis fière et rassurée » (propos recueillis lors de l'évaluation du processus de concertation ayant mené à la création de l'exposition, Ékuanitshik, 2016).

Une dévalorisante impression d'avoir été instrumentalisée

Suite à l'appel à l'action de la commission Vérité et réconciliation,⁸ plusieurs institutions, musées, conseils d'administration et universités recherchent des candidats autochtones et je ne suis pas certaine que leurs intentions soient

8. Menée de 2007 à 2015 à l'initiative du gouvernement canadien, la Commission de vérité et réconciliation a publié 94 appels à l'action exhortant tous les paliers de gouvernement et la société civile à modifier leurs politiques et leurs programmes pour réparer les torts causés par les pensionnats autochtones et pour aller de l'avant avec la réconciliation.

toujours louables. En tant qu'autochtone, je vois que je dois être prudente avant de répondre à de telles demandes. Il faut vérifier les intentions : la volonté de changer les choses est-elle réelle où est-ce que cette organisation, une fois que j'aurai accepté le mandat, mènera son propre agenda à travers plutôt qu'avec moi ? Décoloniser les rapports entre institutions muséales et peuples autochtones implique de changer en profondeur les façons de faire, d'être attentif et assidu à faire ce qu'exige ce changement car une démarche incomplète fera plus de mal que de bien. Comme nous l'a rappelé Hugues de Varine lors de sa venue à l'UQAC (2005), il faut cesser de croire que l'on peut parler de la culture des autres à partir sa propre perspective. Les projets collaboratifs utilisant la concertation deviennent inévitablement des outils de revendications politiques dans le contexte d'oppression que subissent encore les peuples autochtones. Jusqu'à quel point un musée d'État veut-il s'engager sur cette voie ?

Dans le cas d'un engagement en ce sens, cette institution a la responsabilité de bien faire les choses, de savoir partir d'une coquille vide et de laisser émerger la vérité. Pour y arriver, elle doit cesser de continuellement mettre en scène sa propre vérité au détriment de celle des autres.

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Decolonizing collections: A legal perspective on the restitution of cultural artifacts

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Moreover, I hope that the conquerors to come will learn through these reflections not to strip the cities they submit, and not to use the calamities of others as the ornament of their homeland.

Polybius, Histories. Book IX, Fragment III

ABSTRACT

Despite an abundance of international instruments devoted to the restitution of illegally exported cultural artifacts, they usually exhaust their usefulness regarding artifacts looted during the Colonial Era.

These requests are indeed confronted with various obstacles, whether it is the limited scope of the conventions, their non-retroactive nature, or the expiration of periods of limitation. In the absence of applicable international standards, plaintiffs must then refer to national laws and courts of justice in the States concerned in the dispute. However, due to the complexity of situations and the diversity of legal systems, legal proceedings are often unpredictable and unsatisfactory. In these circumstances, many restitutions today are the result of alternative processes (voluntary restitution, mediation, or arbitration) which allow the participants to invoke moral, ethical, or deontological principles and lead to equitable solutions adapted to each situation.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Restitution, Decolonization, Law.

RÉSUMÉ

Décoloniser les collections : perspective juridique sur la restitution des biens spoliés

Malgré une abondance d'instruments internationaux consacrés à la restitution des biens illicitement exportés, leur utilité révèle ses limites lorsque vient le moment d'examiner les demandes portant sur des biens culturels spoliés durant la période coloniale. Ces dernières sont en effet confrontées à divers obstacles, qu'il s'agisse du champ d'application restreint des conventions, de leur nature non rétroactive ou encore de l'écoulement des délais de prescription. En l'absence de normes internationales sur lesquelles fonder leurs requêtes, les demandeurs doivent alors se référer aux législations nationales et aux tribunaux des États concernés par le litige. En raison de la complexité des situations et de la diversité des systèmes juridiques, les procédures judiciaires se révèlent cependant souvent imprévisibles et insatisfaisantes. Dans ces circonstances, nombre de restitutions sont aujourd'hui le résultat de processus alternatifs (restitution volontaire, médiation ou arbitrage) qui permettent aux participants d'invoquer des principes moraux, éthiques ou déontologiques pertinents et d'aboutir à des solutions équitables adaptées à chaque situation.

Mots clés : Biens culturels, restitution, décolonisation, droit.



Introduction¹

As one of the most visible manifestations of a people's unique identity, cultural artifacts² have always been a source of wonder and curiosity, but have also often been intentionally targeted to punish, or sometimes to help eradicate, the community they belonged to. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries in particular, the massive displacement of cultural artifacts from colonized territories resulted both from punitive expeditions, military lootings, or war tributes, as well as from trades and exchanges for collection purposes or to meet the “necessities” of scientific research³.

As they gained independence, formerly colonized States, and more recently Indigenous peoples, naturally showed themselves eager to recover their heritage, many important elements of which are still scattered in the museums of the former colonial metropolises and among private collectors. Since the 1960s, these “new” actors on the international scene have notably demanded that restitution principles similar to those put in place in the aftermath of armed conflicts be applied to them. They also base their demands on the need to re-establish the sacred links between population, territory and cultural heritage, and on a broader notion of the right to self-determination of peoples who must be able to revitalise and develop their cultural identity (Pratt & Kowalski, 2011). With the release of the Sarr-Savoy Report in November 2018, at the French government’s behest, these restitution requests have benefited from a renewed interest. However, despite the media and political enthusiasm of recent years, the restitution of cultural artifacts continues to meet resistance. Skeptics and opponents rely on practical, logistical, economic, or even philosophical and nationalistic arguments to justify the conservation of these items in collections, public or private, far from their land of origin. In most cases, it is ultimately the law which proves the most successful instrument to deter, delay or prevent restitution. Despite a plethora of legal instruments devoted to cultural heritage, these indeed prove to be largely ineffective in ensuring the return of artifacts looted during the Colonial Era.

1. This contribution takes up various elements discussed in more detail in my doctoral thesis on reparations for cultural damages (unpublished), and in an article written in collaboration with Prof. Bernard Duhaime on legal disputes surrounding the ownership of the Dead Sea Scrolls. (Duhaime & Labadie, 2016).

2. Regarding material cultural heritage, the recent literature tends to refer to them as cultural “artifacts” or “objects” rather than “cultural property”. While keeping in mind that this expression can be criticized as well, the present paper also favors the expression “cultural artifact” to emphasize that heritage cannot be – and should not be – strictly apprehended through the lens of “private property”.

3. The acquisitions of artifacts during the Colonial Era did not always stem from violent, unlawful, or immoral acts. Although it can be argued that it took place within unequal power dynamics preventing “fair exchanges”, many items were traded or purchased in good faith, or gifted by the local communities. Moreover, members of those communities were also often skilled merchants. They were therefore not always helpless in the face of Westerners’ requests, as evidenced by the existence of local networks for the reproduction of cultural artifacts intended to be sold (Cornu & Renold, 2010; Desmoulins, 2012; Pratt & Kowalski, 2011).

In this context, this article proposes to examine briefly the international legal instruments aimed at prohibiting looting and regulating the possible restitution of cultural artifacts, and to underline the main provisions which limit their scope and make them inapplicable to most of the claims presented today. In the absence of suitable international instruments, and in the absence of a legal regime designed specifically for cultural heritage, it will then be possible to show that courts of justice are generally ill-equipped to resolve restitution claims in a fully satisfactory manner. This will include going over some of the main practical and procedural obstacles that may arise, in particular when the dispute is of an international nature. Finally, this paper will highlight the relevance of resorting to alternative restitution mechanisms that make it possible to bypass legal and judicial obstacles and to develop original solutions adapted to each case.

Restitution of cultural property: from practice to law

From a historical point of view, the practice of restitution of cultural artifacts emerged between States during the 16th and 17th centuries, although it only appears occasionally in peace treaties signed in the aftermath of conflicts, and essentially stems from political and diplomatic objectives (Perrot, 2005). At the beginning of the 19th century, during the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the European nations also demanded that France return the numerous archives and artworks seized by Napoleon's armies, and most of the peace treaties concluded until the end of the century contained similar restitution clauses. Those signed at the end of the First World War almost systematically contained provisions relating to the restitution of looted artifacts, or to compensation by items of equivalent value (Desmoulins, 2012; Francioni, 2008; Perrot, 2005; Prrott & Kowalski, 2011). Then in 1943, faced with the scale of the looting perpetrated by the Nazis, 17 allied countries signed the *London Declaration*, by which they reserved the right to invalidate any transfer of property carried out in a territory occupied by Germany, whether it was the result of looting or a seemingly legal transaction. Finally, the 1945 *Paris Conference on Reparations* provided that cultural artifacts looted by the German Army, if they could not be returned, should as far as possible be replaced by equivalent items.

This empirical and sometimes opportunistic practice has gradually embedded the principle of restitution in international law. In addition to the provisions protecting all property of a civil nature, the specific prohibition on looting cultural artifacts is thus recognized by The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907, which also impose an obligation on States to guard against the violation of this prohibition⁴.

4. These conventions do not, however, explicitly provide for an obligation of restitution, and are limited to protecting "works of art" which only constitute (arguably) a restricted category of cultural artifacts. Several military codes of conduct and international law codification attempts also previously aimed at limiting or prohibiting the destruction and spoliation of cultural heritage, such

This principle was then enshrined in the 1954 *Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* and its two protocols which prohibit the export of artifacts from occupied territory and explicitly require their return to the territory from which they have been taken.

In 1970, the law relating to wartime was supplemented by the *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* which commits the international community to mobilize, at all times, against illicit trafficking of cultural artifacts. Then in 1995, in the absence of a solution to respond to international disputes, the *UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects* was adopted. Developed at UNESCO's request, it aims to apply uniform treatment to requests for the return of stolen or illegally exported cultural artifacts and urges Member States to standardize their legislation accordingly.

Even more recently, several United Nations Security Council resolutions have explicitly addressed the obligations of States with regard to the restitution of cultural artifacts illegally exported as a result of armed conflicts or terrorist activities, and, in 2006, the International Committee of the Red Cross established that the prohibition of the looting of cultural heritage and the obligation to return artifacts illegally exported from an occupied territory fall under customary international law and therefore apply to all States, regardless of whether or not they have ratified the aforementioned international instruments (Henckaerts & Doswald-Beck, 2006)⁵. Finally, it is also worth mentioning that concerning Indigenous peoples in particular, the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, although not a binding instrument, calls on States to provide reparation – which may include restitution, with regard to cultural artifacts of which they have been deprived⁶. However, despite this normative arsenal in terms of the prohibition of looting and the obligation to return cultural artifacts, the existing instruments often prove inadequate to resolve the demands relating to the Colonial Era.

The limits of international law

The first, and arguably main obstacle, is that these instruments are non-retroactive; that is, they cannot be applied to an act committed before they came into force⁷. Regarding cultural heritage, whether it is the *Hague Conventions* of 1899,

as the *Lieber Code* (1863), the *Draft International Declaration on the Laws and Customs of War* (1874) or the *Oxford's Manual* (1880).

5. There are also many other resolutions and recommendations from UNESCO, the United Nations General Assembly, regional organizations and NGOs such as the International Council of Museums.

6. Despite its nonbinding nature, States such as Bolivia have taken steps to integrate the *UN Declaration* into their domestic law, while the Inter-American and African courts of human rights have made explicit references to its dispositions in several decisions in recent years.

7. The principle of non-retroactivity is a legal safeguard recognized at the national (often included

1907 and 1954 relating to armed conflicts, or the 1970 UNESCO Convention and that of UNIDROIT, their provisions do not concern events occurring before their respective date of coming into force. Consequently, cultural artifacts acquired through colonial conquests cannot be returned on the basis of the existing instruments⁸. In the absence of retroactively applicable norms, it is therefore necessary to examine the law existing when the spoliation occurred. Unfortunately, many practices, now considered criminal or immoral, were widespread at the time they happened. In matters of spoliation, the rights to loot and plunder in time of war were widely accepted customs⁹. That being said, the reference to the law in force at the time generally refers to the law as it was codified and interpreted by the victors, and it was most often formulated in a way that served their interests.

In addition to their non-retroactive nature, international instruments also contain various provisions which limit their scope. The *Hague Conventions* of 1899 and 1907, for example, are limited to situations of armed conflict between recognized States. Developed by Western colonial metropolises, these conventions thus exclude colonial conquests and wars of national liberation that did not qualify as interstate conflicts¹⁰. As highlighted above, European nations who benefited from colonialism usually used International Law as a functional instrument for their expansionist interests. Specifically, the notion of *terra nullius* served to justify their occupation, expropriation and looting of Indigenous peoples' lands around the world.

The 1970 Convention is characterized by an extremely narrow scope. Under its article 7b, the only cultural artifacts taken into consideration are those meeting the double criteria of coming from a museum (or similar *institution*), and of being inventoried. Such provision therefore excludes cultural artifacts which have been the subject of misappropriation before their registration, and those

in constitutional texts), and international level (for example in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, or in the *Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties*).

8. While several norms relating to cultural heritage in situations of armed conflict are now recognized as having customary force, it is up to the courts to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether the standard considered already had customary force in 1805 or 1915, for example.

9. From antiquity until the 20th century, the right to loot was generally regarded as an inevitable consequence of war, even as the prerogative of the victors. Around 370 BCE, Xenophon thus affirmed in the *Cyropedia*, that "it is a universal and eternal law that, in a city taken on enemies in a state of war, everything, people and goods, belongs to the winner". From a legal point of view, the "right to appropriate what was taken from the enemy", to use the words of the jurist Hugo Grotius in the 17th century, was a lawful and codified practice of war throughout Europe.

10. Before the promulgation of the *Geneva Conventions* of 1949, the outbreak of war, in a legal sense, was through a declaration between recognized States. However, the colonized territories were generally regarded by Western powers as "barbarians" or "uncivilized" and not as States. The conflicts between their populations and the colonial forces were therefore not legally considered to be wars. Moreover, The *Hague Conventions* of 1899 and 1907 are only applicable *between Member States*. The Second Protocol to the 1954 Convention, which came into force in 2004, extends the provisions of the Convention to non-international conflicts, but is not retroactive either.

belonging to individuals or communities. Finally, as regards the UNIDROIT Convention, although it allows the requests for restitutions to benefit from a relatively uniform judicial treatment in a few Member States, it sets a time limit on these requests by imposing a limitation period of three years from the moment the plaintiff has all the information necessary to proceed with a legal action and, in all cases, of 50 years from the date of the theftⁱⁱ. The Convention provides a few exceptions to this limit regarding cultural artifacts forming an integral part of an identified monument or archaeological site, artifacts belonging to a public collection, and cultural artifacts used by a tribal or Indigenous community as part of that community's traditional or ritual use.

International instruments thus suffer from several impediments, whether it is the requirement for the ratification of texts (customary norms being recognized in the context of armed conflicts only), their non-retroactivity, or the constraints fixed to their respective scope, which prevent their application to spoliation perpetrated during the Colonial Era. Even though it could sometimes be possible to refer to the spirit of these conventions, to the principles of justice which presided over their elaboration, or even to the need for an updated interpretation of these instruments, those arguments do not have legal force. Moreover, it is also clear that disputes relating to cultural artifacts generally face additional obstacles due to their complexity.

First, restitution claims are often complicated by the diversity of artifacts and legal entities involved. Indeed, there is a wide variety of situations not only depending on the nature of the item, but also depending on whether the claims are addressed from State to State, from State to individual, from individual to State, to a community, an institution (public or private) or another individual, or any combination of these actors. The claims may also relate to artifacts located within the State of the plaintiff, or in another State. Finally, such properties may be in the hands of private owners, while still being subjected to national legislation prohibiting the exportation of cultural artifacts, for example.

Second, the parties usually rely on a wide range of arguments to justify their request for restitution, or to oppose it. By way of illustration, in the case of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan base their claims on territorial (the place of discovery of the Scrolls), humanitarian (their illegal dispossession following the annexation of East Jerusalem by Israel in 1967) and

ⁱⁱ. Most legal systems have established time limits between the commission of a crime and legal action. Once this period has elapsed, it is no longer possible for the victim to initiate legal proceedings. In this case, we speak of "extinctive" prescription. Conversely, the principle of limitation may also, under certain conditions, make it possible to "gain" a right. A person could thus be recognized as the legitimate owner of an asset (for example a piece of land, a sculpture or a painting), when it has been in her possession for a certain amount of time. We then speak of "acquisitive" prescription. With the exception of the UNIDROIT Convention, instruments relating to cultural property are silent on prescription and leave States free to set their own limitation periods in their national laws.

legal arguments (Jordan claims to have proof of purchase of several manuscripts). For its part, Israel claims a status of “guardian” (rather than “owner”) and relies primarily on moral and religious principles, invoking the sacred history of the Jewish People and recalling that these scrolls are of fundamental importance for the heritage of Judaism (Duhaime & Labadie, 2016). However, to date, doctrine and case law do not provide a definitive answer to the question of the primacy between territorial ties and “privileged cultural links” formed between a community and an artifact originating from another country¹², nor to the question of the primacy among claims based on legal norms and those based on competing moral, ethical, or religious considerations.

Third, from a practical point of view, many restitution requests relate to objects acquired decades or centuries ago. In addition to the inapplicability of international instruments, these claims may thus be further complicated by the determination of the unlawful nature of the dispossession itself, or by material difficulties relating to the traceability of the artifacts insofar as they have often been subject to multiple transfers of ownership, nationally and internationally, which can obscure the chains of title. To support any claim for restitution, the plaintiff must indeed be able to prove “ownership” of this artifact. To establish their title, many States rely on the protective legislation they have adopted regarding their cultural heritage. However, States do not necessarily agree on the definition of what constitutes a “cultural artifact” and do not always exhaustively identify the items to which they attach particular importance. Moreover, as mentioned previously, many criteria can be used to determine the belonging of a property, and it can be recognized not from a legal point of view but rather with regard to the link established between the community and the property concerned. As for requests presented by individuals or communities, not only do they not always consider the artifacts to be “property” that can be privately owned (as required by most Western legal standards), but the older the spoliation, the more difficult it will be to present material evidence in support of their claim. Their requests will therefore often have to rely on costly, and sometimes controversial, anthropological, ethnographic, or geotechnical reports attesting to the geographical or cultural origin of the claimed artifacts.

The inadequacy of national courts

In the absence of applicable international standards, applicants must then refer to existing national laws in the States concerned by the request for restitution. However, States generally do not have a specific legal regime in place for cultural artifacts. These are then often treated as material goods like a car

¹². Cultural artifacts can be considered part of the heritage of a State without necessarily having a direct link with its territory or its culture. The ‘Mona Lisa’ for example, although not having any link with France, is now fully assimilated into the Louvre and French heritage (Prott & Kowalski, 2011; Cornu & Renold, 2010; Desmoulins, 2012).

or a computer, and are therefore subject to the provisions governing private property or contract law, and to the vagaries of private international law when requests for restitution go beyond national borders¹³.

In these cases, indeed, courts often come up against the problem of “conflicts of laws” that arises when laws from different countries or legal orders may apply to the same dispute. Depending on the situation at hand, the requests for restitution may, in fact, require a combination of public and private laws, of international and domestic laws, or of laws from different countries, with sometimes competing or even contradictory rules. When it comes to determining the law applicable to restitution claims, it is generally the “the law where the item is situated” (*lex rei sitae*) that is the consensus. However, courts do not necessarily agree on the “moment” that must be taken into consideration: is it the law of the country where the artifact is situated at the time of the claim? Or the law of the country where it was situated when it was acquired by its current owner? States such as France and Switzerland favor the law of the location on the day of the claim, while British and American courts tend to favor the law of the location on the day of the acquisition (Lagarde, 2006). In addition to these two options, “special attachment” solutions are sometimes offered to reconcile the parties. They aim to identify the legal system having the closest links to the situation in dispute, and they sometimes lead to the recognition of the legislation of the place of origin of a stolen cultural object (*lex originis*) as being the most appropriate (Desmoulins, 2012 ; Lalive d'Epinay, 1996).

Depending on the applicable law retained, the rules that will be used for the resolution of the dispute can then vary greatly, considering that States have developed different legal traditions. Restitution requests are thus complicated by legal rules, such as periods of limitations, the protection of *bona fide* buyers, standards relating to contract law, export control or burden of proof, of which modalities differ from one national legal order to another. These fluctuations in the identification of the law and the resulting applicable rules are a source of great uncertainty for plaintiffs (as well as for defendants) who may find themselves subject to more or less favorable legal provisions. Finally, in many cases, the inalienability of national collections¹⁴, the immunity from seizure of cultural artifacts on loans from foreign States (Le Moine, 2020), or the principle of State immunity¹⁵, can also be invoked to delay or prevent requests for

13. A notable exception concerns the properties looted by the Nazis. Many States responding to the *London Declaration* have put in place special legislative frameworks and restitution mechanisms for such properties. See Laloum, 2002; Lillteicher, 2007; Perrot, 2005; Rykner & Hershkovitch, 2011. We will limit ourselves to stressing that, despite these special frameworks, requests for the return of properties looted during the Second World War now often encounter problems similar to other requests, particularly when they have an international dimension.

14. In several States, such as France, national collections are protected by a “principle of inalienability” by virtue of which their components are considered to be national property and cannot be sold or transferred without a legislative amendment adopted by the Parliament.

15. Provided for by international and domestic laws, these jurisdictional immunities provide that

restitution¹⁶. As a result, the solutions proposed at the end of legal proceedings often prove unpredictable and unsatisfactory, both legally and ethically (Peters, 2012; Prrott & Kowalski, 2011).

Considered by many to be too long, too complex, and too costly, it is believed that relatively few restitutions are the direct result of a court injunction. By way of illustration, in a case which reveals the complexity of many disputes, an American court had ruled, after several years of proceedings, that the Greek Orthodox Church could recover icons looted from a Cypriot church on the grounds that the US-based trader, who bought them in Switzerland from a Turkish seller, did not ensure their provenance with all due diligence despite their dubious origin (Amineddoleh, 2020; Prrott & Kowalski, 2011).

If the various normative instruments provide a legal framework for the restitution of many cultural artifacts, it must nevertheless be noted that most claims have such specific characteristics that it is difficult to formulate legal principles or rules of general application. The diversity of cultural artifacts, the way in which they were acquired, the identity of their holders, and their trajectories, make any generalization questionable. Faced with the complexity of these historical, political, diplomatic, economic, or spiritual issues, the need to appeal to more flexible rules is undeniable.

Favoring alternative mechanisms

Although there is, as we have seen, no international legal obligation to return cultural objects acquired during the Colonial Era, their restitution is generally perceived as a moral duty and stems from a sense of obligation to repair past injustices (Desmoulins, 2012). To bypass the various legal and practical limits – or when legal proceedings have failed – many restitution disputes are now resolved by alternative mechanisms that make it possible to invoke historical, moral, ethical, or deontological principles in order to reach a satisfactory settlement.

Among the main alternative methods, mention should first be made of “voluntary returns”. Although relatively rare, a few States, institutions or individuals

a State can be protected against prosecution brought before a foreign court.

16. In the now famous *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer* case, the US Supreme Court ruled that Austria was not immune from a lawsuit in US courts. To reach this verdict, the plaintiff had to demonstrate that the claimed artworks had been stolen in violation of international law; that the Austrian State or one of its agencies (in this case the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere) was in possession of these artworks; and that the State or the agency in question was carrying on business in the United States. However, the court did not rule on the ownership of the paintings as such, and the case was ultimately settled through an arbitration process in Austria to avoid additional years of litigation (*Republic of Austria v. Altman*, 2004). On the other hand, in the case *Federal Republic of Germany et al. v. Philipp et al.* in 2021, the Supreme Court concluded that it had no jurisdiction to rule on a dispute between the German government and its own nationals over the forced sale of artworks during the years preceding the outbreak of the Second World War.

proceed to voluntary donations or restitutions¹⁷. For example, the Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow directly returned to the Wounded Knee Survivors' Association a shirt that belonged to an alleged victim of the 1890 massacre. Robert Peters reports that “[a]s part of the decision, the Council emphasized the fact that it did not act out of legal obligation, but rather on the basis of ethical and humanitarian considerations” (2012; Prott & Kowalski, 2011). In March 2021, a similar process was initiated by the Parisian Musée d’Orsay, which launched a procedure for the return of a Gustav Klimt painting, looted in Vienna in August 1938, to the beneficiaries of the collector Nora Stiasny¹⁸.

However, the majority of disputes today are resolved through mediation or arbitration¹⁹. Although often still long and costly, these processes have several important advantages. As they differ from the strict application of the law, they make it possible to appeal to norms and values other than legal ones, and they are more oriented towards the satisfaction of the parties and the reconciliation of their interests in order to achieve fair settlements. They also make it possible to directly involve various actors, such as museums, which can have a certain freedom in the management of their collections and thus the use of discretion to return items in their possession (Cornu & Renold, 2010; Desmoulins, 2012). The search for fair solutions adapted to each situation has thus led to the development of extremely varied solutions.

The return can, for example, be carried out in the context of an exchange. In 2007, the British Museum of Natural History returned the bodies of 13 Aboriginal ancestors to a community in Tasmania, in exchange for the conservation of DNA samples taken from the remains for scientific research (Cornu & Renold, 2010; Desmoulins, 2012). In the same vein, a 2006 agreement between Italy and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York provided that in exchange for the restitution of the Euphrinos Krater, the American museum would be loaned other items of equal beauty, historical and cultural significance (Amineddoleh, 2020; Cornu & Renold, 2010; Desmoulins, 2012). Agreements reached in mediations may also provide for the formal recognition of the importance of artifacts to the cultural heritage of one of the parties. The February 2002 agreement between France and Nigeria, for example, recognized Nigeria's ownership over Nok and Sokoto artworks, in exchange for a free and renewable 25-year loan to the Musée du Quai Branly (Cornu & Renold, 2010).

17. For Robert Peters, “The term ‘voluntary return’ indicates that the restoration of cultural objects takes place under three premises: firstly, the return is made without the request of financial compensation (as provided, for example, in the case of a bona fide purchase); secondly, the return is conducted without any formal (legal) procedure; and thirdly, the return has not been facilitated by the mediation of a third party” (2012).

18. « Annonce du lancement de la procédure de restitution du G. Klimt, “Rosiers sous les arbres” (Inv. RF 1980-195), conservé au musée d’Orsay », (2021).

19. Unlike mediation, arbitration processes are usually more formal, and their awards are binding like a court judgment.

The extrajudicial processes also allow for the arrangement of particular property regimes. In 1984, following the failure of legal proceedings, a co-ownership agreement concerning Aztec frescoes was put in place between the Fine Arts Museum in San Francisco and the National Institute of Anthropology and History of Mexico. It provided for a sharing of the paintings and of the costs relating to their exhibition and preservation between the two institutions. In some cases, museums that hold the artifacts may also accept that they be used by the community from which they originate for ritual purposes²⁰, or they can agree to display copies of original artifacts that have been returned (Cornu & Renold, 2010; Desmoulins, 2012). Finally, other agreements such as the purchase of an artifact by a State already in possession of it, the establishment of cultural cooperation programs, or the payment of compensation (Cornu & Renold, 2010), can be adopted by the parties. Overall, unlike international instruments and court judgments, the solutions elaborated through these alternative mechanisms, although they heavily rely on the goodwill of all parties involved, are simply not limited.

Conclusion

Two thousand years ago, Polybius called upon victorious armies to cease using the tragedy of the people they vanquished as an ornament of their homeland. In view of the ever-increasing number of acts of restitution, these words seem to have been heard at last. Unfortunately, many disputes remain unresolved, including the restitution of the treasures looted from the Summer Palace, that of the Parthenon Marbles and of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as numerous requests for restitution presented by formerly colonized States and Indigenous peoples, to which the law struggles to provide solutions.

Indeed, if cultural artifacts benefit from a wide range of instruments relating to their protection and the obligation of restitution, the requests presented today reveal the many limits of international texts. They are faced with the limited scope of the conventions, their non-retroactive nature or even periods of limitation. Most claims for artifacts looted during the Colonial era thus generally fail at the doorsteps of the courts, as no legal provision is applicable. As for requests that have overcome these obstacles, judges and lawyers must then submit to complex practical and procedural exercises aimed at identifying the applicable law, with often unpredictable results. They are also bound to treat cultural artifacts as any other material goods even though these items are often imbued with deep values and significance that transcend the concept of “property” and cannot be transposed in legal terms.

20. These “half-restitutions”, and restitutions accompanied by conditions of conservation or use, are not always well received by the communities who sometimes see in them a continuity of colonialism or Western paternalism.

In the absence of binding or adequate legal provisions related to colonial looting, we nevertheless observe the emergence of a practice of restitution which stems from a moral and ethical feeling of the necessity to repair historical injustices. However, it should be emphasized that restitution of cultural artifacts is not always enough to repair the other damages that may have arisen from the material deprivation. In the case of dispossession of human remains, of sacred artifacts or of items associated with unique ancestral know-how, restitution alone is not always sufficient to repair the loss of knowledge or the social and spiritual disturbances resulting from their disappearance during an extended period of time. As Mamadou-Mahtar M'Bow points out:

“The peoples who are victims of this secular plunder have not only been stripped of irreplaceable masterpieces: they have been dispossessed of a memory that would undoubtedly have helped them to know themselves better, and would undoubtedly have helped others to understand them better” (as cited in Prrott & Kowalski, 2011, p. 31, author's translation).

”

Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, because of the original results they can produce, seem to constitute an interesting avenue for a more comprehensive repair of historical cultural damages and injustices, and certainly not the least.

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Repatriation, colonialism, and decolonization in China

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ABSTRACT

Two questions are discussed in this research. The first is: how to understand the phenomenon that decolonization is a rarely mentioned word in the context of repatriation, while colonialism is a familiar issue to Chinese people? The second: how to understand Chinese people's attitude towards repatriating cultural objects removed from China during the colonial era? This research aimed to provide an in-depth view of Chinese people's understanding of Chinese colonial history, international repatriation, and decolonization. The complicated relationship between people's understanding of colonialism and decolonization in China and the correlation between the attitude towards repatriation and the understanding of colonialism are revealed in this research.

Keywords: China, repatriation, decolonization, colonialism.

RÉSUMÉ

Rapatriement, colonialisme et décolonisation en Chine

Deux questions ont été abordées dans cette recherche. Le premier était de savoir comment comprendre les phénomènes que la décolonisation n'est pas un mot souvent évoqué dans le contexte du rapatriement, alors que le colonialisme est une question familière au peuple chinois. La deuxième question était de savoir comment comprendre l'attitude

du peuple chinois vis-à-vis du rapatriement des objets culturels retirés de Chine à l'époque coloniale. Cette recherche visait à fournir une vision approfondie de la compréhension par le peuple chinois de l'histoire coloniale chinoise, du rapatriement international et de la décolonisation. La relation compliquée entre la compréhension qu'ont les gens du colonialisme et de la décolonisation en Chine, et la corrélation entre l'attitude envers le rapatriement et la compréhension du colonialisme ont été révélées dans cette recherche.

Mots-clés : Chine, rapatriement, décolonisation, colonialisme.



Introduction

Repatriation is an important issue that museums worldwide have to deal with (Curtis, 2012). The motivation for and practice of repatriation are complicated and varied in each case. Bienkowski (2013) divided repatriation claims into eight categories. Among them, the claims for objects looted or wrongfully removed in the colonial context can be naturally related to the practice of decolonization. This kind of repatriation aims to restore the Indigenous cultural heritage and address the inequalities and exclusiveness in the culture during colonial times and even now (Onciu, 2015, p. 33).

Since the American government enacted the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act in 1990, museums are obligated to return human remains and sacred objects to Indigenous communities (Dubin, 2001, p. 22). This was a law that focused on repatriation within one country.

However, most of the current cases relate to colonial history that exists between several countries. A very recent repatriation case is that of the Benin Bronzes: a group of thousands of art objects looted by British troops in 1897 from the Kingdom of Benin (present-day Nigeria), as part of colonial conquest. At a virtual conference held by Columbia University on 9 April 2021, academics discussed myths about the Benin Bronzes. Some were concerned that the artifacts would be safer at the American and European institutions that currently hold them than in Nigerian museums, which are relatively small and unsophisticated. This kind of concern also incurred strong retorts from many art historians and museum professionals (Greenberger, 2021).

Even today, the cultural, economic, and political debate on the repatriation of artifacts is taking place, making the discussion about repatriation more complicated. Generally, the significance of repatriation is engaging with source communities (Bienkowski, 2013).

In China, the recovery from abroad of China's lost cultural objects is an appealing issue that attracts huge social attention. The concept of "China's cultural objects lost overseas" was initiated by the China Foundation for the Development of Social Culture (CFDSC) in 2002, and referred to the objects which were taken away from China through illegal and unethical practices during the period from 1840 to 1949 (Zhang & Wang, 2009). According to the Chinese Society of Cultural Relics, the number of China's cultural objects lost abroad is incredibly high and is believed to be millions of pieces (Prott, 2009, p. 145). These cultural objects are now scattered in at least 47 countries and collected by more than 200 foreign museums (Meyer & Brysac, 2015, p. 14), such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the British Museum, and the Musée Guimet.

Repatriating those Chinese cultural relics from abroad has been an essential task facing the Chinese government. According to Yu Meng, from 1949 to 2016, at least 53 cases were recorded regarding the recovery and repatriation of Chinese cultural objects from abroad to their country of origin, China (Yu, 2018). Those objects were recovered through various approaches, such as transnational civil litigation, negotiation, and international law enforcement. However, most objects were brought back in auctions by the governmental foundation, entrepreneurs, and non-governmental organizations (Yu, 2018).



Among these repatriation and recovery cases, the objects that were lost because of colonialism are the most attractive to Chinese people. When the auction of Old Summer Palace bronze heads (see Figure 1) took place in France in 2009, repatriation became the most popular social topic that year in China (Cao, 2009). The Old Summer Palace, also known as Yuanming Yuan in Chinese, was a royal garden of the Qing dynasty and housed numerous treasures and artworks belonging to the royal family. In 1860, during the Second Opium War, it was invaded and destroyed by the French and British troops. After that, a vast amount of artworks were looted from the Old Summer Palace and are now found in museums worldwide.

The loss of artworks from the Old Summer Palace is considered the result of colonialism and invasion wars (Fang, 2009). According to the mainstream view of current Chinese historians, China was considered a “semi-colony” from 1840 to 1949 because of conquests by Western countries. The term “semi-colony” refers to a country whose sovereignty has been destroyed and only maintains its independent sovereign state in name. Imperialist countries control the politics, economy, military, and culture of a semi-colony (Liu, 1998). Internationally, classifying the society of China from 1840 to 1949 as a semi-colony might be controversial. However, China as a victim of colonialism has been written down in the history textbooks of Chinese middle school students and is wildly accepted by Chinese people.

Along with the perception that China was a semi-colony, colonialism was attributed as the main reason for the loss of Chinese cultural objects from 1840 to 1949 (Fang, 2009). The loss of artworks from Old Summer Palace caused by direct military force, as I mentioned above, is only part of the story. Many trades of artworks between Chinese people and foreigners, such as Dunhuang Manuscripts, are considered illegal and unethical by today's Chinese scholars. As Su Donghai (2003) pointed out, the unequal relationship between the colonizer and the colonized people made those artwork deals happen. Even the deals were legal at that time.

The repatriation or recovery of Chinese cultural objects removed from China during the colonial time is considered the right thing to do against colonialism in China. However, it is interesting that, while colonialism is a frequently-mentioned word in China, decolonization is not an issue. It seems like China's way of approaching anti-colonialism has never brought about any discussion of decoloniality and shows no sign of tackling decolonization. The question is, why?

Compared with anti-colonialism, decolonization might be a more complicated issue. Through the cases of returning cultural objects to the Indigenous communities in North America, we can see that repatriation is not only about anti-colonialism but more about decolonization which means respecting and engaging the source community of a cultural object.

While most Chinese people are enthusiastic about repatriating objects from abroad, repatriation within China is unusual. It seems that there is no problem with collecting and managing cultural objects in museums in China, even though the permanent collection of the National Museum of China was mainly acquired from regional museums, communities, and individuals as instructed by the government policy.

The National Museum of China was founded in 1912 with no more than 60,000 objects in its possession. In the following 46 years, the museum's collection was accumulated at a very slow pace. The first major acquisitions of the National Museum of China were made in 1958; in that year, as a result of the order from the Chinese government, the museum received around 600,000 objects

from individuals, regional museums, provincial departments of cultural and tourism, and regional archaeological institutes (Lv, 2012). Another vital acquisition happened in 2007, when the National Cultural Heritage Administration allocated 400,000 objects to the National Museum of China. According to statistics released from the museum, the total amount of its collection is now 1,400,000. At the present time, there is no official repatriation initiated by regional museums, communities, or individuals requesting the objects' return.

However, those objects that were handed over to the National Museum of China are always the most extraordinary ones and are significant to regional culture and history. As a result, many regional museums only have pictures or replicas of those objects displayed in the exhibition. While Chinese people are enthusiastic about repatriating Chinese objects to their country of origin, returning the Indigenous cultural object to its community of origin within China is a non-topic. At least, the status quo of the National Museum of China holding such a high number of regional cultural objects has never been challenged.

According to many Chinese experts, the fight to recover Chinese objects from abroad is in opposition to colonialism and shows the importance of returning objects to their origin. However, the fact that the National Museum of China acquired objects from regional museums and communities is, obviously, taking the objects away from their cultural origin, which contradicts the Chinese experts' words. This raises another question, whether Chinese international repatriation under the umbrella of colonialism can be regarded as the practice of decolonization?

Two questions were posed in this research. The first was how to understand the phenomenon that decolonization is a rarely mentioned word in the context of repatriation, while colonialism is a familiar issue to Chinese people? The second question was, how to understand Chinese people's attitude towards repatriating cultural objects removed from China during the colonial era?

Current Study

Most of the past studies on international repatriation have taken the perspective of law and focused on the reason for the loss of Chinese objects and the approaches to their return. Fang (2009) indicated that most Chinese cultural objects were lost in three ways: looting during the colonial invasion, robbery, and smuggling. Many scholars have also discussed the approaches to getting objects back. Yu (2018) indicated that international law enforcement cooperation, transnational civil litigation, negotiation, and gift and purchase were the main approaches to recovering Chinese objects from 1949 to 2016.

However, the motivation and impact of repatriation have not been covered by empirical research. As repatriation is largely considered a moral issue (Bienkowski, 2013), the cognitive and emotional aspects are crucial in repatriation. This research aimed to provide an in-depth view of Chinese people's understanding

of Chinese colonial history, international repatriation and decolonization, and reveal the relationship between those three.

Methods

Approach

To provide a deeper description and understanding of colonialism, decolonization, and repatriation in China, a qualitative approach was chosen in this research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to encourage the participants to express their personal experience of and attitudes towards colonialism, decolonization, and repatriation.

The interview consisted of four parts: personal habits and preferences for museums; understanding of colonial history; attitudes towards repatriation; and understanding of decolonization. There were nine questions in the first part to explore interviewees' preferences for museums and cultural heritage, such as "How often do you visit museums?", "What kind of museums do you like to go to?" and "How do you think of museums' function in society?". The second part comprised nine questions about interviewees' understanding of the colonial time in Chinese history. For example, "What do you think of the colonial time in Chinese history?". The third part aimed to reveal interviewees' attitudes towards repatriating Chinese cultural objects removed from China during the colonial time. There were eight questions in this part, such as "Do you support repatriating those objects from their current museum to China?", "What do you think of the value and impact of repatriation?", "Does repatriation have personal significance to you?". The fourth part focused on the interviewees' understanding of and attitude towards decolonization. There were three questions in this part, including "Have you heard of decolonization?", "What do you think of decolonization?" and "Do you think decolonization has anything to do with museums?".

Participants

The sample consisted of sixteen Chinese people from diverse backgrounds who were raised, educated, and living in China (shown in Table 1 below). Fourteen participants were from the Han ethnic group, and two of them were from minority ethnic groups. The age group of participants ranged from 18 to 48. Five of the sixteen participants were male, and eleven of them were female. Nine participants were acquaintances of the researcher, and the other seven were recruited from among the visitors to the Zhejiang Provincial Museum. None of the participants were museum professionals because it was the ordinary public's voices I wanted to hear in this research.

The sampling was not random in this research. The researcher hoped the participants were all more or less interested in cultural heritage, Chinese history, and museums, and at the same time, come from different backgrounds. People interested in cultural heritage, history, and museums are more likely to talk

more about the research topic. That is why the Zhejiang Provincial Museum was chosen to be the recruiting place. As the largest history institution in Zhejiang, this museum has the richest collection and attracts diverse visitors. Second, due to the form of this research approach, the sampling amount could not be huge. However, in order to gain a larger picture of the topic, the researcher hoped to diversify the background of participants. Participants with different backgrounds and occupations might provide different insights into understanding colonialism, decolonization, and repatriation.

Participant	Sex	Age	Ethnic Group	Occupation
1	Female	18	Han	University student
2	Female	22	Han	University student
3	Female	23	Han	Tourist guide
4	Male	25	Han	Property administrator
5	Female	28	Zhuang	Doctor
6	Female	29	Mongols	Software engineer
7	Female	29	Han	Community service
8	Female	29	Han	Data analyst
9	Male	30	Han	Civil engineer
10	Female	32	Han	Unknown
11	Female	34	Han	Graphic design
12	Female	36	Han	Financial adviser
13	Male	36	Han	Unknown
14	Male	40	Han	Cultural travel guide
15	Male	43	Han	University lecturer
16	Female	48	Han	Retired

Table 1

Procedure

Data collection took place in March 2020. The researcher contacted every participant directly and decided the time and form of the interview. Because of the stay-at-home order during the COVID-19 pandemic, all the interviews were conducted through a WeChat video call. Before the interview started, every participant was informed that the interview would be recorded and fully transcribed into texts. The interview normally lasted about 35 to 45 minutes. After that, interviewees received small rewards for their participation.

Method of data analysis

The data analysis was based on the grounded theory approach, and all the data were analyzed thoroughly in the same way. As there was no established hypothesis before the research, the aim of data analysis was not only to provide descriptions but also to try to explore some patterns in, and connections between, participants' understanding of colonialism, decolonization, and repatriation. There were two waves of analysis for the two research questions.

The first wave of data analysis focused on the first research question about understanding the phenomenon that decolonization is not a frequently-mentioned word in China, while colonialism is a familiar topic to Chinese people. In the first step, all sixteen samples were divided into two groups according to whether the interviewee knew about decolonization or not. Next, participants' responses about colonialism and decolonization were coded into several categories with different themes. For the responses about colonialism, the themes included national impact, personal significance, etc. For the responses about decolonization, there were themes about eliminating all colonial influences, and improving national confidence, etc. After the coding process, a non-cross-sectional analysis was conducted in the third step. In this step, participants' opinions on colonialism from each group were compared separately to see if they were similar or shared some patterns. The non-cross-sectional analysis was aimed to see if there is a correlation between attitudes of colonialism and familiarity with decolonization in general. The last step was two sets of cross-sectional analysis. The first set was checking the views on colonialism among the samples with the same theme of decolonization. The second set was comparing the themes of decolonization among the samples with the same themes of colonialism. Those cross-sectional analyses might reveal correlations between one kind of understanding of colonialism and a certain attitude towards decolonization.

The second wave of data analysis shared the same method as that of the first wave but focused on the second research question about understanding Chinese people's attitude towards repatriating cultural objects removed from China during the colonial time. Firstly, all sixteen samples were divided into two groups, with samples in one group supporting repatriation and samples in the other group not. In the second step, all participants' responses about colonialism, decolonization, and repatriation were coded into several themes sepa-

rately. As responses about colonialism and decolonization had been coded in the first wave, in this phase, the coding process was focused on repatriation. Coding themes of responses about repatriation included national impact, personal significance, ownership, etc. Then, the non-cross-sectional analysis was conducted to compare each group's themed responses of colonialism and decolonization, respectively. Finally, different themes of understanding colonialism, decolonization, and repatriation were compared through three sets of non-cross-sectional analyses.

The understanding of colonialism and decolonization in China

The gap between the understanding of colonialism and decolonization

Through the non-cross-sectional analysis in the first wave of data analysis, the researcher found no evident correlation between participants' recognition of colonial influence and their familiarity with decolonization.

Six interviewees indicated that they had some knowledge of decolonization. Among these six people, only one claimed an intense feeling about colonial influence. However, this participant also expressed non-familiarity with decolonization. The remaining ten interviewees were unfamiliar with decolonization, while one of them expressed intense feelings about colonial influence, and three of them had no recognition of colonial influence.

That is to say, neither intense nor weak recognition of the influence of Chinese colonial history could directly lead to a familiarity with decolonization.

The desire for a powerful China

After the coding process of participants' understanding of the colonial time in Chinese history, the desire for a powerful China appeared frequently. Nine interviewees mentioned that colonial history inspires the Chinese people's desire for a powerful country and fuels Chinese national development. At the same time, some negative results were found in those nine interviewees' understanding of decolonization.

Among those nine interviewees, five people indicated that they did not know about decolonization.

Participant 4: I can feel that, because China is becoming stronger and stronger now so that many countries recognize us, the previous colonial history has just become a contrast. It can encourage and promote the development of China.

Participant 10: (colonial influence) For example, the Old Summer Palace, the cultural heritage was lost and looted because we were not strong enough at that time, so the objects were taken away by other countries, and we could not stop that. But, because the country has become

stronger now, there will be no such thing again. And we can gradually get those objects back.

Furthermore, three of the nine interviewees expressed their rejection of decolonization. From those participants' perspectives, today's powerful China is, to some extent, the result of colonial influence. They believed that lagging behind in economy, military, and culture rendered China a semi-colony from 1840 to 1949. They also pointed out that Western countries' colonization brought advanced knowledge to China and made the Chinese people realize China's weakness. In the following 100 years, the status quo as a semi-colony served to encourage China's development. In this sense, colonialism appeared not so negative to some interviewees. So, there was no need to change or promote decolonization.

Participant 7: It [the colonial history] can inspire the patriotism of the people. Because, you know, the country, at that time, and then you will understand that if a country is weak, it must be difficult to develop itself, so it will, ah, to put it bluntly, it will increase the cohesion and unity of the nation, and it will be beneficial to the rule of the government... Em, actually, there is no such thing as decolonization in our country.

Participant 13: For example, without colonial history, the entire Yangtze River Delta would not be in existence. Shanghai and the Yangtze River Delta could never achieve their current status. I think they have also benefited from colonization. Moreover, I should say, because you have a history of falling, you can have the pleasure of standing up... Why could things brought about by colonization replace our Chinese traditions? Because they have some advantages. Why would you want to deny an advanced thing? Even it stems from an incorrect thing. Why should we overthrow it? There is no decolonization. That word sounds like degradation to me.

By analyzing participants' understanding of colonial history, the researcher found that the desire for a powerful China is a very common reflection of China's colonial history among Chinese people. According to most interviewees, the lack of advances in science, the military, and culture led China to becoming a semi-colony. Therefore, instead of exploring the inequality between the colonizer and the colonized, many interviewees' notion of colonialism was more about learning from Western countries and pursuing an advanced and powerful China. This understanding of colonial history might not encourage people's willingness to discuss or practice decolonization in China.

The rejection of decolonization

According to the participants' responses, seven interviewees expressed their rejection of decolonization. The reasons they gave were summarized in two points:

The first one has already been mentioned above. One participant believed that colonization brings advanced culture. In this case, decolonization was likely to result in degeneration and a reversal of development. Thus, this participant rejected the notion of decolonization.

For the remaining six interviewees, decolonization meant eliminating all the things brought by the colonizer, such as advanced knowledge and colonial-style buildings, even the whole colonial history. However, they believed that what had happened could not be changed or erased. Thus, decolonization for them was equal to denying the facts and they considered it disrespectful to history.

Participant 11: For me, decolonization is a concept that means to remove, i.e., take away. However, removing colonial history is no good to displaying the history and cultural relics. You have indeed been colonized. It is not that you want to remove it as if it never happened during that period. History has happened, and you can't change your history through any efforts you make now. So, I think the term decolonization is a false proposition.

Participant 14: For example, Taiwan may have been colonized by Japan for a long time. After that, many buildings from the Japanese occupation era were left behind, along with many people's lifestyles. The new ruler may gradually eliminate the marks of the colonial era. He may want to make some huge changes and emphasize more on the tradition. This may be understood as decolonization. But whether it is necessary? I don't know... Maybe I would not choose to do that.

Generally, these two kinds of attitudes still have one thing in common: focusing on the result brought about by colonialism instead of how colonialism brings about the outcome. We should realize that the essence of coloniality is an unequal and top-down power matrix in which only one kind of authority can be established (Mignolo, 2007). At the same time, the other possibilities are prohibited. Those interviewees who gave some negative comments on decolonization believed that decolonization is to deny or cancel whatever was brought up by colonialism. However, decolonization really means breaking the unequal power system of colonialism and creating tolerance, equality, and diversity.

Some misunderstandings about decolonization caused interviewees to reject it. Unfortunately, I have to say that those misunderstandings of decolonization might stem from interviewees' narrow and superficial ideas about colonialism.

Attitudes towards repatriation in China

Chinese repatriation is not motivated by decolonization

After the non-cross-sectional analysis of the second wave data analysis, the researcher found that the participants' support for repatriating Chinese cultu-

ral objects showed almost no positive correlation with their familiarity with decolonization.

Twelve interviewees indicated that those Chinese cultural objects removed from China during the colonial time should be repatriated to China. However, these twelve participants' knowledge of decolonization was very diverse. Three people claimed that they had never heard of decolonization. Four people said that they had heard of decolonization but had almost no knowledge of it. Five people indicated that they had some knowledge of decolonization.

For the remaining four interviewees whose opinions were against repatriation, three indicated that they had never heard of decolonization, and one said he or she was very familiar with decolonization.

As the data above shows, there is no evidence to say that, in China, people's support for repatriation is motivated by or has a correlation with their familiarity with decolonization.

The struggle between national interest and personal interest

Participants' attitudes towards repatriation were generally divided into two groups: for it and against. Within each group, the participants' answers of personal significance, and national significance were coded and compared. The data revealed a complicated relationship between national interest and personal interests in the interviewees' attitudes towards repatriation.

The attitudes of interviewees who did not support repatriation were easy to understand. Among the sixteen participants, four said that they did not support the return of Chinese cultural objects removed from China during the colonial time. At the same time, these four people said that repatriating Chinese cultural objects from abroad had no personal significance and would not increase access to the objects, because for them, all the information they needed about the objects could be acquired through the Internet. They didn't need to see the objects in reality. From their perspective, repatriation was significant to the country rather than to ordinary people. In this case, these four interviewees also willingly accepted any alternatives to repatriation, such as shared ownership and loaned objects.

Participant 9: Cultural objects returning to China, maybe, um, to promote national prestige or something? Because the international status of China is high now, the others are giving our objects back. This may also be a means of propaganda for the government. But it doesn't make much sense to me personally. If those objects are in the UK, through the Internet, I can still figure out their story. I won't wait until it is back in China to know it.

Participant 16: Personally, I don't think they should be returned. Maybe some people think it is a kind of national pride, but I think it's also a good thing that Chinese objects are displayed abroad. Because if they are in a museum in our country, like Zhejiang Provincial Museum, as far as I know, there are too many objects piled up in its warehouses. There is no place to display them. I think it is very likely that I will never see them. So, why not keep them in American museums? It doesn't matter to me.

For the remaining twelve participants who supported repatriation, the situation became more complicated. Six people thought that the return of Chinese cultural objects had no personal significance for them but still supported the return of those objects. For those six people, repatriation was vital because it was of great value to the country, although it mattered little to them. At the same time, the alternatives, such as shared ownership and loans, became hard to accept, even though some could increase their access to cultural objects. Instead, the objects' national ownership became their primary concern. They were struggling between national interests and personal interests.

Participant 1: The repatriation will, ah, increase China's influence on the world. If they are willing to return, it must be because of the increase of China's national power and international influence. And, ah, there is one more, it will increase Chinese people's confidence in the national culture. Personally, it doesn't matter. I hope that the objects can be returned, but it is not important... Shared ownership is unacceptable. Loaning is also impossible. The objects were initially mine. It should be me who lends to them.

Participant 6: First of all, if those countries are willing to return the objects, it means that our country must have some kind of international status. Otherwise, they will definitely ignore you. However, it is not important to me personally because it does not affect my everyday life... For a loan, the cost should be free. If it is not free, they use our cultural objects to make money, which is unethical. For shared ownership, we must hold the primary ownership.

Six participants supported repatriation and, at the same time, thought that repatriation was personally important to them. From their perspective, national interests had a strong impact on them and outweighed their personal interests.

Participant 2: The repatriation is very important to me personally because I want to see the objects. However, whether I want to see them or not, they belong to my country and should be there [China]. To see or not to see the objects is my business. However, for them [other countries], returning or not returning the objects reflects their attitude and respect towards my country.

Participant 4: It is very important to me personally. Because the return of the objects, first, means that we are recognized by the other countries

and can protect our cultural objects. Second, it means that our country is now strong enough to get these objects back.

Repatriation as an approach to restoring China's national dignity

There was no positive correlation between the strength of recognition of colonial influence and attitudes towards repatriation. According to the participants' attitudes towards repatriation, all sixteen samples were divided into two groups, with one for repatriation and the other against. Then, a comparison of participants' understanding of colonialism was conducted separately in each group. Four interviewees did not support repatriation. Among them, one person said that colonial history had no influence on himself or herself, and three people acknowledged mild impact from the colonial past. Of the twelve interviewees in the other group who supported repatriation, two indicated no impact from colonial history, eight were mildly affected by colonial history, and the remaining two had strong feelings about colonial influence.

Based on the comparison above, it was not the strength of recognition of colonial influence that directly correlated with participants' attitudes towards repatriation. However, through sets of cross-sectional comparisons about participants' understanding of repatriation and colonialism, the researcher found that interviewees who thought that Chinese colonial history represented national humiliation and vulnerability were very likely to support repatriation and viewed repatriation as evidence of a powerful China. Seven interviewees expressed that Chinese colonial history represented national humiliation and vulnerability. And all of them wanted Chinese cultural objects to be returned and thought that the return had significance for China's national confidence and international status.

Participant 11: The most significant impact of colonial history is to allow you to reflect on all of this, that is, why you were colonized or beaten by others in the past, and what lessons you should learn from this fact so that this kind of thing will no longer occur. I think this is the most important thing. And I hope my country becomes stronger... The return of lost objects means that our international status is improved, and we have the right to speak. What I could not get back in the past, now I get it back. It is like telling the world. I am no longer the way I used to be. I have become stronger. I think the most important thing is this.

Participant 12: The glory of ancient China can create a gorgeous dream for the Chinese people. But that period of colonial history, that long history, nearly a hundred years, is actually an extreme humiliation.... Those lost objects show me a tragedy in the history of modern China. Their return is a national issue and will cheer the whole country up.

However, it is worth noting that there were another five participants who shared that kind of understanding about repatriation but without the corresponding attitudes towards Chinese colonial history. Thus, there might be

other elements affecting participants' support for repatriation and their desire for a powerful China. Unfortunately, they were not found in this research.

Conclusion

A complicated relationship exists between people's understanding of colonialism and decolonization in China. First, the strength of recognition of colonial influence has no direct correlation with people's familiarity with decolonization. In this case, the popularity of colonialism cannot directly encourage people's interest in decolonization in the context of China. Second, the desire for a powerful China is a common attitude towards Chinese colonial history. However, this kind of desire is unlikely to lead to an exploration of decolonization. Third, the rejection of decolonization is likely to be found in people who hold a narrow and superficial view of colonialism.

Currently, there is a gap between people's ideas of colonialism and decolonization in China. The notion of colonialism is closely associated with China's national identity, dignity, and strength. Along with that national-based understanding of colonialism, decolonization has not received enough attention and discussion until now. Unfortunately, Chinese museums are not encouraging people's insight into colonialism and decolonization and cannot help close the gap in understanding between them.

Museums in China are tightly controlled by the government and CCP secretary (Lu, 2013, p. 209). The terms "public" and "state-owned" museums are equal to each other (Bollo & Zhang, 2017), as the state or CCP always dominates and supervises the museological discourse. Even the national ICOM committees in China are led by senior officials of the SACH (State Administration of Cultural Heritage). In this sense, the role of Chinese museums is to construct a "Chinese identity" (Lu, 2013, p. 212) and to provide a "patriotic education" (Bollo & Zhang, 2017). The objectives of museums in China are to promote patriotism and nationalism and to teach the public that socialism is the only way for the salvation and development of China and that the CCP is the only party capable of leading China (Lu, 2013, p. 213).

Furthermore, due to the lack of social equality, the power system within Chinese museums is a very top-down one. Visitors and local communities are excluded from museums' decision-making and knowledge-formation process (Lu, 2013 p. 214). The Ministry of Culture's State Administration of Cultural Heritage (SACH) regulates presentation in most public museums (Bollo & Zhang, 2017). As a result, the museums' narrative about the history of China is no different from that in students' textbooks (Lu, 2013, p. 215). Therefore, the public's understanding of Chinese history can be standardized in museums. There is only one story in China.

To be honest, the current existence of Chinese museums is against all the values of decolonization. They are exactly the kind of institution which should

be decolonized. However, as a useful propaganda tool of the state, Chinese museums can hardly be changed.

Besides, in the context of China, the attitude towards repatriation of Chinese cultural objects removed from China during the colonial time has more correlation with the understanding of colonialism than with that of decolonization. First, in China, people's support for repatriation is motivated by or correlates with their familiarity with decolonization. Second, the struggle between national and personal interests can be frequently found in people's attitudes towards repatriation. Third, there was no positive correlation between the strength of recognition of colonial influence and attitudes towards repatriation. However, people who thought that Chinese colonial history represented national humiliation and vulnerability were very likely to support repatriation and took repatriation as evidence of a powerful China.

In China, repatriation is always motivated by the national interest at the risk of dismissing personal interests and values. In this sense, it is easier to understand that the National Museum of China is collecting objects from regional museums and never returning them. Therefore, it is clear that the request of China's international repatriation is not meant to fight for equality or diversity. Instead, it will help to establish a homogeneous and exclusive cultural environment in China. This kind of repatriation cannot be regarded as a practice of decolonization.

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Muséologie, colonisations et domination

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RÉSUMÉ

Nous avons une idée assez précise de ce que signifie « décoloniser le musée » ; la décolonisation de la muséologie apparaît cependant comme un phénomène à la fois différent et plus complexe. Il s'agit en effet moins de rapatrier des objets ou de transformer des dispositifs que d'évoquer le changement des rapports de force entre les principaux centres de diffusion de cette discipline (les pays anglo-saxons ou francophones) et les autres centres, partiellement « subalternes », dont la production apparaît largement ignorée. Cet article explore certaines des hypothèses sous-jacentes à ces propos, afin d'envisager d'autres perspectives permettant une lecture différente des rapports de domination entre ces centres de diffusion.

Mots clés : études post-coloniales, cultural studies, muséologie, géopolitique.

ABSTRACT

We have a pretty good idea of what “decolonizing the museum” means. However, the decolonization of museology appears to be a different and a more complex phenomenon altogether. Indeed, this expression designates less a question of repatriating objects or transforming devices than of evoking the change within the balance of power between the main centers of dissemination of this discipline (the Anglo-American or French-speaking countries) and other, partially “subaltern” centers, whose production appears largely ignored. This article explores some

of the hypotheses underlying this proposal in order to consider other perspectives allowing a different reading of the relations of domination between these centers of diffusion.

Keywords: post-colonial studies, cultural studies, museology, geopolitics.



Le terme de colonisation évoque une action violente : « Occupation, exploitation, mise en tutelle d'un territoire sous-développé et sous-peuplé par les ressortissants d'une métropole » (*Trésor informatisé de la langue française*). Le processus de décolonisation, dans l'histoire récente, se réfère au démantèlement des empires coloniaux, essentiellement européens, à commencer par ceux de la Grande Bretagne et de la France (mais aussi l'Allemagne, la Belgique, l'Espagne, l'Italie, les Pays-Bas ou le Portugal). Ce processus est évidemment plus ancien et largement corrélé à la notion d'empire : on le retrouve depuis l'Antiquité, aussi bien en Grèce ou à Carthage qu'à Rome, on le voit se développer sur tous les continents : empires Chinois, Ethiopien, Fatimide, Gupta (Inde), Maya, Ottoman, etc. Les rapports de force entre le centre de l'empire (la métropole) et sa périphérie (territoires conquis ou colonisés) marquent alors, structurellement, la direction des transferts des profits et l'inégalité de la répartition du pouvoir et des richesses qui en résulte (toujours au bénéfice de la métropole, qu'il s'agisse de Rome, de Constantinople ou plus tard de Madrid). Ce déséquilibre va s'intensifier au cours de la Révolution industrielle, le développement de la technique et des richesses bénéficiant de plus en plus largement à la métropole. Il induit logiquement un mouvement de contestation, puis d'indépendance ou de décolonisation, mené aussi bien par les peuples autochtones que d'anciens colonisateurs souhaitant se détacher de l'emprise de la métropole. C'est à une logique de colonisation puis d'indépendance que l'on doit la création des Etats-Unis d'Amérique au XVIII^e siècle et de nombreux pays d'Amérique latine au XIX^e siècle¹.

Le déclin de la puissance européenne, décimée par deux conflits mondiaux, entraîne le délitement des deux principaux empires coloniaux du XIX^e siècle – tout en bénéficiant aux systèmes mis en place par les deux puissances dominantes de l'époque, Etats-Unis et Union soviétique. C'est dans un tel contexte que l'analyse d'une certaine pensée coloniale émerge dans les années qui suivent, d'abord par l'entremise d'un certain nombre d'intellectuels en lien direct avec le processus de décolonisation (Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, Albert Memmi), puis par les générations suivantes, une fois l'indépendance acquise, notamment à travers la diaspora universitaire établie en Amérique. L'*Orientalisme* de Saïd

1. Une première version (réduite) de cet article a été présentée dans Mairesse (2021).

(1978) est souvent présenté comme l'ouvrage fondateur des *postcolonial studies*, qui se développent à travers la littérature comparée, dans le sillage des *cultural studies*, s'appuyant notamment sur les écrits de Foucault, les principes de déconstruction de Derrida et, de manière plus générale, sur la *French Theory*. Les *postcolonial studies* s'appuient par ailleurs également sur les *Subaltern studies*, développées en Inde autour de Ranajit Guha (avec notamment Dipesh Chakrabarty ou Gayatri Spivak), explorant les cultures dominées et s'attachant à révéler d'autres modernités que celle - critiquée - des Lumières (Bancel, 2019).

Le musée colonisateur

En tant qu'institution, le musée incarne, par ses activités, son lien avec les Lumières et son discours, le pouvoir en place, issu de la métropole. Son propos et ses activités reflètent la logique du colonisateur. Ces principes restent en place en dépit de la décolonisation, la plupart des élites ayant été formées par les anciens colonisateurs, continuant à embrasser plus ou moins partiellement leur point de vue. Les musées, y compris ceux actuellement en activité, alimentent ce rapport de colonisation dont il conviendrait de se départir. L'essentiel de la littérature alliant *post-colonial studies* et musées s'inscrit dans cette logique de décolonisation, à partir de trois voies différentes : l'analyse du discours (textes et dispositifs expographiques), celle des pratiques scientifiques et celle des collections. Quelques pionniers, comme Stanislas Adotevi (1971) n'ont pas attendu les *cultural studies* pour s'insurger contre les anciennes puissances coloniales : « Ce monde est sans doute en train de disparaître, mais le musée demeure encore le lieu de la concentration magique des obsessions poussiéreuses d'une classe qui croit toujours à l'extension de son pouvoir » (Adotevi, 1971, p. 121). L'analyse des dispositifs a par la suite fait l'objet de nombreuses publications (Karp & Lavine, 1991 ; Simpson, 2001 ; Gonseth et al. 2002 ; Chambers et al., 2017), certains musées d'ethnographie, comme celui du *Quai Branly* (Price, 2011) ou le musée de Tervuren (Wastiau, 2001), faisant l'objet d'une attention particulière. Les nouvelles pratiques expographiques actuelles de ces musées, développées en réaction aux critiques, ont à leur tour fait l'objet de publications (Seiderer, 2012 ; Crenn, 2016 ; Pagani, 2017 ; Wajid & Minott 2019). Les activités scientifiques du musée ont à leur tour fait l'objet de plusieurs publications, essentiellement dans le domaine ethnographique, comme le développement de zoos humains (Bancel, 2002), mais c'est surtout la question de la constitution des collections durant la colonisation (Gob, 2007, Davis & Mairesse, 2017), qui a fait écho des critiques les plus nombreuses, accompagnées de demandes de restitution (Saar & Savoy, 2018). C'est aussi dans ce contexte que la proposition d'une nouvelle définition du musée de l'ICOM, présentée à Kyoto, a été conçue, le comité ayant rédigé cette dernière soulignant que « [l]es musées en tant qu'institutions ont été fondés à la croisée de la quête de la connaissance et des nouveaux paradigmes scientifiques, marqués par la violence extrême mise en œuvre par les puissances européennes pour coloniser l'Amérique, l'asservissement des populations africaines, les persécutions religieuses et les expulsions en Europe » (MDPP, 2019).

Peut-on, selon la même logique, évoquer l'idée d'une décolonisation de la muséologie ? C'est la formule qu'emploie Hugues de Varine en 2005, pour évoquer, en lien avec la critique d'Adotevi et la nouvelle muséologie, la manière dont l'humanité pourrait assurer de manière plus collective la responsabilité du patrimoine. Pour être plus exact, il faudrait, dans un premier temps, s'interroger sur la notion de colonisation de la muséologie. Varine parle moins, à cet égard, d'un champ théorique que d'un ensemble de pratiques. Peut-on parler de muséologie en tant que « science coloniale », au sens que celle-ci avait acquis à la fin du XIX^e siècle (Singaravélo, 2020) ? Qu'elle soit définie en tant que champ de recherche ou discipline universitaire, la muséologie n'existe pas encore réellement à cette époque, *a fortiori* dans les colonies. Plutôt que de colonisation, il conviendrait plutôt de parler de propagation de la muséologie, dont les idées se diffusent progressivement, durant l'entre-deux guerres, à une époque effectivement encore coloniale, depuis les métropoles en direction des périphéries. Incontestablement, des auteurs comme Rivière vont bénéficier de ce système d'influence ou de diffusion – à travers la langue française notamment – mis en place quelques décennies plus tôt.

L'idée d'un discours post-colonial sur la muséologie porte en effet moins sur les politiques patrimoniales ou sur la nature des théories que sur l'existence de tels circuits de diffusion encore en place de nos jours. Tereza Scheiner (2016) évoque ainsi la prééminence, au sein de l'ICOM notamment, des discours anglophones et francophones sur le musée, au détriment des auteurs publiés dans d'autres langues. Bruno Bralon Soares et Anna Leshchenko (2018) sont les premiers à avoir cherché à objectiver cette tendance hégémonique, en étudiant notamment les références de *l'International Handbook of Museum Studies* et celles du *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie*. Leur constat est sans appel, le premier citant quasiment exclusivement des auteurs anglo-saxons, le second présentant en majorité des auteurs francophones et anglo-saxons. Selon les auteurs, « la théorie de la muséologie produite au cours du dernier demi-siècle pour définir sa propre interprétation morale de la réalité s'est révélée être marquée par des paradigmes créés au sein des structures coloniales du pouvoir, excluant les approches et les expériences qui ne peuvent être traduites – culturellement ou linguistiquement – dans le discours de ces centres épistémiques » (Bralon Soares & Leshchenko, 2018, p. 75). Ainsi, même la nouvelle muséologie, à travers la figure d'un Hugues de Varine, pourtant l'un des premiers à penser la décolonisation de la muséologie, est présentée comme une appropriation, par la muséologie française, d'idées extra-européennes (Bralon Soares & Leshchenko, 2018, p. 70). Si le calcul des citations révèle des différences indubitables entre les auteurs, les conclusions qui en sont tirées me semblent devoir être discutées.

On pourrait, bien sûr, rejeter en bloc la logique post-coloniale et la qualifier d'imposture académique, comme n'hésitent pas à le faire certains chercheurs (Taguieff, 2020). Cette politique de disqualification, bien qu'argumentée, m'apparaît tout aussi questionnable et contre-productive. Le post-colonialisme ou le décolonialisme reposent sur un grand nombre de recherches étayées,

abordant des sujets directement en lien avec le plan muséal (par exemple les expositions coloniales, les zoos humains ou la lecture critique des musées d'ethnographie), ouvrant de nouvelles perspectives à la pensée muséologique. En revanche, certaines des hypothèses liées à ces nouveaux questionnements méritent d'être analysées. Une première des hypothèses que je voudrais discuter ici est liée à la temporalité de l'analyse, qui m'apparaît très réduite. Une seconde hypothèse laisse supposer la répartition du nombre de chercheurs, à travers le monde, comme relativement homogène, ce qui me semble questionable. Une troisième hypothèse sous-tend que tous les chercheurs s'adressent à l'ensemble de la communauté muséale mondiale ; une quatrième hypothèse, enfin, laisse entendre qu'un auteur produisant des idées originales doit être cité, sans tenir compte des freins à la citation ni des efforts que l'auteur doit réaliser pour tenter de se faire connaître. La discussion de ces hypothèses me conduit à penser que le prisme des *post-colonial studies*, tel qu'il est appliqué ici, ne fait que renforcer une certaine vision toujours dominante de la muséologie, mais qui n'est pas lié aux colonialismes dénoncés.

Langue et temporalité

La question de la temporalité m'apparaît essentielle à envisager au niveau de la critique post-coloniale. En se concentrant essentiellement sur les processus de colonisation des Etats européens (Grande-Bretagne, France, Belgique...), le post-colonialisme développe une vision essentiellement centrée sur les XIX^e et XX^e siècles, évacuant les logiques colonialistes antérieures (de nombreux pays colonisés ont été colonisateurs), mais surtout ultérieures. Cette évolution s'observe dans les rapports de pouvoir entre Etats ou au sein des Empires, lesquels ne cessent de fluctuer. Il en va ainsi de la langue. Comme le rappelle très justement Tereza Scheiner, «[o]n sait aussi que la langue constitue un formidable instrument de pouvoir, et que l'hégémonie de la production dans une langue spécifique peut être appréhendée – surtout par ceux qui ne sont pas des théoriciens systématiques – comme une hégémonie de la pensée » (Scheiner, 2016, pp. 41-42). La décolonisation de la muséologie, en ce sens, passe pour la muséologue brésilienne par la fin de la domination de ces deux matrice linguistiques dominantes que sont l'anglais et le français, et l'ouverture à d'autres matrice, comme le brésilien ou le chinois, dont la littérature muséologique est importante, afin de mieux refléter la diversité du système muséal global – et par exemple la manière de percevoir le musée. Le principe fondamental sur lequel se fonde la critique portée par Scheiner, Bralon Soares et Leshchenko est en effet lié à l'usage des langues les plus utilisées dans le système académique, soit l'anglais et, dans une moindre mesure, le français (qui a dominé la pensée du monde occidental au XVIII^e siècle, mais dont l'influence a largement décliné tout au long du XX^e siècle. Seule, une (très) bonne maîtrise de ces langues permet à leurs auteurs de publier dans les revues internationales et d'accéder à une notoriété par-delà les frontières, privilégiant dès lors les natifs de la langue sur ceux qui l'auraient apprise plus tardivement.

On peut déplorer cet état de fait, mais il apparaît comme un mécanisme central à toute logique de mondialisation des échanges, notamment commerciaux ; l'acquisition d'une langue (en dehors des guerres et migrations) est influencée par un certain nombre de critères (le nombre de locuteurs, la distance linguistique, le niveau d'éducation), le plus important étant lié à l'importance des échanges commerciaux (Ginsburgh & Weber, 2018, pp. 41-43). Ce phénomène est observable à l'échelle des nations : le français lui-même a dû s'imposer sur son territoire, face au breton ou au flamand, comme l'espagnol et le portugais se sont imposés, en tant que langue colonisatrice, sur le Quechua, l'Aymara ou le Guarani. C'est ce même principe que l'on retrouve, à travers les échanges scientifiques, pour toutes les disciplines cherchant à « commerçer scientifiquement », soit à développer un savoir commun à travers des revues internationales (privilégiant l'anglais). L'anglais s'est effectivement imposé après la Seconde guerre mondiale comme langue la plus universelle, d'abord pour les échanges commerciaux, puis pour la vie intellectuelle. Il est la *lingua franca* – actuelle – dominant les autres, supplantant le français qui a pourtant dominé l'espace diplomatique occidental durant deux siècles, lui-même ayant remplacé le latin, langue hégémonique du Moyen-âge occidental. Certaines régions peuvent également développer une *lingua franca* sur des territoires plus limités, liés à leur zone d'influence (Braudel aurait parlé d'économies-mondes), comme le russe, le mandarin ou l'arabe. L'anglais s'est donc imposé de nos jours comme première langue, avec plus d'un milliard de locuteurs (langue maternelle et seconde), respectivement devant le mandarin, l'hindi, l'espagnol et le français (SIL, 2018). On peut le déplorer, comme on peut déplorer l'utilisation du dollar dans les échanges internationaux (ce qui privilégie fortement les Etats-Unis), mais l'efficacité du système actuel repose sur l'utilisation d'un nombre très limité de devises (comme l'euro, le yuan ou le yen). Si la maîtrise de quelques monnaies au sein du système monétaire apparaît déjà comme complexe, que dire de celle des langues ? Seule, une fraction très limitée de la population maîtrise l'emploi de plusieurs idiomes, y compris dans des pays développés multilingues comme la Suisse : sur l'ensemble de la population ; 38% y pratiquent deux langues, 21% trois, mais les chiffres diminuent rapidement après : 6,4% pour quatre, et 1,7% pour cinq langues ou plus (OFS, 2021).

Le fait que le français soit présenté ici comme jouissant d'un statut identique à l'anglais fera certainement plaisir à tout francophone (colonialiste)... Le problème est – ce dernier sera bien obligé de le reconnaître, s'il cherche à s'adresser à des collègues internationaux – qu'une telle vision n'est plus vraiment d'actualité, le déclin de la langue de Molière étant vécu par la plupart de ses locuteurs comme inexorable, les jeunes générations étrangères privilégiant l'usage de l'anglais comme seconde langue. Les premiers résultats d'une étude en cours sur les revues consacrées aux musées et à la muséologie à travers le monde montrent que plus d'un tiers (35%) sont écrites en anglais, précédent de loin celles en espagnol (10,5%), en français (6,4%) ou en allemand (5,2%) (Doyen & Mairesse, tbp). Les francophones, eux aussi, ne sont que très peu cités par les anglophones, sauf s'ils ont été traduits. Cet état de fait diffère largement de la

situation telle qu'elle se présentait encore dans les années 1960, où le français (à travers Sartre, Foucault), s'imposait au sein de la structure de réflexion occidentale. L'époque durant laquelle Georges Henri Rivière dirige l'ICOM coïncide encore avec cette période, celle de Hugues de Varine annonce déjà un premier tournant, marqué par une certaine ouverture à l'international. L'utilisation actuellement négligeable du français au sein de l'ICOM illustre parfaitement la poursuite inéluctable du déclin de son influence, moins au bénéfice d'une diversité langagière que de celle de l'anglais.

Premier constat, donc : les deux « pôles de domination » ne sont absolument pas au même niveau l'un de l'autre et connaissent des trajectoires différentes : le français décline depuis plusieurs décennies, tandis que l'anglais ne cesse de renforcer son statut. Sur les plus de 7000 langues existant sur terre, certaines voient leur statut se développer, notamment au gré de leur puissance commerciale (c'est le cas du Chinois, de plus en plus souvent appris comme seconde ou troisième langue, y compris en Afrique) ; d'autres voient leur influence péricliter (comme l'italien ou le français), et il y a fort à parier que l'anglais aurait connu un sort similaire s'il n'était pas aussi la langue officielle des Etats-Unis. Le constat d'une domination d'une langue par une autre ne peut en tout état de cause être envisagé que de manière dynamique, sur la longue durée, et forcément, en relation avec les autres, le dominant d'hier étant parfois le dominé de demain, et vice-versa. Le colonisé serait-il un colonisateur (passé ou futur) qui s'ignore ?

Une répartition équivalente ?

La seconde hypothèse sous-tendant la critique de différence de citation semble reposer sur le fait que la production académique serait équitablement répartie à travers le monde (sinon, pourquoi se soucier de différences de traitement ?). On trouve des muséologues et des professionnels de musées sur tous les continents, mais le plus grand nombre se retrouve dans les pays occidentaux. Il n'existe actuellement pas de statistiques répertoriant l'ensemble des auteurs publiant dans le champ muséal, ce qui permettrait d'estimer les biais potentiels entre production et citation. On peut cependant tenter d'avoir une idée de la répartition des auteurs en observant celle des musées à travers le monde (UNESCO, 2021), celle des centres de documentation en muséologie (Mairesse & Doyen, 2020) et celle des principales universités dans le monde² (Tab. 1) :

2. Classement de Shanghai pour 2019 (<http://www.shanghairanking.com/ARWU-Statistics-2019.html>). Ce classement est discutable (pour ce qui concerne les critères de sélection) et partiel (puisque l'on répertorie près de 20.000 établissements d'enseignement supérieur), mais il donne cependant une tendance générale sur la répartition des universités « publiantes ».

Groupe régional	Nombre total de musées	Nombre de centres de ressource muséales	Nombre d'universités du top 500
Amérique du Nord	35 327	39	155
Europe de l'Ouest	28 609	57	190
Europe de l'Est	11 366	30	10
Asie	16 987	13	95
Amérique du Sud et Caraïbes	8716	22	9
Pacifique	1193	9	27
Pays africains	868	8	5
Pays arabes	757	4	9

Tab. 1. Répartition des musées, des centres de ressources à destination des professionnels de musée et des principales universités dans le monde.

On pourrait longuement discuter de la justesse des statistiques présentées dans ce tableau, dont le principal mérite est d'évoquer les différences de répartition régionales au niveau des infrastructures. Ce décompte présente de très grandes disparités, tant sur le plan de la population muséale qu'en matière de centres de ressource ou de documentation sur les musées, et qu'en matière universitaire. On peut en déduire qu'à son tour, la production muséologique ressortant de ces différentes régions est loin d'être identiquement répartie, et qu'il semblerait logique que l'essentiel de cette production soit concentré dans les deux principales régions (l'Amérique du Nord et l'Europe de l'Ouest) pour lesquelles les infrastructures muséales ou universitaires sont les plus développées. Dans un tel contexte, que peut vouloir dire un appel à « décoloniser » la muséologie ? Le nombre relativement limité d'auteurs provenant d'autres pays qu'eurocéens ou nord-américain, tel que répertoriés dans *l'International Handbook of Museum Studies* et le *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie*, ne reflèterait-il pas, dans ses grandes lignes, la répartition des auteurs du champ muséal académique ? Si l'on peut observer des différences à cet égard (notamment pour le Brésil dont la production académique est importante), force est néanmoins de constater qu'elles sont moins criantes que si la production scientifique était répartie de manière uniforme à travers le monde.

Ecrire pour soi ou pour le monde ?

Les sciences exactes ou la médecine dont le cadre a été conçu par les régimes colonisateurs (il s'agit bien de sciences occidentales, issues des Lumières) se sont d'emblée imposées comme des disciplines mondiales, les chercheurs contribuant ensemble, toutes régions confondues (bien qu'inéquitablement réparties) à la constitution d'un savoir mondialisé, publiant dans les mêmes revues (anglophones). Certaines disciplines ont cependant moins cherché à se développer de manière aussi globalisée, comme l'histoire ou la sociologie qui bénéficient encore d'un grand nombre de revues écrites dans les langues vernaculaires. Les chercheurs en muséologie, de la même manière s'adressent largement à des publics (professionnels ou chercheurs) régionaux, voire locaux. La plupart des francophones s'adressent en français aux francophones, les Chinois aux Chinois, les Allemands aux Allemands, citant une littérature essentiellement locale. Une telle économie académique éditoriale s'avère possible dans les bassins linguistiques dont la population est suffisamment importante (quelques dizaines de millions de locuteurs) pour constituer un lectorat suffisant. C'est probablement le cas de toutes les langues principales, dont le russe ou le portugais (8^{ème} et 9^{ème} langues les plus parlées dans le monde), et forcément pour ce qui concerne l'anglais, dont la population constitue en soi un potentiel de lecteurs considérable. Beaucoup d'anglophones n'écrivent donc que pour les anglophones, en s'appuyant sur des auteurs anglophones.

Seul, un petit nombre de chercheurs aspire à développer des échanges de manière plus globale. Les premiers, dans une perspective de recherche, prospectent à travers le monde afin de découvrir de nouvelles idées sur le plan muséal ; les second cherchent à faire connaître leurs idées au plus grand nombre (certains auteurs pouvant s'inscrire dans les deux catégories). La première catégorie est liée aux activités de collecte documentaire et vise à enrichir les corpus constitués par tout scientifique : dans ce cas, le chercheur d'un pays linguistiquement dominant se trouve défavorisé, l'acquisition d'une seconde ou d'une troisième langue ayant souvent été négligée. A cette barrière linguistique s'adjoint une barrière technique ou financière : les circuits de diffusion des connaissances, en muséologie, sont relativement limités, notamment en raison du manque de plateformes permettant de récolter ces informations. L'investissement (temps, argent, infrastructures) nécessaire à de telles recherches n'est, la plupart du temps, possible que pour un nombre limité de chercheurs. La seconde catégorie est également relativement réduite et ne concerne que les chercheurs universitaires (plus rarement des professionnels) souhaitant développer une activité internationale. Ici aussi, une distinction s'impose entre un chercheur natif anglophone, disposant d'emblée d'une grande facilité d'expression pour intervenir lors de colloques, de séminaires ou sur Internet, et d'autres collègues dont l'anglais constitue seulement la seconde ou troisième langue. Les chercheurs issus de ces second pays – qu'ils soient français, brésiliens ou chinois – ne pourront espérer une certaine renommée que s'ils bénéficient de moyens naturels (capacités d'apprentissage des langues), culturels

(formation linguistique d'un pays) ou techniques (dispositifs de traduction) suffisants. A ce niveau, les scientifiques de plusieurs petits pays développés mais linguistiquement dominés (Belgique, Pays-Bas, Pays scandinaves, Suisse) bénéficient d'un avantage indéniable, ayant été formés très tôt à l'emploi de plusieurs langues et notamment l'anglais. Il n'en reste pas moins que même en maîtrisant suffisamment les langues d'échange international, un chercheur ne peut bénéficier automatiquement d'une reconnaissance internationale sans le déploiement de stratégies particulières.

Stratégies (nationales et internationales) de diffusion de la recherche

L'idée que l'émergence d'idées originales devrait conduire à la notoriété est séduisante, mais la situation s'avère plus complexe. Bruno Latour (1989) a bien montré l'importance des stratégies à mettre en œuvre pour accéder à une certaine notoriété : qu'il s'agisse de médecine, de sociologie ou de muséologie, celle-ci n'évolue que si un certain nombre de conditions sont représentées. L'existence d'une infrastructure (laboratoires ou bases de données), d'équipes de recherche, de postes académiques, de collègues (pour discuter les hypothèses), d'un vocabulaire commun et de méthodes partagées, ou d'un soutien politique et de la société, ne constituent que quelques-uns des éléments qui ont permis conjointement à certains chercheurs et à certaines disciplines ou certains courants de recherche d'émerger et de se propager.

La notoriété³ de Rivière ou celle de Varine sont largement dues au rôle qu'ils ont joué au sein de l'ICOM et à leur grande mobilité, les conduisant à explorer le phénomène muséal à travers le monde, mais aussi à participer à de nombreux colloques, séminaires ou formations sur tous les continents. Le curriculum vitae de John Falk, le chercheur vraisemblablement le plus cité actuellement dans le champ muséal³, témoigne non seulement de sa production (26 monographies rédigées ou éditées et près de 200 articles ou chapitres) mais surtout du réseau considérable qu'il a mis en place à travers ses recherches en tant que professeur invité ou chercheur aux Etats-Unis mais aussi en Inde, Australie, Colombie ou au Chili, et consultant pour plus d'une soixantaine de sites, en Amérique du Nord, Amérique latine, Europe et Asie, tout en délivrant des interventions sur tous les continents.

De manière générale, ce sont des stratégies similaires qui ont été mises en œuvre par les *cultural studies* pour se développer à travers un certain réseau d'universités (Mattelart, 2003), et c'est une lecture similaire des *post-colonial studies* qui peut être envisagée pour évoquer le succès de sa diffusion (Sibeud, 2004). L'inverse s'avère tout aussi possible : la notoriété d'un champ de recherche ou

3. Le profil de John Falk sur Google Scholar (22.500 citations) présente un indice h de 65 et de 43 depuis 2015. Son curriculum est disponible sur le site de l'Institute for learning Innovation, dont il est directeur : <http://www.instituteforlearninginnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/John-Falk-CV.pdf> (consultation mars 2020)

d'un chercheur peut aussi décliner, comme cela a été le cas de la muséologie scientifique qui s'était développée dans les pays de l'Est durant la guerre froide, et de penseurs comme Zbyněk Stránský, Awraam Razgon ou Klaus Schreiner. Si une personnalité comme Stránský a réussi, en l'espace d'une trentaine d'années, à mettre en place un réseau complexe d'influences (à travers son département et l'Université d'été de muséologie, soutenue par l'UNESCO), en jouant un rôle de première importance au sein d'ICOFOM, sa notoriété n'en a pas pour autant décrû au cours des années 1990 (Mairesse, 2020).

Le principe même de la citation repose donc sur des mécanismes qui dépassent largement, qu'on le déplore ou non, la qualité d'une recherche : la langue dans laquelle est écrite la citation, bien sûr, mais aussi la curiosité ou la paresse intellectuelle des chercheurs, leur volonté de développer des recherches à l'international, leurs qualités linguistiques, leurs moyens techniques et financiers, ainsi que les stratégies qu'ils ont eux-mêmes mis en œuvre pour développer leur notoriété.

Post-colonialisme, géopolitique et néolibéralisme

« La muséologie, telle qu'elle a été produite et enseignée dans le monde entier au cours des dernières décennies, a été créée et reproduite selon les structures coloniales du pouvoir. Un long chemin nous attend encore dans la recherche des influences et des courants muséologiques à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de ces centres coloniaux » (Brulon Soares & Leshchenko, p. 76). S'il est toujours intéressant de se plonger dans l'histoire coloniale, il serait peut-être plus instructif d'envisager les structures contemporaines du pouvoir, permettant de comprendre la situation actuelle. En l'occurrence, France et Grande-Bretagne ne sont plus les puissances dominantes actuelles, bien que leur rôle ne soit pas négligeable. Le prisme colonial ne privilégierait-il pas un cadre en voie d'obsolescence favorisant la critique mais pas les stratégies visant à inverser ces tendances, tout en masquant les structures de domination actuelles ? La littérature post-coloniale a rapidement fait l'objet de critiques concernant sa frilosité quant aux enjeux et aux analyses économiques des situations évoquées (Dirlik, 1994). Bayart parle à leur sujet de « carnaval académique », « un moment de déroulement qui ne met nullement en danger l'ascendant de l'utilitarisme triomphant du *rational choice* dans l'Université américaine ou nord-atlantique et qui permet au passage la cooptation en son sein des trublions les plus brillants de l'élite indigène » (Bayart, 2010, p. 67).

L'approche géopolitique, qui intègre à la fois les pouvoirs politiques et militaires (*hard power*), le pouvoir économique, mais aussi diplomatique et culturel (*soft power*), permet à mon sens d'interroger les rapports de force actuels de manière bien plus pertinente. La géopolitique s'intéresse, comme les *postcolonial studies*, aux logiques colonisatrices, dominatrices ou hégémoniques, mais en se concentrant moins sur les discours que sur les enjeux et les stratégies de domination, militaires, économiques et culturelles, afin d'assurer, selon les termes d'Adam Smith, la richesse des nations. D'un point de vue géopolitique

et géostratégique, le monde est actuellement dominé par les Etats-Unis, première puissance économique depuis le début du XX^e siècle, et politiquement dominante après 1945, d'abord en opposition frontale avec l'Union soviétique puis, après l'implosion de cet empire, de manière unilatérale. Le rôle des Etats-Unis, par le biais d'un jeu d'alliances et de relations de pouvoir aussi bien militaires qu'économiques et culturelles, vise à assurer à ce pays le rôle que toute métropole d'Empire entend jouer, à savoir préserver ou développer sa richesse en s'assurant d'une libre disposition des matières premières nécessaires à son économie et de débouchés pour sa production industrielle, afin d'assurer le développement de sa prospérité. Le rôle joué par un certain nombre de nations, ces deux dernières décennies (Brésil, Russie, Inde, Chine, Afrique du Sud, Chine) n'a pas encore permis d'inverser cette situation, l'expansion aussi bien économique que politique et militaire de la Chine laissant cependant percevoir la transformation des rapports de force en présence dans les années à venir (Boniface, 2014).

Le musée, comme institution largement soutenue par le pouvoir en place, constitue à la fois un symbole de la richesse ou du développement d'un pays, et un instrument de *softpower* à destination des publics nationaux ou internationaux (Mairesse 2019a). Il en va de même des universités, qui reflètent autant qu'elles façonnent (à travers leur production académique ou l'accueil d'étudiants étranger) la puissance et la logique de pensée du système dominant. Le développement des *postcolonial studies*, dans cette perspective, participe pleinement à cette logique : en fustigeant le rôle des anciennes puissances coloniales (France, Grande Bretagne, etc.) et en incitant les anciens pays colonisés et colonisateurs à la critique des représentations, ou à des demandes de restitutions, il constitue un discours sur la domination des pays anciennement colonisés par l'Occident, qui ne peut que résonner favorablement à l'oreille de ces derniers. Mais en concentrant l'analyse sur la domination culturelle des anciens pays colonisateurs, les *postcolonial studies* ne participent-elles pas au renforcement de la domination culturelle actuelle, fruit du *soft power* américain (de Disney à Facebook) tout en passant sous silence les enjeux économiques actuels sous-jacents, à savoir l'établissement d'une économie de marché la plus ouverte possible... au bénéfice de la principale puissance dominante ?

La volonté du MDPP d'avoir voulu supprimer le caractère « sans but lucratif » du musée est révélatrice à cet égard : « [I]leur définition doit inclure des notions de responsabilité et de transparence beaucoup plus importantes que ne le fait l'expression « sans but lucratif » pour clarifier la manière dont les musées répondent à leur objectif, définissent et observent leurs principes et acquièrent et utilisent les ressources matérielles, financières, sociales et intellectuelles à leur disposition » (MDPP, 2018)⁴. Transparence et responsabilité, autant de termes appartenant au vocabulaire entrepreneurial que l'on retrouve dans l'idéologie

4. Le terme « sans but lucratif » n'a été réintroduit que sur le tard, par le Conseil d'Administration de l'ICOM, et non par le MDPP.

néolibérale, pour des entreprises entièrement dédiées à la recherche du profit. Dans cette perspective, le discours post-colonial constitue une remarquable stratégie de diversion, aux conséquences mineures sinon négligeables (un peu d'autoflagellation pour quelques grands musées américains, une critique sans concession de anciens pays colonisateurs et la menace de quelques restitutions), en regard des vrais enjeux, à savoir la poursuite de l'exploitation continue de territoires étrangers, de manière directe ou par le biais de multinationales, et l'exploitation sans contraintes des matières premières (pétrole, gaz, terres rares, etc.) de la planète.

Conclusions

Les *post-colonial studies* constituent un champ d'étude pour le moins intéressant, notamment sur le plan muséal, ayant permis de mettre en lumière un certain nombre de phénomènes particuliers, notamment les zoos humains ou certaines structures d'exposition fondées sur des préjugés racistes. Si l'idée d'une « décolonisation du musée » apparaît cohérente, en regard des expositions permanentes de certains établissements, rejoignant ainsi la muséologie critique (Lorente, 2016), peut-on dire la même chose d'une décolonisation de la muséologie ?

L'enjeu de la décolonisation de la muséologie ne repose pas sur la critique du caractère supposé raciste ou dominateur des conceptions de certains de ces auteurs, mais de manière plus générale, sur la place qu'ils occupent à travers le monde, et donc de certaines conceptions de la muséologie en regard des autres, du fait de supposées structures de pouvoir coloniales toujours dominantes (en l'occurrence, l'anglais et le français). Si certaines langues – essentiellement l'anglais – continuent de dominer les échanges internationaux, c'est moins, à mon sens, en raison d'une logique coloniale remontant au XIX^e siècle, que des rapports de domination actuels, essentiellement américains (et non britanniques, qui cependant en bénéficient), qui continuent de dominer l'ensemble des échanges internationaux (et les outils qui sont nécessaires à son maintien : langue, monnaie, instances internationales).

Tandis que les anciens empires coloniaux ne cessent de voir leur influence diminuer, d'autres Etats (dont la Chine et, dans une moindre mesure, le Brésil, l'Inde ou la Russie) s'emploient à faire évoluer les rapports de force entre nations, au détriment de la puissance dominante. L'émergence des *postcolonial studies*, au sein du système universitaire international, dont certains courants proviennent de ces pays (notamment l'Inde), doivent pourtant une grande part de leur notoriété aux universités américaines, où elles se sont largement développées. Cette situation semble *a priori* paradoxale – comment la « métropole du monde » accepte-t-elle une telle critique ? En réalité, comme le suggère Bayart avec l'expression de « carnaval académique », la contestation, lorsqu'elle est institutionnalisée (le temps du carnaval) ne remet nullement en cause l'ordre établi, permettant au contraire de mieux en accepter les conséquences, sans aucune perspective de changement.

Il importe aux chercheurs qui le souhaitent de poursuivre la critique ou d'agir, l'un n'excluant pas l'autre, mais l'inversion de ces rapports de force ne passera pas juste par les études, qu'elles soient muséales ou post-coloniales.

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Decolonization within the Museum

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ABSTRACT

There are two realities which pose the greatest impediments to museum decolonization. These are: the very existence of the museum itself being a Western construct, and, the nature of the collections within. Since the last decades of the 20th century, museums with assemblages of anthropological materials have become highly contested spaces. There is a growing movement emanating from the descendants of the peoples from whom these materials originated for the decolonization of such museums. To this end, these museums are having to develop a way to address the dilemma in which they find themselves in order to map a route forward and effect a realignment with those for whom this means so much.

Keywords: museums, anthropology, decolonization, dilemma.

RÉSUMÉ

La « Décolonisation » et les musées

Deux phénomènes constituent des obstacles majeurs à l'introduction de la décolonisation dans les musées : d'abord, les musées sont avant tout une création occidentale, ensuite la nature même des collections détenues par les musées. Depuis les dernières décennies du XXème siècle les musées ayant rassemblé des objets anthropologiques sont devenus des lieux de contestation. Des mouvements croissants, émanant des descendants des peuples de chez qui les objets sont originaires,

agissent pour la décolonisation dans ces musées. Pour atteindre cet objectif, les musées doivent élaborer une stratégie pour affronter le dilemme dans lequel ils se trouvent et qui leur permettrait, à nouveau, de se mettre en accord, avec ceux pour qui tiennent cette question particulièrement à cœur.

Mots-clé : musées, anthropologie, décolonisation, dilemme.



The questions to be addressed are: why are museums seen as colonial spaces and why has a state of museum decolonization not yet been achieved? While Indigenous peoples are always “knocking” on the museum’s door, museums are reluctant to reach out, to welcome, to share. What is behind all this and can a path forward be achieved?

The primary fact

The existence of the museum is, itself, a colonizing fact. The very structure and what it embodies is perhaps the epitome and certainly one of the most readily observable symbolic remnants from the age of “active” colonialism. Museums are a product of colonialization as they grew out of those Cabinets of Curiosities which were private assemblages of what were frequently classified as strange and unusual oddities often pillaged and brought back from foreign and exotic lands. Colonization and the “bring ‘em back alive” mentality that all too often underpinned the growth of such collections, up to and including the advent of the museum, has deep roots and became firmly entrenched in “Western” and “Western-leaning” societies around the world.

As a consequence, the ultimate reality of any decolonization achievement in this sphere would mean the entire physical destruction of museums and all for which they stand. As this is not likely to happen, what can be done to try to mitigate the over-bearing colonialization museums represent to so many, and especially to indigenous peoples worldwide? Another route, another mindset, another rethink, are required and this can only happen from within the museum itself and through the museum undertaking to transmit a new reality not only to itself, but also to its immediate community, to the world beyond, and even to the seats of national governance. Then, and only then, can museum become a standard-bearer for the decolonization of itself and for a societal realignment towards those who have been disenfranchised for so long.

The pyramid effect and its consequences

Based on a worldwide perspective, it could be said that situated at the top of the perceived museum hierarchy is the International Council of Museums

(ICOM) (a non-governmental organization which maintains formal relations with UNESCO – United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization). While ICOM does not involve itself in the politics or running of museums per se, it does take responsibility for providing a definition of “Museum”. For many countries and museums worldwide, even if they do not subscribe to or are members of ICOM, ICOM’s museum definition seemingly remains THE most referenced word on what a museum is. Both institutional and related political jurisdictions have incorporated this definition not only into their *raison d'être*, but also into their path forward. In addition, ICOM has also developed a formalized Code of Ethics to determine and to steer appropriate institutional and individual behaviours of and in museums, and again, these have become a foundation for museum and staff conduct.

Since these two documents have evolved into benchmarks for a global “museumness”, the standards they set tend to steer museums in compliance with their tenets and what these represent. To surmise that they do not have a relational effect on museum thought processes, on museum behaviour and on what and how museums communicate to and within their communities, would be an understatement. In this way, the trickle down effect is solidly in place and the consequences far reaching. How can museums shake off the veil of colonization when there are overarching impediments to even consider doing so?

Looking carefully at both the ICOM Museum Definition and at the Code of Ethics, what signs of a route to decolonization can be seen? In fact, there is so very little that can be interpreted from these documents to support such a stance. Even considering ICOM’s three official languages (English, French, and Spanish), it is an inescapable reality that all three are from nations formerly responsible for mass imperialism and colonization throughout the world.

Taking all of this into consideration, museums are left alone without stanchions on to which to hold or mentors to follow. Perhaps this is a good thing, since it avails museums of the opportunity to set their individual course in concert with their own internal circumstances and those of the communities they serve. Thus, we return to the only route forward, that being the one individual institution’s need to map out for themselves.

Anthropology and the museum

Anthropology’s contribution to the museum’s impediment towards decolonization has its roots much earlier than its coming of age as a scientific discipline.

From the 15th through the 18th centuries, a number of European countries launched a competitive “Age of Discovery”, and the building of bigger and better ships allowed for travel to and exploration of distant, hitherto “unknown” lands – that is, unknown to the countries from where the ships came. These forays into the “unknown” turned into highly competitive imperialistic races to claim territories for that nation under which flag they sailed. In Europe, this

resulted in national policies of colonialism and the race to hold onto newly “discovered” lands, which often led to confrontation. What these early explorers found was that many of the lands they “discovered” were already inhabited by Indigenous populations and it was at this point of contact that both culture change and subjugation began to take hold. Voyages of “exploration and discovery” returned home not only with cartography of the new territories, and drawings of landscape, of flora and fauna, of Indigenous peoples (their clothing, habitations, ceremonies, etc.), but also with sample collections of animal and plant species, live herbarium specimens, and material culture objects from the peoples with whom they came into contact – objects which inevitably made their way into museum collections. In this way, museums became inextricably linked to colonialization.

Following on the heels of waves of global imperialism and colonization by European powers, anthropology arose in the latter part of the 19th century and hit its stride as a science in the first half of the 20th century. Anthropologists undertook fieldwork wherever an Indigenous society or ancient site of former habitation could be located, with many often laying claim to a lifetime exclusivity of right-of-study. Such forays into Indigenous territories or as a result of excavations in the pursuit of knowledge resulted in an influx of material culture objects that ended up in museums. It is these objects, whether archaeological or ethnological in nature, from such sources worldwide that have formed important, well-documented holdings in museums today. For Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1991, p. 387), “Ethnographic artifacts are objects of ethnography. They are artifacts created by ethnographers. Objects become ethnographic by virtue of being defined, segmented, detached, and carried away by ethnographers.” Thomas (1991, p. 184) goes one step further and lists “agents of colonialism” as “explorers, missionaries, planters, ethnologists, administrators, pioneers” with some having “far less impact than others”. The once popular image of the ethnographer “shifted from a sympathetic, authoritative observer” to the unflattering figure of “the ambitious social scientist making off with tribal lore and giving nothing in return” (Clifford, 1986, p. 9). And yes, museums have been complicit in this activity as well.

In “post-colonial” eras, “the relation of anthropology to colonialism/imperialism became for the first time, a burning issue for anthropologists” since “in the aftermath of political decolonization, the voices of national liberation rang louder” and “access to traditional fieldwork sites now in control of independent “new nations” became problematic” (Stocking, 1991, p. 3). The role of the anthropologist thus grew into a controversial issue and by 1970, “anthropology was sometimes spoken of as the ‘child’ or ‘daughter’ of western imperialism and a form of ‘scientific colonialism’” (Stocking, 1991, p. 3). In addition, anthropology was targeted for its insensitivity in dealing with issues of historical context and “the discipline’s relationship to colonialism and ... to neo-colonialism” was questioned (Marcus & Fischer, 1986, p. 14). Further criticism came in relation to the “process of objectification and representational sleight of hand through

which a conventional ethnography comes to be produced" (Keesing, 1992, p. 19). (This is critical as museum anthropologists draw from known ethnographies for informational materials for, for example, exhibition texts.)

Museum anthropology tended to be ignored by academic anthropology until near the end of the 20th century when the museum boom, "with its accompanying objectification and politicization of culture, finds its counterpart in expanding social scientific interest in the musealization of culture" (Bouquet, 2001, p. 1). Issues, such as those of the "social relevance of museum exhibits, deconstructionist critiques, critiques of ethnocentric primitivism, authenticity issues, and the politically-charged implications of museum exhibits in contemporary society" followed (González, Nader & Ou, 2001, p. iii). Desmond (1999, pp. 37–38) observed that "the rise of anthropology and the beginnings of tourism as an organized industry coincide, with each a different dimension of the ethnographic gaze" and that "both practices emerged within, and supported, the mutually constitutive ideologies of modernism and primitivism."

Nevertheless, the anthropologist working as a curator in a museum is not in a comfortable position – the field of study and face-to-face interaction with Indigenous populations does not take place in a "remote" location but rather where public scrutiny is an immediate reality. Museum anthropologists work with material culture and have come to distance themselves from the peoples and lifeways from which these objects originated. It is evident that there is an irrefutable, interrelated link between the museum and anthropology which has significantly contributed to calls for decolonization. In fact, there have been growing concerns about whether anthropological collections, be they in the realm of archaeology, ethnology or physical anthropology material culture and specimens, should remain in museums at all.

Even probing questions have arisen about the very future of ethnographic museums and whether these will continue to exist. In July 2013, as a culmination to a five-year Réseau International de Musées d'Ethnographie project funded by the European Union and involving ten major European ethnographic museums – the aim of which was to encourage ethnographic museums to redefine their priorities in response to an ever more globalizing and multicultural world – the Pitt Rivers Museum and Keble College at Oxford University held a conference to try to find answers to such questions as those which appeared in their Advance Conference Announcement: "What is the purpose of an ethnographic museum in the twenty-first century? Who are they for and what should they contain? Who has the right to own and represent the material culture of others?" These are, however, quite different issues from those for museums located close to indigenous populations where the immediacy of these matters would require their own distinct response in keeping with the demographics. There are two divides here that exist: "them over there" and "us over here". Distance matters, as does circumstance, both of which produce a very different mindset and path towards resolution.

Perception

The museum has become a status symbol and is often perceived as a “temple”, an “elitist” enclave, and an icon of “excellence” with worldwide recognition, a place to learn about oneself or the lives of “others” through viewing their material culture. In fact, the public face of museums is, first and foremost, their exhibitions and these carry powerful messages in whatever manner museums dictate and provide as experiential encounters. Exhibitions are a “contested terrain” and the “struggle is not only over what is to be represented, but over who will control the means of representing” and ultimately, “the articulation of identity” and to this end, “exhibitions are privileged arenas for presenting images of self and ‘other’” (Karp, 1991, p. 15).

Through this one public-relational activity, museums have become an isolated law unto themselves with those on the outside “looking in” and absorbing what they are “told” without questioning either veracity or contextualization. Museums, after all, are the “experts” in the production and dissemination of such knowledge and any thought of disinformation never enters the equation. In this way, exhibitions act as the fulcrum for whatever messages museums wish to broadcast.

Nevertheless, museums, especially those with anthropology collections, have become disputed spaces since the latter part of the 20th century. They are viewed as the products of “imperial and colonial constructions of knowledge, official displayers of cultures and cultural hierarchies” and “repositories of intensely desired objects” (Phillips, 2012, p. 73). Further, “the objects of cultural Others” tend to be appropriated primarily into two categories: “the artifact or ethnographic specimen and the work of art” (Phillips and Steiner, 1999, p. 3). Museums also recast objects of “meaning” into commodified showpieces mounted in display cases featuring the “other”, a pejorative term now in common use. Consequently, these museums have found themselves in a tricky situation and are increasingly being held to account for their position and even for their *raison d'être*.

Two highly criticized and contentious exhibitions, *The Spirit Sings* (1988) and *Into the Heart of Africa* (1989), and the fiascos that befell them due to museum missteps, still weigh heavily on the Canadian museum consciousness. These, coupled with such insensitivity and poor judgement as that displayed in a 2014 incident when the Seattle Art Museum wagered an item (a Nuxalk First Nations 1880s ceremonial mask) to lend to the Denver Art Museum if the Seattle Seahawks lost that year’s annual US Super Bowl game to the Denver Broncos, shows that there is a long way to go before decolonization can truly manifest in the museum sphere.

The quandary

Museums face what they perceive to be an uphill battle towards reaching an acceptable and workable resolution. While the very existence of the museum

itself could be equated with an “overt colonialism”, what transpires within this structure still remains a form of “subtle colonialism” which is all-too-often manifested by an ingrained ongoing museum ethos and its consequential actions. Many observers see museums as “a colonizing space engaged in classification processes that define people” and think that museums “construct the ‘other’ to construct and justify the ‘self’” (Marstine, 2006, p. 14). Further, Ames (1992, p. 102) asks: “What happens when a museum attempts to ‘museumify’ living traditions?”

On another note, Pratt (1992, pp. 6–7) describes “contact zones” as “the space of colonial encounters” in which “peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations” but which usually involve “conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.” In keeping with this, Clifford (1997, p. 192) refers to museums as “contact zones” and when “museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a *collection* becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral *relationship* – a power-charged set of exchanges of push and pull”.

True, museums are a symbol of colonialism and museums are here to stay, but the challenge is how to decolonize a product of colonization without removing all museum structures and their services from the scene. So, what to do? Where to start? How to move forward? As a starting point, the subject is being narrowed to the Canadian circumstance – the “us over here” museum perspective.

In Canada, immigrant (primarily European and now Asian) populations “share” the land with those Indigenous peoples (referred to as “First Nations”) who were here long before all of us. This view, however, is not held by the First Nations who see the immigrants as poachers on lands that do not belong to them but which were “stolen” from their ancestors through the actions of exploration, colonialization, and exploitation by European powers who claimed to have “discovered” these new lands. Nevertheless, such territories were not “discovered” by European colonizers, because the then extant inhabitants were already here and this term is offensive to First Nations sense of being. Rather, and more accurately, Europeans ventured to “explore” lands new to themselves. This action, however, perpetrated a “move in” and “take over” scenario, which resulted in an ingrained “conqueror” ethos and the attitude and action of superiority that went with it. This state of mind is still prevalent in museums.

Museums have developed their own attitudinal ethos based on rights of intrusion and ownership. Still not fully cognizant or accepting of their stewardship role, museums continue to hold fast to the control they exert over all in their domain, whether it be the collections they have amassed or the accompanying intellectual property. They hold onto the right of title and are supported in this by the laws of the land. They generate a perceived attitude of arrogance as evidenced, for example, through actions of “inclusion” and “exclusion”. Nevertheless, how to maintain the integrity of their collections, their curatorial purpose and, at the same time, address decolonization, has become a challenge

for those museums holding anthropological materials as they endeavour to find a path through a conflicting conundrum.

Museums have learned and accumulated knowledge based on science which they disseminate through exhibitions and programmes and this has gone uncontested until relatively recently. The impending loss of their traditional and perhaps all too comfortable position of power is very much at the root of the enigma which museums are having to address. First Nations cultures are rooted in oral traditions which are passed down through the generations. This, therefore, introduces a new perspective which museums perceive as being unscientific and which may very well contradict the hard evidence. Nevertheless, First Nations will no longer accept being shut out of this sphere of knowledge dissemination where their own cultures are concerned. The challenge for the museum, therefore, is how to convey scientific evidence in a format that is acceptable to First Nations peoples.

There will still remain, however, a tension between scholarly data and traditional knowledge that is passed on verbally. In spite of the perception that memory can be elusive, museums need to acknowledge differences and embrace multiple voices in all aspects of museum activity when presenting indigenous lifeways and thought. It also needs to be borne in mind that each First Nation is unique to itself and can, therefore, differ widely from all others.

A pathway

So, where to go from here? What has to transpire within museums to ensure a path towards “decolonization”? Can decolonization ever be achieved? These are tough and far-reaching questions that must be addressed if there is to be any resolution to the current circumstance.

To begin, museums need to irrevocably shed their past mindset and adopt a position of, and path towards, inclusion and sharing by letting go of their previous, ingrained rights of privilege. They need to be prepared to take a back seat even to their own perceived learned status which they believe is their right. They need to welcome new ideas, new perspectives, new ways of doing, new voices into their “sacred” halls of academic learning and rigid articulation to what they hold as sacred to themselves. They need to learn to share and to listen, to collaborate and to form partnerships. Breaking down these extant barriers will not be an easy route to take, but if decolonization is to be realized and museums with anthropological collections are to survive with these holdings still in place, these tasks are essential.

There is also a belief that “bona fide” cultures are “frozen” in time, often occupying an almost fanciful place in the past, and do not change even when visited. The view is that museums deal with a sense of purity, and not with the hybrid resulting from integration. All too often, museum exhibitions endorse this impression. Even though museums are a registry of what was, peoples cannot be forever held in the past, especially if they hope to co-exist with them in the “real

world". Museums must learn to accept this and to also represent the cultural continuum. Over time, extant cultures have had to adapt to their surrounding milieu even with their inheritors maintaining an identity which is tied to that of their ancestors. Museums need to be reflective of "living" cultures, rather than just Indigenous cultures of the past. Recognizing and acknowledging the "cultural continuum" as a legitimate inclusion in its collections, exhibitions and programmes, is an important step for museums to take. To achieve this, there needs to be a shift in ideology to allow for contemporary thought and action whereby the museum discards its penchant for what it considers to be real or authentic cultures and accepts that cultures change. Museums need to recognize that the resultant hybrids are as diverse as the backgrounds from which they originated. Museums need to become what they have not yet imagined.

Museums are a product of the "age of discovery" and have been comfortable in that role. In fact, the museum's approach to itself is a colonizing act and requires a change of mindset which needs to come down to such simple basic human values as "perception" and "attitude". First Nations peoples will no longer accept being marginalized or shut out of the museum sphere. They now demand equal access to museum collections and the right to interpret these through their own eyes.

Since the mid-20th century, the political landscapes have been altered by "the cumulative effects of postwar decolonization – uneven and locally articulated, hemmed in by neocolonialism, but making space for a broad range of contestations and voices" (Clifford, 2013, p. 104). The question to be asked might very well be: "Does the growing popularity of collaborative exhibits signal a new era of social agency for museums" or have museum spaces become a place where "symbolic restitution is made for the injustices of the colonial era in lieu of more concrete forms of social, economic and political redress?" (Phillips, 2003, p. 158).

Clifford (2013, pp. 5–6) sees the last half-century as the "interaction of two linked historical energies: decolonization and globalization"; he states that neither process "is linear or guaranteed" or "can subsume the other" and that both "are contradictory and open ended", and concludes that this is "an unfinished but irreversible project" (Clifford, 1986, p. 9). Clifford continues to say that cultures "do not hold still for their portraits" and that attempts to make them do so "always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship, and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship" (Clifford, 1986, p. 10).

In Canada, larger museums are now hiring First Nations peoples as curators and interpreters in an effort not only to right the wrongs of the past, but also to inform their visitorship of the valued knowledge Indigenous peoples bring to this public arena. This opportunity for museums to address cultural assimilations and the tangential or hybrid cultures that arise from competing ideas provides the museum with new ground to explore and adds an incredibly

important dynamic to the museum's role in the community. Sadly, however, not all is going well. For example, in February 2021, it was reported that the head of the Royal British Columbia Museum (one of the largest in Canada) was forced to step down amid an investigation following the resignation of the Head of their Indigenous Collections and Repatriation Department (and a member of the Haida First Nation), citing an internal culture of racism and discrimination. That this should happen in a museum of this stature will send efforts to decolonize museums back to the "starting blocks".

Canadian Museums do have a course of action as outlined by the 1992 *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples*, but this has not been fully embraced, is not legally binding and stands in contrast to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) which is in force in the United States. What the Task Force Report does recommend are steps which encompass "partnership" (Task Force, 1992, p. 4). This is a good starting point for museums regardless of whether or not they have hired First Nations curators and interpreters. Since museums are virtually an operational-centric law unto themselves and strive to maintain their position of authority in all that they do and plan to do, "partnership" is foreign to the museum ethos and needs to be initiated and embraced if not already present. Nevertheless, "partnership", *full and equal*, is what it will take to begin to dissolve the yoke of colonialism felt by Indigenous peoples everywhere, not just in Canada. Partnership will require a putting aside of the museum's long-held stance of superiority and its tight grip on that which has gone before. Partnership will require the opening up to other ideas and perspectives, to other ways of "seeing" and "doing", and to other "voices".

Ames (1999, pp. 41–42) recognizes that "‘Partnering’ and ‘collaboration’ are popular terms with museums these days, though they are used to describe many different arrangements and usually from the perspective of the museum itself", but also admits that there are concerns about "potential risks to research opportunities, academic freedom, and curatorial prerogatives" – risks which cannot figure in the equation when heading towards decolonization.

Sharing museums as "keeping places" with Indigenous peoples would go a long way to decolonizing the extant imbalance. There is little doubt that closer interaction would benefit both demographics. In fact, why cannot a full and equal partnership be achieved whereby Indigenous peoples have not only a voice in, but also full control of *all* aspects of museum activity in presenting Indigenous lifeways and thought?

A case in point

Take for example, the venture into "partnership" by the Vancouver Museum when creating and mounting an exhibition on Coast Salish basketry.

This museum sits squarely on the former Indian Reserve #6 (Sn?aqʷ) in a park near downtown Vancouver. The land was allotted to the Squamish Nation in

1887 and, in 1913, was illegally taken over by the provincial government. Those living on the Reserve were forcibly dislocated, put on a scow and towed to new reserve lands in North Vancouver and the Squamish Valley where these peoples reside today. The homes on IR6 were burned and the land was taken over by the Canadian Pacific Railway. Between 1913 and 1946, the Federal government permitted other parties to use the land, including Canadian armed forces during and after the Second World War. The land was eventually acquired by the City of Vancouver which was responsible for the building of the museum thereon (as the city's major project to celebrate the 1967 Canadian Centennial) and which opened in October 1968. Beginning in 1977 and continuing well into 1999, legal action was taken by *s̕kw̕xwú7mesh* (Squamish) First Nations, with both the *x̕w̕məθkʷəy̕əm* (Musqueam) and the *sel̕íl̕witul̕h* (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations (also inhabiting the lands within the Vancouver city catchment), filing counter claims in respect of the same action.

This situation being the reality for this museum, it “partnered” with all three First Nations to mount an exhibition. Throughout, the three First Nations were involved in all aspects of the process – choice of exhibition theme, application for grant monies, choice of objects for display (including seeing that important items which the museum did not have were either made by or borrowed from their First Nations), writing of texts and labels, working in the museum’s conservation lab to prepare objects for display, choice of display methodology, paint colours, text format and print, graphics inside of the exhibition hall, and any ambient embellishments such as sound. Once the exhibition opened in 2002, the three First Nations were also responsible for school and public programming. Each First Nation provided a curator and an administrative person to whom the curators reported. The role of the museum’s Curator of Anthropology was one of facilitator, attending all meetings with the curators, and serving as the liaison between the First Nations and the museum.

The partnership dynamic (which was *not* initiated by the museum) was particularly evident when the First Nations administration would not allow the museum to either hire the curators or pay them. Thus, when the monies were awarded to the museum by the government, those fiscal appropriations for the First Nations curators went directly from the museum to the respective First Nations. The museum administration was not happy with this arrangement, and this was, in fact, one of numerous cracks which developed in this “partnership”. There were others along the way as well which became ongoing irritants for the museum’s administration. These included numerous delays in the exhibition opening, the ongoing need for courtesies towards First Nations elders which included food and ceremony, ongoing conflicts among the three First Nations, and an opening ceremony in which the museum played almost no part at all. Such irritants would need to have been overcome and accepted by the museum to effect a truly full partnership with these First Nations peoples.

Before any such collaborative project begins, the museum will have little influence over the issue of control even though these undertakings may ori-

ginate from and occur on its premises. First Nations peoples will initiate Protocol Agreements (which state how the parties will work together), set the agenda and course of action, will direct what is said not only inside the museum but also what information is disseminated beyond its walls, what is to be displayed (objects, visuals, reconstructions) and how these are to be represented. In fact, anything and everything that impinges on any joint project, including the vetting of funding and other support sources, in which First Nations peoples are involved.

“Until museums do more than consult (often after the curatorial vision is firmly in place), until they bring a wider range of historical experiences and political agendas into the actual planning of exhibits and the control of museums collections, they will be perceived as merely paternalistic by people whose contact history with museums has been one of exclusion and condescension.” (Clifford, 1997, pp. 207–208)

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Whatever the reasons, whether it is guilt over past wrongs or a willing compliance, the museum is being cornered into a secondary role. The loss of the traditional position it has had in the past, is a dilemma which museums now need to address.

The future

Museums need to face some hard realities. They serve many communities in their sphere of influence and if they are to stay relevant to and inclusive of an important element they need to accept that their anthropological holdings are not just objects to adorn their exhibition halls, but are “living” components of a people’s past through which they speak. It is a fact that the “movement towards self-determination among North American First Nations continues unabated” and these peoples are “asking that society recognize their interests in their own heritage, spiritual and well as material” (Ames, 1990, p. 158). It is also true that museums with anthropology collections “are places where competing claims to ownership, compensation, authority, and interpretation have to be negotiated on an almost daily basis” (Phillips, 2012, p. 73).

So far, there has been no mention herein of repatriation, a term that sends shivers through museums, although they are all fast becoming aware of what it means in a real sense and this is another difficult situation which museums are now having to face. While repatriation may be seen as a corollary to decolonization, it is not a given. Not all First Nations peoples want materials returned for a variety of reasons, such as the loss of knowledge of the appropriate ceremonial requirements or the lack of an ability to accommodate same, even though indigenous museums and cultural centres do exist.

Of particular concern are human osteological materials (“ancestor remains”) which museums have in their collections. The protocol of not exhibiting such materials in Canadian museum galleries has been the norm for decades, having been removed in response to a growing realization of the inappropriateness of their public display. Still, there are museums that are involved in physical anthropology pursuits and make use of such in their laboratories. Even though there are some First Nations that do not want such remains returned, there is, nevertheless, a growing demand that many museums are heeding and making concerted efforts to comply. Yet, Jivaro *tsantsa* and Egyptian mummies, for example, are still a source of public curiosity and there does remain a lingering reluctance to remove these from sight.

Museums, too, rapaciously built their anthropological collections throughout the early part of the 20th century, often in competition with each other. While some of these were amassed from the field under questionable circumstances, or obtained by stealth, or “purchased” from First Nations peoples, all are seen as “theft” perpetrated by museums. These also need to be addressed and serious thought given to their return en route to effecting museum decolonization. It certainly would go towards promoting equity in and bring some measure of resolution to the museum-First Nations struggle. Unquestionably, such an action would be a heavy loss to be borne by museums and it would seem that distance plays a part in effecting action.

For example, the 1904 removal of the Mowachaht Whaler’s Washing House Shrine from Yuquot on the west coast of Vancouver Island, a purchase negotiated by George Hunt (who, in the late 19th to early 20th century, had already acquired vast quantities of First Nations objects from the Pacific Northwest Coast for the American Museum of Natural History in New York) in collaboration with anthropologist, Franz Boas, has been a source of endless repatriation requests since the 1980s. On the other hand, an iconic large stone 3000-year-old carving known as the Sechelt Image, found in 1921 and subsequently sold to the museum in Vancouver in 1926, was returned to the Sechelt Nation in 2010. Further afield, in 2007 an Indigenous man from Mexico set up a small display in Stephansplatz, Vienna, depicting his people’s concern over the headdress of Montezuma, a ruler of the Aztec empire, believed to be in the collections of the Museum für Volkerkunde, and appealing to passers-by for its return.

Coda

Within the scope of this paper, the all too numerous colonialist-type “errors” certainly cannot be tabulated – there are simply too many. Suffice to say that these have existed, have had deleterious consequences, and still exist today. Regardless, it is the anthropological holdings in museums and what evolves from this circumstance that are the primary targets for critique when discussing decolonization.

Lonetree (2012, p. 1) begins her book with these sobering words: “Museums can be very painful sites for Native peoples, as they are intimately tied to the colonialization process”, but goes on to acknowledge (although it cannot be accepted as a pan-Indigenous statement) that museums “have changed significantly from the days when they were considered ‘ivory towers of exclusivity’”, and that Indigenous peoples are “actively involved in making museums more open and community relevant sites.” Nevertheless, she concludes that transforming museums into places that matter for Indigenous peoples means that decolonizing “tells hard truths”, “engages a collaborative methodology”, converts “sites of oppression to places that matter”, “goes beyond survivance” and means “sharing Indigenous knowledge” (Lonetree, 2012, pp. 168–175).

In the end, if “museums find that they are still trying to control a people’s heritage, influencing the perceptions of that heritage and setting conditional relationships with the Indigenous, then the transformation is still distant” (Branche, 1996, p. 125). This will certainly be the case if museums cannot reach a level of cultural pluralism with the Indigenous peoples with whom they are inescapably linked and this will be a loss for both demographics. While there are many impediments, there are still routes open towards ending colonization in museums and for museums to initiate an “us together” path forward.

Postscript

In June 2021, following the recent tragic discovery of the unmarked graves of 215 children on the land of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, an arrangement has been made between the order of nuns who staffed the school and the British Columbia Provincial Archives for the school records to be made accessible to First Nations communities. As the Archives falls under the responsibility of the Royal British Columbia Museum, and as access will be controlled by the Archives, this represents another associative activity which museums also need to address. With this and other similar atrocities being discovered elsewhere in Canada, decolonization, even at the museum level, appears to be extremely acute.

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“Changing up” the museum: cultural translation and decolonial politics

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*We can do something different. We can change up who we think
should lead us, who should speak for us.*
Wangechi Mutuⁱ

*Good translation is demystifying. It manifests in its own language
the foreignness of the foreign text.*
Lawrence Venuti (1998, p. 11)

ⁱ. <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2019/wangechi-mutu-the-new-ones-will-free-us> accessed 7 March 2021.

ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the dialectic of colonial / decolonial is both too comprehensive and too polarizing to be useful in the granular work needed to change up the deep structures of Western museological practice. It proposes that we think instead of the museum as a site of cultural translation that deploys approaches of "foreignization" and "thick translation" as theorized within the field of Translation Studies. The generative potentials of recognizing mistranslation and untranslatability are explored as well as the relationship of critical hybridity to the ongoing need for re-translations that respond to changing societal needs.

Keywords: Museums, Cultural translation, decolonial politics.

RÉSUMÉ

«Changer» le musée : traduction culturelle et politique décoloniale

Cet article soutient que la dialectique coloniale/décoloniale est à la fois trop complète et trop polarisée pour être utile dans le travail granulaire nécessaire pour changer les structures profondes de la pratique muséologique occidentale. Elle propose de considérer le musée comme un site de traduction culturelle qui déploie des approches de «foreignization» et de «thick translation» telles que théorisées dans le domaine des études de traduction. Les potentiels génératifs de la reconnaissance de l'erreur de traduction et de l'intraduisibilité sont explorés, ainsi que la relation de l'hybridité critique avec le besoin permanent de retraductions qui répondent aux besoins sociaux changeants.

Mots-clés : Musées, traduction culturelle, politique décoloniale.



Museums have drawn me in since I was a child during the 1950s. Growing up near New York City, my first museum – the Metropolitan Museum of Art – was one of the most imposing. To climb up the wide steps and cross the threshold into the cool, expansive space of its Great Hall was to enter a place like no other. Normal human scale gave way, diminishing and uplifting adults and children alike. My mother and I walked down corridors lined with ancient statues, between ranks of cases filled with precious objects, and into galleries hung with colourful paintings in impossibly elaborate gold frames. The museum's riches seemed both inexhaustible and arcane, tersely labelled by

anonymous and unlocatable authorities who, priestlike, guarded the museum’s mysteries and preserved its aura.

Ultimately, I suppose, this combination of attraction and impenetrability led me to art history, decoder of ancient inscriptions, sculptural conventions, and painted iconographies, and then to anthropology, translator of cultures. But it was with the emergence of critical museology during the last decades of the 20th century that scholars began to penetrate the aura of the museum itself. A compelling series of deconstructive analyses revealed the modern museum to be a space of ritual performance produced by highly specialized technologies of representation. They documented how Western societies have deployed these technologies to construct, narrate and display collective memory and history for a broad audience, empowering curators and donors imbued with the sponsors’ ideologies, values, and tastes to choose what things to preserve, how to classify them, what to say about them. Tony Bennett (1995), for example, explained how exhibition strategies serve the needs of democratic nation states to produce self-regulating citizens; Svetlana Alpers (1991) described the conditions of extreme visibility museums create to heighten and intensify our way of seeing; and Carol Duncan (1995) showed how particular architectures, regulations, and visitor paths orchestrate the museum visit as a ritual of social reproduction. Crossing the threshold into the Met’s Great Hall was, indeed, to enter a liminal, even a sacred space.

Walking along Fifth Avenue toward the Met’s main entrance six decades later, in 2019, the museum seemed largely unchanged – until the unexpected came into view. A set of imposing bronze figures had suddenly arrived to occupy niches built into the neoclassical façade that had remained empty for 117 years.² The *New Ones will free Us*³ – four majestic Black women, their bodies ringed and draped in coils reminiscent of African styles of body decoration – is the work of Kenyan-American artist Wangechi Mutu. The Met’s Modern and Contemporary Department chose her to undertake its first façade commission, initiating a series that invites artists to “create new works of art inspired by the collection, establishing a dialogue between the artist’s work, the collection, the space, and audiences.”⁴ For Mutu, the prominence of the site on the front of an institution whose classical traditions have been, as she puts it, “heavily guarded”, was an opportunity to redefine who these audiences are – in her words, to “change up who we used to represent”. She draws on the female caryatid figures that occur both in classical European architecture and

2. Mutu has said: “And in the way we installed them, they basically arrived overnight, as if to communicate something that hasn’t been allowed to be spoken.” <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2019/wangechi-mutu-the-new-ones-will-free-us> , accessed 7 March 2021.

3. Individually entitled *The Seated, I, II, III and IV* (2019) <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2019/facade-commission-wangechi-mutu> , accessed 7 March 2021.

4. <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2019/facade-commission-wangechi-mutu> , accessed 7 March 2021.

stools used by African kings in order to speak back to sculptural traditions that have positioned female images as structural supports. Rendering them as freestanding and powerful, she liberates them to intervene in both gendered and racialized hierarchies. Quintessentially intersectional, *The New Ones shall Free Us* is fully in tune with feminist activism and the women's movements of the past decade. Building on her long-standing consideration of the "relationship between power, culture, and representation," Mutu's *New Ones* "bring word of new ideas and new perspectives."

At the end of 2019 a second commissioned project appeared just inside the Met's main entrance. It, too, draws on Western academic traditions in order to turn them in new directions. Cree artist Kent Monkman's response to the first Great Hall commission is *mistikosiwak* (*Wooden Boat People*), a diptych that adopts the monumental scale and figural conventions of history painting, the most prestigious of Western painting genres for more than three centuries. Like Mutu, Monkman "changes up" the gendered and racialized power relations this genre has long inscribed. His time-travelling, gender-fluid alter ego, Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, displaces the white male heroes celebrated in earlier history paintings to occupy the central position of leadership. In the first panel, *Welcoming the Newcomers*, we see her helping ashore a motley array of hapless arrivées in the Americas, rewriting the discovery narratives of explorers from Columbus to Cook. In the second, *Resurgence of the People*, we are in the present. Here Miss Chief occupies the place of George Washington in Emanuel Leutze's 1851 *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, a centrepiece of the Met's American wing. We see her piloting a boat overloaded with Indigenous people, settlers, and refugees through the flood tides of a world engulfed by environmental crisis, massive human displacement, and growing threats of racial violence. In his performances, lectures and interviews Monkman leaves his viewers in no doubt about the targets of his historical revisionism; at the Met he provided visitors waiting in line for the coat check with a key that identifies the specific works in the Met's collections of European and American painting and sculpture whose inaccuracies and stereotypes his re-paintings correct. "I think this is a turning point," he says. "The Met is encouraging shared perspectives on its own history. We can decentre the conversation."⁵

I have used the word "occupy" advisedly in describing the action of these two commissioned interventions, for although revisionist works of art can claim space within the museum only as proxies for embodied acts of resistance, many museum visitors would have made the connection with the wave of real-time protests decolonization activists have been staging in New York and elsewhere in recent years. The protestors have demanded removals – of monuments from public space, of donors' names from museum walls, of trustees from museum boards, and of collections through acts of restitution. But equally, they have

5. Kent Monkman, "Miss Chief Eagle Testickle" soundcloud, <https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2019/great-hall-commission-kent-monkman>, accessed 7 March 2021

demanded additions – of new areas of collecting and display, new audiences, and transfers of authority to curators and collaborators from under- or unrepresented communities. The intersectionality of both Mutu’s and Monkman’s works responds to the wide range of issues that are aggregated by the protectors under the umbrella of decolonization – systemic racism, gender biases, the treatment of refugees and migrants, Indigenous treaty rights, corporate amorality and greed, the environmental crisis.

Like “occupy”, Mutu’s use of the phrase “change up” has multiple resonances. In baseball, a “changeup” is “a slow pitch . . . thrown with the same motion as a fastball in order to deceive the batter.”⁶ If you are driving a car, to change up means changing into a lower gear to give your vehicle more power.⁷ Both definitions are apt. As in baseball, Mutu and Monkman might be said to deploy a kind of deception by cloaking their subversive messages in the familiar language of classical Western arts. And, like a car shifting into first gear, each powers up the rhetorical strategies and modes of art installation on which establishment museums have long relied to go bigger, better, and more imposing. The Cambridge dictionary online offers a still broader definition: “change up,” it says, means “to change something, especially in order to improve it,” as in the phrase, “if something’s not working, they change up.”⁸ The something that has not been working for 21st-century museums is the legacy of colonialism that continues to inform the ways they frame the world’s artistic and intellectual traditions according to Western hierarchies, classifications, genres, temporalities, and narratives. In an era that affirms the values of pluralism and Indigenous reconciliation, the organizers of this conference ask whether and how and for whom this modern Western tradition can be changed up?

I bring to these big questions the perspective of a Canadian settler trained in art history and anthropology. I also speak in the aftermath of 30 years of attempts to reform Canadian museums. This era was set in motion by a series of strong and forceful challenges to modern museological practices raised by Canadians of African and Indigenous descent.⁹ In an initial phase of decolonial negotiation Canadian museologists formed a Task Force on Museums and First Peoples and accepted the recommendations of its 1992 report which centre on new models of partnership and collaboration between museums and source communities.¹⁰ The efforts that followed have changed how Canadian

6. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/changeup> OED online 2. *Baseball*. A slow pitch thrown with the motions of a fastball to deceive the batter. (OED Third Edition, June 2017; latest version published online September 2018).

7. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Third Edition, online. Accessed 10 March 2021.

8. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/change-sth-up>.

9. These controversies erupted around two major exhibitions, the 1988 *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada’s First Peoples*, at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary Alberta (see Phillips, 2011), and the 1989 *Into the Heart of Africa*, at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (see Butler, 2007).

10. The report, *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples*, was funded by the Canadian Department of Communications (now the Canadian Department of Heri-

museums work with Indigenous and minority collections, communities, and Indigenous curators. Among the most recent examples are new long-term exhibitions organized by our two largest national museums to mark the 150th anniversary of Canadian confederation in 2017. At the Canadian Museum of History the new history hall, which was closely overseen by an Indigenous advisory committee, opens with Indigenous origin stories. The installation is followed by an extensive account of Indigenous history in the lands that are now Canada during the millennia before the arrival of Europeans, and then by a settler history regularly punctuated by accounts of Indigenous experience. The history hall it replaces had presented, in contrast, an almost exclusively settler history of Canada. Similarly, the new Indigenous and Canadian galleries at the National Gallery of Canada, are introduced by contemporary works representing the Algonquin nations on whose unceded lands the gallery and the nation's capital are located. The exhibits that follow interweave Indigenous and settler art histories.

In recent years, however, skepticism has been growing among Indigenous critics and museum professionals about the instrumentality of the "soft" acts of inclusion that museums can accomplish. And there is also a growing sense that the term "decolonization" itself has been stretched so wide that it risks losing focus – that, as in a game of telephone, over-repetition is evacuating it of meaning. The skeptics point to two kinds of problem. One recent body of critique is represented by political scientist Glen Coulthard, who argues in his 2014 book *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* that inclusion, collaboration, partnership, and affirmative action are assimilative and neo-colonial moves. In the same vein, in their widely cited article "Decolonization is not a Metaphor" Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) point to the need for real world acts of land return and political sovereignty rather than the symbolic forms of restitution that can be offered in the spaces of the museum.

A second body of critique raises even more challenging problems to effective decolonization in museums. Many Indigenous Studies scholars have argued that holistic and relational Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies are inherently incompatible with the classifying and objectifying practices of the modern museum. As Margaret Kovach writes, for example, "Indigenous approaches to seeking knowledge are not of a Western worldview, a matter that colonialism (and its supporters) has long worked to confuse" (2009, p. 21). The modern museum has played a key role in engendering this "confusion" by sorting material culture and data collected from Indigenous peoples into separate repositories organized according to Western disciplinary formations. The disarticulations of the human, the animal, the cultural, and the technological that are embodied in the very structures of the museum system are, from

tage) and sponsored and accepted by the Canadian Museums Association and the Assembly of First Nations https://museums.intitouch.org/uploaded/web/docs/Task_Force_Report_1994.pdf.

this perspective, incompatible with Indigenous principles of relationship and ethics of reciprocity. For Kovach and others, extractive Western practices of collecting and research have “left those they studied disenfranchised from the knowledge they shared” (2009, 26).

In the remainder of this article, I will argue that the dialectic of colonial / decolonial is both too comprehensive and too polarizing to be useful in the granular work needed to change up the deep structures of Western museological practice. In its place I propose that we think of the museum as a site of translation. Cross-cultural translation across both time and space has been at the core of the museum’s mandate since its beginnings. Museums lead us into the different countries of the past and open us to the endlessly diverse ways in which people have thought about their existence on this planet. Like interlingual translations, however, those of the museum can never be final or even “correct”. Historically contingent rather than perfectable, they have been and will continue to be subject to periodic processes of re-translation informed by epistemic changes in both the receiving and the source cultures. Objects collected and presented under the sign of curiosity, for example, were re-translated into scientific specimens and ethnographic artifacts, and then into works of primitive art. Today, these same entities are increasingly being re-translated as belongings, beings, and living embodiments of ancestral knowledge. Although these translations are always partial and incomplete, they are also inevitable, unavoidable, and indispensable. They create points of connection between us and our forebears and between us and others without which we are unmoored, impoverished, and put at risk – more than ever in this era of impending environmental implosion. In exploring the modalities of translation in the remainder of this article I will draw my examples largely from Canadian museological projects and Indigenous arts and histories I have had the opportunity to observe most closely. My hope, however, is that the lens of translation and the issues of process and impact my examples instantiate have broad applicability to global projects of decolonization.ⁱⁱ

Translation and Translation Studies

Translation, in its most common meaning, refers to equivalences between languages. Because languages are unique in their capacities to name, describe, and suggest the infinite variations of human experience, belief, and knowledge, it is axiomatic that perfect translations are impossible. Walter Benjamin’s famous 1923 essay “The Translator’s Task,” identifies the contradiction at the heart of the human urge to translate. “It is clear,” he writes, “that a translation, no matter how good, cannot have any significance for the original. Nevertheless,

ii. I served as a member of the advisory committee for the development of the new History Hall at the Canadian Museum of History from 2013 to 2016 and worked with the National Gallery to convene its first Indigenous advisory committee in 2016.

it stands in the closest connection with the original by virtue of the latter's translatability....It can be called a natural connection, and more precisely, a vital connection" (1923/2012, p. 76). This "vital connection" is, in my reading, the underlying fact of shared humanity, which Benjamin terms "convergence". "This imagined, inner relationship among languages," he continues, "is, however, a relationship of special convergence. It consists in the fact that languages are not alien to each other, but *a priori*, and independently of all historical connections, related to each other in what they want to say" (1923/2012, p. 77).

Over the centuries, translators have reflected on and theorized how to confront these intralingual conundrums. In the late 20th century, the field of Translation Studies, like museology and other humanities and social sciences, entered a reflexive and interdisciplinary phase informed by poststructuralist and postcolonial theory. This development, which Lawrence Venuti characterizes as "a renewed concern with the social effects of translation and their ethical and political consequence" (2012, p. 271), entailed a new awareness of the impact of colonial power relations and the violence done to the lives of colonized peoples through translational processes. *Cultural* translation, the new orientation that arose, has been defined by historians Peter Burke and Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia as "the adaptation of ideas and texts as they pass from one culture to another" (2007, p. 3). Because the items of visual and material culture museums hold and interpret are primary carriers of "ideas and texts", the toolbox developed by cultural translation scholars has great potential for the work of decolonization.

A re-translation approach, furthermore, is applicable not only to the repositioning of individual works, but also to the ways in which the institution of the museum itself is translated across cultures. It invites us to think about the museum not only or even primarily as a bureaucratized bricks and mortar structure that offers resistance to change but, rather, as a technology – or a method, as anthropologist Nicholas Thomas (2010) puts it – that is malleable and available to an infinite number of applications and usages. In other words, although invented in the West and exported and imposed by colonial regimes, the museum has been embraced, adapted, and transformed to serve new ends – the subject in other words, of a translational process from Western source culture to non-Western receiving culture.

I will draw on insights from both Translation Studies and decolonial critique to parse key modalities of re-translation. My discussion does not pretend to be exhaustive but, rather, suggestive, and invites debate, critique and refinement. I will look at past histories and future potentialities of translation, beginning with different strategies open to translators, and the light they shed on historical processes of *mis*-translation and *re*-translation. Cultural translation also offers useful ways to think about the problem of mixing, hybridization and creolization highlighted in the ICOFOM theme statement. The problem of *untranslatability* remains – most often finessed, unaddressed, obscured, or silenced. I argue, however, that if we acknowledge and celebrate the untranslatable through a strategy of thick translation the untranslatable

can be transformed from an obstacle into an affirmation of the value of difference. Finally, we must confront the colonial history of language suppression, an – perhaps *the* – ultimate tragedy of silencing and erasure. How, I ask, might museums take up duties of compensation and reconciliation by supporting current projects of language renewal?

Domestication / Foreignization

Translators have long recognized that although all translation is assimilative, in the sense that it must restate the foreign text in terms comprehensible to the receiving audience, there are nevertheless choices to be made. As already noted, during the late 20th century, translation studies scholars re-theorized this process as not only technical and linguistic but also, inevitably, cultural and ideological. In his 1998 book *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* Venuti identified the two main strategies open to translators as “domestication” and “foreignization”. The domesticating operations of the colonial museum have been a major focus of postcolonial critique. They are accomplished both on a linguistic level, through the translation of terms and units of discourse that name and interpret individual items, and through the acts of decontextualization and recontextualization that occur as systems of classification and paradigms of installation change. All these forms of museological domestication sever the mask or the item of clothing from its interrelated aspects of expressive culture – food, fragrant plants, a musical performance, dance movements, ritual practices. Insertion into such categories as “religion”, “warfare”, “farming”, “transportation”, and “art” hacks into principles of relationality and holism with even greater violence.

The paradigm shifts that have occurred in Western museums during the past four centuries have already been noted, and they can be briefly illustrated by the successive ways in which wampums from northeastern North America have been exhibited. These woven bands of shell beads have been exchanged by Indigenous peoples and Europeans in key rituals of peace and treaty making for many centuries. Wampums first entered 17th-century European cabinets in the guise of curiosities; 19th- and 20th-century salvage ethnographers re-translated them as specimens of material culture and Indigenous technology, and by the mid-20th century they were being exhibited in museums as Native American art. The minimalist and reductive installations of non-Western arts we see most often today in galleries devoted to the arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas are lineal descendants of early 20th-century exhibitions of Primitive Art and still carry much of that colonial baggage. But equally, the recreations of imagined early- or pre-contact Indigenous contexts for wampums preserve the legacies of contemporaneous early-20th century scientific paradigms. The partiality of the meanings that come across in such recontextualizations exemplify what is lost in translation. Missed translations easily slide into mis-translations.

Indigenous curatorial work is not exempt from the inevitable partiality of retranslation whether they position wampums as historical artifacts equiva-

lent to written European treaties, as in *Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations*, shown at the National Museum of the American Indian from 2014–2021, or as a work of art, as Mohawk artist Skawennati did in an installation that accompanied *Tsiakwanahstahsonchéhرا' / We Extend the Rafters* included in the National Gallery of Canada's *Ábadakone / Continuous Fire / Feu Continuel* (2019–2020). Both are also domestications, placed in museum settings to represent a genre that has continued to be activated by the living performative and ritual traditions that give it primary meaning.

Cultural translation also works through the formation of canons, a process that was brought home to me at the very beginning of my doctoral research in Sierra Leone on Mende women's masquerades. In Western museums the Mende are commonly – and usually exclusively – represented by the head pieces of *sowei* masquerades performed by members of the women's Sande Society. Mende people I consulted found this puzzling, because their most important and powerful masquerades are the *goboi* and *gbini* representing the men's society and chiefly power (Phillips, 1995). Western museums have privileged the *sowei* because it is an idealized anthropomorphic image carved of wood and therefore comprehensible within the hierarchies of subject matter and materials associated with Western sculptural traditions. The men's masks, in contrast, are made of leather, basketry, cloth, cowrie shells, and other materials associated with craft in the Western art world. During the late 20th century, furthermore, this female-controlled masquerade tradition was celebrated by second-wave feminists as evidence of a history of female empowerment in Africa that supported their ideals. To represent Mende gender relations in this way, however, mis-translates the complex negotiations of gender and power that occur through masquerade performances – as well as the impact of colonialism on Mende gender politics. This small case study bears out Venuti's remark that "translation patterns that come to be fairly established fix stereotypes for foreign cultures, excluding values, debates, and conflicts that don't appear to serve domestic agendas" (1998, p. 67).

Venuti has argued for the value of foreignization in rectifying hegemonic histories of translation. "A translator," he wrote, "can choose to redirect the ethnocentric movement of translation so as to decenter the domestic terms that a translation project must inescapably utilize. This is an ethics of difference that can change the domestic culture" (1998, 82). Other cultural translation theorists have further developed this approach, advocating for the preservation of original linguistic forms rather than naturalizing foreign syntaxes, lexicons, and expressive modes by finding idiomatic English approximations – even, or especially, when the resulting translations are disharmonious, unexpected or awkward. For Gayatri Spivak (1992/2012), a literalness in translation that does not achieve an idiomatic currency is preferable to what she calls 'social realism' as a way of conveying the actuality of cultural – and especially gendered – difference. As Venuti has succinctly put it, "Good translation is demystifying; it manifests in its own language the foreignness of the foreign text" (1998, 11).

In his 1993 essay “Thick Translation” Kwame Anthony Appiah has offered a philosophically rigorous consideration of the translational challenges that arose for him in late 20th-century America. The example around which he builds his argument – Akan proverbs – is particularly apt for this discussion because of the canonical status of Ashanti gold weights as African art and their tight iconographic connections to Akan proverbs. To translate a proverb, Appiah shows, requires not just the simple identification of unfamiliar items and place names but also an understanding of the unvoiced mutual knowledge and expectations shared by speaker and auditor in the source community. “Translation that seeks with its annotations and its accompanying glosses to locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context” he writes, “is eminently worth doing. I have called this ‘thick translation’ ” (1993/2012, p. 341).

For Appiah, as a university teacher, useful translations must be adapted to the social context and needs of his students. “A thick description of the context of literary production,” he writes, “meets the need to challenge ourselves and our students to . . . undertake the harder project of a genuinely informed respect for others,” and “to face up to difference” (1993/2012, p. 341). It must respond to embedded contexts of racism and sexism by developing “views of the world elsewhere that respect more deeply the autonomy of the Other” (1993/2012, p. 341). He also stresses the need to affirm continuities with the past that validate the authenticity of contemporary practices and “challenge directly the assumption of the cultural superiority of the West by undermining the aestheticized conceptions of value that it presupposes” (1993/2012, p. 342). Appiah wrote these words in 1993. It is hard not to be discouraged that Wangechi Mutu found herself responding to the same issues two decades later. The call for thick translation in the museum has only become more urgent.

Museology and foreignization

For museums engaging with decolonization, the foreignization approach has the potential to create a kind of Brechtian estrangement that usefully disrupts the appropriations and assimilations of non-Western – and also earlier Western – objects. In the theatre, Brecht’s goal was to prevent audiences from experiencing a subconscious sense of emotional identification with difference and to develop instead a conscious and intellectual understanding and respect. When London’s Horniman Museum reinstalled its African ethnographic collections 25 years ago it innovated exactly this kind of estrangement. In place of elegant museum casework, curator Anthony Shelton (2000/2003) worked with architects to create a jarring design that would disrupt the harmony of the vaulted neo-classical late-19th century building in order to suggest the out-of-placeness of the items on display. Cases were positioned out of parallel and the Benin brasses purchased from collections looted by the British army in 1897 were exhibited in cases that resembled locked safes to emphasize their captive status. Foreignization was also achieved more recently when Toronto’s Royal Ontario Museum recreated an early-20th century diorama of Mohawk life in a

frozen ethnographic past; Mohawk consultants placed a video camera, electric drill and cell phone in the hands of mannequins clad in 19th-century clothing.

Thick translation offers another avenue to foreignization. Returning to my example of Mende masquerades, it would mandate exhibitions that privilege the Mende hierarchy of power and value, thus estranging Western aesthetic criteria and the patina of old wood. In such an exhibition, as in Appiah's discussion of Akan proverbs, texts and videos would account for the ways in which these masquerades negotiate ambivalent distributions of power across genders as well as the complications introduced by colonial constructs of gender. As in my wampum example, these changes would, however, remain re-translations, since their presentation within the museum would still frame them in terms of Western epistemologies, as examples of "art", "culture", or "history".

Mixing, mimicry, and colonial translation

It is often stated that no words for the modern Western constructs of art, history, and culture are to be found in the lexicons of Indigenous languages – and it must, of course, be added that the meanings of these terms in the West have also changed radically across the centuries. The statement, however, ignores the generative nature of translation as such constructs travelled across time and space, through not only the impositions of colonial regimes, but also the multilingualism and cosmopolitanism of colonized peoples (Clifford, 1997). Interlingual translation is intercultural, dynamic rather than stable. For Benjamin, "established words also have their post-maturation. What might have been the tendency of an author's poetic language in his own time may later be exhausted, and immanent tendencies may arise anew out of the formed work" (1923/2012, p. 77). For Bella Brodski, translation always entails "the transporting of texts from one historical context to another, and the tracking of the migration of meanings from one cultural space to another" (2007, p. 4). For Appiah: "A translation aims to produce a new text that matters to one community the way another text matters to another.... it is part of our understanding of literary judgment, that there can always be new readings, new things that matter about a text, new reasons for caring about new properties" (1993/2012, p. 339).

Translations, in other words, layer, interact, and generate new and hybrid meanings. While they draw on the terms and concepts available within the source and receiving communities at a given time, they also make new terms available to both parties, altering the array of concepts that may be used in successive projects of translation. The global currency of the Western construct of "art", and the exchanges and syncretizations engendered by modernist primitivism are outstanding examples of this phenomenon, as illustrated by the hybrid styles developed by Arrente artist Albert Namatjira and settler artist Margaret Preston in Australia during the mid-20th century. In this context, too, museums today take directly instrumental roles when, in their efforts to further decolonization, they translate exhibition texts and publications into

Indigenous languages and find ways to articulate aesthetic terms for which no words previously existed (Naokwegijig-Corbierre, 2008).

The historical processes of mixing, hybridity, syncretism, and creolization that have been produced through colonialism have, of course, been the subject of extensive analysis and theorization. Like translation itself, modes of mixing are historically contingent and produced by choices and strategies available to subjects. The two recent artistic interventions I discussed at the beginning of this article illustrate such choices. Both Wangechi Mutu and Kent Monkman responded to the Met’s collections and traditions by appropriating styles and genres whose familiarity make their gestures of turning and inversion particularly effective. Rather than *rejecting* classical and academic vocabularies, they affirmed their own interests in these artistic traditions and *claimed* them as a shared heritage. Both used their commissions as opportunities for re-translation through gestures of correction, inclusion and decentering.

Although both Mutu and Monkman rely on strategies of domestication rather than foreignization, each works with different calibrations of hybridity. Mutu has been best known for pastiched, fragmented, and surreal collages that invoke the hybridity of the cyborg, the monstrous, and the conflicted. In the *New Ones*, in contrast, she combines African and European traditions to create a stable, harmonious whole in which internal contradictions appear resolved. For his part, Monkman’s work has been characterized by its masterful use of parody. As an icon of high camp and homoeroticism Miss Chief has embodied the spirit of colonial mimicry defined by Homi Bhabha. The “menace of mimicry” Bhabha writes, “is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (1994, p. 88). In *mistikosiwak*, however, Monkman extends his parodic power by endowing Miss Chief with a new gravitas that contrasts with her previous persona.

Untranslatability and thick-translation

Such projects affirm and celebrate a position of critical hybridity, but they are also cognizant of the dimensions of trauma and irreparable loss that must be confronted in the moment of decolonization. The elephant in the room also remains, for we do not yet know if or how the museums, in their modern Western forms, can assume responsibility for histories of extreme oppression in which they have been directly implicated, or address adequately the epistemological and ontological differences of Indigenous traditions. Here too, language is key, as Margaret Kovach has argued: “Indigenous knowledges have a fluidity and motion that is manifested in the distinctive structure of tribal languages . . . from this perspective alone Western research and Indigenous inquiry can walk together only so far” (2009, p. 30). For her, foregrounding the fundamental untranslatability of language is a first step. “In tribal epistemologies and Indigenous research frameworks one must first assert the interrelationship between Indigenous language structure and worldview, and then the manner in which colonialism has interfered with this dynamic” (2009, p.

59). As Burke comments, "Something is always 'lost in translation'. However, the close examination of what is lost is one of the most effective ways of identifying differences between cultures" (2007, p. 38). The untranslatable emerges from such analyses as both a loss demanding the effort of recovery and the recognition of difference as elusive as it is precious. For both challenges, the collaborative models museums have been developing, which engage members of source communities as authoritative voices in interpretation, are the vital means of respecting and honouring the untranslatable.

The silencing and erasure of Indigenous languages was the gravest harm inflicted by the campaign of cultural genocide waged by colonial regimes. Here the museum also has a role to play. Not only are anthropological museums repositories of the language research conducted by salvage anthropologists, but they also preserve items of art and material culture that have provided stimuli to the recovery of Indigenous discourse and knowledge – as the Smithsonian's Recovering Voices project demonstrates.¹² In a recent series of works, Cree artist Joi T. Arcand has challenged museum audiences with the difficulties of both untranslatability and recovery. Her site-specific installations place Cree syllabics on floors and staircases that lead us into museums. "ekawiya akaya-simo" was installed in the Winnipeg Art Gallery in 2017, but no translation was included in the labels placed nearby. As Arcand has said "Why should I make it easy for anybody?" Instead she placed the translation – "Don't speak English" – in the elevator. Her explanation – "I always say, if you want the easy way, you take the elevator" – is a comment on settler feelings of entitlement as well as on the hard work required of Indigenous people in the recovery of their languages (as cited in Hampton, 2018). In a subsequent installation, "ōtē nīkānōnk", Arcand led visitors up the ceremonial ramp into the National Gallery of Canada's Great Hall and the entrance to *Abadakone / Continuous Fire / Feu Continuel*, its 2019 exhibition of international contemporary Indigenous art. In this project the artist left the Cree title and floor text untranslated, requiring visitors to walk over the words without understanding what they were trampling underfoot.

Conclusion

In this article I have urged that we think of museum decolonization as an ongoing project of cultural translation, rather than framing it in polarizing terms of inclusion and exclusion. I do this not to avoid necessary confrontations with the abuses of power and destruction wrought by centuries of colonial rule, but in order to understand our own contingent historicity, on the one hand, and, on the other, to encourage productive processes of dialogue and collaboration. As I have argued, such an approach asks that we attend to past *mis-translations* in order to engage in projects of *re-translation* defined by

¹². See <https://naturalhistory.si.edu/research/anthropology/programs/recov-voices> , accessed 06 April 2021.

contemporary needs. It also requires that we acknowledge and position the *untranslatable* as a valued locus of cultural difference. My larger argument is directly parallel. Just as Mutu and Monkman claim traditions of Western painting, sculpture, and museums as their own – although demanding critical transformations and redirections – so too have Indigenous and non-Western societies appropriated the technologies and mechanisms of the museum itself for their own purposes.

Museums have been in the business of cultural translation throughout their long histories. They can be valuable partners in the process of decolonization because they can move hearts and minds to undertake this work on political, economic and social levels. In the complex societies in which we all live we have no choice but to confront together the enormous problems of human displacement, radical inequality, and environmental crisis. Because none of us can retreat from these hard realities we will need all the channels of translation we can access in order to join forces. “More than ever,” Brodzki writes, “translation is now understood to be a politics as well as a poetics, an ethics as well as an aesthetics [that] underwrite[s] all cultural transactions from the most benign to the most venal” (2007, p. 1). Unlike the dialectic of colonization / decolonization, the notion of translation is fluid. It is not a toggle switch. It does not imply an end point or a finish line, only our commitment to the ongoing work of re-translation.

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Muséologie postcoloniale ou muséologie décoloniale ? Réflexion sur la porosité des concepts

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RÉSUMÉ

En observant que les termes de muséologie postcoloniale et décoloniale peuvent parfois être utilisés dans la littérature de manière aléatoire, ce texte se propose de réfléchir aux significations ainsi qu'aux différences existantes entre ces deux concepts. Pour ce faire, il propose deux tentatives d'explication, en se basant sur la réalité des musées des « pays neufs », de l'Amérique latine et de l'Europe occidentale. En postulant que ces deux interprétations se complètent, et que ces deux approches muséologiques se superposent en partie selon les contextes, les conclusions de cet article insistent sur l'importance de ne pas opposer ces deux muséologies, mais de comprendre plutôt les manières dont les auteurs et les musées les interprètent et se situent par rapport à elles. Cette situation permet dès lors d'insister sur l'importance de mieux connaître et définir les bases théoriques des concepts appliqués en muséologie.

Mots-clés: muséologie postcoloniale, muséologie décoloniale, post-colonialisme, décolonialisme, concepts muséologiques.

RESUMEN

¿Museología poscolonial o museología decolonial? Reflexión sobre la porosidad de los conceptos

Al observar que los conceptos de museología poscolonial y decolonial a veces se utilizan en la literatura de manera aleatoria, este texto se propone reflexionar sobre los significados y las diferencias existentes entre ambos. Para ello, propone dos intentos de explicación basándose en la realidad de los museos de los “países nuevos”, América Latina y Europa Occidental. Al postular que estas dos perspectivas museológicas se diferencian, pero se superponen también en parte según el contexto, las conclusiones de este artículo subrayan la importancia de no oponerlas, sino de entender las formas en que los autores y los museos las interpretan. Este hecho nos recuerda la importancia de una mejor comprensión y definición de las bases teóricas de los conceptos aplicados en museología.

Palabras clave: museología poscolonial, museología decolonial, pos-colonialismo, decolonialidad, conceptos museológicos.



Cet article part d'un constat issu de nos recherches sur la rénovation des musées ethnographiques menées dans le cadre d'une thèse doctorale réalisée entre 2010 et 2014, qui tentait de définir les manières dont la réflexion multiculturelle avait eu un impact sur leur rénovation de part le monde. En réécrivant les résultats entre 2018 et 2020 sous la forme d'une publication (Van Geert, 2020), nous avons été intrigué par le fait que, moins de dix ans après notre étude sur ces institutions, nous pouvions trouver dans la littérature deux manières de qualifier ces dernières, soit comme des musées postcoloniaux, soit comme des musées décoloniaux. Ce constat nous a amené à nous interroger sur les différences existantes entre ces deux types de musées, et plus largement entre les muséologies postcoloniale et décoloniale, souvent mentionnées dans la littérature mais assez peu théorisées. S'agit-il de concepts synonymes? S'agit-il de l'adoption par les chercheurs et les professionnels des musées d'un vocabulaire plus lié à l'esprit du temps, à la suite de l'influence croissante de la pensée décoloniale sur les sciences humaines et sociales? Ou s'agit-il plutôt d'une méconnaissance des tenants et aboutissants de ces deux approches qui seraient différentes? C'est ce que nous allons tenter d'explorer dans cet article. Il en va sans dire que nous n'abordons pas ici le terme de « muséologie » dans

le sens d'une réflexion théorique sur le fait muséal, mais plutôt, en suivant Mairesse et Van Geert (2021), à la fois comme un champ de recherche interdisciplinaire analysant le musée depuis différentes approches scientifiques, mais aussi comme une approche réflexive développée par les institutions quant à leur rôle et leurs pratiques.

Pour répondre à ces questions, nous proposons deux tentatives d'explication. En nous centrant sur les pratiques muséales des « pays neufs »¹³ et de l'Europe occidentale, la première se base sur le postulat qu'il s'agit de deux visions muséales différentes, se succédant dans le temps (même s'il s'agit ici d'un temps court, d'à peine une vingtaine d'années). En revenant sur les bases théoriques de ces deux approches, la deuxième explication défend plutôt l'idée qu'il s'agit de deux terminologies nées dans des contextes différents pour se référer à des enjeux spécifiques. Nous argumentons dans la conclusion que les significations de ces deux termes diffèrent dès lors selon les lieux, en se recoupant néanmoins parfois en partie. Les réponses aux questions soulevées dans cette introduction se situent alors à cheval entre nos deux tentatives d'explication. En prolongeant cette réflexion, cet article invite dès lors les chercheurs à questionner l'origine des concepts utilisés en muséologie mais aussi leur portée universelle, afin de contribuer à renforcer les bases théoriques de ce champ de recherche.

D'une muséologie postcoloniale à une muséologie décoloniale : entre ruptures et continuités

Un premier élément de réponse à ces questions est apporté par Emma Kowal, anthropologue de l'université australienne de Deakin, dans un texte publié récemment dans la revue *Themes* (Kowal, 2019). Dans ce dernier, où elle explore le déplacement et les resignifications d'un des artefacts du musée de Melbourne dans le contexte de la nouvelle mise en exposition de ses collections aborigènes, l'autrice indique que la muséologie décoloniale se substitue à la muséologie postcoloniale, sur la base de nouveaux objectifs.

Selon cette idée, en Australie, tout comme dans la plupart des « pays neufs », la muséologie postcoloniale se serait développée afin d'intégrer des populations jusqu'alors invisibles dans les musées. En effet, depuis leur création au XIX^e et au début du XX^e siècle, ces derniers ont contribué à mettre en espace un récit national défini par les colons européens et leurs descendants, qui relaie

¹³. À défaut de mieux, nous reprenons ce concept à Grosfoguel, Le Bot & Poli (2011), afin de dépasser l'idée connotée de « nouveau monde », tout en en reprenant une partie. Proche du terme anglais *Settler Colonial Countries*, il renvoie aux pays tels que les Etats-Unis, le Canada, l'Australie ou la Nouvelle Zélande, où les colons, puis leurs descendants, ont pris les rênes du pouvoir depuis le XIX^e siècle, au détriment des populations autochtones qui vivaient sur place avant la colonisation de ces territoires par les Européens. Une partie des pays latino-américains peuvent également répondre à cette définition, même si la logique y est un peu différente, du fait notamment du caractère métisse d'une grande partie de la population, ainsi que de la spécificité de leurs constructions nationales. En conséquence, nous ne les considérons pas dans ce texte comme des « pays neufs ».

les populations autochtones, au mieux, au rang de curiosités naturelles, ou, au pire, à la figure de « sauvages » à civiliser. Dans le contexte de l'« Ethnic Revival » des années 1970 (Smith, 1981), et des revendications politiques émanant alors des populations autochtones, un certain nombre de ces musées ont questionné leur rôle, en développant de nouvelles pratiques. Au Canada, Michael A. Ames, alors directeur du Museum of Anthropology de l'université de Colombie britannique à Vancouver, fut l'un des premiers à mettre en place, dès les années 1970, des pratiques de « muséologie coopérative » (Dubuc, 2004) avec les Premières Nations du pays. Conséquence de l'esprit du temps, ces approches ont depuis essaimé dans le monde, notamment aux Etats-Unis, où les musées ont tenté depuis de réfléchir à leurs modalités de représentation des peuples autochtones (mais aussi d'autres minorités ethniques ou de genre). C'est notamment dans ce cadre qu'un certain nombre d'institutions ont sollicité la participation d'artistes postcoloniaux afin de mettre en perspective leurs récits de manière critique, à l'image des interventions de Fred Wilson ou de James Luna largement commentées dans la littérature.

En Amérique du Nord, c'est néanmoins surtout à la suite du boycott bien connu de l'exposition « The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples » en 1988 au Glenbow Museum de Calgary que des collaborations systématiques vont être nouées entre les musées canadiens et les Premières Nations. Dans le contexte de reconnaissance de la nature multiculturelle d'un certain nombre de « pays neufs » au cours des années 1980 et 1990, de grands musées (*Major Museums*), dont les musées nationaux, vont situer ces questions au cœur de leurs réflexions (souvent d'ailleurs dans le cadre de la rénovation de leurs expositions), en cherchant à donner une image plus inclusive de la nation, grâce notamment à la participation active des différentes populations y habitant. Selon James Clifford, ces musées vont alors incarner des « zone de contacts » (Clifford, 1997), qui contribuent à déconstruire les rapports coloniaux de domination en devenant des espaces de rencontre et de dialogue entre les populations jadis colonisatrices et colonisées. Au-delà du Canada, et des institutions bien connues telles que le musée de la civilisation de Québec ou le musée des civilisations de Gatineau, ces pratiques se retrouvent également depuis dans de très nombreux musées nationaux, à l'image du Te Papa Tongarewa de Wellington, des nouvelles antennes de la Smithsonian Institution créées sur le *mall* de Washington, ou encore du National Museum of Australia à Canberra.

A la différence de cette muséologie post-coloniale, la muséologie décoloniale ne tente pas de réfléchir aux modalités de représentation des populations jadis invisibilisées, en les intégrant moyennant des approches collaboratives. En postulant que ces pratiques ne remettent pas en cause les structures coloniales du pouvoir dont les musées seraient les héritiers, l'approche décoloniale s'inscrit plutôt dans une volonté radicale de déconstruction de l'approche occidentale des musées. Son principal objectif consiste ainsi à renverser la manière de faire « musée », d'acquérir et d'exposer des collections, de s'adresser aux publics,

en donnant notamment toutes leurs places à des pratiques et des ontologies (notamment autochtones) qui pensent différemment le musée et les collections, au-delà des termes même de « musée » et de « collection » qui auraient été exportés dans le monde suite à l'expansion coloniale de l'Europe¹⁴.

Même si les objectifs de ces deux approches apparaissent ici comme opposés, la muséologie décoloniale peut être néanmoins perçue comme la continuité, voire l'aboutissement de la muséologie postcoloniale. En effet, après que les voix des populations autochtones ont été intégrées dans les musées afin de représenter une société plurielle et inclusive, ces dernières ne souhaitent désormais plus simplement participer de leurs représentations, selon les termes et les modalités définis par ces institutions. Au contraire, depuis leur reconnaissance symbolique suite au développement des politiques multiculturelles, elles souhaitent désormais décider elles-mêmes des manières de se représenter et de transmettre leur culture, à partir de leurs cadres de pensée. Sans toujours y faire explicitement référence, il s'agit donc en quelque sorte ici de prolonger et de généraliser à l'ensemble des musées l'expérience des institutions communautaires qualifiées dans la littérature de « tribales » (Clifford, 1991) ou d'« indigènes » (Stanley, 2007), qui ont contribué à l'émergence d'une « muséologie autochtone » (McCarthy, 2021). Ces institutions, que l'on retrouve au Canada dès les années 1970 (à l'image de l'U'mista Cultural Centre d'Alert Bay en Colombie britannique), se sont développées sur l'ensemble des continents américain et océanien dans les années 1980 et 1990, en se basant sur des critères autochtones dans les manières d'exposer et de concevoir les collections, en se détachant explicitement de l'idée occidentale de musée (dont le nom est d'ailleurs souvent absent de ces établissements).

Comme l'observe Emma Kowal dans son texte, cette approche décoloniale du musée va connaître un très large succès à partir des années 2010. Outre le musée de Melbourne qu'elle analyse, certains musées prestigieux se revendiquent en effet alors de cette perspective, à l'image du National Museum of American Indian de Washington D.C. (pour lequel le terme décolonial apparaît dès 2005; voir Smith, 2005) ou du Museum of Anthropology de Vancouver (Porto, 2020), tandis que de nombreux ateliers, recherches ou expositions présentées comme décoloniales fleurissent dans de très nombreux musées du monde. C'est le cas de l'Amérique latine, où ce type d'institutions est soutenu par les autorités nationales. Au Chili, la création du Museo mapuche de Cañete Ruka Kimvn Taiñ Volil-Juan Cayupi Huechicura, illustre ainsi la volonté de la Dirección de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos (DIBAM) (actuel Servicio Nacional del Patrimonio Cultural) de décoloniser l'approche des collections ethnographiques,

¹⁴. Notons que cette réflexion muséale trouve son pendant du côté des études sur le patrimoine, chez les anthropologues notamment, mais aussi chez les auteurs se rattachant aux études critiques du patrimoine (*Critical Heritage Studies*). En se basant notamment sur les théories de Maurice Godet-Lier, selon qui l'acte de patrimonialiser existerait dans toutes les cultures humaines, ces auteurs tentent de déterminer l'existence et les spécificités de ce qui constituerait des approches non-occidentales du patrimoine.

en exposant désormais ces dernières depuis le point de vue de la communauté mapuche lafkenche (Van Geert et al., 2018). Outre les peuples autochtones, cette volonté de décolonisation s'applique également depuis à d'autres populations. Sur la base d'une logique intersectionnelle remise au goût du jour par la pensée décoloniale, l'idéal moderne du musée est en effet perçu comme colonial, mais aussi intrinsèquement patriarcal, hétéronormé, etc.. impliquant dès lors de repenser l'ensemble des pratiques muséales, mais aussi plus profondément de redéfinir le concept même de musée.

En Europe, nous avons également pu observer ce passage d'une approche postcoloniale vers une approche décoloniale des musées durant notre recherche doctorale au Tropenmuseum d'Amsterdam, et au musée royal de l'Afrique centrale de Tervuren. Dans ces institutions, deux camps opposés existaient en effet en 2012 parmi les professionnels. Certains se situaient résolument dans une approche postcoloniale, en souhaitant approfondir le traitement de l'histoire coloniale au sein des expositions, en insistant sur les logiques de métissage à l'oeuvre dans les sociétés européennes contemporaines, tout en favorisant la participation des différentes communautés immigrées résidant dans ces villes. D'autres, en revanche, formés notamment dans les contextes anglo-saxons, indiquaient dès cette époque qu'il faut aller plus loin. Même s'ils n'utilisaient pas encore le terme de décolonisation (en 2012, le terme n'était pas aussi commun qu'il l'est aujourd'hui), ces professionnels en appelaient à une transformation radicale du musée et de ses pratiques, à partir du point de vue des minorités et des populations jadis colonisées. C'est d'ailleurs cette dernière pratique qui s'est progressivement imposée dans ces musées. Depuis sa réouverture en 2018, après cinq années de travaux, le musée de Tervuren rebaptisé pour l'occasion AfricaMuseum, se présente en effet comme un musée « exposant une vision décolonisée de l'Afrique »¹⁵. Le Tropenmuseum (aujourd'hui intégré dans un consortium national composé de trois musées néerlandais) met également en avant cette approche (van Huis, 2019), notamment par l'entremise de son département de recherche (*Research Center for Material Culture*) dirigé par Wayne Modest.

Au-delà de cette transition d'une approche muséale postcoloniale vers une perspective décoloniale, semblable à ce que nous avons évoqué pour les « pays neufs », les relations et les différences entre ces deux formes de muséologie sont néanmoins plus floues en Europe, du fait notamment des spécificités de l'action publique en faveur de la reconnaissance de la diversité culturelle (ce que nous avons qualifié plus haut de multiculturalisme). En effet, à la différence des « pays neufs », où la muséologie postcoloniale s'est développée afin de présenter une image plurielle de la nation au sein des institutions, les muséologies postcoloniale puis décoloniale en Europe ont plutôt pour objectif de lutter contre le racisme (rares sont en effet les pays se reconnaissant officiellement

¹⁵. AfricaMuseum. Histoire et rénovation. <https://www.africamuseum.be/fr/discover/history-renovation> (consulté le 30 octobre 2021).

comme multiculturels, si ce n'est la Suède, et pendant un certain temps les Pays-Bas). L'idée d'une rupture entre un type de muséologie et un autre apparaît donc comme moins évidente.

Dans un dessein postcolonial visant à repenser l'Europe à l'heure de la mondialisation, les musées européens revendiquant leur rôle sociétal ont ainsi surtout tenté de sensibiliser la population à la richesse de la diversité culturelle (issue de l'immigration), en insistant sur le fait « qu'il n'est désormais plus possible de représenter l'autre distant car nous nous exposons nous-mêmes, cet ensemble de citoyens multiculturels qui peuplent les villes » (Arrieta et al., 2008). Pour ce faire, ils ont développé des approches collaboratives, notamment avec les populations migrantes, tout en insistant dans leurs expositions sur la persistance de clichés coloniaux dans la publicité ou dans de nombreuses œuvres littéraires ou cinématographiques. Enfin, la question de l'acquisition des collections est également abordée dès ce moment, tout particulièrement dans les institutions ethnographiques. Si l'on se réfère à l'AfricaMuseum de Tervuren, renouvelé à une époque où la pensée décoloniale connaissait une popularité croissante, l'approche décoloniale apparaît comme le prolongement de ces actions. Présenté un temps par son directeur comme un modèle de musée postcolonial (Gryseels, 2013), puis perçu par les chercheurs comme une « critique postcoloniale en acte » (Seiderer, 2014), ou une « réforme muséale à l'heure postcoloniale » (Crenn, 2016), ce dernier préfère néanmoins se présenter aujourd'hui comme « décolonial », même s'il entretient un certain nombre de pratiques que nous avons définies plus haut de « postcoloniales ». Il a en effet fait des pratiques collaboratives avec les populations africaines, ou issues de la diaspora, l'un de ses principaux axes de travail, tout en insistant lourdement dans ses expositions sur l'histoire coloniale belge. En agissant de la sorte, le musée a souhaité s'extirper (lire ici « se décolonialiser ») des liens entretenus avec la propagande coloniale qui lui avait donné naissance au début du XX^e siècle, et qui étaient encore largement visibles dans ses salles avant sa rénovation (le musée était d'ailleurs souvent qualifié de « dernier musée colonial du monde »).

A partir de cet exemple, cette première tentative d'explication qui verrait se substituer la muséologie décoloniale à la muséologie postcoloniale, apparaît comme trop centrée sur la réalité des « pays neufs », mais aussi trop linéaire pour les institutions européennes. Elle ne permet en outre pas d'expliquer concrètement les manières et les raisons qui articulent ce passage d'une approche muséale à une autre, d'autant plus quand ce dernier s'effectue au sein d'une même institution. Quels seraient ainsi les éléments déclencheurs de cette transition? Pour répondre à cette question, il convient de changer d'angle d'analyse, en se penchant sur l'émergence des pensées post- et décoloniales, ainsi que sur leurs influences sur la muséologie.

L'application des théories postcoloniales et décoloniales à la muséologie

Si le texte d'Emma Kowal nous a servi de référence pour guider la première partie de notre réflexion, c'est ici un article de Capucine Boidin, anthropologue à l'Institut des hautes études de l'Amérique latine de l'université Sorbonne Nouvelle (Boidin, 2009), qui va nous servir de fil rouge. Dans ce dernier, l'autrice tente de comprendre la réception des études postcoloniales et décoloniales dans la sphère académique française, en arguant qu'elles constituent deux perspectives qui se différencient très nettement d'un point de vue géopolitique, disciplinaire et chronologique. Appliquer ce point de vue aux muséologies postcoloniales et décoloniales apparaît comme particulièrement fécond pour en comprendre les différences, mais aussi les points communs.

Si l'on suit l'autrice, les théories postcoloniales engloberaient les recherches, menées entre la fin des années 1970 et les années 2000, sur les héritages coloniaux et leurs conséquences, principalement dans l'ex-Empire britannique, à partir d'un cadre conceptuel nourri de principes foucaudiens (et plus largement de l'ensemble de la *French Theory* autour des rapports entre le savoir et le pouvoir), mais aussi gramsciens (tout particulièrement autour de l'idée d'hégémonie culturelle). Au Moyen Orient, Edward W. Saïd a ainsi pu explorer dès 1978 les manières dont l'Occident a créé une image de l'Orient, au travers notamment de la littérature, qui conditionnerait encore aujourd'hui la perception, l'étude ou la représentation de ces populations dans les créations culturelles, mais également dans les sphères scientifiques et politiques. D'autres auteurs ont analysé ces mêmes héritages coloniaux en Afrique (tel que Kwame Anthony Appiah), en Inde (avec Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, ainsi que de nombreux auteurs se rattachant aux *Subaltern Studies*), ou encore dans les Caraïbes anglophones (autour notamment de Stuart Hall).

Ces approches ont irrigué de très larges domaines de recherche dès les années 1980, notamment en histoire (avec des auteurs tels qu'Eric Wolf), ou en anthropologie (avec notamment Johannes Fabian ou James Clifford et George Marcus qui se sont intéressés, à la suite de Clifford Geertz et du tournant littéraire de la discipline, aux manières dont les anthropologues « écrivent » les cultures). De nombreux auteurs s'inscrivant dans les études culturelles (*Cultural Studies*) se sont également nourris de ce cadre de pensée pour analyser les questions de pouvoir et de représentation dans la culture, en y soulevant notamment la prédominance du modèle occidental (colonial). Cette approche se retrouve en muséologie, où les modalités de représentation, mais aussi le statut épistémologique des catégories utilisées par les musées, telles que l'art ou la culture, ont été tout particulièrement traités. De nombreux auteurs inscrivant leurs recherches dans la *New Museology* ou la *Critical Museology* ont également tenté de répondre à ces questions en se nourrissant de travaux, depuis devenus emblématiques, publiés dans les années 1990 et 2000. C'est le cas de l'ouvrage d'Ivan Karp et Steven D. Lavine, publié en 1991 à l'issu d'un colloque de la Smithsonian Institution, dont la première partie du titre « Exhibiting Cultures », constitue une

référence directe à l'ouvrage « Writing Culture » de Clifford et Marcus. C'est également le cas d'auteurs tels que George W. Stocking Jr., Michael A. Ames, Anna Laura Jones, James Clifford lui-même, Moira G. Simpson, Ruth Phillips, Sally Price, Ian Chambers, Pippa Skotnes, etc., tous largement cités par les muséologues.

Par contraste, les théories décoloniales, popularisées dans les années 1990-2000 par des auteurs tels que Ramón Grosfoguel, Aníbal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, Arturo Escobar, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, etc., partent du legs des empires espagnol et portugais sur l'Amérique latine pour considérer le système-monde à partir essentiellement des philosophes créoles et amérindiens des XIX^e et XX^e siècles ou encore des écrits d'auteurs antillais plus récents tels qu'Aimé Césaire ou Franz Fanon. Afin d'explorer les impacts contemporains de ce qu'ils définissent de « colonialité » (Quijano, 1992) sur la culture, la conception de la nature, les idées de race et de genre, les relations géopolitiques, le système capitaliste mondial, etc., leur pensée puise en outre dans les théories économiques de la dépendance ainsi que dans la théologie de la libération. Autrement dit, et contrairement aux études postcoloniales qui ont surtout pris racine dans les départements de littérature des contextes anglophones en s'attachant à déconstruire l'eurocentrisme des discours, les études décoloniales articulent les analyses économiques, sociologiques et historiques avec des développements philosophiques, de manière beaucoup plus radicale et structurelle.

A l'image du postcolonialisme, ces théories décoloniales ont irrigué de larges champs de recherche et de nombreux auteurs se sont appliqués depuis à déconstruire des pans entiers de la connaissance pour les repenser depuis les « épistémologies du sud » (Sousa Santos & Meneses, 2009). Le chantier de décolonisation de la muséologie mis en place depuis 2018 par l'ICOFOM (Brulon Soares & Leshchenko, 2018) s'intègre dans cette volonté de « décolonisation épistémologique » (Mignolo, 2007), en tentant de déconstruire les approches théoriques occidentales du musée, des collections et du patrimoine, perçues comme intrinsecurement liées aux structures coloniales du pouvoir. Il n'est d'ailleurs pas anodin de rappeler ici que ce projet théorique a été initié sous la présidence d'un latino-américain (et plus concrètement brésilien), contexte d'où émerge la pensée décoloniale, et où plusieurs muséologues ont tenté de développer des approches endogènes de la muséologie depuis les années 1970. A la suite de la table ronde de Santiago du Chili, des auteurs tels que Marta Arjona Pérez, Waldisa Rússio ou encore Camargo Guarnieri, ont ainsi produit des textes de grande importance pour la muséologie latino-américaine, dont certains ont d'ailleurs été republiés pour l'occasion par l'ICOFOM.

A partir de cette réflexion, il apparaît que ces approches postcoloniales et décoloniales ne s'opposent donc pas, ni se prolongent, mais qu'elles se superposent plutôt en partie. Leurs différences résident dans le cadre conceptuel et les références à partir desquelles les auteurs réfléchissent, mais aussi des lieux d'où ils produisent leurs réflexions. L'internationalisation de la pensée décoloniale depuis les années 2010 a néanmoins contribué à brouiller cette distinction,

en sortant très largement du contexte latino-américain qui l'a vu naître, pour s'installer dans la plupart des universités et centres de recherche du monde, et être ensuite reprise par la presse et un certain nombre de collectifs activistes. Dans ce contexte, les conditions d'émergence de la pensée décoloniale vont être parfois oubliées, et ses significations fortement élargies, notamment chez les muséologues. Cette situation contribue sans aucun doute à alimenter la confusion entre ce que serait une muséologie postcoloniale et une muséologie décoloniale, comme nous l'avons indiqué dans l'introduction de cet article.

En Amérique latine, la distinction entre ces deux concepts apparaît comme plutôt simple. Le terme « muséologie postcoloniale » y est en effet majoritairement absent, puisque les musées ont commencé à être perçus (plus tardivement qu'ailleurs) comme des institutions héritières du colonialisme sous l'influence précisément de la pensée décoloniale. Dans les « pays neufs », l'usage de l'un ou l'autre de ces termes dépend surtout de la date de publication des écrits, selon la logique de substitution d'une muséologie postcoloniale par une muséologie décoloniale décrite dans la première partie de cet article. Ainsi, en Amérique du Nord, et tout particulièrement aux Etats-Unis où les principaux chercheurs décoloniaux sont en poste, la pensée décoloniale a eu un impact très important sur les muséologues. D'abord nourris de théorie postcoloniale dans les années 1990-2000, l'influence de la pensée décoloniale sur ces derniers leur fera modifier leur approche du fait muséal vers 2010. Comme le souligne Emma Kowal, c'est le cas d'une chercheuse comme Amy Lonetree, autrice du premier ouvrage de référence sur la question décoloniale dans les musées étasuniens (Lonetree, 2012), qui n'a pas utilisé une seule fois le terme décolonial dans l'ouvrage qu'elle a co-édité quatre ans plus tôt (Lonetree & Cobb, 2008), lui préférant alors le terme « postcolonial ». De très nombreux auteurs nord-américains ont suivi cette même logique en adoptant progressivement cette approche décoloniale des musées (souvent à la suite de leurs écrits postcoloniaux), à l'image de Ruth Phillips, Samuel J. Redman, Susan Sleeper-Smith, etc.

Dans les contextes européens, tout particulièrement anglophones, le développement des réflexions décoloniales en muséologie suit une logique semblable, avec des auteurs tels qu'Annie E. Coombes, Dan Hicks, Wayne Modest, etc., jadis plus ou moins ouvertement postcoloniaux. Néanmoins, alors que l'Europe ne compte pas de populations autochtones (si ce n'est en Scandinavie, ou dans l'espace ultra-marin français), la réflexion décoloniale y est quelque peu différente. L'objectif de cette dernière ne consiste en effet pas à déconstruire l'approche occidentale du musée et des collections, comme nous avons pu le voir dans les « pays neufs » ou l'Amérique latine. Au contraire, en Europe, cœur des anciens empires coloniaux, la décolonisation des musées passerait plutôt pour les penseurs décoloniaux par la reconnaissance des conséquences du colonialisme sur la constitution des musées, et sur la création d'un imaginaire des peuples du monde (ou encore de la nature¹⁶) dont on verrait les

¹⁶. A ce sujet, nous renvoyons le lecteur à la conférence « Decolonising Natural Science Collec-

traces dans les modalités d'exposition et d'interprétation des collections. Enfin, cette approche du musée (re)pose bien évidemment la question de l'origine des objets, de leur acquisition, mais aussi de leur possibles restitutions. À travers ces objectifs, proches de ceux de la muséologie postcoloniale des « pays neufs », on perçoit bien que les frontières entre ces deux muséologies sont poreuses. C'est tout particulièrement le cas de la France, où les pensées postcoloniales et décoloniales ont pénétré conjointement la sphère académique, autour des années 2010, après une longue période de résistance face à ces nouvelles théories. Du fait des spécificités sociopolitiques et culturelles de ce pays, la percée de la réflexion décoloniale y est en effet tardive, et porte tout particulièrement sur la représentation des minorités ethniques dans les musées, mais aussi dans la création artistique (Cukierman, Dambury & Vergès, 2018), selon une logique proche de la muséologie postcoloniale. De nombreux auteurs traitant (en partie) des musées, à l'image de Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel ou Françoise Vergès (parmi tant d'autres) se présentent d'ailleurs, ou sont présentés, comme des chercheurs postcoloniaux et/ou décoloniaux, tandis que des expositions ambitieuses telles que « *Exhibition* » au musée du quai Branly en 2012, ou « *Modèle noir* » au musée d'Orsay en 2019 ont pu être qualifiées à la fois d'expositions postcoloniales ou décoloniales. L'emploi interchangeable de ces deux termes, que l'on retrouve dans la littérature professionnelle ou dans la presse, contribue à rendre encore plus poreuses les significations de ces deux concepts dans la littérature francophone.

Au-delà des conséquences de cette internationalisation de la pensée décoloniale, il convient de noter qu'un dernier élément contribue à générer une certaine incompréhension sur la signification des deux termes qui nous intéressent ici. Il apparaît en effet que tous les musées ne perçoivent pas de la même manière le décolonialisme et ses enjeux sur leurs pratiques, tout particulièrement si on les compare avec les approches théoriques que nous venons de présenter, ou encore avec la compréhension qu'en ont les collectifs et mouvements sociaux décoloniaux. Contrairement aux musées, ces derniers se basent en effet souvent sur une vision plus « orthodoxe », voire plus révolutionnaire de ce terme. Lors de la conclusion du 44^e symposium annuel d'ICOFOM en 2021, Bruno Brulon Soares a d'ailleurs mis en garde les muséologues sur les dangers d'un « décolonialisme pop »¹⁷, bien-pensant et inoffensif. C'est sans aucun doute pour cette raison que des institutions se présentant comme décoloniales, tel que l'AfricaMuseum de Tervuren, ne sont pas perçues comme telles par certains collectifs. Ces derniers affirment en effet que ce dernier demeure colonial puisqu'il continue notamment de parler de l'Afrique depuis le point de vue du colonisateur, et qu'il passe sous silence une partie des conséquences actuelles de l'histoire coloniale (voir notamment De Block, 2019). Cette perception

tions », réalisée en 2020 par la NATSCA: <https://www.natsca.org/natsca-decolonising> (consulté le 30 octobre 2021).

17. Voir l'enregistrement de cette synthèse sur <https://www.facebook.com/icofom/videos/vb.918798191539069/464029021619195/?type=2&theater> (consulté le 30 octobre 2021).

différente de la pensée décoloniale entre les musées et les collectifs décoloniaux n'est d'ailleurs pas spécifique à l'Europe. Le Brooklyn Museum, souvent présenté dans les milieux muséologiques comme progressiste et à la pointe du décolonialisme et des approches genrées, fait ainsi l'objet de nombreuses critiques, notamment du collectif Decolonize this Place, concernant ses pratiques curatoriales, le lieu de son emplacement (situé sur des terres ancestrales), son rôle au sein des logiques de gentrification du quartier, etc.¹⁸

Ces quelques remarques invitent dès lors à se demander jusqu'à quel point le musée peut se décoloniser. Jusqu'où l'approche décoloniale est-elle acceptable et intégrable par l'institution muséale ? Le musée peut-il ainsi être anticapitaliste, alors que les penseurs décoloniaux établissent des liens intrinsèques entre colonisation, modernité et capitalisme (Mignolo, 2011) ? L'institution muséale peut-elle s'aventurer sur ces sentiers ? Peut-elle véritablement faire partie intégrante, voire impulser, un autre projet de société, alors qu'elle constitue l'une des institutions symboliques les plus importantes, voire le principal garant de la société occidentale ? Ou cette institution est-elle au contraire réformiste par essence, en ne pouvant se limiter qu'à offrir un supplément d'âme et un grain d'éthique à notre monde en représentant les points de vue de populations pourtant exclues structurellement du système actuel ?

Au-delà de ces questions éthiques et politiques auxquelles nous ne prétendons pas répondre dans cet article, il est donc extrêmement important pour les muséologues de réfléchir aux bases théoriques sur lesquelles reposent les actions ou les pratiques qu'ils définissent de post-ou décoloniales. Au-delà de leur projet global, qu'ils partagent dans les grandes lignes, que connaissent-ils de la pensée décoloniale (et/ou postcoloniale) ? Quels arguments et concepts théoriques utilisent-ils, et comment les appliquent-ils aux musées ? Même s'il conviendrait d'analyser ici en détails les sources et les références bibliographiques utilisées par les muséologues et les musées pour définir leurs pratiques, on sent bien que les réponses à ces questions risquent de rendre encore plus floue la compréhension des différences entre ces deux types de muséologie.

3. De l'importance de questionner les concepts muséologiques

Dans cet article, nous avons tenté d'ébaucher deux explications possibles aux usages imprécis, et donc potentiellement synonymes, des concepts de muséologie postcoloniale et décoloniale. Chacune présente sa part d'interprétation, sans pourtant apporter de réponses définitives aux questions que nous avons formulées dans l'introduction de ce texte. Ces dernières doivent donc être cherchées à la croisée de ces deux explications. Les muséologies postcoloniales et décoloniales ne s'opposeraient ainsi pas, mais se recouperaient en partie, du

18. Decolonization Commission. Decolonize this place. <https://decolonizethisplace.org/bk-mu-suem> (consulté le 30 octobre 2021)

fait notamment de l'internationalisation des théories qui les sous-tendent. En ce sens, tenter de qualifier telle ou telle approche de décoloniale plutôt que de postcoloniale (ou vice et versa) s'avère futile, tant les frontières entre ces deux approches sont devenues poreuses. Il convient au contraire de revenir à l'essence même de ces théories, pour en comprendre l'application à des contextes précis (puisque tout connaissance est nécessairement située). Il apparaît alors que la véritable opposition ne se situe pas entre la muséologie décoloniale et la muséologie postcoloniale, mais plutôt dans les manières dont les muséologues et les musées les interprètent et s'en revendiquent. Plus qu'une muséologie décoloniale et une muséologie postcoloniale, il existerait ainsi de nombreuses manières de penser ces muséologies, selon l'approche politique que l'on en a, mais aussi selon que l'on se situe dans les musées, au sein de l'académie, ou que l'on soit membre de l'un des nombreux mouvements sociaux décoloniaux (pour compliquer encore les choses, il apparaît en outre que ces différents positionnements ne s'excluent pas les uns les autres, puisque certains activistes décoloniaux travaillent actuellement au sein des musées ou des universités).

Pour comprendre toute la teneur et l'implication des concepts que nous importons à notre domaine de recherche et de pratique, il importe donc de s'intéresser à leurs conditions d'émergence, tout particulièrement lorsque ces derniers sont à « la mode » et extrêmement présents dans la littérature. Cette attitude nous semble d'autant plus importante que le champ de la muséologie peine à créer des concepts stables qui peuvent être utilisés par tous les chercheurs pour se référer à des réalités présentes de par le monde. On peut renvoyer ici à la fameuse incompréhension existante encore parfois entre les termes « nouvelle muséologie » et « *New Museology* ». Comme on le sait, même s'il s'agirait à simple vue d'une traduction en anglais et en français des mêmes termes, ces deux concepts ont en réalité des significations très différentes. On pourrait bien sûr aller plus loin en évoquant la complexité de termes désormais communément acceptés, tels que ceux d'écomusées, de centres d'interprétations, voire même plus largement de patrimoine ou encore de musée, dont les significations se révèlent pourtant moins universelles qu'il n'y paraît. Si l'on souhaite pouvoir utiliser des termes qui soient heuristiquement et universellement valides pour comprendre le monde des musées, il importe donc de réfléchir à ces questions qui vont bien au-delà d'un simple exercice linguistique. C'est d'ailleurs sans doute l'un des premiers chantiers intellectuels auquel s'atteler si le projet de la muséologie consiste véritablement à se décoloniser.

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Cultural heritage as a reparation mechanism: Germany and Brazil

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we examine and discuss how internal demands for recognition of plural identities and reparation of colonial dispossessions through cultural heritages are being carried out in Germany and in Brazil, two countries with different trajectories within Modernity's shared relational experience. For it, we spotlight recent developments concerning the mobilization of the colonial past by means of proposing cultural policies as symbolic gestures for addressing social injustice derived from colonialism in the first case, and the emergence of a series of exhibitions in the second. Whereas in Germany restitution claims of stolen cultural heritage seem to guide the agenda of historical corrections and symbolic compensations, in Brazil, it is the struggle for

institutional visibility of marginalized groups and the recognition of a failed attempt of cultural homogenization that takes place.

Keywords: Colonialism, reparation, cultural policy, exhibitions, Germany, Brazil.

RESUMEN

En este artículo examinamos y discutimos cómo las demandas internas de reconocimiento de identidades plurales y reparación de despojos coloniales a través de herencias culturales se están llevando a cabo en Alemania y Brasil, dos países con trayectorias diferentes dentro de la experiencia relacional compartida de la Modernidad. Para ello, destacamos desarrollos recientes en torno a la movilización del pasado colonial mediante la propuesta de políticas culturales como gestos simbólicos para abordar la injusticia social derivada del colonialismo en el primer caso, y la puesta en marcha de una serie de exposiciones en el segundo. Mientras que en Alemania los reclamos de restitución del patrimonio cultural robado parecen orientar la agenda de correcciones históricas y compensaciones simbólicas, en Brasil es la lucha por la visibilidad institucional de los grupos marginados y el reconocimiento de un intento fallido de homogeneización cultural lo que tiene lugar.

Palabras clave: Colonialismo, reparación, política cultural, exposiciones, Alemania, Brasil.



Thinking of developments in art from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, Juliane Rebentisch (2015) associates them with an increasing artistic critique against modernist narratives of progress. In this sense, 1989 represents the end of Cold War, as well as the threshold to a global-scale deregulated capitalism accompanied by an enhanced awareness, derived from postcolonialism, of “global non simultaneity” and “local specificity”. Therefore, the enlightened idea of single Modernity is still debated (Rebentisch, 2015, p. 237). Also, David Joselit (2020, pp. 8–10) points out that, whereas neoliberal economic expansion contributed to a detachment between places and transnational companies, it also engendered stronger ties between a locality and its culture, or, as he calls it: heritage.

For Joselit (2020, p.7), cultural and geographical inheritances in a historical frame can create aesthetic genealogies employing shared experiences and identities. As he points out, heritage as a matter for reanimating the past is employed by art producers from the Global South as a gesture of defiance against the

Wes's intellectual and creative hegemony. Evidence of decentralized endeavors in favor of building stages of visibility for artistic production from the margins can be seen, at least since the 1980s, in the rising number of biennials and art fairs in countries located in the peripheries of power. Some of these events are explicitly focused on non-Western art, such as the Biennials of La Habana and Dakar (Iskin, 2016, p.10).

Yet, discussions on power relations in cultural and symbolic fields regarding the postcolonial situation seldom look within the borders of countries and ask how internal demands for recognition of heritages and reparation of colonial dispossessions take place. As nation-states have proven to be anything but homogeneous societies, we believe it is necessary to consider multiple conflicting notions of identity within societies. Concerning the cultural sphere, Hal Foster (2020) envisions museums, universities, and institutions alike taking a particular role in addressing historical injustices and acting as discussion forums for contemporary social issues – frequently related to historical frames of exclusion and exploitation. However, demands for processing the past and correcting injustices do not come from institutions alone. Society is a crucial agent in proposing agendas through organized groups, social media, and press visibility.

Therefore, it is a matter of interest to examine cultural and institutional policies in two different contexts, in which claims for justice concerning a heritage – be it objects or historical events – have played a relevant role in addressing an enduring condition of subalternity. Therefore, we analyze recent developments in Europe and Brazil concerning the mobilization of a colonial past by means of implementing events and policies in the cultural field as symbolic gestures of reparation and recognition of enduring social injustice and its aftermath. On one side of the Atlantic, restitution claims of stolen heritage seem to guide the agenda of redress and compensations. On the other, it is the struggle for institutional visibility and recognition of a failed attempt at cultural homogenization.

We base our perspective on Enrique Dussel's (1993) defence of Modernity as a European alterity-based phenomenon constituted in dialectical relation to non-European collectivities. Therefore, so-called peripheries are equally part of Modernity itself since this phenomenon was established in relational conjecture. Dussel (1993, p. 66) proposes that, whereas Modernity stands for the emancipation of the hegemonic group, it also produces the conditions for genocidal violence against its "Others." Thus, modern colonial exploitative procedures and narratives raise the ambiguous relation of bringing prosperity for some at the cost of lives and cultures of those who supposedly do not belong to this relational process. However, despite a similar historical frame of violence, exploitation, and dispossession, speaking of Modernity and its aftermath demands plural narratives since its traits and outcomes differ depending on the region. In fact, using the plural noun "modernities" to emphasize

the various possibilities that the idea of Modernity implies in today's debate would appear to be more appropriate.

Assuming contemporary demands for recognition and reparation of historical social injustice grounded on former colonial rule and its aftermath occur both in previous colonized and societies, we aim to expose and discuss a brief analysis of distinct developments based on employing the past for producing practical actions in the present.

Restitutions of heritage: Processing the past for envisioning the future

Since 2017, the restitution of cultural heritage to former colonies has received widespread attention in Western Europe and in African countries like Nigeria and Ghana. Commissioned by France's President, Emmanuel Macron, writer Felwine Sarr and scholar Bénédicte Savoy (2018) delivered a survey report on the number of African objects in European ethnology museums and examined the legal conditions for restitution in France. Proposing to reverse the burden of proof, the authors recommended that France accept restitution requests of objects acquired in the following cases: as spoils of war by the French or foreign army; as items donated to French museums by colonial administrators or their families; as donations occasioned by "scientific expeditions" in Africa; of objects acquired after former French colonies gained independence, if attested illicit conditions of trade; and of loans by African institutions never returned from France (Sarr & Savoy, 2018, p. 61).

As Bénédicte Savoy (2021) shows, the return of material culture – transported notably from Africa under legally and ethically questionable conditions – to former colonies has, since the 1960s, been demanded by intellectuals, politicians, and museum professionals from newly independent countries. At the same time, major holders of African heritage like France, the United Kingdom, and Belgium started deploying legal measures to keep the objects in their museums by turning them *de facto* into inalienable state property. Germany – a former minor colonial power, but holding extensive non-European collections – was then split between East and West, being one of Cold War's main stages, so that the extent of museum collections was one of the numerous points of rivalry between the emerging ideological power axes. Berlin's prominent Ethnological Museum was under the Federal Republic of Germany's sovereignty and early demands for permanent loans made by Nigeria, for instance, were promptly denied and kept quiet (Savoy, 2021, pp. 41–43).

Curiously, although commissioned by France's President, the Sarr-Savoy Report provoked a broad debate in Germany concerning its cultural policy for ethnological collections, especially given the country's current cultural ambitions. Launched in 2020 in Berlin, the Humboldt Forum is a major cultural centre project dedicated to displaying Berlin's ethnological collections, among other exhibits. Throughout the decades between the Forum's inception and its ope-

ning, the status of objects acquired under colonial rule came under public scrutiny, notably after repeated criticisms concerning the Forum's setting – a reconstructed imperial palace housing objects from early colonies – as well as its low regard for provenance research.

In this way, Germany's cultural authorities began to envision the restitution of heritage acquired under colonial rule. In March 2019, a framework document signed by various government institutions proposed a series of joint initiatives to regulate the treatment given to objects from colonial contexts. It was recommended that federal bodies formulate the required legal conditions for restitution, besides promoting dialogue with states and communities under former colonial rule in order to provide information about objects in German collections, including advice concerning possible returns. Finally, there was a requirement for German institutions to proactively undertake provenance research even without formal restitution requests (Framework Principles, 2019, pp. 6–8). Furthermore, from 2018 to 2021, the advocacy and consulting group *Deutscher Museumsbund* (German Museum Association) published three editions of a guidelines series for museums holding objects from colonial backgrounds, aspiring to improve the treatment of such items and encouraging partnerships with specialists and institutions from communities of origin.

As the Humboldt Forum simultaneously holds Germany's most extensive ethnological collection and has its mission to be a place for cultural exchanges and debate at a global level, it also stays in the spotlight regarding the promises of reparation and recognition of colonial injustices in the cultural realm. Discussions mainly concern its collection of Benin Bronzes, the second largest of its kind in Europe, most of which was purchased in the English art market at the beginning of the twentieth century after the British punitive expedition against the Kingdom of Benin – currently part of Nigeria – in 1897 and the plunder of the Royal Palace. Parallel to recent public announcements of negotiations envisioning the restitution of part of the collection of Bronzes, the provenance of other pieces of Berlin's Ethnological Museum stays under suspicion.

Brazil's fragmentary anti-colonial gestures

Whereas in multicultural, diasporic post-war Europe, claims for restitution and critical provenance research play a significant role in the postcolonial debate for the recognition of heritages and reparation of colonial damages in the cultural realm, in Brazil, disputes primarily concern the achievement of broader visibility of political minority groups amidst complex discussions surrounding notions of identity.

Brazilian cultural politics during the twentieth century were engaged in promoting a simplistic notion of a culturally united country through the idea of a successful integration and mixing between three “races”: Indigenous, European and African. Supported by respected intellectuals like Gilberto Freyre, with his 1933 magnum opus *Casa Grande e Senzala* (The Masters and the Slaves), this

conciliatory approach helped to hide social inequality and to expand white dominance in the cultural field, since the institutional presence of artists with African and Indigenous backgrounds was minimal. The development of social indicators laying bare the disadvantages of non-white groups gradually eroded the view of so-called racial democracy and successful miscegenation in Brazil (Costa, 2001).

Brazilian anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro (1995) demonstrated that the long-lasting colonial system and its rush for territorial expansion was based not only on the systematic killing of local rebel communities but also on the exploitation and transplantation of an enslaved labour force of Indigenous and African origins. Moreover, the working population in the colony was further increased by forced sexual intercourse between European men and Indigenous or African women. Ribeiro represents the view that the growing population of so-called *mamelucos* and *mestiços* forms the basis for an authentic Brazilian culture, distinct from the originating others. Unlike in Haiti, Brazil's independence in 1822 did not necessarily change the status of enslaved black people; it took another 66 years for slavery to be abolished. Besides the wars against colonial settlers and enslavement, Indigenous peoples suffered from diseases brought by European colonizers. Thus, their population was drastically reduced over centuries of expansion¹.

In reactionary political times, when historical narratives are a topic of dispute, the notion of a harmonious miscegenated society still helps to overshadow claims for recognition of divergent subjectivities, as well as reparations. Nevertheless, actions opposing a singular view of Brazilian society contribute to complexifying the discussion on identity and creating a fragmentary and non-consensual itinerary of exhibitions, policies, and cultural institutions committed with voices from the political margins – such as urban peripheries and social groups underrepresented due to race or gender. Different views on how to engage cultural and artistic endeavours reflect on different uses of terms and classifications. Among them are the outlines of what *Afro-Brazilian Art* can be.

Curator Hélio Menezes (2018, p. 590) states that the term *Afro-Brazilian Art* had been used to encompass artists of Afro-Brazilian origin and to admit a wider production based not exclusively on the phenotype of artmakers but on the themes explored in artworks. However, he points out that, even if *Afro-Brazilian Art* can not be defined strictly according to the artists' skin color or artworks tackling blackness, *Afro-Brazilian Art* as a political topic is easily identifiable when thinking of the representation of black artists in institutional collections. A similar parallel can be traced to the Indigenous presence in art museums beyond acting as models for westernized depictions in previous centuries. However, the interplay among temporary exhibitions in art museums and the few museums specializing in African and Indigenous

¹. Darcy Ribeiro (1995, p. 151) estimates a five-fold decrease in the Indigenous population in Brazil between 1500 and 1800.

heritages have contributed to amplifying visibilities and increasing demands for recognition.

The Afro-Brasil Museum and Emanoel Araújo's legacy

With a collection of over 6,000 Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous, and African objects ranging from the eighteenth century up to contemporaneity, and also a library, the Afro-Brasil Museum was founded in 2004 at the Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo and showcases Brazil's African historical roots and its influences on society's formation. The axes on which the permanent collection of this public institution is shown mobilize Brazil's African heritage throughout art, religion, popular culture and festivities, labor, and slavery². The display of objects generates value and turns injustices and claims for reparation visible: a variety of elements that make the museum a historical, ethnographic, and artistic one (Menezes, 2018, p. 586). Located close to the São Paulo Biennial Pavilion and São Paulo's Modern Art Museum (MAM/SP), the Afro-Brasil Museum broadens the view of Brazilian culture and roots in a privileged arena of international visibility.

The museum's ensemble is based on the personal collection of its curator and director, the artist Emanoel Araújo (b. 1940). His career as an exhibition-maker prior to the creation of the Afro-Brasil Museum contributed decisively to his approach to addressing aspects of and exhibiting the art made by artists of color in Brazil. This practice targets converting social agendas related to inequality and exclusion as a permanent part of the institution programme. Since 1988 Araújo has been engaged in numerous exhibitions mobilizing either the creations of black artists in Brazil or, in a broader sense, the presence of blackness and Africanness in Brazilian art. Being director of the *Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo* – the city's oldest art museum – between 1992 and 2002 contributed to giving Araújo a higher profile and facilitated dialogs with political decision-makers as well, which resulted later in the transformation of his collection into the Afro-Brasil Museum. However, it is noteworthy how this museum lacks transparency regarding the confusion over Araúj's role as director and curator of the institution and his status as collection's owner – or former owner; this is also unclear – which is maintained at a public building.

Beyond the city of São Paulo, other places in Brazil maintain institutions specialized in African and Indigenous heritage with programmes targeting their local communities. Some of them are the Afro-Brasileiro Museum of Bahia's Federal University, the Afro-Brasileiro Museum of Sergipe, Pierre Verger Foundation in Salvador, and the Museu do Índio in Rio de Janeiro, to name a few.

Specialized exhibitions as temporary discursive instances

Since Brazil's re-democratization in the 1980s and the exhaustion of the lingering idea of a homogeneous Brazilian identity amid deep inequality among the

2. Retrieved June 11, 2021 from <http://www.museuafrobrasil.org.br/acervo-digital>

white and non-white population, identity debates occupied the cultural field within and beyond specialized museums. Recent large-scale collective exhibitions propose renewed discussions on identity and recognition of subjectivities other than the hegemonic, Westernized one. They all showcase juxtapositions of artistic creations belonging to different cultural, temporal, and geographical groups as a common curatorial feature.

Histórias Mestiças (Mestizo Histories) took place in 2014 at the Tomie Ohtake Institute in São Paulo. Curated by Adriano Pedrosa, since 2014 the artistic director of *Museu de Arte de São Paulo* (São Paulo Museum of Art – MASP), and Professor Lilia Schwarcz, author of several books on Brazilian history and social identity and today also part of MASP's curatorial team, the exhibition scrutinized the formation of Brazilian society by means of examining the narratives and protagonisms in this historical sequence of events, as well as dismantling hierarchies and categories imposed on art and artifact. It showcased around 400 works from 80 national and international collections of art and material culture from the sixteenth century up to today. In the exhibition's catalog, curators explicitly report that *Histórias Mestiças* took place in the wake of Emanoel Araújo's previous shows *A mão afro-brasileira* (MAM/SP, 1988), *Negro de corpo e alma* (*Mostra do Redescobrimento*, Biennial's Pavillon, São Paulo, 2000) and *Para nunca esquecer: negras memórias, memórias de negro* (National Historical Museum, Rio de Janeiro, 2001). Whereas Araújo's exhibitions focused on the black experience and representation in Brazilian art, Pedrosa and Schwarcz expanded the scope by including the output of indigenous subject along with representations of Indigenous people in Western art.

The curators employed an innovative methodological approach through so-called “frictions” between views, subjectivities, and narratives. Friction was produced by removing chronological and geographical criteria within the seven thematic groups so that paintings from previous centuries depicting black and Indigenous subjects in racist and stereotyping manners could be compared with contemporary works of art exploring racial differences through other perspectives. Pedrosa and Schwarcz presented a critical view of the idea of a country peacefully miscegenated, and examined discursive changes on this aspect over time.

However, the Indigenous presence in *Mestizo Histories* deserves a separate comment. Between 2014 and the present day, Indigenous presence in Brazilian contemporary art has changed drastically regarding its visibility. Indigenous contemporary artists like Jaider Esbell and Denilson Baniwa take part in biennials and art events worldwide besides approaching contemporary art through Indigenous perspectives. Nevertheless, by the time *Mestizo Histories* took place, established art venues and contemporary art curators still had their eyes closed to these creations. The echoes of Jean Hubert Martin's 1989 celebrated show *Magiciens de la Terre* at Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris kept guiding non-Western art's hand back, then, by focusing on formal aspects of traditional “tribal” artwork and less on its meanings. In *Mestizo Histories*, the

absence of contemporary Indigenous artists speaking for themselves and the massive presence of Indigenous material culture, plus two private ayahuasca ceremonies lead by Huni Kuin leader Leopardo Yawa Bane inside Ernesto Neto's installation *Em busca do Sagrado Jiboia Nixi Pae* hindered producing "frictions" against stereotypical depictions of Indigenous peoples more successfully.

Moreover, removing hierarchies should not remove the tensions that generate them. "When coexistence is visually expressed primarily through the works available, there remains a risk of ignoring real-life conflicts whenever the work in question does not address difference." In this regard, positioning Indigenous material culture alongside Westernized artworks, aiming to communicate cultural diversity, still contributes to the silence over the reality Indigenous communities and subjects face in Brazil.

Four years later, Pedrosa and Schwarcz continued their curatorial agenda with *Histórias Afro-Atlânticas* (*Afro-Atlantic Histories*), which took place simultaneously at MASP and Tomie Ohtake Institute. This time, the artist Ayron Heráclito and curators Hélio Menezes and Tomás Toledo participated in the curation. Relevant to mention is that Pedrosa, Schwarcz, and Toledo are part of MASP's curatorial staff and that the exhibition comprised an extensive one-year program with solo shows and symposia. Deepening a methodology similar to *Mestizo Histories*, *Afro-Atlantic Histories* showcased 450 works of over 200 artists from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century. The curators focused on exploring black experience and diaspora from the slave trade until the present day with works of Faith Ringgold, Sônia Gomes, Rosana Paulino, and Nana Faustine, among other significant voices³. This time, the debate went beyond the Brazilian context by establishing visual links with other former colonies, especially Jamaica with loans from the country's National Gallery.

If, on the one hand, these shows initiated meaningful discussions about identities and recognition of alternative subjectivities other than the hegemonic Western point of view, more recent shows elaborated on this perspective and have been far more successful in providing space for the "others" to contribute to the debate by their own voices.

Vaivém (To-and-Fro) was curated by Raphael Fonseca in 2019. On this occasion, the former curator of Niterói's Contemporary Art Museum investigated the relationship between sleeping hammocks and the construction of Brazilian national identity. The show traveled through major cities in the country, given it took place at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil – a network of cultural centers run by Brazil's public bank. The exhibition derives from the curator's doctoral project and transforms the thesis into a tridimensional discourse. As Fonseca puts it:

3. Retrieved June 11, 2021 from <https://masp.org.br/exposicoes/historias-afrro-atlanticas>

It is up to us, while obliged by the dissemination and polysemy of the images, to continue to engage in their analysis and deconstruction of common sense and the stereotypes that revolve around the notions of 'Brazil', 'Brazilian' and 'Brazilianness'. Strangeness is necessary – without this action, we are not able to write new stories for our future. (Fonseca, 2019)

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Also inspired by shows such as *Mestizo Histories* in expographic design terms, *Vaivém* juxtaposes artists from different realities, ethnic groups, and Brazilian regions. In the catalog, there are guest writers from social groups with less representation in the artistic system, such as Naine Terena, curator, educator, and artist of the Terena people; Ailton Krenak and his ethnic group; and Amanda Carneiro, a black curator who is dedicated to producing mainly Afro-Brazilian themed exhibitions. The other collaborators are representative of Brazilian universities and curators associated with institutions within the main axis Rio-São Paulo, such as the Pinacoteca do Estado, Rio Art Museum, and MASP, indicating a predominance of institutionalism discourses. This phenomenon reflects the hegemony of the Brazilian artistic mainstream circuit, which still resists including a more diverse range of voices. The only exception seems to be Aldrin Moura, as representative of the Federal University of Pará, a state belonging to the Brazilian Amazon. The other academic collaborators come mainly from the State University of Campinas, where the curator's doctoral project was carried out. In this sense, the maintenance of a focus on the Rio-São Paulo axis is perceived as the need to legitimize curatorial discourses that aim to challenge specialized hegemonies by the local artistic system itself.

Two issues that seem particularly interesting to us here are: 1) the diversity of works and artists supported by extensive research; 2) the way in which this exhibition failed to share curatorial authority among other authors while remaining within a safer place of single curatorial authority; on the other hand, how it widened the arena of debate for other subsequent exhibitions to actually take bolder steps in that direction.

À Nordeste (To the Northeast) (2019) was an exhibition organized by Northeastern curators Clarissa Diniz, Marcelo Campos (who was the main curator at the Museu de Arte do Rio – MAR and present in the *Vaivém* catalog), and Bitu Cassundé. The show was based on challenging clichés and stereotypes about this countryside region, often of a pejorative character. The curators recovered collections of obscure Northeastern museums, collections, and modern artists – little known in the Rio-São Paulo axis, if known at all – and combined this history with contemporary art of different forms, including digital art, web art, street art, and design. The show at SESC 25 de Maio, an art and culture centre maintained by the São Paulo trade association, prompted a social discussion that directly touched the North-eastern immigrant community, which integrates

the leading labour source for the wealthier strata established in the city of São Paulo. The shared curating and the social theme, with critical content about the culture of the city in which the exhibition took place, showed a selection of modern and contemporary art produced in the country's Northeast by a marginal bias to the hegemonic narratives of local historiography, bringing in artists not recognized by the dominant artistic system established in São Paulo. This exhibition was successful both in its powerful critique of the artistic system and even the historiography of local art, replacing hegemonic agents, points of view, and approaches.

Finally, *Véxoá*, curated by Naine Terena and with the support of Fernanda Pitta, curator of the Pinacoteca do Estado, managed to reach an ideal place regarding what we now expect from institutions in the light of the culture of native peoples. The museum offered Terena museological support through its in-house curator and production teams. For the first time in the museum's history, the exhibition presented three rooms with works by 23 contemporary indigenous artists and collectives from different regions of Brazil, resulting in the incorporation of works by two prominent artists in the current scene: Denilson Baniwa and Jaider Esbell. Terena, the curator, stressed the importance of showing indigenous creations through an indigenous curatorship. In the words of Esbell,

Every exhibition of indigenous art is above all a denunciation of all the crimes that are taking place. We wanted to bring to this art stage positive issues that are related to our knowledge, technology, our cosmogony. Although we have not stopped going through violence as an obligatory path, [we want] to take this struggle further through the artistic stages⁴ (Zanon, 2021, online).

”

Final considerations

The case studies presented here demonstrate how cultural heritage grounded in the colonial experience of Modernity's two sides – that of the colonizer and that of the colonized – has been currently activated within the institutional contexts and local contingencies of two different geopolitical scenarios. Revisiting the colonial past and re-evaluating its aftermath engenders demands for correcting injustices in multiple ways that blur the lines between material reparations and symbolic gestures of sharing power. Actions taken in each place are subject to local particularities regarding their differing communities, museum collections, and exhibition programs.

4. Translated by the authors

In Brazil, unlike in other geographic-political realities, the challenging of established narratives via exhibitions exploring identity content or even guided by diversity, is timely. This reflects the same position on the part of academics dedicated to the visual arts, who are still groping for ways and strategies to produce plural interpretations and observe from points of view based on approaches that address difference. In this sense, we notice the lack of continuity in curatorial programs so that diversity could be sustainably transformed into institutional policy. A recent and paradigmatic case of this problematic situation is the current MASP exhibition program. Before dedicating its annual projects to themes related to the inequality of representation of social groups in the museum itself, in 2021, the museum decided to devote its exhibition program to the history of dance.

Although the museum's mission is quite broad, emphasizing its objective of being a "diverse, inclusive and plural museum" and "to establish, in a critical and creative way, dialogues between past and present, cultures and territories, based on visual arts", it does not clearly embody its destabilizing bias of hegemonic narratives promoted during its 2018 and 2019 exhibition programs, when there was a clear demonstration of a confrontational attitude towards such narratives. The question that should be asked is: Why this sudden change to a less combative and energetic direction, discontinuing a program of undeniable success with the public, with effects on its educational and institutional activities, and its contribution to art studies locally? One wonders how the strategies developed in *Afro-Atlantic Histories and Feminist Histories: Artists After 2000* (2019) could have been maintained, even when addressing a more general topic like *Histories of Dance* (2020).

Considerations such as these would need a separate article to be better discussed. In any case, we pointed out the fragility caused by the lack of continuity and, therefore, the need for incorporating policies that effectively promote inclusion and challenges hegemonic narratives. Therefore, we understand that while there is no organization of public and private institutions collectively to promote this desired diversity, exhibitions that strive to offer inclusive paths end up having ephemeral effects that reverberate as potent polemics, however temporary. We understand that although the Brazilian State has developed inclusive policies that mobilized the spheres of culture and arts in past administrations, institutional strategies still do not seem to have been established in the form of continuous exhibition programs, for example. Even so, the potential of the exhibition initiatives such as the ones we've discussed must be emphasized, although they cannot replace an effective transformation in institutional exhibition programs that can be maintained regardless of different managers or budget limitations.

In Europe, the more the status of cultural heritage from regions under former colonial rule gains visibility in the public sphere, the more the states are constrained to act envisioning reparations and critically processing the colonial past through inclusive and dialogical approaches with communities

of origin as well as with diasporic groups in the continent. In this sense, and indeed motivated by the controversies behind the ambitious Humboldt Forum, Germany emerges as the country with a great opportunity to play a leading role in this issue – especially after the acquired expertise with restitution of art stolen or misappropriated by the Nazi regime. As the official responses have shown, the federal decentralized bureaucratic structure of the country hinders a national restitution policy, for local juridical systems are required. In this sense, official institutional movements were no more than recommendations, intentions, and formal commitments. On the other hand, one finds in Germany policies like *Museum Global*, funded by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (Federal Cultural Foundation), which aims at engaging collections of German modern and contemporary art museums encouraging dialogical approaches with non-European production, either through temporary exhibitions or new acquisitions. The durability of such interventions opens a new horizon for future investigations. *Museum Global* as a public policy is what we missed in Brazil's fragmented acts of recognition.

After all, dealing with material culture whose provenance goes back to colonial times still raises fear of dismantling collections and threatening European cultural hegemony. Thus, developments take place slowly. History is being written day by day and demands openness from cultural institutions and constant surveillance from groups of interest. Correcting the modern-colonial ambiguity outlined by Dussel includes a redistribution of resources and symbols, for objects and their provenances are irrevocable sources of history and cultural identity.

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SYNTHESIS

SINTHÈSE

SÍNTESIS

The myths of museology: on deconstructing, reconstructing, and redistributing

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Museology was invented as a way to look at the diversity of museums through a single “scientific” lens. Behind the assumption that museology could be a science – one that was in the foundation of this international committee (ICOFOM) – there was the idea promoted by some of our founding figures that one single branch of knowledge could serve the study of the plurality of museums. A claim of universality, according to which “the embryonic nucleus of museology must have existed since a long time [ago]” (Sofka, 1987, p. 7) was a founding myth that may hide the fact that museology, as a body of mixed knowledge and methods, can be as diverse as the reality of the museum experience. Based on the recent debates proposed by ICOFOM on the decolonisation of the study of museums, in this synthesis I will suggest that in the process of defining itself as *science*, museology had to assume a universal and neutral point of view, consequently excluding other subaltern subjects and their situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988). Its core purpose was the production of one single conceptual basis with defined theoretical centres for the investigation of museums, both in theory and in practice. Decoloniality calls that universality into question.

Looking at the basis of museum theory, I will stress that the decolonisation of museums and that of museology as a disciplinary field is dependent on a three-fold and interrelated process that encompasses *deconstructing*, *reconstructing*, and *redistributing*, necessarily in that order. The problem with today’s discourse on the decolonisation of museums is its restricted focus on the last part of this complex and difficult process, disregarding its more fundamental procedures.

This is a flaw with political consequences, because if you redistribute heritage without rethinking the regimes of value and knowledge in which heritage is produced and preserved – which are marked by coloniality, rationality, and violence – these regimes will essentially and pragmatically stay unchanged.

First, we must decolonise the mind (Wa Thiong'o, 1987), which includes decolonising knowledge and being (Mignolo, 2007), before decolonising museum collections and methods. In this sense, decolonisation cannot be only about restitution or giving the right to some dominated populations to enter the museum and to access their own dispossessed goods; it is about inviting these groups and individuals to change our way of thinking, to reshape our own understanding of cultural heritage and to denounce the violence produced by museums that sometimes are beyond our grasp as scholars and museum professionals of a certain class and ethnicity.

At one point defined as the scientific discipline that studied “the complex of philosophical and theoretical issues related to museums” (Sofka, 1980, p. 67), 20th-century museology pursued the notion according to which “somewhere in the future individual witnessings and annunciations will merge into a compact system”, as suggested by Tomislav Šola in 1984 (pp. 35-36). As has been the case in other social and human sciences forged in Modernity, one of its discursive strategies was to conceive general theories and encompassing concepts, as if knowledge could be compartmentalised into independent systems and limited series (Foucault, 1969/2002). As Foucault demonstrated, if the history of “Western” thought could remain the locus of uninterrupted continuities, as if connections between differences could be endlessly forged, it would continue to “provide a privileged shelter for the sovereignty of consciousness”, that way ultimately securing the power of the scientist, “as if we were afraid to conceive of the Other in the time of our own thought” (1969/2002, p.13). For some time, museologists were chasing exactly that. They wanted to be sovereigns in their own domain. And they wanted it to be regulated by general rules – some of them invented within this committee.

Since the last decades of the 20th century, museum theory has had to deal with critical studies that have put the museum under scrutiny by questioning its colonial roots. These reflexive analyses, marked by a strong influence from critical anthropologists (Balandier, 1951; Stocking, 1985; Clifford, 1997), have denounced our “colonial legacies” (L'Estoile, 2008) in their urgent need for reinterpretation and renegotiation in the present. The influence of critical thinking and the post-colonial studies on museum theory have also provoked the recognition of museums’ central role in decolonising the past preserved in their collections. Notably, these analyses have questioned the assumption that there is an essence of colonialism, overlooking the actual diversity of colonial projects and interactions, as well as the idea that the inhabitants of a post-colonial world are necessarily passive recipients of this legacy. As Benoît de L'Estoile has noted, these analyses have helped to draw a distinction

between *colonial relations* in a generic sense and *colonisation* as a restricted historical occurrence.

Among Latin American authors, a *decolonial* approach was defined between the 1970s and the 1990s, based on the concept of coloniality of power and knowledge forged by Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano. While in the mid-1970s dependency theory¹ considered the relations between centre and periphery in the political and economic spheres, museology proposed the idea of an “integral museum”, during the Round Table of Santiago de Chile in 1972, amidst a flow of new ideas under the influence of Enrique Dussel’s *Philosophy of Liberation* (1977) and Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), both concerned with the worldviews of the oppressed classes. Both these authors emphasised the value of local experiences in the social and political liberation processes, influenced by Marxists’ interpretations as well as by the radical ideas and epistemological shifts proposed by Amilcar Cabral, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Rigoberta Menchú, among others.

By evoking the idea that modernity and coloniality are two sides of the same coin – notably in the constitution of the Americas – decolonial critics point to how relations of power established during the colonial period and the expansion of Europe have shaped the so-called modern world and have been transformed into other forms of oppression and violence reproduced through global capitalism. “Coloniality” serves these authors to criticise the European paradigm of rationality/modernity, stating that coloniality of power is linked to coloniality of knowledge. From the 1970s on, then, in Latin America, decoloniality opened up the path for the reconstruction and restitution of silenced histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternised knowledges and languages (Mignolo, 2007, p. 451).

In parallel to this movement, post-colonial currents based on the post-structuralism of Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida were also serving to deconstruct the colonial heritage in the social sciences and denouncing relations based on domination and hierarchisation – in the works of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Hommi Bhabha, for instance. Considering its various ramifications in different parts of the world, postcolonial studies examines the effects of and reactions to European colonialism, analysing its processes from the 16th century up to and including the neo-colonialism of the present day.

In the development of museological thinking, several studies have been presented since the last decades of the 20th century with a critical approach to

1. Dependency theory was one of the responses from Latin America to a changing world order in the second half of the 20th century that, according to Mignolo (2000), in Asia and Africa took the form of “decolonisation”. The author calls attention to the fact that in the Americas, independence from colonial powers (Spain, Portugal and Britain) was obtained long before what was labelled as the first wave of decolonisation (he recalls the U.S. and Haitian revolutions; Spanish-American independence, and I would add the so-called “independence” of Brazil from Portugal, accomplished by an imperial elite in 1822).

colonialism in museums. In Latin America, the first wave of a decolonial approach to museology—under the influence of *libertarian* ideas disseminated after the Round Table of Santiago and with a Marxist interpretation of the social role of museums—was identified in the works of Waldisa Rússio (1974), Marta Arjona Pérez (1977), and Norma Rusconi (1987), among others. Later, some studies which circulated in the region but were not widely known in the rest of the world would emphasise the relation of museums and power, in a Foucauldian approach (Chagas, 2001), as well as museum's mestizo nature (“una mirada mestiza fundante”) within the framework of a subaltern museology (Moreno, 2012).

While in the Latin tradition recent works have explored the concept of “coloniality” in museology and cultural heritage studies (Souza, 2018; Pereira, 2018; Brulon Soares, 2020a; Peixinho, 2021), or the notion of decolonisation in political and practical analysis (Chuva, 2013; van Geert, 2017; Bertin, 2019, 2020; Mellado et al, 2018; Mellado & Andrade, 2020), Anglo-Saxon museum studies have presented postcolonial approaches to the same issues (see, for instance, Ames, 1992, 2006; Macdonald, 1998; McCarthy, 2007; Chambers et al., 2014/2017; Onciu, 2015)². What these different approaches to colonial legacies have in common is a critique of the sovereign subject of knowledge in its totalitarian and universal presumption, which is still dominant both in museums' narratives and in museology.

In this triennium (2019–2022), ICOFOM set itself a goal to map the different approaches on decolonisation that were complementary to a critical revision of museum theory in past decades and still are today. The debate has widened, involving other international and national committees, the regional alliance for Latin America and the Caribbean and affiliated organisations of ICOM, with the Special Project “Museums, community action, and decolonisation” implemented by ICOFOM in 2020. This project and other parallel initiatives conducted by several committees and groups show an increased need, within the ICOM organisation and outside its borders, to revise the structure of knowledge and the main concepts of museology. Nonetheless, for this revision to be achieved, museology needs, first, to recognise its own colonial roots and to *deconstruct* its myths in order to *reconstruct* its conceptual basis and, finally, to *redistribute* authority in the museum field.

1. The myth of museology as science

Since the 1980s, ICOFOM has accepted the challenge of defining museology as *science* based on the ideas of certain thinkers from Central and Eastern Europe (van Mensch, 1992), but also on the modern notion that allowed Zbyněk Z. Stránský to affirm museology as “a scientific autonomous discipline whose

2. Curiously, these different approaches do not intersect, and even though some Latin authors may reference Anglo-Saxon works, the reverse rarely happens.

subject of knowledge is a specific approach of man to reality" (1980, p. 39). The many followers of Stránský's initial ideas, who have spread his views throughout different schools and training programmes in museology, have introduced the question of science as a relevant matter for various scholars who were trying to have museology established in the academic systems of their own countries. Following his assertion, other theorists such as Anna Gregorová defined the museological subject of study as "specific relations of man to reality" (1980, p. 19), considering the subject of knowledge in its structural differentiation from the totality of reality, and at the same time differentiating itself from the object of observation.

This cognitive notion re-conceived by Stránský, Gregorová and others refers to the modern philosophical assertion that separates man from reality and presupposes the existence of a (material) reality that is divorced from society. First, we must recall that the breach between subject and object is, in fact, fabricated by a particular appropriation of reality. It was initially conceived as an important part of Descartes' *cogito*, according to which subjects as "minds" exist as completely separate entities from physical reality. This conception of a mind that is even detached from a physical body and that exists beyond any materiality lies in the foundation of idealistic philosophy and modern rationality. It was further explored by Kant and discussed by Hegel. But it was only after the Enlightenment that Rationalism translated into politics, becoming a central part of the dominant ideologies in the West. In the case of museums, this breach is a historical phenomenon that distinguishes Modernity and characterises a certain *a priori* for the existence of these modern/colonial institutions.

Modernity, as a construct that was based in a new imaginary of the world system invented to justify the expansion of a capitalist world economy (Wallerstein, 1974), is based on a cultural complex under the name of rationality. Modern thinking, as conceived by Descartes and others, is centred in rationality, established as the universal paradigm of knowledge that serves to produce hierarchical relations between "rational humanity" (Europe) and the rest of the world (Quijano, 1992, p. 440; Mignolo, 2000, p. 59). In the history of knowledge, this epistemological principle was responsible for splitting the knowing subject from the known object. According to this postulated correlation between subject and object – a correlation that is in the foundation of museums as much as in modern sciences – it became unthinkable to accept the notion that a knowing subject was possible beyond the universal subject of knowledge.

According to the *Stranskian* theory, museums are places where this separation occurs between objective reality and a subject that thinks and conceives of the world as a mind. Therefore, as an institution that fundamentally applies *specific relations of man to reality*, the museum is culturally and philosophically predetermined. The same separation of subject from reality is at the root of all the thinking sustaining ecomuseology and New museology, international movements of the 1980s with both a theoretical and practical nature. This "new"

formulation was conceived from the well-known triangulation that marks the binaries between the “classical” museum and the so-called “new” museums: building/territory, collection/heritage, public/population³.

To question the epistemic geopolitics through decolonial lenses, however, entails denouncing this claim of a universal subject-object relation that is in the genealogy of modern sciences. It means shifting the central scientific assumption “in the frame of epistemic embodiments (geo-historical and body-graphical)” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 460).

That is, museology is founded as an academic discipline or a social science based on an artificial fragmentation of reality that finds its roots in rationality – a separation that, until now, remained unquestioned. To deconstruct museology’s founding myths, then, we must start by dislocating its central epistemological problem from its supposed subject of study to the cognitive frames we use to interpret it. In other words, the museological *problem* is not having the museum as subject matter, or the man-reality relation, but understanding the museum exclusively through a dated philosophical idea (the Cartesian cogito) limiting all thinking processes to one single perception of reality.

2. The myth of a single museology

From the 1980s onwards several theoretical attempts were made to formulate a single foundation for the study of museums. The contrast between a diverse practice organised according to institutional needs and a possible science with strong foundations is directly addressed in the first issue of the *Museological Working Papers*, published by ICOFOM in 1980. The first conclusion presented in that issue, by Villy Toft Jensen and considering the opinions of several museum professionals from Eastern Europe, was that “a simple common museology does not exist” (1980, p. 9)⁴. Coming from a critical assessment of museology, one could ask: does it exist today? And, moreover, should we still be pursuing it?

According to Enrique Dussel, Modernity, as a historical process, has allowed Europe to affirm itself as the ‘centre’ of the world that it created, while defining its ‘periphery’ as a consequence of its own self-definition (1993; 2000). As the field of museums has become an open arena for the emergence of new subjects and groups whose knowledge and beliefs have been extirpated from scientific thinking in the process of formal colonisation and, more recently, through the logic of capitalism⁵, the geopolitics of knowledge that defines museology has

3. Cf. A. Desvallees, M. O. De Barry, & F. Wasserman (Eds.) (1992). *Vagues: Une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie*, (Vols. 1-2). Collection Museologia, Éditions W-M.N.E.S.

4. Villy Toft Jensen summarised the results of a survey on museology undertaken among some European museum professionals during 1975 and presented it in the *Museological Working Papers* in 1980.

5. As Mignolo will point out, the continued disqualification and simultaneous appropriation of indigenous knowledge to produce “modern” pharmaceutical drugs is a contemporary example in which the rhetoric of modernity justifies “not only the appropriation of land and labor forces but,

revealed its centres, as recent studies have shown (Scheiner, 2016; Bralon Soares & Leshchenko, 2018). By exposing the effects and consequences of Western imperial and capitalist expansion on knowledge production in the present, these analyses serve to break up the illusion that all knowledge is produced and distributed equally and under the same conditions in different places.

The myth of a single museology, with a universal connotation, inevitably implies the extermination of other forms of knowledge or of making museums in the borders, what has been called by decolonial authors as “epistemicide” (Grosfoguel, 2016) reflected in Eurocentric academic production as well as in the assimilation of colonial heritage, along with its historical silences and erasures, in the collections of the most prominent museums.

Parallel to the configuration of a scientific and autonomous discipline, New museology, as conceived in the minds of certain Central European thinkers in the 1980s, was proclaimed as a movement towards the decolonisation of museums. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in a previous work (Bralon Soares, 2020b), it did not decolonise the minds of those who were making museology acceptable and replicable in universal terms in different parts of the world. New museology quickly became an international movement that was absorbed as “a return to the basis of museology” (Devallées, 1992, pp. 22-23), promoting a radical transformation in museum practices and ideologies, and allowing European authors to make amends for the museum’s colonial past.

The premise of a supposed “rupture” from traditional museology (and its colonial legacy) can be explained by the post-colonial critique of Gayatri Spivak (1994, pp. 66-67), who stated that a radical revision coming out of the West is usually the result of a desire “to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject”. This is the issue behind the current neo-colonisation of knowledge, when the language of decolonisation is used as a shield for dominant voices to maintain their domination. It was partially the problem that some Latin Americans had with the revision of the ICOM museum definition proposed in Kyoto in 2019, when a radical change was stated as part of a self-proclaimed decolonising discourse within a clear European agenda that did not consider subaltern voices. In other words, some decolonial devices can also serve to allow dominant subjects to speak for the others in a condescending and colonising way.

What was defined by some decolonial authors as *la pensée unique*, produced by colonisation and reaffirmed in capitalism, is a Western way of thinking in the sense that it is, at once, liberal and neo-liberal, but it is also Christian and neo-Christian, as well as Marxist and neo-Marxist. In other words, it is a product of the totality of the three major macro-narratives of Western civilisation, as noted by Walter Mignolo (2007, pp. 455-456). To escape from the logic of coloniality and a totality of thinking, it is necessary, thus, to engage in what

lately and more intensively, the knowledge of ‘Others’” (2007, p. 462).

the author has called “border thinking” or border epistemology, an alternative to Modernity in its colonial sense and to the supremacy of one single way of producing knowledge. In this sense, a reconstruction of museums and cultural heritage from the borders, as a creative alternative to central narratives, could result in a more effective path to decolonisation, rather than “including” peripheral voices in the very centre responsible for their exclusion.

Border thinking is “logically, a dichotomous locus of enunciation and, historically, is located at the borders (interiors or exteriors) of the modern/colonial world system” (Mignolo, 2000, p. 85). It is based on the ideas of a “double critique” or “epistemological Creolization”, according to the discussion raised by Edouard Glissant. The proposed epistemic shift – acknowledged in museology only in more recent criticisms – brings to the foreground other epistemologies and other bases of knowledge production that are undisciplined and unsubordinated to the Eurocentric paradigm: what we call, in the field of museums, *experimental museology*, as a kind of museology of “liberation”⁶, the aim of which is to liberate experience from the subaltern place to which modern science has relegated it. This liberation refers to a process of de-centering the universal subject of knowledge from its own “emancipation” prescribed in the dominant capitalist and neo-colonial discourse. It suggests the reconstruction (which is *co-construction*) of new knowledge based on the plurality of social experiences, having “pluriversality as a universal project” (Mignolo, 2007, pp. 452-453).

As alluded to by Chimamanda Adichie (2018), the danger of a single story is that it leaves no possibility for humans to connect as equals. Based on Adichie’s central arguments, one can say that a single museology is about power; the power to represent and interpret the material culture of others according to one’s exclusive perspectives and superiority. This is what was at stake when modern scientists decided to discard experience as a trustworthy source of knowledge. A museology based on experience, not on rationality as one single way of thinking, challenges itself to recognise different subjects of knowledge that make museums in their particular and variant ways, outside of the supposed universality of a single and determined political viewpoint and beyond the established models and paradigms.

3. The myth of museum theory separated from practice

By relegating experience to non-scientific forms of creation, modern museums have prioritised rationality and forms of knowledge that behave as a systematised body of *theories*. As a result, the museum theory produced in certain

6. In the sense of a *Philosophy of Liberation* (1977), proposed by Enrique Dussel, using the word “liberation” in direct reference to the social movements of “national liberation” in Africa and Asia, as well as in Latin America. In Walter Mignolo’s (2007) explanation of the term, to attach the word “liberation” to “philosophy” complements its meaning on the revolutionary fronts of political decolonisation.

parts of the world has developed as a superior form of authorised knowledge, in many ways divorced from practice.

When ICOFOM was created, in 1977, it was the result of a long-standing need to develop specific concepts and theories to standardise knowledge in the museum field. The international circulation of museum knowledge within ICOM, through the circulation of ideas and the professionals who produced them, led to a need for the standardisation of museum concepts and rules that would result in the spread of an *authorised normative discourse* – a normative museology. In fact, the conception of a separation between theory and practice was at the centre of this process of making knowledge a standard to all practice, involving the dissemination of concepts defined in Europe to be applicable in other parts of the globe.

It was ICOM director Georges Henri Rivière who first defined *museology* as “the science that studies the mission and organisation of the museum” and *museography* as “the set of techniques in relation to museology” (1960, p. 12). This conceptual separation between science and technique according to Rivière’s initial definitions would be followed by professionals and scholars in various training courses around the world, in some cases up to the beginning of the 21st century. The spread of his ideas was a landmark in the establishment of museology as a discipline with a theoretical basis, as defined by ICOFOM in the following decades, but it also implied a hierarchy between knowledge based on theory (produced by the experts) and other forms of unauthorised museologies based purely on practice or on other (subaltern) experiences of the museum.

As a result of this artificial separation, in the academic structure of overvalued universities, museology promotes theory as the basis for an interdisciplinary corpus of knowledge, almost superseding practice. This artificial separation was sustained by the notion of a “museum philosophy” (“une philosophie du muséal”, according to Bernard Deloche, 2001, p. 37) detached from museums’ practical daily life, which was applied to the teaching of museology as *theory* in several contexts in the world.

Looking back to the 1980s, when museological theory was internationally established, we can say that ICOFOM believed in a theoretical basis that could serve museologists around the globe, regardless of their specific contextual problems and situated practices – that is still a core issue for this committee when decolonising its own conceptual basis. Today, however, as witnessed in the articles in this issue, there is not one single way to decolonise museology, nor one single philosophy for a postcolonial critique of museums to be exported and applied in our different cultural contexts. As the plurality of voices in this issue show, *decolonisation involves different forms of suffering and different forms of healing*. In fact, this was one of the problems in the proposition of New museology as an international *remedy*, but also of some interpretations

of museum theory as a universal philosophy that can serve us all and shape our ways of thinking.

One of the challenges at the centre of epistemic decolonisation is to achieve a change in theory that results in a change of practices. While the New museology movement might have initiated a change of theoretical content in museology, it still reproduced, in practice, the matrix of colonial domination. For instance, it exported the notion of the “ecomuseum” as a global prototype for new practices of “local development”, constructed as a European concept to be adopted by communities in the peripheries of the globe⁷. A change of terms in theory to achieve new practices is needed because the Western categories of thought have been globalised through the logic of coloniality and the rhetoric of modernity, but also through capitalism and the dynamics of an expanded global market.

Theoretical museology, as it has been interpreted and debated in the scope of ICOFOM, should be perceived in its critical ability to assess museum practice as a conscious and systematic reflection on the theory of the museum. As a field built by specialists of the museum world who were both theorists and practitioners, museology today constitutes a specific platform for debate over the definition of its own terms, concepts and paradigms, based on academic research but also on the experience of those making museums from the borders, constantly challenging the colonial limitations of the established theory.

4. The myth of the object/visitor dichotomy

Museums have defined collections as their core component while embedded in colonialism. Descendants of the cabinets of curiosities, where the objectification of “the Other” in the representation of societies was a central practice, they have participated in the colonial system as an important device for the domination of cultures through the accumulation of collections dispossessed from people. Another important myth that constitutes museum modernity, inherited by museology and equally based on the artificial separation between subjects and objects, is one that still persists today: the old dichotomy between the museum’s focus on material *objects* and that on *visitors*.

Constituting its collections based on plunder and exploitation, the colonial museum that was reproduced in Europe and spread throughout its colonies helped to define *civilised man* by objectifying entire populations in showcases detached from the local realities they represented. Such a logic is at the centre of a colonial discourse still present in museums whose main goal is the accu-

7. When ICOM director Hugues de Varine introduced the notion of the “ecomuseum” to be adopted as a global concept for community-driven initiatives, several other experiences involving social groups had already been put into practice in colonised countries such as México, Cuba, and Brazil. Nonetheless, the French prototype would be mirrored in these other contexts since the 1980s, shaping museum practice and authorising community work. On this discussion see Brulon Soares (2021).

mulation of collections disconnected from their original owners and creators. By reproducing the fragmentation of social reality, colonial museums are narrating the past in a way that preserves certain inherited separations between things and persons, culture and society, heritage and territory, objects and audiences, etc.

A critical point of view was introduced in museology in its reflexive revision in the 1970s, after the modern museum was diagnosed as an institution opposed to the living (Adotevi, 1971/1992), and the European *temple* was contrasted with a democratic *forum* (Cameron, 1971) – a dichotomy that would be further explored by museologists engaged in changing the ethos of the museum field. Going back to the discourse of New museology, the concern with a museum oriented to audiences was a direct response to societal calls for its decolonisation and for the deconstruction of a temple for the elites. In this new rhetoric, the definition of the museum as a development tool for grassroots communities (Varine, 2005) was opposed to the old colonial notion that what was preserved in a museum was generally wiped out from underpowered groups. As an immediate result of this wave of self-criticism in the 1970s and 1980s, the French sociologist Hugues de Varine proposed the concept of the “ecomuseum”; a museum without walls, without collections and oriented to a territory and a population – as if the problem was collections and not the violent ways in which they were accumulated over the centuries.

As many authors show, the dichotomy between object and visitor, or the gap between communities and material collections, is an old one in museology (Conn, 2010; van Mensch & Meijer-van Mensch, 2011) – and, as we argue, it has been reinforced by New museology and with the notion of the “ecomuseum”. From the “classical” opposition between “collections” and “populations” proposed by Varine, the ecomuseum was defined as a museum of problems, without material collections (1978/1992)⁸. But can museums have collections and still be relevant to the present of living societies? In other words, one could ask: how are these two important aspects of contemporary museums still in conflict with each other?

In a contemporary interpretation of New museology, one cannot ignore its political role in reaffirming traditional inequalities that sustain a hierarchical division between experience and normativity in the museum field (Brulon Soares, 2021). In this sense, the prototype of a “community ecomuseum”, which in the 1970s was opposed to the “institution” with material collections, is based on a false assumption that would mark the short history of several museums defined according to a central dichotomy between *persons* and *things*. The *new*

8. A central dichotomy for the proposed ecomuseum was immediately unveiled when the Direction des Musées de France refused to recognise a museum with no material collections when the Écomusée du Creusot-Montceau was created. In 1976, the ecomuseum would be attached to the newly created ministry of the environment, obtaining some financial support due to the specificity of this newly invented definition (Debary, 2002, p. 40).

concept helped to temporarily resolve an *old* identity crisis in the museum sector, a crisis that was to resurface in the polarised debates on the ICOM museum definition in the following decades, resulting in unfruitful discussions and revealing other *new* forms of colonising knowledge. Before proposing a more nuanced and broader understanding of the museum, museology should consider decolonising its own myths – one of them being the artificial opposition between colonial *institutions* (based on material collections) and a decolonial *forum* (driven by “communities”); a dichotomy that is not only colonial in origin, but that is also present in the rhetoric of New museology theorised in Europe.

5. The myth of decolonisation: notes for redistributing the museum

When museums spread throughout the colonised world, a centre and a periphery were assumed as part of Modernity – the centre being a point of gathering, the periphery an area of discovery. Today in the 21st century, societies from different parts of the globe ask museums to be de-centralised, becoming accountable in a way that goes beyond the mere preservation of collections. Perceived as a contact zone, the museum has had its organisational structure as a collection transformed into an ongoing historical, political and moral locus for various power relations – “a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull” (Clifford, 1997, pp.192–193). Museums are, thus, reinterpreted as sites of historical and political negotiations by creating occasions for an ongoing contact (Clifford, 1997) and the emergence of border thinking (Mignolo, 2000) as a means to de-centralise the centre – i.e., to take power or control from the centre and redistribute it. Therefore, museology, as a way of reflecting upon museums, has also been under review.

I argue that in the process of diversifying and redistributing the museum experience around the globe since the late 20th century, museology has delegated to the centre the responsibility to requalify and decolonise its margins, in practical and in gnoseological terms. While more or less clear boundaries between the margins and the centre are stressed, it is easy to maintain untouched the hegemony of central museums and that of “centred” museologists. But on the other hand, museum marginality in the postcolonial world has prompted the rise of counter-museologies: experimental museology, social museology, critical and post-critical museology; postcolonial and decolonial currents inspired by marginal ways to conceive of museums in a constantly changing world.

These revisions from the margins of a postcolonial world are concerned not only with museum collections and repatriation, but also with a deeper revision of paradigms that may lead to the redistribution of authority in the museum field. As we have argued, *redistribution* does not refer to the exclusive restitution of colonial objects, but the restitution of the museum itself as a device that may be used by communities and subaltern groups to restore their relationship to

the past. But even though museum objects can tell multiple stories and create shared knowledges “in-between” the colonial past and the critical readings of the present, museums must face the fact that there is not only an unequal distribution of material collections but also an unequal distribution of the resources for the preservation and transmission of heritage around the globe. In a general observation, the colonised countries that have been plundered of more of their cultural belongings in the past are usually the nations that find it more difficult to implement effective means to preserve their cultural heritage in the present.

At least since the 1990s, anthropologists and museum professionals have faced the fact that, more than ever before, curators must deal with the realisation that ownership and control over collections have never been absolute. Based on that notion, the museological discourse has confounded shared authority and decolonial mediation with “participation” and “co-curatorship” as progressive notions for the management of museum collections. Meanwhile, how many indigenous curators have permanent and well-paid jobs in museums and how many are just doing temporary collaborations with permanent well-paid white professionals? Are their salaries usually the same? Do they get the same benefits? How are they absorbed into the museum market once the collaborative exhibition is over? How durable are the relationships built in these institutions that can actually change the precarious lives of those involved in their projects? Inequalities can become much greater in institutions and cultural projects of the global North, but the reproduction of colonial relations has proven more acute in the context of colonised countries of the South.

Redistributing authority is never simple and it will always challenge the colonial foundation of institutions. For this reason, active collaboration and sharing of authority must be seen in a critical light. As we witness today, indigenous participation is usually serving to authenticate the curator’s work rather than the other way around. The current calls for museums to display their objects in “a fresh light” are motivated by political and economic reasons. While it has been a positive thing for museums to listen to their audiences’ requests for postcolonial readings of collections, at the same time, the market, driven by a sense of innovation, also influences the need to reinvent the display of old objects, especially when museums lack the resources to acquire new ones.

All these practical and material consequences of colonialism at the present time, as we have shown in this synthesis, are embedded in modern epistemology, hence the revision of museums is strictly connected to the critical revision of museology. This text has reflected on the different approaches to decolonisation from a museological point of view, but it is also proposing decolonising “decolonisation” in a more radical perspective, one that has proven necessary to avoid the neo-colonisation of museum contents and of museologists’ minds.

In a way, people started screaming “post-colonial” and “decolonisation” in museology as if they had found an antidote to the coloniality in museums, when

in fact the decolonial project wishes to propose a critical look at colonisation and Modernity, perceiving those as irreversible phenomena. I ask, then: is it possible to reverse slavery in the Americas? Is it possible to overturn genocide in Africa? What about the exploitation of finite resources through imperial expansion and plunder? Are we going to solve the issue of colonisation once and for all by inventing the idea of a post-colonial museum and getting rid of the traces of this past that haunts us?

Is there a way to escape colonialism in the museum? Or, asking the same question differently, can we make museums while supplanting Modernity? Denouncing coloniality in the museum is probably the only way out from colonialism. But this shift, as we have tried to demonstrate, will not happen through rationality nor in the mind of an abstract universal subject of knowledge detached from social reality. Coloniality can only be denounced with the recognition of difference, friction, and distress. The perspective of the Other, or “an Other thinking”, allows for looking at the world through different lenses, lenses that were forged in the margins, through border thinking and experience-driven methods. After we see museums through the eyes of an Other – that in some cases, are our own – maybe then, and only then, will we conceive of museology in a decolonial mindset.

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