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Exposing the Predator, Recognising the Prey: New institutional strategies for a reflexive museumology

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Introduction: The ethical mission of museums

Museums and libraries are heterotopias in which time never ceases to pile up and perch on its own summit, whereas in the seventeenth century, and up to the end of the seventeenth century still, museums and libraries were the expression of an individual choice. By contrast, the idea of accumulating everything, the idea of constituting a sort of general archive, the desire to contain all times, all ages, all forms, all tastes in one place, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside time and protected from its erosion, the project of thus organizing a kind of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in a place that will not move – well, in fact, all this belongs to our modernity. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are characteristic of Western culture in the nineteenth century (Foucault, 1998, p. 182).

This is the widely renowned interpretation of the museum as “heterotopia”, as elaborated by Michel Foucault in 1967. It refers to the predatory activity of every museum, which is linked to collecting and cumulating objects, items and concepts in a space of absolute difference. Without this predatory and aggressive “desire to contain all times, all ages, all forms, all tastes in one place”, museums could not exist.

Along with this, interpreting museums as heterotopias permits us to consider another important issue. Following Beth Lord’s interpretation of Foucault’s theory of heterotopia (2006), this article aims to highlight the ethical role of museums through the specific case of ethnographic museums. According to Lord, the museum as heterotopia “is the space in which the difference inherent in its content is experienced” (p. 5). Since the museum is a space of representation and difference, it “can perform Foucault’s own historical methodology of genealogy”. The interpretive skill offered by the museum enables it to accomplish an “ethos of permanent critique of its own history”, which stems from the Enlightenment (p. 3). In a Foucauldian perspective, she argues that:

All museums have the capacity to perform Foucault’s genealogy – to present historical events not as “a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but [as] the reversal of a relationship of forces”⁶⁵. The museum has the capacity to reveal conceptual systems and political orders to be contingent and reversible. It has this capacity because it is a heterotopia and because it has its origins in the Enlightenment. Like Foucault’s own notion of genealogy, the museum has certain Enlightenment capabilities –

⁶⁵ Cf. Foucault, M. (1984). Nietzsche, Genealogy, History. In Rabinow, P. (Ed.). *The Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault’s Thought* (pp. 76-100, 88). New York: Pantheon Books.

including critique, autonomy, and progress – and can use those capabilities to question and overcome the power relations that have historically been based on them. The museum is a site for Foucauldian genealogy, through which we can liberate ourselves from the power structures of the past (p. 11).

In other words, thanks to its Enlightenment origins, the museum adopts a permanent critical *ethos* over its own origins. It shows the contingency of political and historical events, questions its own conditions of possibility and, therefore, plays an ethical role.

Ethnographic museums, above all, exemplify a predatory activity. Their favourite prey are objects and images from non-western countries. Undeniably, Western museums increased their collections in an asymmetrical relationship of power and domination within the colonial framework (Bennett, 2006, de L'Estoile, 2007). Many scholars interpreted this situation with the term “cannibalism” to the extent of eating other cultures’ objects while at the same time negating and silencing the peoples who produced them (Ames, 1992; Gonseth, Hainard, & Kaher, 2002; Dias, 2002, p. 27).

On the one hand, since the late 80s, strong criticism has revealed the cannibalistic and predatory origins of ethnographic heritage, which has led to a “new post-colonial museology” (Phillips, 2008, p. 406, Lebovics, 2007). On the other hand, this work will demonstrate that, thanks to this predatory nature, ethnographic museums can apply a critical interpretation of their heritage and history to the extent of Foucault’s genealogy. Thanks to the adoption of a reflexive museology, they can therefore play an ethical role within society.

The aim of this article is twofold. Firstly, it intends to overcome the critical approach that, until recently, characterized the main museological debate (Jamin, 1998, Clair, 2007, Mazé, Poulard, & Ventura, 2013). It certainly moves from the premise that ethnographic museums are cannibals and predators. Nonetheless, it aims at inverting this negative interpretation in order to highlight the positive role of exposing a politically and historically sensitive heritage. A self-reflexive exhibition on museums’ collections would enable visitors to perform the genealogical critique described by Lord. Secondly, it attempts to sketch a new normative definition for ethnographic museums. Due to the radical change that the European museum landscape has been experiencing, it suggests rethinking the category of “ethnographic museums”. This methodology focuses more on the institutional changes and on the official statements of museums than on museography.

A new international normative landscape

In order to understand the complexity of different changes and renovations that most European ethnographic museums have been undertaking for the last two decades, it is useful to briefly analyse the international normative framework. European institutions and international organisations such as UNESCO and ICOM, through the development of international norms on cultural diversity and on the return of cultural property (Prott, 2009), have played a fundamental role in influencing museum policies and new agendas.

The international normative framework *vis-à-vis* minorities and indigenous peoples has deeply changed since the 90s, according to Kymlicka. The evolution in the international community is the sign of

a new era, characterised by the recognition of minorities in international norms and European institutions and by the valorisation of cultural diversity (2007, p. 41). The international normative response to indigenous claims for more equal recognition has extensively influenced museological policies around the world. Certainly, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* (UN, 2007) set the premise for a cultural revolution inside the museum landscape. The aim of this declaration is to repair historical wrongs, which are connected to colonialism, and to promote politics of recognition for indigenous peoples, who were previously invisible in the international legal framework. Articles 11 and 12 directly address the question of restitution of cultural objects and human remains to indigenous communities. They also explicitly invite museums to ensure the mechanisms to make these restitutions effective⁶⁶.

Although it is only a declaration with no binding consequences, most museums around the world are now adopting a “new deontology” (Prott, 2009, p. 112) with regard to indigenous demands for restitution or for heritage interpretation. Furthermore, contemporary museology focuses more on the present dimension of heritage and on its links with living communities than on the past (Simpson, 2009, p. 133).

Likewise, the evolution of UNESCO and ICOM norms towards heritage is noteworthy. The concept of *cultural diversity* has appeared as an international moral norm since the UNESCO Universal Declaration in 2001, where it is considered as a “common heritage of humanity” (UNESCO, 2001). Arjun Appadurai interprets this “new paradigm” through the concept of “sustainable diversity” (2002, p. 10), relaying cultural diversity to intangible heritage, indigenous rights and development⁶⁷. Certainly, the introduction of the category of intangible heritage within the official definition of a museum in 2001 (ICOM), the *ICOM Shanghai Charter* (2002) and the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003), has determined a change in the interpretation of heritage.

The insertion on a global scale of a new heritage category (Bortolotto, 2011) is closely linked to the concept of cultural diversity and to indigenous expressions. Although it might be argued that this is only theoretical, it has influenced museum policies at different points (Pinna, 2003, Alivizatou, 2006). Firstly, it represents the end of “object absolutism”. The peoples and communities who made the objects are considered as part of the heritage and exhibition process itself. Secondly, the present dimension acquires a fundamental role, leading living elements and contemporary issues to be considered as parts of heritage. Thirdly, museums are encouraged to work with indigenous communities to the extent that intangible heritage is closely related to indigenous expressions. Thus, collaborative museology with indigenous or source communities has become a more common approach (Golding & Modest, 2013)⁶⁸. Finally, alongside the traditional exhibition of objects, museums explore new kinds of creative arts, valorising music, performances, and theatre,

⁶⁶ Concerning the link between museums and indigenous peoples see: Galla, 1997.

⁶⁷ The *ICOM Cultural Diversity Charter*, which was promoted by the ICOM Cross Cultural Task Force and adopted in Shanghai in 2010, shares similar approaches.

⁶⁸ The European Commission funded different projects of participative museology. The most noteworthy are *MapforID* 2007-2009: (Bodo, Gibbs & Sani, 2009) and *READ-ME I* (2007-2009) & *II* (2011-2013): <http://www.culturelab.be> (Lattanzi & Cossa, 2008).

within the exhibition space. All these consequences are even more visible in museums where indigenous peoples are involved in the direction or exhibitions strategy, like in the National Museum of the American Indian or the National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Sandahal, 2005).

The internationalisation of multiculturalism has been paralleled by an increasing international legislation on the return of cultural objects. The question addressed by the processes of return, restitution or repatriation⁶⁹ concerns the nature of heritage – whether it is considered a universal public good or as a particular tool for preserving and imparting the memory and identity of a specific group (Appiah, 2006, Cuno, 2008). The historian Elazar Barkan argues that, since the end of the Cold War, a new international justice based on morality and restitution has been established (2001). According to Barkan, the increasing number of claims for restitution worldwide is the sign of a new policy in international relations. Restitution is therefore a tool for repairing historical wrongs, reconciling memories and giving visibility to indigenous peoples and former colonised countries. To this extent, restitution is part of the politics of recognition in a guilt-victim relationship.

Undeniably, indigenous demands for the return of objects, as well as for the repatriation of human remains and sacred objects, are telling cases showing political negotiation about heritage ownership and interpretation. The Native Americans Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and the foundation of the National Museum of the American Indian represent a milestone in the history of restitution (Lonetree & Cobb, 2008; Sandahal, 2005, p. 28, Pagani, 2013b). Likewise, the Maori Heads case highlights the international dimension of restitution as a policy of recognition. It required political negotiation between the Maori and more than fifty museums in ten countries (Richert, 2009), which was coordinated by the bi-cultural Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. In particular, the difficult negotiations between New Zealand and France showed how a policy of restitution turned into politics of recognition and reconciliation. The repatriation of Maori heads from France to New Zealand, which prompted the creation of a specific new French law in 2009, ended with a Maori ceremony and an exhibition on Maori culture at the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum in 2011. What is at stake in this case is not only a matter of goods property, but also of historical narrative and memory. It is therefore fundamental that museums and community source cooperate through practices of sharing knowledge and memory.

Consequently, by exposing their own predatory origins, museums have the opportunity to critically engage in debate on restitution issues with visitors and source communities. For example, the temporary exhibition *Whose objects?* at the Ethnographical Museum of Stockholm represented a noteworthy case of a critical dialogue with visitors on the sensitive topic of museums and restitution (Bodenstein & Pagani, 2014).

Beyond ethnography: new institutional strategies in Europe

This new international moral and legal context – with the evolution of UNESCO and ICOM norms, the rise of indigenous rights awareness,

⁶⁹ To analyse the difference between return and restitution, see Kowalsky, W. (2005).

and the introduction of the intangible heritage category – has extensively influenced the museum world, causing an increase in the number of claims for a more equal representation of cultures and for a multi-vocal interpretation of heritage⁷⁰. With the purpose of overcoming the colonial legacy (Bennett, 2006), new institutional strategies have been adopted in Europe in order to go beyond the ethnographic approach (Pagani, 2013a). These institutional transformations aim at eliminating, or on the contrary critically exposing, the predatory history of collections and buildings (Bodenstein & Pagani, 2014).

As a consequence, some national ethnographic museums in Europe have radically changed their institutional strategies: i) detaching themselves from the ethnographic approach; ii) changing their narrative and interpretation of collections; iii) applying participative museology. In order to liberate themselves from the burden of the colonial legacy, some of them have even avoided the term “ethnography”. Despite the heterogeneity of their contents and their scales, these various projects share some common elements.

Firstly, museums tend to use an interdisciplinary approach instead of a traditional ethnographic perspective. This allows them to combine ethnography with contemporary art or contemporary issues such as migrations, globalisation, mass tourism etc. The exhibition *Bolliwood*, shown in the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg in 2009, is a telling case of an exhibition dealing with contemporary social issues through an interdisciplinary approach (Grinell & Pagani, 2013, p. 208). Similarly, an intensive strategy of temporary exhibitions enables the integration of ethnographic collections with other disciplines, approaches and topics. In most cases, the focus of exhibitions has moved from objects to subjects, and from past to present time. The Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum, for example, made more than seventy temporary exhibitions in ten years covering various topics and disciplines from contemporary issues to archaeology or from contemporary art to anthropology (Pagani, 2013a, p. 263).

Secondly, performances, temporary installations, music and digital devices are used within exhibitions in order to bridge tangible and intangible elements. This has been strongly influenced by the 2003 UNESCO Convention and by the idea that intangible heritage bears the same importance as the tangible one.

Finally, participative museology has been encouraged by UNESCO and ICOM norms and by different European projects involving the most important ethnographic museums in Europe. The most notable are the projects READ-ME I and II, which were based on the cooperation between museum curators and peoples from migrant associations in order to rethink the role of museums within the society, ending in the multi-vocal exhibition on migrations “[S]oggetti Migranti” at Ethnographic Museum Pigorini in Rome (Lattanzi & Brenna, 2013).

The following table shows part of these renovation projects

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⁷⁰ Museums directed or consulted by indigenous peoples have extensively influenced European ethnographic museums, (Sandahal, 2005, Pagani, 2013a).

Museum	Type of Change	Old Name	New Name	Date
Museo delle Culture del Mondo Castello D'Albertis, Genoa	New museum in a historical building	Castello di Montegalletto	Museum of World Cultures	1991 – 2004
Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam	Renovation of permanent exhibition	Colonial Museum (Koloniaal Museum until 1950)	Tropenmuseum	1995 – 2009
National Museum of World Cultures, Netherlands	Three existing museums into one administrative institution	Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, the Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde, Leiden and the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal	National Museum of World Cultures	2014
Louvre, Paris	New Department		Pavillon des sessions des arts premiers	1996 – 2000
Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris	New museum in new building from two different museums, new name	1.Musée de l'Homme 2.Musée National des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie	Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac.	1996 – 2006
Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, Marseille	New museum in new building from two different museums, new name	1.Musée de l'Homme 2.Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires, Paris	Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations (MuCEM)	1996 – 2013
Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum Kulturen der Welt, Cologne	New museum in new building exposing an old collection		Museum of World Cultures	1996 – 2010
Museum der Kulturen, Basel	Change of name	Museum für Völkerkunde und Schweizerisches Museum für Volkskunde	Museum of Cultures	1996
British Museum, London	Relocation and change of department's name	Museum of Mankind	Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas	1997 – 2001
Världskulturmuseet, Göteborg	New museum in new building related to National Museum of Ethnography de Stockholm	Göteborg Ethnographic Museum	Museum of World Culture	1999 – 2004
Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford	Structural renovation			2007 – 2009
Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt	Building extension	Museum für Völkerkunde (until 2001) (Museum of Ethnographie)	Museum of World Cultures	2010 – 2012
Musée royal de l'Afrique centrale (MRAC), Tervuren	Renovation of permanent exhibition – Building extension	Museum of Congo (until 1960)	Royal Museum for Central Africa	2013-2017
Musée d'Ethnographie de Genève (MEG)	Renovation of permanent exhibition –Building extension	Museum of Ethnography	Museum of Ethnography	Reopen ed in 2014

WeltMuseum, Vienne	Project of renovation, new name	Museum für Völkerkunde (Museum of Ethnography)	Museum of the World	2014- 2017
Museo delle Culture, Milano	New museum with old ethnographic collection		Museum of Cultures	2015
Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel	Project of renovation	Museum of Ethnography	Museum of Ethnography	2013- 2017

Projects of renovation of ethnographic museums in Europe⁷¹

Drawing a new museological concept: “meta-ethnographic museums”?

Above all, within the process of renovation, the category of ethnography has often been cancelled or neutralised in the official names of museums. It has been substituted by “world culture” (singular) in Gothenburg, “world cultures” (plural) in Frankfurt and Cologne, and “cultures” in Basel. In Milan, a new museum of cultures (MuDEC) was founded in 2015 from an old ethnographic collection. In Wien, the general term “welt”, meaning “world”, replaced the traditional German word “Völkerkunde”, which means “ethnography”. In Paris, the official label “quai Branly-Jacques Chirac”, from the French President who founded it, replaced *Musée de l'Homme* (Museum of Mankind). It is an important point, which highlights an explicit will to create a distance from the traditional ethnographic approach. The ambiguous categories of “culture(s)”, whether in the singular or in the plural form, “world cultures” or simply “world”, attempt to overcome the traditional dualism of Self/Other assumed within the concept of ethnography⁷².

At the symposium organised in 2013 by the RIME network, which gathered in Oxford the ten most important European ethnographic museums, James Clifford described this situation as “post-ethnographic”. Since the term “ethnography” has been explicitly refused by several European museums, there is a need for a new museological category. Nonetheless, the ambiguous terms of “world cultures”, “world culture”, “world”, “civilisations” or toponymic references do not clearly explain the history of museums, nor the legacy of ethnography as a scientific discipline.

Undeniably, eliminating the term “ethnography” from the official name of museums is an attempt to hide a difficult heritage rather than assume the responsibility of its origins. As interesting counterexamples, the *Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel* and the *Musée d'ethnographie de Genève* decided to keep the category of “ethnography” despite their recent renovation processes. This explicitly underlines the importance of ethnography both as a historical legacy and as an identity maker in museology, even while adopting an innovative and interdisciplinary approach (Gonseth, 2002).

⁷¹ This table is based on my previous research, see Pagani, 2013a, p. 160.

⁷² To analyse the dualism of Self/Other implicit in ethnographic categorizations: de L'Estoile, 2007, Bennett, 1995, p. 76-82.

On the one hand, it is urgent to find a common category for defining this “new paradigm” within the ethnographic museums landscape. On the other hand, in order to adopt a critical and truly reflexive museology, it is fundamental to openly assume the ethnographic legacy. Otherwise, the history of the institution and of the collections would be misunderstood. Definitely, ethnography used to be a key identity-maker of these collections. A possible strategy might be to critically expose the origins of museums and, at the same time, to assume the ethnographic legacy as a discipline. The term *meta-ethnographic*, rather than *post-ethnographic*, museums would be more appropriate within this context⁷³. On the model of “meta-physics”, the Greek prefix “meta” means “beyond” referring to a space distance, rather than “post” which is linked to time distance. Meta-ethnographic museums stem from the post-ethnographic situation and the post-colonial critique, but at the same time intend to go a step further. The prefix “meta” suggests the idea of a critical perspective, which is not divided in a “pre” versus “post” dualism.

Although “meta-ethnographic museums” correspond more to a normative category than a descriptive one, they might be useful theoretical tools to describe these profound changes. Meta-ethnographic museums are museums that critically distance themselves from their ethnographic origin and openly expose their predatory nature. At the same time, they critically discuss the history of their collections and institution, giving voice to the prey they used to capture. Some renovation processes might approach this normative museological category.

Exposing the predatory history of collections

In a few renovation projects, the history of collections and the origins of museums became part of the exhibition path in itself. This is a crucial attempt to show and discuss the predatory nature of museums. In some cases, the renovation project found its *raison d'être* in the willingness to directly address the colonial past of the collections and the institution. This has been the object of the official communication either on the museum's website or in the marketing strategy. Although for the on-going projects it is too early to verify the results concerning the museography or visitors' reactions, it is useful to focus on institutional communication and official statements.

The Tropenmuseum, one of the first colonial museums in Europe, was renovated in 2009 in order to critically rethink its colonial history (van Dartel, 2009). Within the permanent exhibition, the section untitled *Colonial theatre* directly tells the “stories of seven life-size mannequins” from the colonial period (ibid.). Its goal is to show the link between colonial history and museum collections, by creating “one place in the museum where the history of collecting as such would be told” (Legêne, 2009). This enables the museum to perform a critique of its own origins and to make visitors aware of this sensitive heritage.

⁷³ The term “meta-ethnographic” is used with a similar meaning to “meta-colonial”, conceived in 2013 by Antoine Perraud, Emmanuelle Saada, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Mamadou Diouf, and Jean-François Bayart for Mediapart and the “Centre d'histoire sociale du XX^e siècle” (Paris I-CNRS). Retrieved from http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xrfcnu_que-sont-les-etudes-post-coloniales-1-3_news.

Likewise, the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium⁷⁴, one of the most famous colonial museums in Europe, closed its doors in 2013 for a four-year renovation project. The explicit goal of this renovation, promoted by its director Guido Gryseels, is to invite visitors to a reflexive interpretation of the colonial heritage of the collections and the building, and to closely cooperate with contemporary African diasporas (2012). The renovation project is the result of a collaborative museology between the museum and the RMCA-African Associations Committee since 2003. The official communication of the institution explicitly highlights the need for a critical interpretation of the colonial legacy of the museum. Its website states the following:

Remodelling will not be limited simply to the building and access points, but will extend to the contents of this place of memory, where Belgium's colonial past will be addressed capably and openly. All aspects of the museum will put in perspective. It works with researchers from the African communities in Belgium and will serve as a dynamic platform for research, encounters and dialogue between visitors from different generations and cultures (Royal Museum for Central Africa, 2016).

The main idea of this renovation is to include the history of the building and collections into the exhibition space in itself. Therefore the history of ethnographic collections and the museum might become the object of a critical and meta-historical approach. In this way, the museum might play an ethical role, performing a critical genealogy of the institution. Nonetheless, it is still too early to verify the good intention of the museum's official statements.

Another notable case is the Weltmuseum in Wien, the new name of the traditional Museum für Völkerkunde, which is now closed until 2017 for a renovation project on its permanent exhibition. This renovation is officially justified by the need to address the colonial legacy of the museum. In the official communication from its website, it explains that a future section of the permanent exposition entitled "Shadows of Colonialism" will explicitly question the museum's own history, the origins of its collections, and the stereotypes of other cultures that were created in ethnographic exhibitions. The website states the following:

Our museum also profited from colonial expansion, and some histories of acquisition can be linked to brutal appropriation and colonial authority. As colonies gradually succeeded in fighting for their independence or were released into it after World War II, these developments were not mirrored in ethnographic museums simultaneously. Beloved and seemingly timeless beliefs regarding the "Self" and the "Other" were tentatively questioned after the 1980s. Today, we attempt to face the multitudes of our colonial past. The manner in which we deal with our collections and the people connected to them will reveal who we are today to future generations (WeltMuseum, 2016).

In this case, the renovation process is paralleled by a radical change in the official name of the museum, following the trend of avoiding "ethnography". Nevertheless, the category of "world" is very ambiguous, and does not include European collections that continue

⁷⁴ For a more detailed analysis see Pagani, 2013a, p. 292-299, Bodenstein and Pagani, 2014.

to be exposed in the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art (*Museum für Volkskunde*).

Another interesting case is the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, Sweden, where a few permanent installations question the ownership of collections and the link between European imperialism and the origins of European museums. The museum does not provide an answer on purpose; rather it intends to force visitors to reflect on their own (Bodenstein & Pagani, 2014).

Despite their differences in size, scope and scale, all these cases share a common point; it is the intention to make visitors aware of the legacy of ethnographic museums. The latter deals with sensitive and political issues related to the predatory activity of museums. In most cases this predatory nature became an object of exhibition or an object of debate in an attempt to recognise the prey that were previously exhibited as hunting trophies.

This is a fundamental opportunity for museums as educational instruments to show visitors the legacy of a difficult heritage. Therefore, through the explicit exhibition of the predatory past of their collecting and storing activities, some renovated ethnographic museums can really operate a Foucauldian genealogy. Their critical and reflexive approach can in fact produce an ethical critique of their own history, becoming a powerful pedagogical instrument.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, some of these renovation projects aim at sharing with visitors the legacy of their colonial past, the origins of their collections, and the history of the institutions. Within this context, ethnographic museums can play an ethical role performing a critique of their own historical foundations, to the extent of Lord's interpretation.

This metamorphosis experienced by ethnographic museums in Europe is far from being completed. As a consequence, it is too early to draw final conclusions. Nonetheless, it is already possible to argue about the emergence of a "new paradigm" in the European museum landscape. Ethnography as a museological category needs to be updated; it is therefore important for museological debate to explore new possibilities of definition.

Starting from a "meta-ethnographic" definition – although as a normative model – the role of ethnographic museums should be reconsidered. Their predatory nature, thanks to critical and reflexive museology, can become an object of exhibition, debate and gathering. This is an important occasion for ethnographic museums to perform a Foucauldian genealogy of their own origins, a constructive auto-critique that can make visitors aware of this "shared intangible heritage of humanity", which is our common history.

This would show that every history is relative and contingent. The *meta-historical* perspective adopted by some museums – if openly and pedagogically exhibited – can become part of their own contemporary heritage. Exposing critically the predatory nature of their collections would allow voice to be given to the prey that were silenced and objectivised in the past. They could play an ethical role, sharing and building with visitors a common memory of humanity. In this way, the knowledge and intangible heritage produced by this

reflexive museology would become part of a shared *meta-heritage* helping future visitors to understand our time.

During this process, museums are likely to capture new prey because it is part of their very nature. Nevertheless, by exposing the history of their collections and origins, they can offer some visibility to the silenced prey captured in the past.

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Abstract

Since the late 80s ethnographic and world culture(s) museums have been criticized for their predatory and cannibalistic nature. This has led to “a new post-colonial museology” or a “post-ethnographic” era. Consequently, new institutional strategies have been adopted across Europe and Western countries in order to go beyond the ethnographic approach. These structural transformations aim at eliminating or, on the contrary, critically exposing the predatory history of collections. European institutions and international organisations such as UNESCO and ICOM, through the development of international norms on cultural diversity and on the return of cultural property, have played a fundamental role in influencing museum policies. Following an interdisciplinary approach and through case studies in Europe, this article analyses different institutional strategies for a reflexive museology and suggests a new museological category for ethnographic museums.

Keywords: ethnographic museums, post-colonial, UNESCO, ICOM, restitution of cultural objects, repatriation.

Résumé

À partir de la fin des années 1980, les musées d'ethnographie et de(s) culture(s) du monde ont été l'objet de critiques concernant leur nature prédatrice et cannibale ayant amené à une « muséologie postcoloniale » et à une ère « post-ethnographique ». Par conséquent, afin de dépasser l'approche ethnographique, de nouvelles stratégies institutionnelles ont été adoptées en Europe et dans les pays occidentaux. Ces transformations structurelles visent à éliminer ou au contraire à exposer de manière critique l'histoire prédatrice des collections. Les institutions européennes et les agences internationales comme l'UNESCO et l'ICOM, à travers le développement de normes internationales sur la diversité culturelle et sur le retour de biens culturels, ont joué un rôle clé ayant influencé les politiques muséales. En suivant une approche interdisciplinaire et à travers des études de cas en Europe, cet article analyse différentes stratégies institutionnelles pour une muséologie réflexive et suggère une nouvelle catégorie muséologique pour les musées d'ethnographie.

Mots-clés : musées d'ethnographie, postcolonial, UNESCO, ICOM, restitution des objets culturels, rapatriement.