



CITY MUSEUMS on the move

A dialogue between professionals from African countries, the Netherlands and Belgium

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Preface and acknowledgements

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This publication is the result of a fruitful and stimulating collaboration between the Amsterdam Museum, the Reinwardt Academy and the department of European Cultural History of the University of Amsterdam. Each of the partners has a longstanding experience and interest in international cooperation as a source of learning and inspiration. Together they organised the symposium *City museums on the move* in Amsterdam, on 23-24 August 2010. The richness of the discussions that took place led to the decision that an electronic publication would follow.

Like the lectures during the symposium, the articles in this publication provide an interesting overview of case studies from a variety of city or community museums, cultural institutions and universities in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, South Africa, Belgium and the Netherlands. The city or community museums in African countries are a relatively young and very dynamic phenomenon, whereas in European countries generally for this kind of museum the opposite is true. There are exceptions, of course. In Belgium, especially in the Flemish cities, following several years of intense preparation some important new city museums have recently opened. In the Netherlands, a number of older, well-established city museums are trying to re-invent themselves in an innovative way. Everywhere, cultural organisations that are involved in the city and its inhabitants offer a significant source of inspiration.

Our publication is meant to be more than just an inventory of different points of view. By presenting a variety of practical museum experiences, in combination with a more theoretical approach by colleagues from academia, we hope to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the role of present-day city museums. This choice implies that there is no strict uniformity in the articles: some are quite informal whilst others are more academic.

We chose to publish the articles online as a PDF file because this maximizes their accessibility. Moreover, the website on which the e-publication is placed offers the possibility of sending reactions to the texts, thus contributing to further discussion. This added benefit seemed valuable to us because we felt that the symposium in 2010 did not exhaust our exchange of ideas.

We are deeply indebted to the speakers at this symposium who so generously agreed to provide an article for publication. Needless to say, the successful realisation of this entire project depended first of all on their voluntary input.

We also wish to express our gratitude towards the people who contributed in a special way to the making of this book. Patrick Abungu, who was studying at the Reinwardt Academy in 2010 and is now working in Kenya, facilitated the communication with our African colleagues. Wilma Wesselink, coordinator of the master programme at the Reinwardt Academy, played an essential part in the organisation and conceptualisation of our e-publication. At the Amsterdam Museum, Marijke Oosterbroek, e-culture and ICT-manager and the education officer Anneke van de Kieft in an early stage gave us an insight into the advantages and opportunities of e-publishing. Marijke Oosterbroek eventually ensured that this e-publication could be made available on the website of the Amsterdam Museum. We thank you all for your commitment and enthusiasm.

During the production phase we were fortunate in having a good team of specialists that we could rely on: Roos Bernelot Moens, Marion Fischer, Daphne Meijer and Christine Platt. Their endless patience was much appreciated.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support received from the Amsterdam Museum, the Reinwardt Academy, the University of Amsterdam and the ICHS Solidarity Fund for Historians – Amsterdam 2010.



IMPRESSION International symposium on city and community museums



Photos: Susan van 't Slot-Koolman

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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City museums have a long tradition but are at the same time a rather new phenomenon. This paradox stems from the dynamic nature of these museums. City museums permanently reinvent themselves in response to the dynamism of the cities they serve. Today's cities do not ask for dogmatic museum models; they need open, flexible institutions. The present book aims to explore the dynamism and diversity present in the concept of 'city museum'. This will be done from the perspective of museum practice. The authors present a broad array of practical experiences, enriched by more reflexive sections provided by theoreticians who feel a strong affinity with the daily reality of the city museum. Although the contributions are as diverse as city museums are, this book is intended to be more than just an inventory of points of view. It is meant as a contribution to an active discourse on the development of museums that are effectively engaged in the unruly reality of the contemporary city.

In many ways the origins of this publication can be found in the symposium *City museums as centres of civic dialogue?* that was held in Amsterdam from 3 to 5 November 2005. It was the Fourth Conference of the International Association of City Museums,¹ organised by the Amsterdam Museum in cooperation with the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Archaeology and History (ICMAH), a committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).²

Another source of inspiration was a conference session organised by the ICOM working group Cross Cultural Task Force (CCTF), which took place in August 2007 on the occasion of the ICOM General Conference in Vienna. The session's theme was *Transformations: Museums and Cultural Diversity*. Among the issues addressed by Allisandra Cummins, at the time ICOM President, was the need to stimulate the participation of members coming from countries that were still markedly underrepresented in the worldwide ICOM organisation, like for example most African countries. She pleaded for a more efficient and accessible form of communication that would stimulate a far greater response to invitations for conferences and meetings. Also speaking at this session were George Okello Abungu, a former Director General of the National Museums of Kenya, and Lorna Abungu, former Executive Director of AFRICOM. They presented several case studies of museums and heritage organisations in Africa that wished to show the diversity of not only people and cultures but of nature as well, for on the African continent landscape is an important part of heritage. Furthermore, these two speakers explained what the great difference is between older museums, created by former European colonisers, and more recent museums, which are much more inclusive and strive to adequately reflect the diversity of the populations in cities and villages.

City museums in changing contexts

In the autumn of 2007, Pim den Boer and Tamara van Kessel, two cultural historians of the University of Amsterdam, approached Renée Kistemaker, senior consultant at the Amsterdam Museum, with the request to help organise a small-scale international symposium on city (history) museums. This symposium was envisioned as a side-event of the 21st Congress of the International Committee of Historical Sciences (ICHS), scheduled for 22-28 August 2010 in Amsterdam. Taking the published papers of the above-mentioned 2005 conference as inspiration, the function and interpretation of city museums in changing contexts was seen as an ideal topic to on the one hand encourage an exchange between museum professionals and academic historians, and on the other hand invite speakers from African countries who could broaden the historical as well as the museological debate. Like ICOM, the ICHS was determined to augment the number of African representatives participating in their general congresses and thereby ensure a more global discussion.



¹ This informal international network no longer exists.

² The conference was attended by 160 participants from 26 countries, mainly from Europe but also from Russia, Africa and the United States. In the spring of 2006 the proceedings of the conference were published in *City Museums as Centres of Civic Dialogue?* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Historical Museum, 2006). This publication is still available on internet: www.knaw.nl/content/internet_KNAW/publicaties/pdf/20051108.pdf.

The local organizing committee of their 2010 ICHS congress, in this case represented by Den Boer and Van Kessel, recognised the Amsterdam Museum as a valuable partner in obtaining this objective. For the Amsterdam Museum, given its extensive involvement with international networks and committees of city (history) museums, this proposal provided an interesting opportunity to organize an exchange of ideas, methods and practical case studies with museum colleagues and academic historians from Africa. In order to make real dialogue possible, it was decided to keep the symposium small and to therefore limit the invitations to experts from African countries, Belgium and the Netherlands. This had the added advantage of making the event financially feasible.

Two lectures of the November 2005 conference served as a starting point to develop a central symposium theme. Valmont Lane, at the time director of the District Six Museum in Cape Town, had in his lecture explained the background of his museum. In the sixties and seventies of the twentieth century the 70.000 residents of District Six, a lively and multicultural inner district of Cape Town, had been forced to leave their homes and settle in the outskirts of the city. The foundation of the museum in 1989 was driven by an urban social movement, aimed at helping some of these removed inhabitants to return to their land, and to collect and tell the stories of what had happened in this area of Cape Town. All the old houses in the neighbourhood had been torn down. Valmont Lane sketched his museum as an organisation that operated on 'the cutting-edge of civic engagement', in close cooperation with the community of former District Six inhabitants, some of whom had already returned to the area.³

The other lecture was presented by Estifanos Admasu Jenberie,⁴ head of the Addis Ababa Museum in Ethiopia. This museum was created in 1986, on the occasion of the centenary of Addis Ababa's foundation as the capital city, and is a more traditional kind of historical museum of the city. It is housed in a beautiful residence dating back to the 1920s and presents the economical, social, political and architectural history of Addis Ababa, as well as plans for future urban and architectural developments. It is clearly influenced by European ideas of what a city history museum should be like. Among the many problems mentioned by Jenberie, such as inadequate funding and the shortage of professional personnel, was the lack of good and regular contact with the community of Addis Ababa's citizens. His aim was to move away from this top-down organisation of the museum and to stimulate citizens' participation. For the purpose of developing more adequate strategies, the museum had entered a partnership with the Museum of London.

Community-based museums

The big question that was inspired by these two lectures was whether other such city (history) museums as Addis Ababa's could be found in Africa and if they were dealing with similar challenges as their European counterparts. Or was it more likely to find places such as the District Six Museum, which are similar to the community-based or neighbourhood museums that can also be found in some European and North American cities? The research in this field initiated by Renée Kistemaker and Annemarie de Wildt of the Amsterdam Museum in 2008, made clear that the concept of a city museum as we know it in Europe and North America is indeed new and rare in African countries. However, there are instead several important community-based museums and cultural houses, often active in an urban context. To help identify some themes that could be relevant for historical and community museums in Africa, the advice of several specialists was asked. Among those consulted were George Okello Abungu and his wife Lorna Abungu, both of whom were by then working as independent international heritage consultants, and Ciraj Rassool, professor at the Department of History of the University of Western Cape in Cape Town. These specialists proposed some themes that could be relevant for historical and community museums in Africa and suggested which museums and cultural centres might be interested to take part in the symposium.

It was at this point that the Reinwardt Academy of Cultural Heritage in Amsterdam joined the Amsterdam Museum and the University of Amsterdam in the organising team. The Reinwardt Academy offers several heritage-related professional courses, including a Master of Museology

³ District Six is to be redeveloped as an urban housing project for over 10.000 former residents.

⁴ In 2005, Jenberie was also Head of the Tourism Promotion Department of the Addis Ababa City Administration.

taught in English that attracts many international students, several from African countries. Moreover, this academy maintains an extensive international network of museum specialists to which both Abungu and Rassool belong. Léontine Meijer-van Mensch and Peter van Mensch, both connected to the Reinwardt Academy, contributed to the further development of the project by providing expertise and contacts with people in the field. Furthermore, during a visit to the Reinwardt Academy Mrs Rudo Sithole, Executive Director of the ICOM organisation of African Museums, AFRICOM, discussed the plans with the organising team. Her resulting enthusiasm meant that her recommendation could be used in the invitations to the speakers.

The symposium's main title, *City museums on the move*, requires some explanation. First of all, it was decided that the word 'historical' when referring to museums of cities was best left out, as had been done in the title of the 2005 Amsterdam conference. This reflects the many changes that have taken place in this museum sector during the last ten to fifteen years. These changes were related to a more general museological trend in the 1960s and 1970s. Museums at the time started to pay more and better attention to their audiences. Besides focussing on collections and their presentation, museums began to recognise the importance and scope of their educational value in society. From there the next step was to involve their public in all kinds of museum activities, including collecting and presenting. Parallel to this, museums were increasingly aware of their specific social value and responsibility: as guardians of heritage, art and memory, and as institutions for empowerment and inclusion. As a consequence of these trends, several historical city museums chose to remove the word 'historical' from their name. They addressed themselves as 'city museums', thus emphasising their bond with the city's contemporary society, approaching history from the present rather than from the past. Participation is a keyword, and of course the web and social media make this increasingly easy to realise. The modern city museum does not limit itself to working in the actual museum building: it composes exhibitions in cooperation with specific communities in neighbourhoods elsewhere in the city, it involves them in collecting activities and it tells the city's history by publishing thematic city walks. And, increasingly, city museums present themselves as forums and meeting places for exchange of knowledge, creative ideas and discussions. In this new trend, which by the way is not exclusive for city museums, the concept of 'community' plays an important part. It is used by museums, by government at all its levels and by various groups in society themselves.⁵ In some cases the initiative to create a museum comes from a community, for example from a specific neighbourhood.

Why and to what purpose

he questions what can or should be the relation between a city's communities and the city museum, and why and to what purpose communities set up community museums or other types of heritage/cultural centres, appeared to be crucial for our symposium. That is why we chose two themes related to these issues. On the first day the symposium started with the theme *The Community Museum as a place for remembrance*. Here special attention was given to the ways in which these museums stimulate the commitment and participation of community members and how these members are encouraged to participate in the preservation and collecting of heritage and memories, like for example in the Abasuba Community Peace Museum in Kenya. The museum of the relatively new Dutch city of Zoetermeer also presented a case study, as did the Amsterdam Museum.⁶ During the second day we discussed the theme *The city museum or the community museum as an instrument for empowerment and emancipation*, a much-used strategy that was explored in case studies provided by museums in Capetown⁷, Rotterdam and Ghent.

A third theme of the symposium addressed a different issue. *Is it time for a revision of the nineteenth century classification of specialised museums for art, ethnography, archaeology and history?* And if so, what could the consequences be for city museums? Even though this classification issue may not be as heavily debated as the notions of community and museums mentioned before, here too city museums are 'on the move'. In the Netherlands, until the first decades of the twentieth century the collections of many local museums (city and regional museums) generally consisted of a mixture of objects of art, history, ethnography, archaeology



⁵ Elizabeth Crooke, *Museums and community: ideas, issues and challenges* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007) 27-37. Crooke separates three main areas of activity in which the concept of community is used: social and cultural anthropology, public policy and social action. She then shows how the resulting ideas of community are integrated into museum work.

⁶ Paul Msemwa, director of the National Museum and House of Culture Dar es Salaam, was unable to present his lecture during the symposium in 2010, but we have nevertheless included his article in this publication.

⁷ At the symposium Leslie Witz, Professor of History at the History Department of the University of Western Cape, gave a lecture on the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum. He is Chair of the Board of Directors of this museum.

and sometimes even natural history. Since then, in several cases municipal museums have been divided into an art museum and an historical museum. In recent years, under the influence of a growing interest in social and contemporary history, there is much more attention for ethnography as a discipline in city museums and for corresponding collections, both material and immaterial. This is also influenced by the fact that due to immigration city populations are becoming more multicultural, a phenomenon that is making museums look at colonial and postcolonial history from a different perspective. As to archaeology, since the 1950s and 60s city archaeologists, both in the Netherlands and Belgium, have contributed significantly to the establishment of new views on the history of cities and of the surrounding countryside, also in modern periods. A similar trend can be seen in some African countries. Case studies from Antwerp, Meknès (Morocco),⁸ Sittard and Amsterdam illustrated some of these developments.

In general the concept of 'lieux de mémoire', or 'places of memory', is used within the framework of national, rather than local or city history.⁹ Nevertheless, it was chosen as the fourth and last theme of the symposium, and for several reasons. First of all, in recent years city museums have begun to include the physical city, its monuments and the history of its spatial lay-out in their regular work: the city is seen as an object of research and story-telling.¹⁰ Secondly, memory as an on-going, living process, open to the dialectics of remembering and forgetting, plays an important part in the museum work. Stories have increasingly become a source of information and active visitor participation. When living memories are connected to places of history, these can be called 'places of memory'. During this session we intended to compare the use of the concept 'places of memory' in different cities and to discuss how these places are conceptually related to other sites of memorial culture, such as the Shimoni slave cave in Kenya or the so-called 'privileged places' in Mozambique.

Exchange of ideas

During the symposium, on 23 to 24 August 2010, we counted seven speakers from countries in Africa: Morocco (Meknès), Mozambique (Maputo), South Africa (Cape Town), Kenya (Nairobi, Mombassa and Mfangano Island in Lake Victoria) and Tanzania (Dar es Salaam). The three Belgian speakers came from Brugge, Ghent and Antwerp, whereas the thirteen Dutch speakers were from Amsterdam, Zoetermeer, Utrecht, Rotterdam and Sittard. Some of them are museum professionals; others work at universities as historians or archaeologists and have strong ties with the museum world. The mixture of national as well as professional backgrounds and the multidisciplinary character of the symposium proved to be very stimulating and informative, leading to open and lively discussions.

We hope that the resulting publication will give readers a good impression of some of the trends that are affecting city and community museums in the countries mentioned. Together with the introductions to each theme and the brief summaries of the discussions, the different contributions to this book offer an insight into how museums are working for the future, often in cooperation with academics and museologists. As the symposium drew to a close, it became clear that our discussions were still far from conclusive and that there remains much to learn from each other. This was especially true for the dialogue between the Dutch and Belgian participants and their colleagues from Africa. After all, we seldom have the opportunity to meet between continents and share experiences in such a focussed manner. We look forward to a further exchange of ideas in the near future.

⁸ This lecture was presented by the archaeologist Rachid Bouzidi, curator at the Archaeological Site of Volubilis near Meknès, Morocco. The text, however, is not included in this publication.

⁹ Pierre Nora published his renowned series of seven volumes *Les lieux de mémoire* between 1984 and 1993, thereby giving this concept its current fame.

¹⁰ Some city museums are also responsible for the city's monument preservation, for example the Helsinki City Museum.



COMMEMORATING

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The community museum as a place for remembrance: introduction

Peter van Mensch

Professor of Cultural Heritage at the Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Retired since August 2011. At present co-director of Mensch Museological Consulting (Amsterdam-Berlin), where teaching and consultancy come together. Board member of several (international) museum organisations. At present he is member of the Ethics Committee of the International Council of Museums. Regular guest lecturer at universities worldwide and frequently invited as speaker at international conferences. As researcher interested in developing an integral and integrated approach to heritage.



Following the paradigmatic shift within the museum profession during the early 1970s (usually referred to as New Museology), a range of new museum concepts was introduced, both in practice and in theory: civic museum, democratic museum, dialogic museum, discursive museum, disruptive museum, ecomuseum, economuseum, engaging museum, global museum, idea museum, inclusive museum, integrated museum, mutual museum, participatory museum, post-museum, responsive museum, social museum, total museum. Most of these concepts circle around a (re)new(ed) vision concerning the relation between museums and their constituent communities. In this respect, the overarching idea of this range of concepts is the idea of community museum.

In his introduction to the theme, Ciraj Rassool explores the idea of community museum in connection with the notion of community as such. Rassool criticizes the 'paternalist sentiment and ideas of innocence and naiveté' underlying some notions of community and community museums. He emphasises that communities are 'imagined and produced through the very conceptualisation of heritage projects and the nature of the knowledge transactions involved'. In this respect, Rassool's paper can be related to the discussion on conceptualising communities in the 2010 volume of *International Journal of Heritage Studies*. In their introductory article Emma Waterton and Laurajane Smith conclude that 'real life communities are not only misrecognised but misrepresentations of identity become institutionalised in the heritage process' (Waterton and Smith 2010: 12). Rassool points at the role of community museums as active agents in this process.



Independent platforms

In order to become museums of communities instead of for communities, museums should, according to Rassool, be developed as forums of critical citizenship and as independent platforms of social criticism. This requires dialogic and transactive working methods, but also a system of governance which ensures autonomy. All museums discussed in the following papers are looking for dialogic and transactive working methods, but only one (the Abasuba Community Peace Museum) is not defined by 'frames of governmentality'. Not by coincidence, this museum is the only of the four that addresses itself explicitly as community museum. The other three are either national (Dar es Salaam) or municipal (Zoetermeer and Amsterdam).

Paul Msemwa describes how the National Museum Dar es Salaam gradually transformed into a 'platform for stakeholders' dialogue'. By the local population the museum was perceived as meant for tourists and not relevant to them. The museum started to consult the local population and (re) designed the building as well as the museological programmes on the basis of the outcome of this consultation. In his conclusion, Msemwa remarks that 'the disadvantage of the method is that the process is expensive in terms of time and other resources. It takes too long for stakeholders to reach a consensus on any subject', but, on the other hand, 'in the process, confidence between museum professionals and the communities is attained and relevant museum products and services are developed'.

Community of practice

As Jouetta van de Ploeg described, the City Museum of Zoetermeer decided to follow another track. Instead of consulting the local population about the desired museological programmes, it invited the people to play an active role in the decision making process concerning the acquisition of objects that would represent their feeling of being 'at home in Zoetermeer'. The dialogic and transactive project did not turn the museum into a community museum as described by Ciraj Rassool, but at least (part of) the collection is *of* rather than *for* the community. The museum organised a series of workshops in which the donors were confronted with specialists to discuss the process of musealisation. In the process the traditional distinction between the roles of source community versus (museum) expert became diffuse. In this respect the Zoetermeer project is in accordance with similar projects using the idea of 'community of practice' (see for example Krmpotich and Peers 2011).



The Abasuba Community Peace Museum is a private initiative of Jack Obonyo and an example of how 'locals have the capacity to manage their own heritage within the framework of participatory management initiatives'. Obonyo describes his museum as a place of identity, debate, dialogue, and cultural empowerment. After the colonial period, the community was 'left like a collection of institutions and programmes operating near one another but not overlapping or touching any common ground'. The aim of the museum is to create 'a positive future to overcome this fragmentation and to restore the lost communal identity'. This includes the sale of local products and collective watching world cup finals through the Digital Set Television (DSTV) in the museum community centre. These are examples of how the museum avoids being trapped in the ethnographic 'paternalist sentiment and ideas of innocence and naiveté'.

Co-creation

'Control' is a key concept in the case studies. Who is in control of the decision making processes in the museum: the museum professionals or the (constituent or source) communities? The National Museum Dar es Salaam made an inventory of opinions and wishes by interviewing local communities. The participation of these communities was contributory (for a typology of participation, see Simon 2010). The museum respected the input, but did not hand over the control of their internal processes. The City Museum of Zoetermeer involved members of the city in (some of) their internal processes as a way of collaborative participation. The Abasuba Community Peace Museum may be identified as a form of co-creative participation. Co-creation is a key characteristic of the radical community museum as proposed by Rassool. The Amsterdam Museum is not a community museum in this sense, but many of their projects have a strong co-creative stance. One of these projects is the website Memory of East.

The origin and development of the site is described by Annemarie van Eekeren. Although focussed on a particular neighbourhood (Amsterdam-East), the museum avoids addressing specific communities. The invitation is an 'open call' and is as such a form of 'crowdsourcing' (Howe 2008). It can be argued that the site may have the potential to create a community, a self-defined community of interest. The City Museum of Zoetermeer also send an 'open call' (in the local newspapers). The donors (and participants of the workshops) were citizens of Zoetermeer but in the context of the project they formed a self-defined community of interest.

Co-creativity

Annemarie van Eekeren describes how the 'Memory of East' project gives extra value to the streets, to the houses, to the shops and to the parks. As such the project made a connection

between the *ex situ* focus of the museum itself and the *in situ* experience of the people. However, as Van Eekeren concludes, the museum staff is ambivalent when it comes to the added value of the project for the museum collections. The contributors do have control over their own stories, but the stories are not integrated in the museum documentation system still controlled by the museum specialists. So it was a logical step to separate the website from the museum. Even though the format is laid down, there is a high degree of co-creativity. This may indicate that the internet provides a more effective framework for community initiatives than the existing museum infrastructure.

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Introduction: The Community Museum

Ciraj Rassool

Professor and chairperson at the Department of History, and director of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. Board Member of various cultural, heritage and academic organisations in South Africa, and of several journals, including the Journal of Southern African Studies, the South African Historical Journal and Kronos: Southern African Histories. Publishes on the relation between museums, exhibition-making, cultural politics and social history in South Africa.



There are a range of issues that require discussion if we are to understand the differences between community museums and city museums. Not only do we need to understand debates around the notion of community, especially about its potential and limits, but we also need to see these issues in relation to the desire to enhance social participation in all features of museum life, not merely through enhancing visitor numbers. In this symposium we have an opportunity to consider these questions as they have emerged in museums in East and South Africa as well as in the Netherlands, particularly at a time when the Amsterdam Historical Museum transforms itself from a history museum to a city museum.

The first difficulty with the notion of community museum is that it tends to conjure up notions of representativeness and authenticity in a local institution that supposedly works with an audience considered as a bounded community. In this frame, the worldview and interests of the community museum are supposedly circumscribed by locality. In African colonial histories of ethnic formation, native affairs and racial power that shaped the nature of locality, this understanding poses enormous dangers, and may give the impression that racialised and ethnic forms of 'community' occur naturally, and are not the product of particular histories.

Nevertheless, the notion of community is mostly a geo-political category, referring to people who are conjoined by the commonality of locality. Thus 'community' becomes a vector of social analysis that is about people's relationship with the place where they live and work, and the bonds and the commonalities that flow from this, as opposed to their class membership, which refers to their relationship to the means of production. While this might mostly be so, it is the case that in the age of digital information and knowledge formation, communities are also constituted through common interest mediated through television and digital production.

Community museums within the hierarchy

Community museums are also sometimes understood to exist within a typological system of museums. Here community museums are seen as one of the simplest units of museum structure considered along a continuum of museums of different rank, a hierarchy in which national museums are seen as more complex. In this framework, the notions of community and community museum invite a paternalist sentiment and ideas of innocence and naiveté. The idea of community museum also raises the idea of a museum as a focus of educational and cultural services. Here the museum seeks to reach certain audiences and to deliver benefits to specific communities defined geographically as a means of enhancing social inclusion. In this frame, the museum is distinct from such communities with whom it may want to extend formal relations of service and consultation, and with whom it may even introduce forms of partnership, joint management and relations of reciprocity.

In African post-colonial times, community might continue to be defined in ethnic ways, but in South Africa, community emerged as the focus of anti-apartheid mobilization, when community emerged as one of the most decisive 'sites of struggle'. With the emergence of community organisations in the form of civic bodies and structures of rent payers, community also became a category through which to think about local social history as a means of questioning the teleologies of national history.

The independence of community museums

Community museums have also emerged as a form of museum organisation independent of the state, with its own structures of governance. As such, they take their position alongside other NGOs, negotiating their relation with the state and business world as well as other vectors of society. Such independence grants the museum structure a measure of flexibility and autonomy, making it unnecessary to act within frameworks and knowledge systems set by the state. Although this autonomy from the state also creates financial vulnerability, it makes the museum project-driven, necessitating creative funding strategies as part of negotiating relations with the state, private foundations, foreign governments and multilateral structures in the museum, heritage and cultural sectors.

City museums, on the other hand, tend to operate within municipal systems of governance, focusing on collections that pertain to cities, and often with an emphasis on the history of the city. These municipal characteristics often turn the city museum into a locus of governmentality, forming limits on the museum's capacity to collect and re-imagine the city. During recent years city museums have also taken the opportunity to shift from a narrow historical and antiquarian focus, and have begun to seek ways of exploring forms of 'cityness' as well as ways cities are made through planning, architecture, creative expression and the cultural resources of citizenship.

Conceptual categories of community

The concept of community is also related to other conceptual categories through which museums often search for a wider legitimacy. While some museums seek merely to 'enhance their audiences' and to create more participation, the notion of 'community' is also important in the attempts by museums to 'create new audiences', who are not configured as mere demographic additions. Indeed, the notion of 'publics' emphasises that collectivities of people are not ready made and available to be accessed. They are imagined and produced through the very conceptualisation of heritage projects and the nature of the knowledge transactions involved.

These knowledge transactions are about how expertise is deployed in different museum models, with some being museums for the community, in which expertise is almost entirely external and where the community is accessed through outreach. While there will always be moments to employ outside expert consultants, community museums become more effective when they explore forms of co-ownership, through dialogic and transactive methods. This requires systems of governance which ensure that community museums exist not only for communities, but of communities. This also requires new museum methods that enable the disciplines of conservation and stewardship to engage with other knowledge forms held within the communities themselves. Scholars refer to these relations through notions of 'shared authority' and the museum as 'contact zone', but it is also possible to go beyond this to talk about forums of public scholarship, knowledge transaction and local capacity building.

Community museums have the potential to turn city museums into citizen museums, in which citizenship is not figured through frames of governmentality. This is one of the big debates in societies like Brazil, where community museums have been created by the Department of Justice as an instrument for contributing to social order. It is possible to turn such attempts at control on their head through an emphasis on creating forums of critical citizenship and on the active creation of independent platforms of social criticism. This will also ensure that community is never understood through fixed notions of ethnicity or markers of social origin and simplistic authenticity, even as cultural tourism seeks to reproduce anthropology's old ideas. Communities are also themselves products of history, and subject to ongoing and contested processes of production and reproduction. Indeed community museums are active agents in the production of community.



Gathering in the District Six Museum.
Photo Paul Grendon

The National Museum Dar es Salaam transformation into National Museum and House of Culture

Paul Msemwa

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The National Museum and House of Culture in Dar es Salaam city is the first museum in the country, built during the British colonial period. It opened to the public on 7 December 1940. The museum is located near the Botanical Garden of the former German colonial government, which is used for research and acclimatization of plants from different parts of the world.

The museum's name has changed several times, reflecting the political developments in the country (Sykes and Wade 1997), and throughout its history it has maintained its national scope and character (Mascarenhas 2005: 5-12). During the British colonial period it was known as the King George V Memorial Museum, after independence in 1961 it was named National Museum of Tanganyika and four years later the name was National Museum of Tanzania. After 2004 it became the National Museum and House of Culture.

Historical background

During the colonial period (1886-1961) the country's research focus had been on its long history, ethnography, health and an inventory of the natural heritage, especially forestry and wildlife resources. The preoccupation of earlier historical researchers was aimed at establishing how people of the coast of East Africa had been interacting with Persians, Arabs, Indians, Chinese and, from the sixteenth century onwards, European traders, and etc traders and their impact on local peoples' customs and traditions (Chittick 1974). Consequently, the museum's largest collection consists of archaeological, ethnographic and paleo-anthropological collections, whereas biological, historical and contemporary art collections are few and acquired after the 1960s. Until the year 2003, the museums' permanent galleries were on Human Origins, Ethnology, History and Biology, while the focus of temporary exhibits had been on contemporary art and on profiling locally produced industrial products. One could say that Dar es Salaam's history is as long as that of any known settlement on the Western Indian Ocean coast, with its architecture enriched and inspired by Africans, Persians, Arabs, Asians and Europeans (Sykes and Waide 1997, Msemwa 1994:105-108). Its population is multi-racial and of different religions; Muslims, Christians and followers of traditional African religions have continued to co-exist peacefully and the city attracts international visitors as tourists and as business persons (Tanzania Tourist Board 2008).

In 2002, a study conducted on visitation and public perception of the museum (NMT, 2003) revealed that the National Museum Dar es Salaam (the museum's name since 1980) was under-utilised by the local population. People felt it was boring and that it was meant for foreign tourists. These findings and visitors' statistics indicated that a very small number of the more than 2.5 million people living in urban Dar es Salaam actually used the museum; the local communities could rarely identify with it. Indeed, these findings contradicted the museum's expectations. The museum had made special efforts before through its outreach programme to create public awareness on its facilities and services. Based on these findings and building on my experiences of the Ethnic Days Programme, organised at the Village Museum in Dar es Salaam (Msemwa 1999), the management of the National Museum of Tanzania reflected upon the museum's role in the diverse local communities of Dar es Salaam city and proposed the transformation of National Museum Dar es Salaam into a living space, where communities can meet, relax, learn, discuss and exchange ideas and information about their city's life.

Inspiration from the Ethnic Days Programme

The National Museum of Tanzania as a corporate body was established by the Act of Parliament Number 7 of 1980. Currently it is composed of six National Museums, among which the National Museum and House of Culture and the Village Museum. In 1967 the then Curator of Ethnography at the National Museum Dar es Salaam came up with an idea to establish the Village Museum as an open air Museum in Dar es Salaam, specifically to document and preserve the social and economic transformation that Tanzania was undergoing through instituted, post-independence, government policies. The Arusha Declaration policy of 1967 and Tanzania's villagization programme of 1975 were instituted to equitably distribute wealth across the country and among social groups by bringing essential social services and infrastructure closer to the majority of the rural communities (Nyerere, 1974; 25-41) Sadly, through these government efforts, peoples' indigenous knowledge, including methods and materials used in the construction of their traditional houses, were fast disappearing.

Fortunately, the country had ethnographic studies from the 1960s and surveys from 1968-1973 (Wilson 1963, Culwick 1935) conducted on house construction materials and the methods used, which were documented in sketches and photographs (Mpuya, et al. 1987, 1990). These ethnographic studies served as reference material for the government to design low cost housing units and produced a map for traditional house forms and major economic activities of the country. Furthermore, in 1968, in order to preserve indigenous construction technology, the Village Museum was established in Dar es Salaam. By the year 1993 twelve homesteads and their associated structures had been reconstructed by craft-persons using construction materials from the respective regions of the country.

These house structures were the focus of the Ethnic Days Programme conceived of in 1993, which started being implemented from 1994 onwards. The initial challenge of the programme was to get government subsidies. Many people in government were concerned that the programme would foster tribalism and result in the conflicts so common in some African countries at the time (Mpangala 1998). However, with hindsight it can be argued that government's concerns at the time were based on wrong assumptions regarding the sources of conflict between the communities.

As such, the Ethnic Days Programme was established in 1994 to allow each ethnic group from among more than 120 ethnic groups of Tanzania to present its history and culture, and to discuss socio-economic issues affecting the group through an exhibition, performances and a seminar. Twice a year a different group was given this opportunity, for a length of three days. The initial goal of the programme was stated as 'to forge understanding and unity among people of diverse ethnicities and nationalities and to sustain the operations of the Village Museum.' The start was cautious, taking into account government concerns. A team composed of academics, especially conflict resolution experts, museum professionals such as anthropologists and respected community members living in Dar es Salaam, belonging to various ethnic groups, jointly developed terms of reference to guide the programme. These terms were influenced by the realisation that Dar es Salaam city and Tanzania as a country are very diverse in terms of nationalities, ethnicities and religious beliefs, and that each individual has constitutional rights to practice his/her belief without offending others. Community members living in Dar es Salaam were the starting point of the organisation and success of the programme. It was through them that planning of the programmes and the contacts with local authorities and their communities were established. The Ethnic Days Programme is held at the Village Museum in Dar es Salaam City.



Nyakyusa traditional houses at the Village Museum in Dar es Salaam

Dialogue and understanding

Through this programme people of different ethnicities learn from other groups what they value most and stand for; it opens up dialogue and understanding. Through this program the people and their government have come to learn and to appreciate the fact that each person is proud of his/her identity, history and culture, and that conflicts are often rooted in one's ignorance of the other (Mpangala, 1998, Msemwa, 1998, 1999). Prior to this very successful Ethnic Days Programme, a hundred percent of the Village Museum's operations depended on government funding. But during the economic difficulties the country was experiencing in the early 1990s, and given the fact that the museums and culture sector is generally underfunded by most African governments, maintenance of the museum's structures became even more problematic. Luckily, through the Ethnic Days Programme and active participation of the local communities, the much-needed resources started flowing from the communities towards meeting the museum's operation requirements.

In the year 2000, the author was invited to use his experience from this programme, to find ways by which the National Museum Dar es Salaam could be transformed into a platform for stakeholders' dialogue. The programme and also ethno-archaeological studies conducted along the coast of Tanzania (Msemwa 1994), had demonstrated that once people are engaged and involved, listened to and their views respected, they are willing to take part, to share experiences and to contribute significantly with their knowledge and resources.

The participatory approach

In the aforementioned study of 2002, it could be concluded that the local communities were actually alienated from the exhibits, the programmes and the contents of the National Museum Dar es Salaam. This also applied to the manner in which museum professionals communicated and presented the objects to the public. For instance, the presentation of the Human Origins story in a travelling exhibition, using fossil hominids such as the *Australopithecus boisei*, was uninteresting to ordinary people of Dar es Salaam, but a source of great pride and admiration for the people in government and for museum professionals. Thus, continuous use of such exhibits had left a permanent and negative mark on peoples' minds that museums are places that keep old and useless things. (Munjeri 1997, Msemwa 2005).

On the other hand, the most visited exhibits at the National Museum Dar es Salaam were and continue to be on slavery and slave trade, colonialism and for traditional performances. People tend to easily connect with their immediate past because, to a large extent, this continues to shape and structure their social and economic relations. The museum staff is not always aware of this. For instance, tilling the land, which involves physical labour, is despised by some simply because the activity is still seen by people as an activity befitting slaves. Therefore, by not consulting the communities, museum professionals developed programmes and products that were irrelevant to the majority of people of Dar es Salaam city. This is why in 2003 the National Museum of Tanzania used the participatory process in the identification of key stakeholders' needs and their expectations (NMT 2003) to transform the National Museum Dar es Salaam.

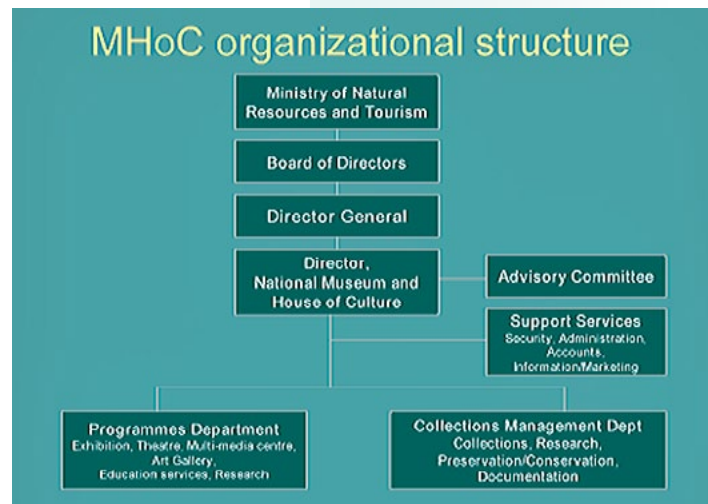
This participatory process, which lasted for twelve months, involved the organisation of a series of meetings and study tours by a working committee to Sweden, South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia, to find out how in those countries museums and houses of culture were organised and functioned. The working committee consisted of three male and three female professional community members and the author of this paper as project manager. The results were reported back in meetings, for example the fact that museums and houses of culture functioned as independent entities and that they operated in different physical locations. On the basis of the working committee's experiences of the study tours and the wishes of the stakeholders, a project document was produced and presented to stakeholders for open discussion of the contents. Discussions of the draft project document were complemented by a children's performance based on realities children experience by growing up in the Dar es Salaam city, and an exhibit on core

functions and activities of the proposed National Museum and House of Culture. The exhibition and the children's performance elucidated on how the House of Culture facilities would be used for programmes and services, especially those that make people want to identify themselves with the museum. The facilities' stakeholders demanded that it must include an auditorium for performances, a space for storytelling, a children's library, a music recording studio, a dance rehearsal hall, a space for temporary exhibitions, a restaurant for traditional dishes, improved permanent exhibitions, expanded collections storage and an office space. Museum collections, the stakeholders argued, should inspire the production of performances, exhibits, films and programmes that address contemporary social and economic issues. Among the noted social issues were the emerging and different forms of slavery, poverty and neocolonialism.

Throughout the participatory process, consultant architects and museum professionals attended all meetings, listened to the stakeholders' wish-list, assessed space requirements and translated them into possible architectural building drawings. Issues that frequently emerged from the discussions included the stakeholders' right to participate in museum activities and the museum's sustainability. As a consequence, the designers of the National Museum and House of Culture buildings had to make sure that the proposed facilities and services would be functional, accessible and affordable and that operational costs were minimised. Accordingly, the organisational structure had to be developed to guarantee the stakeholders a participation in the museum activities (Figure 2) and buildings designed such that will use natural cross-ventilation.

However, to realise the proposed organisational structure was not an easy task. A number of the museum professionals resisted it and felt more comfortable maintaining the old organisation structure, which was more in line with many of the academic institutions. The new structure required museum professionals to work more closely with their communities. This demand is in accordance with the ICOM Museum Definition of 2006.

Once the project document was finalised and approved by the government as a development project in line with the government strategy for economic growth and poverty reduction, the next step was to mobilize project resources. The costs of the project financing (SEK 54.5 million) would not be secured until 15 September 2005 when the Embassy of Sweden/Sida and the government of the United Republic of Tanzania signed an agreement; each committed to contribute to the project 85% and 15% of the total budget respectively. The development project consisted of two major components: the construction works, which started in August 2007 and involved construction of three new and two renovated buildings (Figures 3), and secondly the development of programme activities, which started in 2004. This included exhibitions development, research, skills development, stakeholders' involvement, establishing networks and partnerships with professional and academic institutions, and the publicity of the Museum and House of Culture facilities and services. Throughout the entire project period, the museum management had annually set aside a day for stakeholders to discuss the project's progress.



Organisational structure of the National Museum and House of Culture (2004)



Audience at the Museum and House of Culture following up performance by children titled "Crowing up in urban Dar es Salaam, July 10, 2005 Source National Museum of Tanzania

Conclusion

By the year 2002 the number of visitors to the National Museum Dar es Salaam stood at 14,600, out of whom 75% were local and 25% international; by 2007 this had increased to 53,000, characterized by 88% local and 12% international. In this short span of time since transformation efforts commenced, the visitor statistics clearly vindicated all who had until very recently erroneously thought Africans are un-interested in the past and their cultural heritage. Instead, with the transformed museum, more local people visit the museum and the Museum is attracting support from local people, private companies and the government than it used to before the transformation. The local communities are gradually identifying themselves with the museum and are donating their collections to the museum. A case in point is the acquisition by the museum of collections from the former Dar es Salaam Chamber of Commerce, which for much of Tanzania's history had been dominated by Asian and European business persons. The Dar es Salaam Chamber of Commerce from as early as the 1930s up to the 1980s had played an important role in the development of the country.

I wish to conclude by noting the advantage of using a participatory approach. It is a method that allows stakeholders involvement, and it creates the social capital so critical for long-term sustainability of any project. However, the disadvantage of the method is that the process is expensive in terms of time and other resources. It takes too long for stakeholders to reach a consensus on any subject. But, in the process, confidence between museum professionals and the communities is attained and relevant museum products and services are developed.

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Interaction: Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels

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The Zoetermeer City Museum (officially established in 1989) initiates, amongst other things, exhibitions and projects about current social issues, especially those topics that are related to the city and its development. We do this in cooperation with active residents who like to contribute to the working and living environment of their city. The idea that the museum, as a living and lively home of Zoetermeer, wants to be a platform where discussions are started is one of the key elements in our museum policy to be pursued in the years to come.

The city of Zoetermeer

Zoetermeer is a medium-sized city (3.705 hectare, 121.528 inhabitants, some 53.000 houses and almost 50.000 jobs) ¹ near The Hague, which has grown tremendously over the past three decades. While the residents of Zoetermeer may boast a history that goes back to the tenth century ², the city as we know it today was created over a very short period of time. The village of Zoetermeer was officially designated a so-called 'New Town' in 1962 to allow it to grow and thus reduce The Hague's housing shortage. Zoetermeer is rather affluent (low unemployment, little poverty and a relative small amount of people unfit for work) ³ and has a large percentage of foreign nationals (28,1% of which 6,7% are second generation Western immigrants and 7,6% non-Western immigrants) ⁴.

So how can you tell the story of a city like Zoetermeer? How can you express its unique character? The museum asked itself these questions which resulted in changes to its policy. From a 'traditional museum that reflects its local surroundings', of which there are many in the region, it now promotes itself as 'a house for the city'. Our museum no longer focuses on being a museum of things, but a museum of processes, stimuli, stories and thus a museum in which we look for an answer to the question of exactly what makes Zoetermeer 'Zoetermeer', and how this place in the polder relates to other places.

New Towns are populated by people with highly divergent backgrounds. Zoetermeer is a 'here and now' city where people live together, each with an individual background, each with an individual history. In the 1990s, Zoetermeer was synonymous for 'a city where absolutely nothing happens, a city with post-modern architecture but without an exciting urbanity, a city without roots, a city without a face'. ⁵ This image however is slowly changing as - besides an ever continuous stream of newcomers - a new generation of born and raised Zoetermeeders have settled down in Zoetermeer. Their share in the total population is still modest, but for the first time in the history of the New Town Zoetermeer, one can identify a generation of adult citizens for whom their life story is connected with the development of the town. ⁶

Interaction

By means of various projects in recent years, Zoetermeer's City Museum has sought direct interaction with groups within the community. An example of this was an exhibition we held in 2004 together with 50 residents of Zoetermeer: people from various cultural and religious backgrounds. The goal of this was to encourage an inter-religious dialogue in the city, and to examine whether there was something you could call a 'New-Town Religion'. The project was entitled 'Zoetermeer between Heaven and Earth: Soul and Conscience of a Modern New Town' and dealt with religion as an aspect of urban cohabitation within the tumultuous political-religious climate of autumn 2004 in the Netherlands. One of the findings of the project suggests that dealing with religious engagement as a personal relationship in a secular setting, like a museum, may foster the potential role of religion for social cohesion.

¹ Kengetallen Stad Zoetermeer per 01-01-2010, www.zoetermeer.nl.

² A recently excavated wooden pile of a dwelling-house dating from around 980 proves early inhabitation.

³ www.zoetermeernieuws.nl/2007/04/welvarend-zoetermeer-scoort.html.

⁴ Kengetallen Stad Zoetermeer per 01-01-2010, www.zoetermeer.nl.

⁵ Kees de Groot, 'For Love of Faith', Zoetermeer tussen Hemel en Aarde, Ziel en Geweten van een Moderne Groeistad: (Zoetermeer 2004): 11, 14.

⁶ A.Reijndorp e.a., 'Echt Zoetermeer', Conceptrapport, (INTI, 2010), 2.

In another exhibition held in 2005 - 'A Piece 4 Peace' - young graffiti artists were invited to display their work in the museum. Various happenings and lounge afternoons featuring music, hip-hop, break dancing and graffiti demonstrations brought young people into contact with the museum (in 2010 25% of the population of Zoetermeer consisted of youth up to 19 years old).⁷ The exhibition also contributed to the establishment of a legal graffiti wall in Zoetermeer. Although the museum resembled a club house during the exhibition, it unfortunately didn't manage to keep the attention of the youngsters after closure of the project.

Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels

In 2009 the museum initiated the project 'Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels,' which was implemented according to a concept devised by artist Jacqueline Heerema and directed by her as well. The 'Room of Marvels' was an experiment, a quest - in which we, as a City Museum, could search for new social relevance, whereby our aim was to offer people living in Zoetermeer the opportunity to become co-owners of an exhibition and a collection. The museum also wanted to use the 'Room of Marvels' to deal with questions that many museums are faced with today; questions about representation, about the role of a museum in an ever changing world, questions on collecting new heritage and the involvement of the public.

Background to the project

From the 18th of October 2008 to the 31st of January 2009, the City Museum of Zoetermeer organised a participation project called 'Give & Take', an exchange exhibition about being 'at home in Zoetermeer'. The goal of this project was to examine the emotional bond of people living in Zoetermeer with their city. During this project, inhabitants of the town were asked to present to the museum an object that, for them, symbolised their feeling of being 'at home in Zoetermeer'. To encourage participation, the object could be exchanged for a bottle of Champagne or for a designer bottle of mineral water. The objects were then exhibited with the donor's statement explaining his/her choice for this particular object. The museum itself did not engage in any editing (every object was accepted); it refrained from arranging the objects in a certain way or providing any other explanation. By not interfering, the museum put its own authority up for discussion.

In order to stimulate inhabitants to participate, the museum advertised in local buses with the slogan 'What makes living in Zoetermeer special? What makes you feel at home?' Before the opening of the exhibition, four well known Zoetermeeders, amongst them the Mayor, were asked to present their object, symbolizing their notion of being 'at home in Zoetermeer', to a local newspaper that published their stories weekly. Those 4 contributions were the only objects presented at the start of the 'exhibition', but soon the exhibition was filled with objects of other inhabitants. After the exhibition, the museum kept the 86 donated objects as its 'Zoetermeer 2008 Collection'.

But the next question was: what do you do with such a collection? What do the objects mean for their original owners and for the City Museum Zoetermeer as their new owner? Do the objects, either as individual objects or as a group, say something about life in Zoetermeer? These questions formed the starting point for a study that became the follow-up project known as the 'Room of Marvels'. The 'Zoetermeer 2008 Collection' consists of an interesting series of diverse objects and just as many background stories. The collection resembles a contemporary museum of curiosities, hence the title 'Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels'.

The project 'Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels'

By means of a wide range of approaches, the museum's collection of objects of popular culture was put under the microscope. Together with donors and other interested citizens of Zoetermeer, an interdisciplinary team of professionals examined the 'Zoetermeer 2008 Collection' in a series of workshops and master classes. As the 'Give & Take' project suggested the residents of the city, whose stories when put together like pieces of a puzzle forming 'the' story of Zoetermeer, were the real experts, the museum was interested to see what would happen when specialists in different

⁷ Bibliotheek Zoetermeer, 'Strategisch vestigingsbeleid', Discussiestuk versie 0.7: 4.

fields interacted with citizens in a changing role of master and pupil. This approach proved very fruitful as both parties learned from each other and became dedicated advocates of the project.

During the project, various aspects of giving meaning to objects were addressed. In discussions with professionals, the participants discovered the ambiguity of the donated objects. By registering and photographing the objects themselves, participants experienced how interpretations can be imposed. By considering conservation and restoration, participants understood how physical interventions intended to conserve an object can change its meaning.



Linocut of Zoetermeer's marina Noord-Aa at Het lange land, shown in the Room of Marvels

The study progressed through four phases, the results of which were exhibited immediately in the museum:

Phase one: the naked object

This phase focused on what one actually sees when looking at an object. The museum became a photographer's studio and registration office. Led by a photographer, a museum consultant, an artist/publicist and an author/poet, the participants examined, photographed and registered the objects. They learned, by participating in successive workshops and master classes, something about historical representation and misrepresentation.

Phase two: the speaking object

In this phase the participants examined what a story adds to one's experience of an object. The museum became a story theatre. While describing the objects of the 'Zoetermeer 2008 Collection', the participants were stimulated to verbalize their own colourful relationship with the objects, guided by an art historian. An artist/performer then induced them to personally interact with the objects. In another master class, a Flemish philosopher, examined the relationship between owners and objects in her lecture 'Cherishing old kitchen tables, new DVD players and a stylish standing lamp'. Three national heritage specialists subsequently brainstormed with participants about the 'information set-up' of objects, about experiencing objects in a museological context, and about the personal as well as the general value of objects.

Phase three: object speed-dating

This phase was all about the interaction between the objects themselves. The museum became a platform for the 'Zoetermeer 2008 Collection'. During 'Object speed-dating', participants coupled the objects differently, making various compositions led by an artist/ exhibition-maker, while another artist gave a presentation on 'Cluttered rooms and festering staples'. At the next meeting,



Object speed-dating

an ethnologist talked about the construction of identity and the rituals of daily life, while yet another artist presented the participants with her art, consisting solely of stories.

The Final Phase: beyond the object

During the project, the museum was slowly transformed into 'Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels'. The objects of the collection were enriched with photographs, quotations and descriptions, and were rearranged. In the final debate, creative industry consultant Max Meijer assessed the results of the project. What were the outcomes of this intriguing examination of the role of the museum, its collection and its relevance for the town?

Evaluation of the project

Because of the experimental nature of this project and the intensive participation of inhabitants, the museum wanted to share the outcome and produced a catalogue. In this catalogue several museum and heritage professionals reflect on the project and describe the lessons learned.⁸ First of all, it became clear that working and communicating with groups within the community required something other than the traditional top-down strategy of information processing and knowledge ordering so typical for museums. Instead, it required an attitude dealing differently with information and knowledge: less evaluative, more inquiring, more interactive. In effect, more of a journalistic-anthropological approach. The City Museum of Zoetermeer had introduced no real intervention through the process of including objects in the 'Zoetermeer 2008 Collection' during the project 'Give & Take'. But if the question 'what makes you feel at home in Zoetermeer', would have been more specific or if the museum would have interfered and would have put up criteria for including objects, could this have led to a broader and less obvious input from the participants?

After all, the motto, 'at home in Zoetermeer,' evokes associations with 'feeling at home somewhere'. But where do you feel at home? In view of the objects that were donated, the city where you grew up was found to be of importance in this respect. This was demonstrated by the fact that many of the objects represented being a child in the old village of Zoetermeer or stood for the trades practiced by parents. These objects were usually about what we could call the historic Zoetermeer: the little village that stood at this site for centuries or the idyllic old orchards left from the village's agrarian past. Examples of these objects surrounded by nostalgia and a sense of romanticism are: a chisel (around 1900), a prize medallion (village fair), a decorative tile of the old Zoetermeer before its expansion, a dictionary of local dialect and a butter cutler. But judging from the objects received, 'at home in Zoetermeer' also meant the pioneering spirit associated

⁸ Annelieke van Halen, Arjen Kok, Leontine Meijer-van Mensch, Peter van Mensch, Max Meijer en Michelle Provoost, in: 4289, Wisselwerking. De 'Wonderkamer' van Zoetermeer, (Zoetermeer: 2009).

with the 1960s and 1970s (a memorial tile for pioneering district activities, a book on the early urban development of Zoetermeer, a key to an apartment building and a linocut depicting a newly built clubhouse). For these donors, 'at home' meant being new in a New Town and building something up; perhaps this was because this 'building-up' process occurred just at the time when these people were venturing into their own adulthood and saw this process as a team effort. Interestingly enough, these objects, too, had highly nostalgic connotations.



Give & take

Another conclusion is that a process of museum inclusion in which a small group presents itself as co-maker will evidently exclude others. The theme selected for the inclusion of objects ('at home in Zoetermeer') and its connection with material witness reports also appeared to be a limiting factor in attracting a wider public to participate. Participants in the project were primarily older non-ethnic residents of Zoetermeer, people who remembered Zoetermeer as a village, or people who were building their lives in a city under construction.⁹ Upon inquiry, it appeared that residents with ethnic backgrounds would have felt more attracted to the project if its theme had been different. Although they feel themselves to be residents of the city, they feel most at home in their country of origin. Another reason why this project would not appeal to residents with a different cultural identity might be the fact that the museum has begun operating based on a Western concept about what a museum is and what objects are. But what if you come from a culture where memory and identity are conveyed more by non-visual means: such as storytelling, singing or through rituals, and less by means of objects?

The next conclusion that can be drawn from this experiment is that the public has little insight into what museums stand for and what they do. This could be seen in the concluding discussion of the 'Room of Marvels' when the participants were surprised and intrigued by the complex process involved in the acquisition of objects for the collection, the accumulation of knowledge, and the placement of objects within a context. Public support is nourished by becoming acquainted with and developing respect for this process. The museum's back office offers unprecedented potential for accomplishing this objective.

Another question could be raised in reference to the fact that the museum played an intermediary role for the 'Give & Take' and 'Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels' projects. The museum had a monopoly on this role granted to it by the 'authoritative' position it occupies within the Zoetermeer community. As the independent and permanent guardian of Zoetermeer's heritage, the museum enjoys the public's trust to receive donated objects and to elicit personal stories. Yet this was

⁹ In the early days of the New Town Zoetermeer a large number of newcomers had an urban background. Den Haag especially was the donor city. Between 1970 en 1985 more than 2/3rds of the migration balance consisted of former inhabitants of The Hague (Rob van Ginkel, Leon Deben, *Bouwen aan Bindingen: Sociale Cohesie in Zoetermeer*, (Zoetermeer: 2002), 18.

precisely the dilemma. How long can a museum acting as an open source hold onto this position and command this public trust?

'Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels' was a labour-intensive project and thus relatively expensive. A great deal of time was invested in an intensive collaboration with a small group of participants. Not even a hundred participants produced a small collection for an exhibition that failed to attract many visitors besides the participants. And the question remains to what extent the general public is really interested in objects that shortly before were still stacked in their neighbours' attics?

Overall conclusion

Yet despite these critical comments, our museum has succeeded in taking a group of people from the Zoetermeer community and, by using a very hands-on method, turning them into co-owners of the museum as was the intention of 'Give & Take' and 'Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels'.

Moreover, the museum gained insight into what accounts for the emotional bond of primarily older ethnic residents with their city. The main value of the 86 objects in the 'Collection Zoetermeer 2008' lies in the cloud of memories, personal or shared, that surrounds them: memories of the pioneering period, in which everything had yet to be built and people could start a clubhouse on a piece of wasteland, memories of a time when the children were still living at home, and memories of the old village before the post war growth. This conclusion that (shared) memories are crucial to the identification of people with their city is confirmed by a recent research from the International New Town Institute in Almere.¹⁰

¹⁰ A. Reijndorp e.a., 'Echt Zoetermeer', Conceptrapport, (INTI, 2010), 86.



Participants in the Room of Marvels

'What are the myths surrounding Zoetermeer?' asks Michelle Provoost, director of the aforementioned institute. What anecdotes are connected to these myths? The people living in Zoetermeer will have to construct their own myths and start telling their own stories about the city, its people and its history. The city was planned by professionals, by planners and architects, but will not become a fascinating, exciting city until new layers are added to its original story. Not until then will this one-liner city become a 'real' city.¹¹ With 'Give & Take' and the follow-up project 'Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels' the museum made a start in achieving this aim. After closing the 'Room of Marvels', we are standing at the beginning, rather than at the end of this process. Together with artist Jacqueline Heerema, the museum has entered into a wonderful adventure that, if it is to be included as an integrated part in Zoetermeer's memory, must and shall be continued. The challenge in the time to come is to include a broader and younger community in the search to answer the question of what exactly makes Zoetermeer, 'Zoetermeer'.

¹¹ Michelle Provoost, 'New Town Zoetermeer', 4289, Wisselwerking. De 'Wonderkamer' van Zoetermeer, (Zoetermeer: 2009), 130.

Community museums as places for remembrance

A case study of the Abasuba Community Peace Museum in Kenya

Jack Obonyo

Founding curator of the Abasuba Community Peace Museum, Suba District, Kenya. The objective of the museum is to conserve, preserve, educate, exhibit and document the heritage of the Abasuba community. The museum cooperates closely with the Trust for African Rock Art (TARA) and the National Museums of Kenya.



Community museums can be defined as heritage institutions that follow a communal approach in managing the heritage of a given community, with an aim of empowering the locals using their own heritage. The main objective of such museums is to conserve, preserve, educate, exhibit, collect, document and make accessible historical objects and records that describe the past of the community, available to all. The materials housed in community museums offer insight into the richness and diversity of generations of indigenous, settler and migrant peoples within a given historical background (Coulson David 2005: 5).

Such heritage institutions, therefore, have a critical role in conserving, sharing and developing the identity of their community and to offer a sense of pride to a given community or society. This institution connects people to important stories, traditions and enables us to experience a little of the lives of others. Community museums help us to know about our own personal identity of who we are today, where we come from, and what we aspire to be in the future as a community (Coulson David 2005: 8).

These institutions act as centers of debate and dialogue for the local community, and also they act as an alternative platform for the local community to express their talents, culture, views and ideas. At the same time they act as a centre of reflection towards the growth and development of the community in regards to their history. It can also be argued that such museums are gate-ways to the community's heritage, because they provide an alternative means of accessing communal heritage. For these reasons, such institutions become places for remembrance, which stimulates the commitment and participation of the local community www.abasuba.museum.

The local community and the Council of Elders

In relation to the mandate of the above institution, the managerial system of such museums are usually under the umbrella and the power of the local community and the Council of Elders, who have been given the mandate by the community to nominate the museum board on behalf of the community. Through the above system of management the museum stimulates the commitment of the local community, and it recognises that the locals have the capacity to manage their own heritage within the frame work of participatory management initiatives. In terms of workers, such museums do employ the local community as a way of involving them and appreciating their strength.

Community based museums, such as the Abasuba Community Peace Museum, seem to answer the notion of collecting *the others* for a selected, often elite audience from different countries. Indeed most community museums in Africa were formed during the post-colonialist period and in the late twentieth century with an aim to reflect the correct role of museums in Africa, rather than museums for Africans as it was during colonialism in Africa www.abasuba.museum.

The Abasuba Community Peace Museum follows an integrated approach towards its implementation process in heritage management. This can be seen through the entire process of its management, activities and sustainability strategies. This is because the museum has directed its activities to satisfy the local community, and not the so-called elites or an imagined nation.

This has ensured that the ownership and the sustainability of this community museum rests within the local community. In addition this community museum promotes cultural tourism through

rock art tourism, home stay and picnic programmes. All these initiatives have been introduced to achieve the main objective: to raise the living standard of the local community (Managing community heritage 2008: 65). The approach of Abasuba Community Peace Museum shows that it is important for all museums to use communal heritage to raise the living standards of the local community, instead of using community heritage to oppress the indigenous custodians of that heritage www.trustforafricanrockart.org.

The community museum as a place of identity, debate and dialogue

Most of the local communities have been isolated and assimilated because of the colonial ideologies and the messages from our media; all these factors have contributed towards fragmentation of different communities and the loss of communal identity. Local minority communities were broken into pieces during and after colonialism in our country. An example of this process is the history of the Abasuba community in Kenya. This is important to understand, because it is this dividedness that made it difficult to maintain the Abasuba communal identity. The community was left like a collection of institutions and programmes operating near one another but not overlapping or touching any common ground (Okello Ayot 1976: 56). However, the Abasuba Community Peace Museum has created a positive future to overcome this fragmentation and to restore the lost communal identity. This has been done through the collection of the material culture of the Abasuba, promoting their language, developing radio station programmes and, last but not least, developing one communal museum that reflects the history of the Abasuba people.

All of this is manifest in the way the museum has been constructed and organised; the architecture of the museum, the people involved in the construction of the museum, the place where the museum has been constructed, the material used, the roofing of the museum, the food that is eaten within the museum café, the chairs that are used at the museum and the trees that have been planted at the museum. Moreover, the activities that the museum is doing, both at the museum and for the community, and the fence that surrounds the museum promote the identity of the Abasuba community in the twenty-first century.

It is through the above approach that the museum is working towards the Abasuba communal identity. It is within this institution that the Abasuba Council of elder's office is located and this allows the museum to be a platform where communal issues are discussed and debated.



The Abasuba Community Peace Museum

The community museum as a place for communal empowerment

The Abasuba Community Peace Museum has become the place where the community exhibits and sells their locally made handicrafts for the visitors to buy when visiting the museum. The women and youth groups have been allowed to sell their work here. At the same time the museum also acts as a market for the local community, because it is the only place where local products, like chickens, eggs, vegetables, fruits, fish, meat and many other things that might be required within the museum, can be found locally. Through this initiative the community appreciates how the museum has improved economic growth by encouraging the local community to work hard in agriculture and tourism, because there is a ready market for their product.

As it is shown in the case of the Abasuba Community Peace Museum, material culture from the museum collections can function as catalysts through which people define and redefine themselves. They demonstrate that not all African museum collections have been initiated or maintained with colonial models in mind within the twenty-first century.

The present study reveals that the formal and informal activities that were initiated indigenously have become an integral part of the custodianship of the local museum in Abasuba. These activities generate contemporary adaptations of cultivating practices that were built upon indigenous aesthetic preferences and a local system of alliances.

In essence this museum shows that community museums can be a community-sanctioned forum of public memory and a venue for the expression of contemporary aspirations for the local community that it serves.

The connection between past and present

The relevance of museums like the Abasuba Community Peace Museum to their visitors is clearly pronounced through the connection between the heritage collection and the contemporary culture of the museum. Perhaps it is no coincidence that regional officials often promote the museum by expressing their view of Abasuba museum as a mosaic that merges past traditions with modern practices. In Suba, one finds a diverse community that holds in high regards both the traditional artifacts of the Suba and the innovative creations of contemporary artists.

It is through the community museum that the locals remember their own history through oral narratives, performance, rituals and artwork. This is because the museum has given its first priority to the local community rather than to a national perspective. Moreover, the benefit of the museum to the local community is that it creates employment, promotes good relations among the youth and elders and promotes the value of living in peace through peace educational programs in school, which encourage young Kenyans to promote the process of using African Peace traditions like the *Ganyanya* courts in Rwanda (Shomjee 2000: 23).

The museum has also acted as a centre of information to the local community, like watching news and world cup finals through the Digital Set Television (DSTV) within the museum community centre. Community museums are not only physical buildings within the community, but they form an intrinsic part of the local people's identities, cultures, worldviews and religious perceptions of themselves and the otherworld or the life thereafter. These museums in their many facets really matter for humans, while the social, cultural, ideological and religious roles of community museums include deep ethnological relations and identities, ranging from personal perceptions and gender relations for the benefit of the whole society to perceptions of the cosmological realm and religious beliefs (Oestigaard 2009: 1).

Consolidating community identity

Communities change constantly in number and space. Consequently it is problematic and sometimes incorrect to associate ethnic identity with a space over time. The above argument provides a highlight of the role of a community museum in relation towards the community identity. This is important because in Africa large-scale mobility, which was involving entire ethnic groups or even a clan, had diminished significantly since the establishment of national borders by colonial administrators at the end of nineteenth century. However, inter-country movements, especially migrations involving families and individuals, have continued to the present. This is why community museums are important to help in consolidating community identity (Mapunda Bertram 2010: 3).

At the same time community museums may also help citizens who are deeply ignorant of one another's histories and culture to understand more. Often imaginary walls are erected between ethnic communities who fail to appreciate the shared historical narratives, memories, cultural practices and values that unite them. Community museums can teach visitors and community members to learn the value of their cultural diversity through inter-community heritage tourism (Lotte Hughes 2011:2). Such imagination and lack of knowledge has been partly a result of the fact that citizens have been deliberately kept ignorant of other communities' heritage by successive ruling elite and through the nationalization of heritage institutions for the sake of nationhood, which has not achieved much. For this reason it is said that community museums are powerful tools in connecting and bonding



Museum-in-progress



Participants in the building of the museum are camping at the Abasuba site

communities. As cultural heritage institutions representing any level of the society, community museums have the potential to guide our societies to realise inter-ethnic cohesion (Lotte Hughes 2011: 6). This is because community museums not only preserve culture for the sake of storage but for reference for generations to come, at the community level and beyond. The community museums also have a role in promoting civic pride.

Conclusion

Community museums have allowed the local community to have various connections with other worlds, especially since the start of the 21st century in Africa. This is through the process of introducing community cultural tourism at the local community level (Asante 2008: 2).

It is also argued that these museums are platforms to question why, how, when and who. Through this initiative the community museums act as a platform for answering such questions that affect the local community, through public programs that provide a space of interaction with the local community.

These institutions offer practical sessions on ideas that address new thinking on the relevance of museums to the community and their role in the world today. This is because community museums represent rich and diverse cultures, but struggle to remain relevant and to engage audiences in the contemporary world (Ambrose et al. 1993: 23).

Faced with this dilemma, there is a desire within community museums to explore new theories and practices to fulfill their mandate for social services as cultural mediators www.commonwealthmuseum.org. Through this argument community museums in Africa face challenges like the following: community politics, sustainability, training and equipment www.abasuba.museum.

In conclusion, it is important that the community museum's collections are used as typical tools of transferring knowledge, preserving civilisation, addressing societal concerns and serving as dynamic tools of development and forums for discussion and invention. This will contribute to revitalizing African community museums in light of the current global context and development patterns. It is important that modern, locally improvised, easily comprehensible and viable methodologies are adopted; this is because it will make it possible to address current issues, based on the interests of a cross-section of city dwellers and African communities. This should be the current priority agenda of such museum across Africa and Europe.

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At the opening ceremony of the Abasuba Community Peace Museum



The memory of East, a virtual community project

How some districts in the eastern part of Amsterdam became a space of remembrance

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The Amsterdam Museum, formerly Amsterdam Historical Museum, sees itself as museum of the city. And although most visitors are tourists, mainly from abroad, it is the museum's policy to actively involve the people in Amsterdam and from here, partly by making temporary exhibitions on so-called Amsterdam themes, like prostitution, neighbourhood shops and songs of Amsterdam. More importantly, museum employees themselves go out to neighbourhoods and the peripheries of metropolitan Amsterdam to meet people and get them involved in telling and describing their own history. A large and successful project in this regard is the project 'Oost, een Amsterdamse buurt' (East, a neighbourhood in Amsterdam), which ran from 2002-2004. The website of the project, 'The memory of East' www.geheugenvanoost.nl is still running and has grown into one of the most visited communities in the history of Dutch museums.

Being founded in 2003, this website is still at its peak, catching around 200,000 visitors a year. On the website, stories and memories can be found on the eastern part of Amsterdam, written by volunteers and visitors. There are stories on how fights between neighbours were escalated or solved, about early shops and lost pets. But also there are memories of the Second World War, stories of people whose neighbours were taken away, or stories of people after World War II returning to their empty houses. And there are stories of immigrants, and how they experienced their first years in the Netherlands.

The project 'Oost, een Amsterdamse buurt'

In early 2002, the Amsterdam Historical Museum started working on the project: 'East, a neighbourhood in Amsterdam.' The idea of the project was to develop an exhibition in cooperation with the people living in the eastern part of Amsterdam. This meant that the process of developing an exhibition was not primarily a curator developing a concept and building an exhibition. It was about finding out what was interesting for the inhabitants of this part of the city. The curators were therefore searching for interesting stories on objects, but more so searching for people who could seriously contribute to and work together with the museum on the exhibition. In 2001, the first museum professionals started contacting organisations and key figures in the eastern part of Amsterdam.

In that time the internet was developing rapidly into the World Wide Web, available to broader audiences. The educational department saw in this development an opportunity to use the internet as a platform for the objects and stories collected in the neighbourhood. However, working with the internet was new, and most people found it strange and difficult to use. In their search for contacts, the museum connected with the so-called digital playgrounds in the eastern part of Amsterdam. These playgrounds were neighbourhood centres focusing on training people from the neighbourhood new digital skills. The playgrounds and the museum found a match. The museum trained volunteers in collecting stories and objects. The digital playground developed a special training programme for the volunteers of the museum on how to use the internet to 'store' and

present the stories and objects. The stories were published on the website 'Memory of East', developed by Mediamatic for the purpose of presenting and being a platform.

Stories as background information

The exhibition opened in April 2003. Ten months before this, the website, 'Memory of East', was launched. The website and its stories played a major role in the exhibition. For the exhibition theme 'living', stories from the website were displayed as background information. And on the upper floor of the exhibition, a PC island was built, with four terminals displaying the website. During the exhibition, the website was used intensively, inside and outside the exhibition. The volunteers continued working on the website, collecting stories. In the exhibition itself, volunteers worked as hostesses, giving interested visitors explanations about Amsterdam's eastern neighbourhood. The success of the website was endorsed by the enormous attention from media, government and cultural institutions. The use of internet in a broad public approach was new and innovative. The 'Memory of East' won a prize, being the best digital playground of 2003 in the Netherlands. So during and after the exhibition, the website, 'Memory of East', became well-known throughout the various layers of society.

By the time the exhibition ended, in February 2004, the website was so popular that it was difficult to shut it down. While at the start around 30 people a day visited the website, at the end of the exhibition it was around 300 a day. The volunteers and some



Liberation festivities in the Ajax Stadium in the eastern part of Amsterdam, september 1945, Photo Henk de Koning

employees of the museum supported continuance. With the support of the local government the website stayed online. In the years following, the museum initiated small storytelling projects to attract and commit special target groups in this neighbourhood, like the Surinam community and a group of Turkish women. Up till 2010, the museum initiated and supported projects to mobilize the volunteers to collect stories in the eastern part of Amsterdam.

Museological value of 'Memory of East'

In 2010, with the arrival of new staff in the museum, the question was raised whether the museum should continue supporting the 'Memory of East' project. Through the six or seven years of supporting the virtual community this had become a heavy task for the educational department. The positive thing of the 'Memory of East' project was that the museum was working with communities in an active way. However, the intensive operation requirements made it impossible to initiate new projects. Another issue was the value of the 'Memory of East' website for the Amsterdam (Historical) Museum. The social value was and still is crystal clear, and working with people on their own heritage also has educational value. However, already from the start of the project, the museum professionals were divided on the historical value, because stories on the 'Memory of East' are not connected to any objects in the museum, or to any scientific research. Six or seven years later, this was still a point of discussion.

Both considerations made the museum decide in 2010 to make the website an independent community. We asked volunteers to run the website; the museum trained the volunteers to do so. In 2012, the website is still running, being visited by around 18,000 people a month.

The volunteers managed to develop the website, and the museum is playing a smaller role by facilitating technically. Incidentally, the museum is helping and coaching the volunteers.

Creator of a space of remembrance?

So what can be said about the 'Memory of East', after seven years, 1500 stories, and over 1 million visitors? As has already been stated, the museum is ambivalent when it comes to the historical added value of the 'Memory of East' project. However, from a broader heritage perspective, the value is great and still growing. The 'Memory of East' project gives extra value to the streets, to the houses, to the shops and to the parks. The Tugelaweg is not just a street, but a place where many Jews were taken away in the Second World War. And the Eerste Oosterparkstraat is the place where the important Dutch painter, Willem Witsen, was living and working. And the corner of the Commelinstraat en the Linneausstraat is not just a corner, but brings back memories from the 60s of first kisses, at dancing school 'J. Koehof', The 'Memory of East' gives extra meaning to all corners and places in the East, some small, some bigger. Maybe that is the reason why 200,000 people a year still visit the website.

And what did the museum learn from it? As opposed to seven years ago, working outside the walls is not limited anymore to the educational department, but now it is also in the system of the curators and the management of the museum. For example, in our latest project 'Neighbourhood Shops', the curator did a lot of outreach work and was more outside the museum than inside. It is the vision of the museum that working outside the walls is meaningful, in cooperation with local organisations and individuals. They provide the local heritage, through their objects, stories and memories. The museum can facilitate this process by providing a broader historical perspective. Working in this way makes people care about their own history, and take care of their own environment and surroundings.

Trein der herinnering

Ik ben fan   

1947 / President Brandtstraat 36 huis, Transvaalbuurt

"Waar kwam dat speelgoed vandaan, dat me zo maar in de schoot was geworpen?" vroeg ik me later af



Frans Groot_foto1 - Frans Groot in 1940 bij de brandkraan voor zijn huis aan de President Brandtstraat, foto door straatfotograaf genomen.

Jeugd in de Majubastraat



1929 – 1941 / Transvaalbuurt... Een van mijn laatste herinneringen aan de buurt is mijn bokstraining.

Winter (David)



1935 – 1942 / Schalk Burgerstraat... Dit soort activiteiten ging trouwens in de oorlogswinter gewoon door. Zo ook in de winter van 1941-'42.

14

De schooltijd van Anneke Vas Dias



1946 – 1948 / Transvaalbuurt... De eerste schooldag staat mij nog goed bij. Vooral omdat ik naast een jongelje kwam te zitten dat Adolf heette.

1

Bakkie Wippen (David)



1942 / Schalk Burgerstraat... Nou ging die auto misschien niet zo verschrikkelijk hard, maar toch te hard om er vanaf te springen. We konden dus niet meer uit dat...

Mijn oom Manus Fransman (David)



1941 / Schalk Burgerstraat... Waarom mijn oom Manus tot twee keer toe in het meldingsrapport van politie voorkomt.

24

Enge geluiden in de Majubastraat



1945 – 1960 / Majubastraat... Eén straatzwaer hiel had een lanee

Webpage 'Memory of East', May 2011

THINKING OUTSIDE THE FRAME

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Thinking outside the frame. Revisions of nineteenth-century museum classifications: introduction

Léontine Meijer-van Mensch

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This introduction wants not only to provide some context to the articles in this section, but also wants to give an impression of the lively and interesting discussions that took place during this session, especially in order to be able to include the non-European perspective.

Two types of national museums dominated the museum field at the beginning of the nineteenth century: art museums that were more or less specialised and encyclopaedic museums that covered a wide range of subject areas and combined cultural and natural history. At the end of the nineteenth century this encyclopaedic ideal was declared obsolete, most encyclopaedic museums had been split up and more specialised museums were established instead, a development that would continue well into the twentieth century. Interestingly, the encyclopaedic ideal is witnessing a revival. Nowadays the classical encyclopaedic museums proudly present themselves as ‘universal museums’, while large numbers of specialist museums are seeking cross-disciplinary collaboration at the same time that new museums with an integrated, multidisciplinary profile are emerging (Meijer-van Mensch and van Mensch 2010: 370).

Networks of museums and other heritage initiatives are being created; the distinction between institutional and private initiatives as well as the distinction between in situ and ex situ is becoming blurred. This tendency is especially interesting for city-museums: ‘the new city-museum is a kind of museological presentation using the city itself as its exhibition-room’, writes Jacques Börger, head of the department of Communication and Education of Museum Rotterdam (Börger 2010: 113). ‘The municipal museum must offer its visitors a way of experiencing the city [...] in a variety of places spread throughout the city [...] Creating this structure is more important than collecting thousands of objects [...]’ (*loc.cit.*: 113-114).

Introduction to the session

The theme of this session was introduced by Peter van Mensch. He put forth the hypothesis that the identity of museums very much depends on the international professional discourse the museum identifies with. If a museum considers itself an art museum, decisions concerning collecting, conservation, documentation, exhibiting and education differ from the decisions faced by a museum that defines itself as, for example, a history museum or an ethnological museum. Van Mensch argued that in Europe and North America museums still suffer from a tendency to specialise, even though starting in the 1970s a counter-movement emerged that introduced concepts such as the ‘integrated museum’. The term ‘integrated museum’ was coined at the 1972 UNESCO Round Table on the Development and the Role of Museums in the Contemporary World (Santiago, Chile) and made popular by Kenneth Hudson in his *Museums for the 1980s* (Hudson 1976).

First discussion

During the discussion at the conference, Leslie Witz remarked that in South Africa cultural history used to provide the academic basis for museums. This approach is now being rejected. Solange Macamo asked about the distinction made by Peter van Mensch between two types of archaeology and the classification of (cultural) anthropology as a natural science. In his lecture and his article Peter van Mensch referred to European and North American museums only. In the discussion

Van Mensch stated that in many of the major natural history museums in the United States anthropology (and often archaeology) are still part of the museum, reflecting an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century model.

First case study: Antwerp

In his paper Steven Thielemans describes the museum landscape in Antwerp, putting a strong focus on the Museum aan de Stroom (MAS) which embraces the city collections of Antwerp. The MAS includes an ethnographic collection. Thielemans reflects on the question of what this means for its classification as a city museum. The collection is deliberately included to make a connection between Antwerp and the world. Thielemans writes that 'the MAS will function as a museum that connects the districts, the city, the river, the port, the world and the many communities in the city. [...] The collection of the city, including the ethnographical components, reflects this diversity and the diversity created by the many communities in the city'. The 'usages' of the collections in the MAS can be compared with what Jane Glaister, former president of the Museums Association, refers to as *the power of collections*: 'They provide evidence and offer opportunities for research and learning. They can give status to ideas, people or communities, serve as memorials and validate groups' or individuals' experiences. They have a considerable economic impact, stimulating contemporary science, creativity and industry. They give people a powerful sense of place, identity and belonging, anchored in a fuller understanding of the past' (Wilkinson 2005: 8).

In the discussion Kees Zandvliet mentioned the difference between mergers on the level of museum institutions and mergers on the level of collections. Museums can share a storage building and still preserve their identity. Ciraj Rassool wondered to what extent the exhibition addresses the issue of (Belgian) colonialism. Steven Thielemans explained that the Antwerp collection relates to trade rather than colonialism. Annemarie de Wildt feared that in the context of the MAS the ethnographic collection would stress 'otherness'. Steven Thielemans explained how the museum intends to balance 'our' view on 'the other' with how 'the other' looks at 'us'. Jouetta van der Ploeg enquired about the way source communities are involved. Using a forthcoming exhibition about Ghana, Steven Thielemans showed how the existing museum collection is combined with (new) information from the Ghanese community in Antwerp.

Second case study: Volubilis, Morocco

The second case study was presented by Rachid Bouzidi. This case study is not part of the publication. Starting with a broad overview of the museum landscape in Morocco, Bouzidi focused on the visitor centre at the archaeological World Heritage Site of Volubilis. In the discussion following the presentation Solange Macamo stressed the point that Mozambique is looking for models to develop its museum infrastructure. According to her, in many cases interpretation centres like the one presented by Rachid Bouzidi would be more appropriate than museums. Ciraj Rassool, however, has problems with interpretation centres. They are popular among government officials because they are 'fast heritage' for tourists. They do not deal with the complexity of culture and history but rather present an authoritative one-dimensional view. Rachid Bouzidi admitted that tourists are an important target group in the case of Volubilis.

Third case study: Sittard-Geleen

The third case study was presented by Kitty Jansen Rompen. In her paper she reflects on the Municipal Museum Het Domein (Sittard-Geleen) with an emphasis on the conceptual ideas of the exhibition.



Hedgehog on the bottle, found nearby Museum Het Domein, symbol of the Urban History department

The museum combines urban history, archaeology and contemporary art. Urban history and archaeology are presented from an anthropological perspective, in particular the structuralist ideas of cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. This perspective forms the rationale behind the (conceptual) integration of the disciplines. The aim is also to give visitors 'the opportunity to reflect and to interpret by themselves'. The museums wants 'to show the relativity of meanings and wants our visitors to open their mind to other ways of thinking and perceiving'.

In the ensuing discussion Peter van Mensch asked why Lévi-Strauss' ideas are used as a guiding principle. The former Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires (Paris), which was based on the same ideas, was a big success in the first years after its opening (in 1972), but became obsolete rather soon. According to Annemarie de Wildt, Het Domein pays little attention to diversity. To Kitty Jansen-Rompen objects are expressions of human behaviour and as such represent emotions. The museum wants to evoke emotions among the visitors. Leslie Witz wondered how the complexity of society can be discussed in this manner. Kitty Jansen-Rompen explained that the visitor can make his or her own story. The museum can only trigger the process. Objects provoke people to reflect and discuss. Kitty emphasised the important role of emotions in the process of communication.

This 'emotive turn' in museums can be connected to the concept of experience economy. In 1999 Joseph Pine and James Gilmore published the book *The Experience Economy*. They describe five stages in the development of economic value. According to the authors, society is witnessing a transition from an economy based on service to one based on experience. In an experience economy, the experience, not the service, is the product. Museums are therefore forced to compete on the basis of the experiences they provide. In a lecture for the Netherlands Museum Association (2001) Pine stated: 'There is no economic sacrifice more valued than helping customers achieve their aspirations'. However, it should not be a museum's mission to create a situation that forces the visitor to change. It should be up to the visitor to determine whether he or she wants to change and how. This approach fits in with a constructivist approach to learning, allowing visitors themselves to follow learning goals and pathway constructs (Van Mensch and Meijer-van Mensch 2011: 45).



Fourth case study: Amsterdam

In her paper, Annemarie de Wildt describes the development of the Amsterdam Museum, with an emphasis on the role of works of art in the museum. De Wildt also reflects on the role the museum plays in tackling controversial, sensitive and 'iconic themes of the city', such as drugs and prostitution. These exhibitions can be seen in the context of 'critical heritage studies'. According to Rodney Harrison (2010), who coined the term, it is all about 'who has the power to control [the] interpretation of the past in the present'. 'Being critical in heritage studies simply means 'thinking about' heritage: why do we value particular objects, places and practices from the past more than others? If we memorialise some aspects of heritage, what other aspects might we forget in the process?' (Harrison & Linkman 2010). In the ensuing discussion Rachid Bouzidi complimented the museum on its policy of tackling these themes. According to him, the museums in Morocco are 'not that far yet'.

From its beginning the Amsterdam Museum has had a strong focus on art, especially from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. De Wildt mentions that lately the strict subject-matter borders between the various museums in Amsterdam have been fading. Until very recently the process of specialisation played a role in profiling the Dutch museums. A turning point was the discussion about the new Rijksmuseum presentation. Ciraj Rassool explained that, as in the Rijksmuseum,

departments are separated, not integrated, in the National Museum of South Africa. He mentioned the New Zealand Te Papa museum as an example of successful integration. Renée Kistemaker asked whether local museums would be the most suitable place to achieve such integration. Annemarie de Wildt's case study shows that new, integrative approaches have already been successfully adopted by many local (history) museums.

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Integral and integrated: counter-movements in museum practice

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It can be argued that all museology (in the present paper understood as the theory and practice of museum work) turns around four basic parameters: heritage, functions, institution, society. The identity of an institution is based on specific choices made as to the implementation of these parameters within the framework of internal and external conditions. The dominant variable is the connection between the institutional history and the professional discourse with which the institution identifies itself. The present paper will discuss the evolving identity of city museums in the context of the international professional discourse in the field of museology. The hypothesis is that city museums represent an old nineteenth century museological tradition and a new approach at the same time. Key concepts connecting both approaches are 'integral' and 'integrated'.

Museums can be many things, but, above all, museums are heritage institutions. As such they occupy a special 'niche' in the heritage landscape characterised by the key concepts 'collection' and 'ex situ'. In this they differ from other heritage institutions, such as archives and organisations concerned with the preservation of monuments and sites. Collection is the specific form heritage takes in the context of museums. The creation, development and use of the collection constitute the second basic parameter. The term 'functions' is used as general term for three groups of activities that characterise museums from a functional point of view: preservation (collecting, conservation, documentation), research and communication (exhibiting, education). The organisational and physical (building) frameworks for these functions constitute the third parameter: institution. Every institution has a role to play in society. It may emphasise a certain relevancy for one or more communities. On the other hand, a community may feel a responsibility to sustain a specific museum because it expresses a certain interest.

Parameters and conditions

The implementation of the parameters and their interrelation is defined and affected by a series of internal and external conditions. These conditions ('constraints') provide challenges to be answered. The institutional identity of a specific museum lies in the choices made as to the implementation of the parameters and their interrelation within the framework of the internal and external conditions. Not by coincidence, typologies of museums are based on the specific implementation of each of the parameters. The most important typology of museums refers to the collection. In its most traditional form, four basic types are distinguished: art museums, history museums, natural history museums and science museums. In curatorial museums (with a strong emphasis on collection development and research) the identity of the institution and its identification with the professional discourse relates first of all to the subject matter orientation. An art museum is an art museum and considers itself different from, for example, a natural history museum. Even though art museums and natural history museums are represented in the International Council of Museums, they have organised their own professional infrastructure on the basis of their subject matter orientation rather than on their characteristics of being a museum. This is reflected in subject matter specific approaches to, for example, collecting strategies, conservation and exhibition design.

The following case study may illustrate the dilemmas as to subject matter orientation of a new museum. How does the museum perceive its identity? In this particular case it is a relevant question since the museum may be considered a theme museum rather than a traditional collection-based museum.

Case study: Het Schip

One of the smaller museums in Amsterdam is Het Schip, also known as 'Museum of the Amsterdam School and Social Housing'. The museum, founded in 2001, is located in a neighbourhood in Amsterdam-West called Spaarndammerbuurt. The museum occupies two spaces in a building block, which was given the nickname 'Het Schip' (The Ship). Het Schip, completed in 1921, is the most renowned work of Amsterdam School architect Michel de Klerk. Architects belonging to the Amsterdam School had ambitious political ideals. They explored new forms that reflected their vision of society. Apart from its exuberant architectural style, Het Schip serves as classic example of social housing: it is a 'palace for the working class'. The building block, originally assigned for social housing corporation Eigen Haard, is still in possession of that same housing corporation. For this reason it still serves the same purpose as it was once built for. Parts of the museum are the former post office that was incorporated in the building block, and an apartment. The interior of the post office is designed by De Klerk and is, as such, a unique example of an Amsterdam School interior. The apartment is one of the 102 apartments into the building block. It has been restored to its original state as it was designed by Michel de Klerk, with the original layout, colours and woodwork such as wainscoting and cupboards. The apartment has been furnished with working-class furniture and utensils from the 1920s, many of which are also designed in the style of the Amsterdam School.

The museum is not a city museum per se, but its dilemmas in profiling its institutional identity are comparable with the dilemmas of many city museums throughout the twentieth century. The founders of the museum deliberately did not anticipate a neighbourhood museum. Its ambitions go beyond the specificity of the Spaarndammerbuurt and even beyond Het Schip itself. But, should the emphasis be on architecture and design or on social history? Of course, the socialist ideals of the Amsterdam School architects are described at length on the museum's website www.museumhetschip.nl and are discussed during guided tours, but the museum's collection policy clearly shows some ambivalence. Decorative art (objects in the style of the Amsterdam School) is defined as core collection. Furniture and utensils that are not designed in this style have an unclear status as 'props'. Some objects that relate to the harbour and nearby factories (where the workers living in Het Schip were employed) are not considered as collection. In the near future, the museum may be able to acquire a school which is also part of the building complex. The school will be used as an exhibition space. This will provide a major challenge to the identity of the museum. Does it want to profile itself as (decorative) art museum or as social history museum? Maybe the museum will succeed in showing decorative art in its social context, thus connecting with contemporary developments to an interdisciplinary, integrated subject matter orientation.

External differentiation, disciplinary specialisation

In the late eighteenth century the first generation of public museums emerged throughout Europe, most of them based on private collections. In the transition from private to public, an important role was played by either universities (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), learned societies (Teylers Museum, Haarlem) or states (British Museum, London). By definition these first public museums were multidisciplinary, as were the constituting private collections. The collections covered the humanities (art, history, archaeology) as well as natural sciences (zoology, botany, geology, anthropology).



The Museum of the Amsterdam School is located in a building called Het Schip. (Oostzaanstraat, Amsterdam)



In the reconstructed workers' apartment in Het Schip there is hardly any reference to the Amsterdam School design, illustrating the tension between documenting the Amsterdam School (Het Schip as decorative art museum), and documenting living conditions of local workers' (Het Schip as social history museum)

In the beginning of the nineteenth century a new generation of multidisciplinary museums emerged in particular in multinational states such as the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Meijer-van Mensch and Van Mensch 2010). With an emphasis on cultural history (including folk art) and natural sciences these museums expressed the nationalistic pride of the autonomous regions of the Empire. The first of its kind was the Hungarian National Museum (Budapest). Started as a national library (in 1802), it soon developed into a national museum (1808). Its focus was national with a collection documenting the prehistory, history and natural history of the country. The museum founded at Graz in 1811 by Archduke Johann, hence called Joanneum, became the model for a series of Landesmuseen in the Austrian Empire, such as the 'national' museums of Brno (1817), Prague (1818), Ljubljana (1821), and Innsbruck (1823). The collections cover the natural history, ethnology, archaeology and cultural history of the region. As documents of the natural and cultural characteristics of the region these collections were instrumentalised in the process of achieving national autonomy.

Parallel to the emergence of multidisciplinary 'Landesmuseen', a new type of museum was created in Paris. Discussing the creation of a national museum in the 1790s, the revolutionary government in Paris deliberately decided to break away from the model of the encyclopaedic museum. Visions of transforming the Louvre into 'a physical encyclopaedia of knowledge' were not adopted. The new Musée de la République (created in 1792) did not follow the model of the British Museum. Instead, in the early years of the new state, four specialised national museums were established: the Musée de la République (in the Louvre), the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle (1793), the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers (1794) and the Musée des Monuments Français (1795), all in Paris. The French example was followed in many countries. Despite increased specialisation, in many publications even today a basic distinction is still being made between museums according to the French scheme: art museums, history museums, natural history museums and science museums.

During the nineteenth and twentieth century an increased disciplinary specialisation can be observed among museums throughout Europe. This disciplinary specialisation followed the academic specialisation at universities. New museums were founded on the basis of increasing narrowly defined subject matter orientation. This tendency also affected the old encyclopaedic museums. An example is the British Museum. In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries it 'lost' a major part of its collections, because they were re-allocated to new (specialised) museums. In 1826, paintings were transferred to the National Gallery, in 1878, portraits were donated to the National Portrait Gallery, in 1883, the natural history collection was transferred to a separate building to become the Natural History Museum, in 1970, the anthropological collection was separated as Museum of Mankind, and in 1997, the union between the British Museum and the British Library was ended.

Case study: anthropology collections

The specialisation and branching off of collections involves complex disciplinary and political issues. This will be explored for one type of collection: anthropology. Many anthropology collections were once connected to natural history collections (and some still are). For example, part of the collections of the Musée de l'Homme (1937) originated from the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (Paris). Thus the museum combined physical and cultural anthropology, which was reflected in the theme of its exhibitions, such as '*Tous parents tous différents*' and '*6 milliards d'hommes*'. When the natural history collections of the British Museum were moved to a new building in South Kensington to form the Natural History Museum (1883), physical anthropology moved with the zoological, botanical and geological collections, while cultural anthropology stayed behind, to be branched off later as the Museum of Mankind (1970). The profile of the Musée de l'Homme was thus very different from the profile of the Museum of Mankind.

In 1968, the French ethnographic collection of the Musée de l'Homme was branched off to form the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires. In 2005, this museum was closed to become part of a new ambitious project: the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée, to be opened in 2013 at Marseilles. The re-contextualisation of collections reveals a political agenda.

More than in many other countries, the presidential political agenda sets the parameters for museum policy in France. It was President Chirac who wanted to develop the Musée du Louvre into a real museum of world cultures. The Musée du Quai Branly is the result of the resistance of director and staff of the Louvre to accommodate part of the collections of the Musée de l'Homme and the Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie. As a consequence, Egyptian archaeology in the Louvre is shown alienated from its African context, as in most archaeological museums. As a compromise, a few rooms in the far end of the south wing show the 'Arts d'Afrique, d'Asie, d'Océanie et des Amériques'. On the website of the Louvre no information can be found about these rooms. It is even almost impossible to find the rooms on the interactive map on the website. The British Museum does make a completely different statement. By recalling the Museum of Mankind in 2004 the British Museum was able to present itself as museum where cultures from all parts of the world are presented on equal level: 'a museum of the world for the world' (the museum's present tagline). The plan to reconstruct the former Stadtschloss in the very centre of Berlin and to bring the anthropological collections from the suburb of Dahlem to this building, show a similar ambition: the extended Museumsinsel as museological centre of world cultures. Interestingly, the ethnographic collections concerning Europe will not be transferred to this museological centre of world cultures. As to Europe, there still appears to be a distinction between high and low culture.



The Museum 'Zimmermeister Brunzel baut ein Mietshaus' (Carpenter Brunzel constructs an apartment building) is located in Dunkerstrasse 77, Berlin, in the former workers' neighbourhood Prenzlauer Berg. Elderly people, having their meeting place on the ground floor, are involved in the interpretation of the apartment and conduct guided tours

City museums between multidisciplinary and specialisation

City museums emerged in the major urban centres in the second half of the nineteenth century as expression of new urban pride. To some extent they followed the model of the 'Landesmuseen', although they usually gave up natural history as subject matter. As cultural history museums, city museums were encyclopaedic. However, in the course of the twentieth century city museums became affected by the tendency to specialize too. In the Netherlands most of the city museums started to separate art from history sometime resulting into two separate museums (for example Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum and Amsterdam Historical Museum). In the process decorative art collections often fell between two stools.

By the end of the twentieth century, however, city museums became influenced by a museological counter-movement which started in the early 1970s. This counter-movement is often referred to as 'new museology' (Van Mensch 2005). It advocated the 'integrated museum', a concept that was presented at the UNESCO Round Table on 'The development and the role of museums in the contemporary world' (Santiago, Chile 1972). The integrated museum pursues integration on three levels: the integration of the subject matter disciplines (art history, history, anthropology, natural history, etc.), the integration of the museographical disciplines (collecting, conservation, documentation, exhibiting, education), and the integration of museums and their social environment (participation, social inclusion).

Neighbourhood museums and ecomuseums are institutional expressions of this new museology. The concept of ecomuseum (formulated in 1971 by Hugues de Varine and Georges Henri Rivière) is about the relations, and the development of these relations, between people, their heritage and their environment. It became one of the most important concrete expressions of an integrative approach. In 'ecomuseology', heritage is very close to the notion of place, including history of inhabitants and things, what is visible and what it is not, tangibles and intangibles, memories and future. The emphasis is on the availability of these resources, not on assembling them in storehouses. Neighbourhood museums are based on the same principles, bridging the 'in situ' approach of ecomuseums and the 'ex situ' approach of traditional city museums.



Even though it is not a neighbourhood museum as such, the museum at the Dunkerstrasse, occupying an apartment on the first floor, is physically integrated in the urban infrastructure. Using the doorbell the visitor is reminded of the 'ethnic' diversity of the actual inhabitants of the building as shown by their family names

City museums and the sense of place

The integrated and integral approach as advocated by ecomuseums (and neighbourhood museums) has introduced the location based paradigm in city museums. However, this type of museum tended to develop into community museums focusing on people rather than place. It may be argued that the museological development of community museums is hampered by the dilemmas of inclusion and exclusion, following the problem of defining the targeted community. The concept of community is discussed by Emma Waterton and Laurajane Smith in their introductory paper in a special issue on 'Heritage and community engagement' of the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* (Waterton and Smith 2010). Waterton and Smith have shown that the heritage sector 'is dominated by a particular notion of community, one that overlooks the fact that representation of reality can have powerful effects on any group under construction' (*loc. cit.*: 9). They conclude that 'real life communities are not only misrecognised but misrepresentations of identity become institutionalised in the heritage process' (*loc. cit.*: 12).

The potential of city museums lies in the focus on place as a framework for integrative approaches, as well as framework for documenting social dynamics. 'Lieu de mémoire', 'sense of place' and 'cultural biography' are concepts that are increasingly adopted by city museums. They show the surplus value of combining integrated policies and the 'topographical turn' in museum work (Meijer-van Mensch and Van Mensch 2010; Van Mensch 2005). 'The new city-museum is a kind of museological presentation using the city itself as its exhibition-room', writes Jacques Börger, head of the department of Communication and Education of the Historical Museum Rotterdam (Börger 2010: 113). 'The municipal museum must offer its visitors a way of experiencing the city [...] in a variety of places spread throughout the city [...] Creating this structure is more important than collecting thousands of objects [...]' (*loc. cit.*: 113-114).

In the modern concept of city museums, the early nineteenth century multidisciplinary perspective as to subject matter is combined with a late twentieth century focus on participation. An integral approach to heritage and an integrated approach to society results in a rethinking of the profile of the institution and its functions. The Canadian museologist Pierre Mayrand once predicted the transition of the museum through post-museological into trans-museological structures (Van Mensch 2005). These new structures redefine the dynamics of people and place, i.e. place as a context for the interaction between people, groups and individuals alike. This is not just about the place being an exhibition-room, it is about the process of signification. What does the city mean to me, what does the city mean to you... what does the city mean to us.

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In preparation of the new museum to be accommodated in the rebuilt Stadtschloss (Berlin), a temporary exhibition building is built (Humboldt Box) in which new ways of exhibiting are tested. The aim is to integrate the exhibition traditions of different subject matter disciplines (ethnography, decorative art, Asian art) and object versus context oriented approaches

DiverCity: towards a new approach to reach diversity in city museums

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My city, Antwerp, in the Flemish Community of Belgium is only a small European city of 0.5 million inhabitants. It is, however, one of the most diverse cities in Europe based on the ethnic background of its inhabitants. Diversity in cities is increasing, both in numbers and in the cultural-ethnic background of the inhabitants and visitors. This diversity has historical origins and affects bigger as well as smaller cities.

Diversity in cities and collections

People have always collected things. However, putting collections in museums and other heritage institutions and opening them up to the public is in origin a typically western phenomenon with roots in classical antiquity. The passion to collect is in a certain sense a very personal thing. Even curators but also the curator often talk about his/her collection, even though not he/she, but a public institution owns the collection.

Because of the old and varied origins of many collections and because of the somewhat personal character collecting entails, many museum collections do show an intense diversity and even a lack of coherence. This is the case in city collections and a large number of city museums.



MAS sixth floor, 'World harbor', scenography by B-architecten.
Photo Museum aan de Stroom, Jeroen Verrecht

Origins of a city collection

As an example, I will partially explain the origins of the Antwerp collection. There has been relatively little research on the collection of the city of Antwerp, just like there has not been much research on a lot of public collections in Flanders and Belgium. Yet, we do know how the collection in Antwerp developed. In the second part of the nineteenth century a museum of antiquities was founded. This was the start of our current, very diverse, city collection. Back then, the search for a suitable place to exhibit the collection was very difficult. In the end, Het Steen (an historic building near the river) was chosen, a building which we vacated, because the structure of the

building no longer meets the standards of a museum and the conservation circumstances no longer comply with museum regulations. The commission that laid the foundations for the city collection had already been collecting in many different ways (purchases, donations by private individuals, etc.) and was supported by means of the various public authorities. The museum in Het Steen opened in 1864 and was expanded in 1913 with the Vleeshuis building I. The other city museums were founded when the collection was spread about and more and more locations in the city were occupied.

Collections grow and shrink

Collections grow and are divided. Het Steen, for example, became the maritime museum after a part of the city collection had been moved to the Vleeshuis. The growth of collections is part of history. At the moment, more than in the past, museums and heritage institutions choose to have a clear collection profile. New objects are only acquired when they fit the collection profile; there is a detailed collection plan, and museums even 'de-collect', by trying to find a more suitable place for objects which no longer fit with the profile of the collection.

Curators and other people working in museums are often confronted with the consequences of the historical growth and the lack of coherence of some collections caused by it. One of the differences between someone working for a museum and other professionals in the cultural sector is consequently the fact that they choose a way to work with their existing collections, instead of a director of a theatre who might even decide to play a whole new repertoire. The collection IS the repertoire.



In these observations, I have limited myself to certain parts of the collection of the now so-called MAS museums. The MAS, the 'museum by the river', is the new museum in Antwerp which has opened its doors in May 2011. The MAS combines the collections of the maritime museum, the museum of folklore and the ethnographical museum, as well as the collections of applied arts and industrial heritage in a newly built skyscraper located between city and port.

Antwerp collection now

I will now explain something about the Antwerp collection and the museum landscape in Antwerp. Next I will focus on the new MAS and the integration of collections, especially the ethnographical collection.

In the broadest sense the Antwerp collection comprises all the collections on the territory of the city and in a broader scope also the collections stored or displayed elsewhere with a connection to the city. The city of Antwerp has brought all its museums, a cultural archive and the heritage library together in one organisation for which I am responsible: Museums and Heritage Antwerp, part of the municipal department Culture, Sports and Youth. The city archive and the services for archaeology and monuments do not belong to this. Museums and Heritage Antwerp has a heritage collection of approximately 1.000.000 objects, 1.500.000 books and 10 km archive, especially on literature. On the territory of the city of Antwerp several authorities govern museums: the city itself, the organization for social welfare, the province of Antwerp and the Flemish Community. One important museum in the city is owned by a bank.

MAS fifth floor, 'World city', scenography by B-architecten. Photo Museum aan de Stroom, Jeroen Verrecht

Museum landscape in Antwerp

When I limit myself to the museum landscape in the more central parts of the city, I distinguish three groups of museums and two specific heritage institutions that organise artistic initiatives in the city. Firstly, in the city centre itself there are the historic houses about the past of the city, focussed on important historical characters. The city governs the Museum Plantin-Moretus, the Rubenshuis and the Museum Mayer van den Bergh. Closely connected to these historic houses are the Maagdenhuis, administered by the organisation of social welfare, the Rockoxhuis belonging to a bank and other monuments in the city centre (five monumental churches, the city hall, etcetera). Secondly, to the south of the city centre with the historic houses are the museums of artistic movements, about visual culture, holding works of important artists. The Flemish government is responsible for the museums of fine arts and contemporary arts. The province is responsible for the museums of photography and fashion. Closely connected to this second group of museums there are galleries, shopping neighbourhoods and other places focussed on creation, design and fashion.



MAS eighth floor, 'Life and Death' - collection of Paul and Dora Janssen-Arts, scenography by B-architecten. *Photo Museum aan de Stroom, Jeroen Verrecht*

Thirdly, to the north of the city centre one can find museums and museums-in-development about the city with its harbour and its connection to the world. The city governs the Vleeshuis, a museum about music in the municipal context, it has recently opened the MAS and it is currently working on the Red Star Line, a museum about migration, with as subtitle 'people on the move'. Both projects are realised with the support of the Flemish government. Closely connected to this third group of museums there are clusters of maritime and industrial heritage, and the diamond museum of the province of Antwerp. Two museums or heritage institutions develop artistic initiatives in the city: the Letterenhuis for literature, and the Middelheimmuseum, the open air museum for sculpture, concerning visual arts. Limiting myself to the municipal heritage institutions that are part of Museums and Heritage Antwerp, I distinguish four clusters: historic houses, museums about city and world, institutions focussed on books and literature and finally contemporary visual arts.

Museum aan de Stroom

The arrival of the Red Star Line and especially of the MAS has had a great impact on the museum landscape and has led to a substantial reorganisation of the collections of and in the city. Three museums were closed and four collections have been moved, which I have already mentioned. Five city collections (maritime, folklore, ethnographical, applied arts and industrial heritage) are involved in the MAS, as well as the pre-Columbian collection Dora and Paul Janssen. In the MAS the accessible museum depots deal with collecting and collectors in particular. The opening exhibition draws largely on the Antwerp collection, in particular on the collections of the museums of fine arts and contemporary arts and Museum Plantin-Moretus. But enough about the collections of the MAS and city collections, let me now focus on city museums. The Mas was originally conceived as a city

museum. The decision to include the ethnographical collections as well was taken at a later time and I will talk about it afterwards.

City museums now

The way city museums think about their role, presentation and activities has evolved more than their actual presentations and organised activities. In my opinion their target groups and the ways to reach them are not clearly defined. An important challenge is how to show the diversity of a city in a city museum, or how to integrate a broader world or different environments into the museological representation of more and more diverse cities. One of the problems is that many city museums and/or city collections lack components that really reflect the diversity of the city itself, both in its historical and even more in its actual situation. Ethnographical collections, if contextualised and actualised, have the capability to reflect diversity in the world. Moreover, they could be able to situate a city within a more general geographical framework and appeal to its diverse inhabitants and reflect aspects of its diverse communities. In Antwerp we decided to include the ethnographical collections into our new museum, the MAS, which was originally intended to be a city museum, primarily based on the collections of folklore, applied arts and the maritime collection.

I will now concentrate on our choice, our goals, the process to reach these, the themes of the presentation and several consequences of the original intention as well as some difficulties. The choice to use this approach for the MAS was taken in two phases: firstly the decision to bring together several historically divided parts of the city collections (folklore, applied arts and maritime collection) in a story about Antwerp as a harbour city on the river, secondly the decision to use the river and the port to open up the city's story to the world: both the world in Antwerp and Antwerp in the world. To reach this goal we used the ethnological collections of the city. Is this the only way to integrate the necessary diversity in the story of a city and, as a result, attune that story to the daily reality of the city and the world? No, but we came to the conclusion that it was the most interesting way after screening our collections (their origins, growth and current composition), studying the museum landscape in the city and analysing the opportunities of the new museum.

We are convinced that the integration of an ethnographical collection offers many opportunities to link the role, the presentation and the activities of the museum to the many target groups which consist of both inhabitants of the city and visitors. We are also very aware of the fact that the variation in our collections holds certain traps; so it is essential to keep existing collections up to date.

A museum about the city, the river, the harbour and the world

The MAS will function as a museum that connects the districts, the city, the river, the port, the world and the many communities in the city. The general theme, Leitmotiv, is the world in Antwerp and Antwerp in the world. Antwerp as a (port) city is closely related to the world. For centuries there has been an exchange thanks to traders, travellers, collectors and so on. The collection of the city, including the ethnographical components, reflects this diversity and the diversity created by the many communities in the city.

We also realize that we have more or less given up the category of a city museum by integrating the ethnographical collections. Questioning this category does not make us question the original approach of telling a story of the city, but we connect this approach to the world using the story of the river and the port, and vice-versa.



MAS fourth floor, 'Show of Power', scenography by B-architecten.
Photo Museum aan de Stroom, Jeroen Verrecht

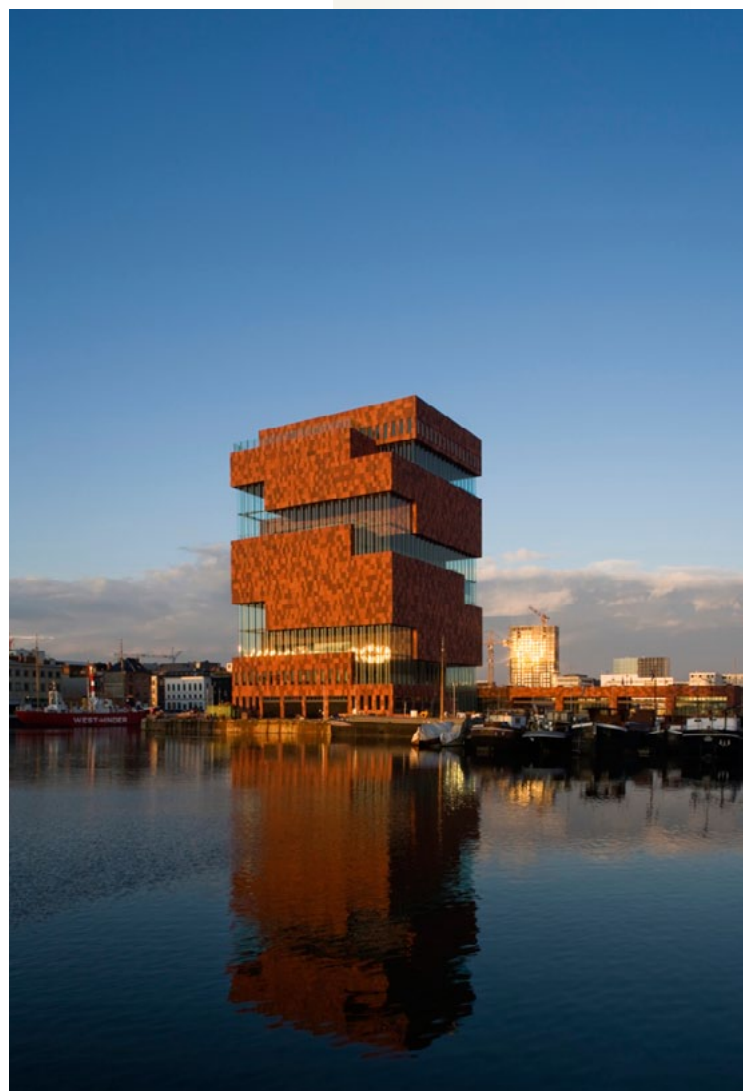
Is this a problem? I don't think so. In my view, the care for the collections and the service to a large and diverse audience is more important than the instrument we use to do these things.

The fact that this instrument, in this case a category to classify museums, evolves, is obvious. We can think of my story about the origins of our city's collection and our municipal museums, we can also think of the discussion 'historical museum versus city museum' in Rotterdam, or the wish to portray Amsterdam as city, capital and metropolis in the Amsterdam Museum.

Though I am convinced of the need to integrate the ethnographical collections in the MAS, I cannot deny that the process to realise this integration has been very complex. Substantial investments in infrastructure and collections were unavoidable, but we managed to improve the care for the collections and we will be able to expand the opportunities to tell a contemporary story and to serve a larger and more diverse audience.

Probably one of the most difficult elements of this process is the change the museum itself had to go through: three separate museums and independent curators had to evolve into one entity with intensive teamwork and multidisciplinary project groups. I do believe that other 'recipes' might work as well and, for example, that there might be reasons to have both a city museum and an ethnographical museum in one city. I just believe that due to the necessary quest (on the one hand a city museum opens itself up to the world and communities in the city, on the other hand an ethnographical museum opens itself up to current events and the ever growing urban aspects of non-western cultures), this was for us the most daring option to improve the collections, the story that is being told and the ways to reach the audience.

Whether the result is a success, is something you will have to see in the MAS for yourself. Let me, to round things up, with which the MAS connects its collections, tells its story of the city, river, port and world and in doing so tries to seduce a large and diverse audience: world city, world port, life and death and display of power.



MAS building, architect Willem-Jan Neutelings. Photo *Museum aan de Stroom*, Sarah Blee

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A city museum or a museum for and about citizens?

Kitty Jansen-Rompen

Curator of history and archaeology at the Museum Het Domein in Sittard, the Netherlands. Started as curator of ethnology in the Limburgs Volkskundig Centrum, the Netherlands, nowadays the Limburgs Museum Venlo, and was also member of the management board. Chairperson of the Netherlands Museum Association, Section Cultures. Studied cultural anthropology at Utrecht University, and pre-historical archaeology at Leiden University, the Netherlands.



Museum Het Domein is a young museum (founded in 1995) and takes a lively, creative and idiosyncratic approach towards presenting the history of its region, its city and current developments in international contemporary art. The museum is located in a former nineteenth-century school in the historic centre of Sittard. In 1997 a brand new department for contemporary art and an older (1937) municipal collection about the history and archaeology of the city Sittard were put together in one organisation. In 2001 Sittard became part of the merged city Sittard-Geleen.

The Contemporary Art Department on the ground floor centres on the international avant-garde. Young artists and their older artistic forbearers are the department's principal focus. The Urban History & Archaeology Department on the top floor takes a cultural anthropological approach to the region's past and present. It also houses the museum's permanent collection of archaeological and historical artefacts, together with a specially designed 'multi-media' street for younger visitors. Set within the broader framework of general history, this collection throws light on the major and minor events and stories of Sittard-Geleen and its environs on the basis of local and regional archaeological and historical objects and sources. Since the present is a part of history too, a link is made with the present, with the city today.

Besides the permanent display 'De Opstelling', the Urban History Department organizes four temporary exhibitions a year, designed to interest a broad public. The programme concentrates on increasing the museum's appeal to inhabitants of the relatively new municipality of Sittard-Geleen and encourages exploration of the new region through the museum's collections and knowledge.



The permanent collection of archaeological and historical artefacts.

Policy

Museum Het Domein has over the last years developed into a new kind of presentation institution for contemporary art. Since 2000, the program of Het Domein has placed particular emphasis on 'cross-over' artists, those whose practices explore the interface between sub-cultures and established arts. Over the last four years the program has developed with an open eye for changes in the art world and researches the role and position of contemporary art in a changing global society. Het Domein has an anthropological approach towards both departments. It is important for Het Domein to encourage dialogues between different cultures, science and areas of life through exhibitions, study, presentations and public meetings.

We choose to collect exemplary, radical positions in contemporary art – for artists and artworks that are distinguished by an exceptional, independent artistic vision and a strong attitude toward the world that surrounds them. We are looking for these particular artists within a relatively young generation of international artists. Simultaneously, we thereby also present their examples; artists from the past that we believe are of particular relevance or urgency for the present. We present challenging artists, who are not part of the mainstream because they are producing special forms of art or are researching specific subjects. Together with the department of history

and archaeology there is, besides the specific profiles, a general anthropological approach. The department of history has done this by making exhibitions about the common way of life, for instance with and about minorities. They always try to show that objects are relics of human behaviour and thoughts, without classifying them as objects of art, top class or of archaeological importance. By presenting artifacts and objects of art as expressions of human behaviour, that are determined by time, space and social environment (anthropological approach), we want to show that there are a lot of resemblances. The other person (the artist or the member of the minority we present) or the past is not that strange at all!

Missing link

Het Domein is situated literally and metaphorically at the centre of the periphery. Literally because the museum premises are in the provincial town of Sittard-Geleen, at a reasonable distance from other cultural centres like Maastricht, Brussels, Antwerp, Aachen, Cologne and Düsseldorf with their many museums and cultural institutions. Whereas metaphorically because the museum implements an idiosyncratic policy of its own. Het Domein takes a professional approach to fulfilling its function as providing the missing link: the indispensable bridge between high and low, between centre and periphery, between we and the other.

Investigation, originality and creativity

Museum Het Domein pursues a policy based on investigation, originality and creativity. For the department of contemporary art it is evident. It shows the ways in which artists continue to interpret today's world, each in their own unique visual idiom. The department of history and archaeology does it in a comparable way. By making exhibitions in a *structuralist* style (the structuralism of the cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss) the visitors are given the opportunity to reflect and to interpret by themselves. We want to show the relativity of meanings and want our visitors to open their minds to other ways of thinking and perceiving.

We are very much aware of our role as creators of meanings and constructors of visions. That is why we present the objects in a storyline with several angles of incidence. The museum is a workshop of memories and personal emotions, together with the visitors we write a cultural biography of the town and we create identity. This could be a pitfall, which, as already stated, we are very much aware of.

We trigger the visitor to discuss, by organizing discussions and integrating possibilities to comment on the things they see in the exhibition. We invite them in an inspiring way to talk with other visitors, and we create special spaces to do so. We make exhibitions about controversial subjects, for instance about the ban on smoking – *Tabee Tabak*, or about the Moroccan minority in our city; but it's all about real people.

At the same time, we investigate the economic, political and cultural backgrounds and give the objects'/artists' context. In this way we hope to bring about a fascinating series of encounters between our city and the world.



The specially designed 'multi-media' street for younger visitors



Guerilla knitting, an educational street art project from the historical department. Old techniques applied in contemporary art

The maxim of the museum: the city and the world

An example: In 2002, the municipality acquired a collection of mining paraphernalia from Mr. Hersbach, relating to local mining history. The collection was described and documented in collaboration with Mr. Hersbach and a former miner. Mining was a particularly vital industry for the town centre of Geleen, although the coming of the mines also had an enormous socio-economic impact on the other centres. You could show these objects purely as relics of a past industry. But they can also show us a way of living that influenced the whole environment (even in space and buildings) and some cultural practices we know nowadays (for example the pigeon-fanciers).



We are participating in a school project where scholars interview former miners, their wives, or their kids. These interviews (sound and vision) are integrated in a database that can be consulted in the museum, on the internet, but also in the libraries, and the Archive of Sittard-Geleen (i.e. Euregional Historic Center).

We think that we are no longer a traditional museum where objects are presented as art or as precious things. We are an institution that participates in discussions about who we are and where we come from. By combining art and history and choosing for an anthropological approach we want our visitors to be fully aware of other ways of thinking. We want to give people some roots and also help them to create an open-minded view of the world.

By making exhibitions where people are emotionally triggered and engaging them in a discourse it is like fencing, always provoking and then ... touché!

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The Museum is located in a former nineteenth-century school in the historic centre of Sittard

Modern art in a city museum

Annemarie de Wildt

Curator at the Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Responsible for numerous exhibitions: 'The history of prostitution in Amsterdam', 'Hunger winter and liberation', 'Amsterdam songs', 'Sailors' tattoos' (Schiffmacher collection), 'City animals', 'The relation between Amsterdam and the House of Orange' and 'The Hoerengracht'. Worked for the University of Amsterdam, Dutch television and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Was also freelance exhibition maker and cultural consultant. Studied history at VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands.



Art and history

One of the first exhibitions I curated in the Amsterdam Museum¹ was on the year 1945, the last winter of the war and the summer of liberation. This exhibition (1995) zoomed in on the lives of some 30 inhabitants of Amsterdam, resistance fighters as well as collaborators, a German soldier as well as a Canadian liberator. A few weeks before the opening I sat in the exhibition space, surrounded by the objects that I hoped would bring to life the main characters of the exhibition. My colleagues came by and joked about the objects I had collected: old furniture, woodstoves, a bicycle rebuilt to generate electricity. "It's not yet April 30" they joked. On that day, the Queen's Birthday, Amsterdammers take their junk out on the street to sell it to other Amsterdammers. At that time most of the objects in my odd collection were not considered as things the Amsterdam Historical Museum (now Amsterdam Museum) should collect or present.

This little anecdote from my own, by now 15 years experience as a curator in the Amsterdam Historical Museum illuminates that museum collection policy is a dynamic process. Compared to other city museums, like the Museum of London, the Amsterdam Historical Museum from the beginning had a strong focus on art, especially from the sixteenth till the nineteenth century. The civic guard group portraits (schuttersstukken) and governors group portraits (regentenstukken), as well as Anatomy lessons are exceptional both from an art historical point of view, and also because of the rich stories about Amsterdam city life of the seventeenth century. The archaeological collection of the city of Amsterdam consists of thousands of objects that are testimonies of the daily lives of Amsterdam citizens in the past centuries. In the last decades the museum has undertaken conscious efforts to collect more everyday objects, especially of the twentieth century, and objects that reflect the diversity of present-day Amsterdam.

Goat's skull as applied art

One of the objects that stayed in the museum after the 1995 exhibition on the war is a goat's skull. A goat head was exchanged for furniture during the last winter of the war, the Hunger Winter. After the family ate it, one of the sons carefully cleaned the bones, glued them back together and kept it for years as a memento of the war and finally donated it to the museum in 1995.

The art focus of the museum is noticeable in the classification system of the Amsterdam Museum collection. It has a strong focus on art historical and material categories such as silver, tin, textile. This originates also from the museum's own history as part of the Amsterdam Museum services that also included the Stedelijk Museum (Contemporary Art Museum). Ton Krielaart, the art historian who designed the classification system, focussed on art historical categories. The goat skull was categorised as applied art. Digitalisation of the collection has partly solved the problem of connecting more diverse and historical information to the objects. Since 2010 a web catalogue of the complete collection database (made in Adlib) is online. <http://ahm.adlibsoft.com/search.aspx>



*Goat Skull, 1944, KA 19489.
Photo Amsterdam Museum*

¹ In January 2011 the museum changed its name from Amsterdam Historical Museum to Amsterdam Museum.

Amsterdam museums and their collections

After a short survey of several important collections and museums in Amsterdam, I want to say something about ways of presenting art in our museum and the difference with art museums. I will give some examples of objects in relation to the stories connected with them.

The collection of the City of Amsterdam grew over the centuries and includes civic guards portraits such as the *Nightwatch* by Rembrandt, *Anatomy lessons* and important collections of paintings brought together by nineteenth century collectors. A large part of this Amsterdam city collection found a place in the Rijksmuseum that moved to its present location in 1885.

In 1894 the Stedelijk Museum opened and started to collect contemporary art: the 19th and, moving along with the new century, especially the twentieth century.

In 1926 the Amsterdam Historical Museum was founded and formed with the Stedelijk the department of Amsterdam Museums, with the historical museum focusing on history in the period up till the nineteenth century and the Stedelijk on art after that period.

In the Rijksmuseum during the 1920s a division was made in the objects; the top art was presented in the rooms dedicated to paintings of various periods. Aesthetics was the main goal and even some labels explaining the paintings disappeared. The less artistic, but historically interesting paintings and objects, were presented alongside historical objects in the National History rooms. Art and history were drifting apart.

In the 1960s the Amsterdam Historical Museum moved to its present location, a former orphanage. A formal division was made in the art collection of the city of Amsterdam: works from before 1890 found a place in the historical museum, the late nineteenth and twentieth century art stayed in the Stedelijk Museum. Part of the collection of the City of Amsterdam, on loan by the Rijksmuseum, was transferred to the Historical Museum, including the civic guards portraits on show in the world's only public museum street.

Now, when we are well into the 21st century, the historically grown division between the Amsterdam museums has become more and more questionable. How to tell the story of Amsterdam in the twentieth century without the art of that period? If art can be a medium to inform people about the past (far away and recent) why shouldn't modern or contemporary art be exhibited in the historical museum as well? And shouldn't the historical museum transform itself into a city museum?

These days the strict borders between the various museums in Amsterdam have started to fade: The Amsterdam Historical Museum dropped the word historical from its name in January 2011 and has developed a stronger focus on the recent history of the city. The Rijksmuseum has decided that after reopening, the museum will be a mix of art and history. It will also deal with the twentieth century and recently some works were bought that former directors may have frowned upon, like the bare bottom dress of lingerie designer Marlies Dekkers, the first thing new director Wim Pijbes acquired for his Rijksmuseum in 2008. He compared its radical newness to Mondriaan's paintings and Rietveld's chairs.

The Stedelijk, that is about to be opened again, will present highlights of twentieth century art as well as more contemporary work. The collections of these museums consist almost entirely of art from Western Europe and America, with, in the case of Rijksmuseum and Amsterdam Museum, some objects related to Dutch colonialism. The rest of the world is on show in the Tropenmuseum, the Museum of the Tropics.



Civic Guard Gallery with the statue of Goliath. Photo Amsterdam Museum, Henk Rougoor

Orphaned works of art

In the rest of this article I want to say something on the way works of art function in a city museum. Art has become more hybrid, the division between high and low is not so relevant any longer. People encounter art in more places than museums and interact differently with it according to where they find it. A statue in a museum is something to look at, outside it may be something to sit on.

And of course the eye of the beholder is very important; the personal experiences and background, the knowledge and taste of the visitor all play a part in how he or she sees the museum objects.

As soon as they enter into the museum, objects are taken out of their original context. In an analogy with the orphans that once lived in the buildings that now house the Amsterdam Museum: objects are orphaned when they enter the museum.

In a city museum like ours, objects function in relation to the story or rather stories of the city. Curators and educators decide in which way these various representations of the past are presented to the public. In a city-, history- or ethnographical museum objects are usually surrounded with much more information than in art museums, where the works of art are expected to speak for themselves. There they are most of the time accompanied only with a label with the name of the artist, the title and the year it was made.

Dutch painter and sculptor Karel Appel made a series of works on *Children asking questions*. Inspiration for this theme came from a journey to Germany in 1949, where he was struck by the faces of the children.

The way we exhibit the work in our museum is different from the way it would most probably be exhibited in the Stedelijk Museum. There is more information on the context, the background of the making of the work and also a reproduction of a mural with a similar theme the artist was commissioned to make for the city hall. The civil servants who ate their lunch while looking at Appel's mural, objected. They disliked modern art and they especially loathed that these were German children. Pity with the perpetrators of the war was not so acceptable in the post-war years. The mural was covered and only years later uncovered. Today the city hall is Hotel The Grand and the original mural is at the entrance of the restaurant. The story of the reaction of the Amsterdam civil servants to Appel's mural is told in the Amsterdam Museum. Karel Appel's work could also function in a totally different perspective, for instance a presentation on the way European artists are influenced by African art. The Amsterdam Museum has the work on a long-term loan from the Stedelijk Museum. Fortunately, it is common practice in the Netherlands to borrow works from other collections. In the 1990s the concept *Collection the Netherlands* was introduced to reinforce this practice, and it might be useful also in African countries to look at other national and international collections when setting up new museums. The concept *Collection World* is probably still a faraway dream.

Artistical value or city life?

In a city museum there are more reasons than artistic value for acquiring objects. Ideally new objects are visually interesting and are a means to tell visitors something about city life. The Amsterdam Museum has a portrait of Theo van Gogh that was painted in the days after he was murdered in 2004, because of the film *Submission* he made with Somalia politician Hirsi Ali. The film contained strong criticism on the position of women in Islam. Van Gogh was murdered by an Islam fundamentalist from Amsterdam West, Mohamed Bouyeri. In a sense this was the Dutch 9/11, conducted in a very Amsterdam way: Theo was murdered when he rode his bike on an Amsterdam street.



Karel Appel, *Children asking questions*, 1949, BB 283. Amsterdam Museum on loan from the Stedelijk Museum.
Photo Amsterdam Museum

The artist Donovan Spaanstra, Faith 71 is his artist's name, made the portrait in the days after the event, on a piece of wood nailed to a empty house in Warmoesstraat. Meanwhile he talked about the murder with passersby. The painting is now in the museum with a video next to it with images of the noisy demonstration at Dam Square on the night of the murder and an interview with a young woman of Moroccan descent. She attended the demonstration and tells how isolated and unwelcome she felt when people started to blame Moroccans in general for the murder. The museum also collected some of the objects Amsterdam citizens had placed on the site of the murder.



Theo van Gogh (1957-2004), 2004, SA 56601. Faith 71 (pseudonym of Donovan Spaanstra). Photo Amsterdam Museum, René Gerritsen

Drugs and prostitution

In recent years the Amsterdam (Historical) Museum explored in exhibitions some of the iconic themes of the city, such as drugs and prostitution. In the 1990s we acquired objects related to soft drugs. In the permanent exhibition is a barstool from one of the first Amsterdam coffee shops (who sell hash and weed rather than coffee). In the 1970s, this was still illegal and in this stool the drugs could be hidden underneath the seat when the police raided the place. The stool was donated to the museum by Henk de Vries who opened his coffeeshop, The Bulldog, on Oudezijds Voorburgwal in 1975. Later he built up a chain of coffeeshops. In the 1990s new drugs became popular in Amsterdam, such as ecstasy. Photographer and video artist Micha Klein made a surreal computer drawn Pill Man, an allusion to the role ecstasy pills played in the Amsterdam house scene. It's called *Double date, Love and Extacy*. The visual strength of this work was one reason for acquiring it for the collection, but also the role ecstasy plays in the Amsterdam youth culture.

Hoerengracht

In 2010 the museum made an exhibition in cooperation with the National Gallery in London: *The Hoerengracht*.² The immense installation was made by Nancy and Edward Kienholz between 1983 and 1988. In 2010 it was on show in the city that inspired it for the first time. The work is an artist vision on Amsterdam's most remarkable phenomenon: window prostitution. It combines elements from reality, the objects in the room, the window sills, the clothing of the women, the red lampshades and ultra violet light, with surreal elements, such as the glass boxes surrounding the heads of the women. Realistic, touching and disturbing are the words most used by visitors when asked about their opinion of the work. People comment on the fact that here they can really look into the rooms, something they wouldn't do in the red light district itself.

² Colin Wiggins and Annemarie de Wildt. *The Hoerengracht: Kienholz at the National Gallery*. (London: National Gallery/Yale University Press, 2009).

Earlier I mentioned the difference in expectations of people visiting art and history museums. In 2002 I curated an exhibition on the history of prostitution in Amsterdam, a mix of seventeenth century genre paintings, photography, a bed from a prostitute's workroom and interviews with prostitutes. Some visitors said they preferred having more direct information from sex-workers themselves, rather than through artists. Probably these last comments wouldn't be voiced in an art museum. For the Amsterdam Museum this exhibition was a very interesting experiment with modern art, presented in the context of the actual changes in the red light district at the moment, including the replacement of prostitutes in some of the windows by artists.

Art and history meeting again

After having been separated in the early twentieth century, art and history are meeting again. Many artists deal with history in their work. In the Netherlands and elsewhere there is a growing interest in history, in some cases related to the urge to strengthen the national Dutch identity. But in what way are these observations on art and history relevant for African (city) museums? I would like to conclude with a fascinating paradox on Europe, Africa, art and history, which came up recently in a conversation I had with Meschac Gaba. He is a well known artist from Benin, now living in Rotterdam. I met him in 1997 when he was studying at



Edward and Nancy Kienholz, fragment *The Hoerengracht*. Photo Amsterdam Museum

the Rijksacademie in Amsterdam. There he started his big project: The Museum of Contemporary African Art. Over the years he has created the various rooms of the museums in different museums and galleries. Some of the, in total twelve, rooms were the museum restaurant in Amsterdam gallery W 139, the Game Room and finally the Humanist Space at the Documenta XI.³ Meschac's life and art became one in the Wedding Room in the Stedelijk Museum, the scene of Meschac's own marriage with Alexandra van Dongen. The project deals with the art market, with the absence of modern art museums in Africa, with ideas about Europe and Africa and with the involvement of visitors. Meschac Gaba's museum will never exist as a building, it's a question. The project is also a positive way of addressing Euro-centrism as it was Europeans who created museums.

The paradox I mentioned arose when Meschac and I talked about the different concepts of history among Africans and Europeans. Meschac noticed how much more history there is in Europe and how well it is preserved. For many Africans, he told me, old things and history in general, are associated with the colonial past. Most Africans are therefore not too interested in history. Modernity is progress. Many Africans prefer China to Paris, because China is modern. Meanwhile however, many Africans have a strong connection to their personal family history; through the stories in his family Meschac knows who his forefathers were up to 5 generations back. The involvement of artists such as Gaba in the emerging museums of Africa, be they art, history or city museums or beyond caring about what they are, can provoke visitors to ask questions about the preconceived ideas, the appearance and rituals, the stories and images of their own communities and their own cities.

³ Bart de Baere, Meschac Gaba, Sebastian Lopez, Bartomeu Mari, et al. Library of The Museum. Museum of Contemporary African Art. (Amsterdam: Artimo, 2001). With an introduction by Bert Steevensz en Gijs Stork. The virtual Museum of Contemporary African Art is documented visually and critiqued by the contributors.

GIVING A VOICE

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The city museum or the community museum as instrument for empowerment and emancipation: introduction

Paul Th. van de Laar

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Nowadays museums are conscious of their social responsibilities towards society. Even art museums, specialised in 'glamour heritage', have made a social turn. Their primary focus, however, is still on entertaining people by showing authentic pieces of civilisation in striking museum buildings, often designed by the upper ten of international architecture.¹ City museums have a different role in society. Therefore, it makes sense to differentiate, as George Abungu does, between museums *in* cities, as institutions for the happy few, and city museums as community museums. The basic question we have to ask ourselves is if there is a future for government-funded European city museums that do not accept the challenges of turning into community museums, especially city museums located in transnational urban spaces.

Transnationalism has transformed the post-war European city. International post-war migration patterns and transnational connections of a new globalised world have reshaped the urban socio-cultural stratification, its public self-awareness and means of urban representation. Urban curators working in these cities cannot deny the impact that the transnational city is having on the role of museums. They need to change their attitude towards the classical heritage paradigm based on authenticity and accept a new role with regards to a multicultural public. European museum professionals can learn a lot from urban anthropologists closely observing the effects of transnationalism in their city, a precondition for the representative city museum of the twenty-first century.²



Besides, European museum directors and curators of city museums may benefit from non-western community museums working in the field of participation and social bonding, two essential concepts of new museum studies in a transnational context.

¹ Suzanne Greub and Thierry Greub eds., *Museums in the 21st century. Concepts, Projects, Buildings* (Munich, 2008).

Poster of the exhibition in Het Schielandshuis: *Panorama Rotterdam. 300 children, 10 neighbourhoods and 1 city* Photo Erno Wientjes, graphic design Marloes Vos

² Paul Th. van de Laar, "New paradigms in city museums. Exhibitions, the unrepresented and the knowledge gap" (paper presented at European Urban History Association, Gent, 1-4 September 2010).

South-African learning experiences

The series of papers on African case studies by George Abungu and Ciraj Rassool are stimulating examples of how museums could transfer power to communities. The authors seem to agree with the statement: museums are not buildings for collections, but public spaces providing communities a bonding space. This space, then, represents a forum where people from different backgrounds and cultures come together sharing common experiences and remembrances. In his discussion of the meaning of heritage Rassool, for instance, stresses that 're-membling' literally means putting back together the 'members' of a community. In this sense remembrance and social bonding are two sides of the same coin. His example of the District Six Museum in Cape Town illustrates his major point.³ This museum is not a happy place, romanticising the past, idealising a world before 1966. In that fatal year the Apartheid regime declared District Six a 'white group area' and decided that about 60.000 people were to be moved to the Cape Flats, an area located outside the central business district of Cape Town. The museum was founded in 1994, the year in which the Apartheid regime stepped down from power and South Africa became a democratic country.

The District Six has become a place where people come together to bring back the feelings and experiences of those who used to live in District Six.⁴ Since its opening this award-winning community museum examined 'the city, its history and heritage, its shifting landscape and its socioeconomic changes and mobilise these towards the healing and transformation of the city'.⁵ In this sense, the museum has become an activist kind of public space, a 'hybrid space' in a Foucauldian sense, where traditional museum expertise – scholarship, research, collection and exhibitions – are integrated with community activities. Of particular importance are activities supporting the land claim politics with respect to the Restitution of Land Rights Act. The memories of ordinary people, their commitment to the community are active means of 'healing the city'.⁶ Interactivity, participation and new methodologies of curatorship are crucial in turning the museum from a house of collections into a house of dialogue. That is, as Abungu explains in his paper, 'a meeting point where commonly shared experiences and expectations are met'.

The South-African post-apartheid experiments show that empowerment of communities in a multicultural and comparative setting redefines the roles of city museums. It is of particular relevance that the heritage concept changes as well. Heritage is not just safeguarding the past for future generations, but its meaning is embedded in the new role of a museum as an institution of social change. In this respect I would like to make a distinction between a heritage paradigm driven by the quest for authenticity, which has been the leading principle of museums in the past, and new heritage concepts. In sum, the 'authenticity' and 'ritual' agenda of the curator's professionalism has been called into question.⁷

In a transnational world, we need 'cohesion heritage', a concept not based on romanticising the past, but on heritage as a means of bonding people.⁸ Heritage in this sense serves a collective purpose. The immaterial and mental awareness of this heritage concept is underlined by the Faro (Portugal) Convention of the Council of Europe: 'cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time'.⁹

Urban curator as participation agent and heritage broker

The new heritage concept is rather complex and thus difficult to operationalise in museum collection guidelines. There are not many city curators trained in the immaterial practices of urban life and who know how to collect values and beliefs and exhibit them. This is not a novelty. In recent years, city curators making city histories in city museums were already aware of the importance of immaterial heritage. However, in the transnational city of today's global world where media and cultural heritage cross each other, the significance of immaterial heritage has become even more prominent. We witness a process of democratisation through new mass media facilitated by Internet. YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter whilst other globalised websites and

³ Ciraj Rassool, "Making the District Six Museum in Cape Town", *Museum International*, Vol. 58, No. 1-2 (2006): 9-18; see also the museum site: www.districtsix.co.za/frames.htm.

⁴ Katherine J. Goodnow, Jack Lohman and Jatti Bredekamp. *Challenge and transformation: museums in Cape Town and Sydney*. (Unesco/Museum of London, 2006): 125. See also Ciraj Rassool, "Making the District Six Museum".

⁵ Zayd Minty, "Post-apartheid Public Art in Cape Town: Symbolic Reparations and Public Space", *Urban Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2, (February 2006): 421 – 440, 428.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Quoted in Beverley Butler. "Heritage and the present past", in: Christopher Tilly et. al., (eds.), *Handbook of material culture*. Reprint (Los Angeles: 2008), 463-479, 469.

⁸ Paul Th. van de Laar, "Migratie in het museum", *ZemZem Tijdschrift over het Midden Oosten, Noord-Afrika en Islam* jrg. 5 nr. 1 (2009): 28-38.

⁹ <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/Commun/QueVoulezVous.asp?NT=1998&CM=8&CL=ENG>, (Faro: Council of Europe framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 27.X.2005): 4.

cyber applications represent a serious challenge to curators' authority. Users of social media create their own world and museum curators have to accept that visitors enjoy a virtual world of their own. The digital age has definitely shaken up the position of curators, as new web applications - including interactive dedicated collection websites - will break up the institutional museum barriers for good. The heritage industry will thus become blurred by different media practices and uses. The general public consists of laymen who consider themselves experts with access to the World Wide Web.¹⁰ They want to use their knowledge and expect museum professionals to grant them 'collection rights'. This new laymen curatorship is based on knowledge sharing and the curators, consequently, turn into cultural brokers, mediating between parties with their knowledge and expertise.¹¹



¹⁰ Van de Laar, "New paradigms in city museums".

¹¹ Butler. "Heritage and the present past": 469.

Cover Photo Magazine "Vrouwen van der Velden". Photo Mark Janssen

A matter of urgency

In discussing the role of community museums the issue of urgency plays a significant role. The African cases show that issues of racial separation and social backwardness have had such a major impact on communities that these museums developed from institutions run by volunteers into professional organisations. Their existence is justified by the lasting commitment to community museums. This sense of urgency may have been less apparent in the European context. There we have witnessed a different pattern: the city museums were originally bourgeois institutions that gradually began to be aware of the need for greater participation by communities: they evolved from top-down to bottom-up. City museums are nowadays developing as 'agents of social changes'.¹²

Several museums in Europe accept the new challenges of community museums. The House of Alijn in Flanders presents itself as a community museum. Empowerment and emancipation are key elements of the new mission of this museum that operates in the complicated heritage landscape of Belgium. The Erasmus University Rotterdam started a programme on Community Museums Past and Present and hopes to integrate the theoretical work on cultural dynamics with best practices from European community museums.¹³

'City as Muse'

One of the case studies will use the heritage experiments in Rotterdam as a test case. Museum Rotterdam, for instance, started a four-year intensive community based heritage programme, based on new ideas and concepts. Named the 'City as Muse', the programme began in 2010 and is based on the best practices of earlier participation activities. As part of this heritage programme, Museum Rotterdam's urban curator did extensive fieldwork amongst an intercultural woman group, some of them single mothers, living in one of the poorer parts of Rotterdam. She

¹² David Fleming, "Making city histories", in: Gaynor Kavanagh (ed.), Making histories in museums. Reprint (London/New York: 1999).

¹³ For the Dutch program on Community Museums Past and Present, see www.eshcc.eur.nl/onderzoek/onderzoeksprojecten/community_museums_past_present/.

interviewed them on a regular basis, made photographs and used their personal stories to set up a heritage agenda based upon participation by the women. They live in a Rotterdam neighbourhood that used to be one of the landmarks of the post-war welfare society. However, this housing area proved not to be suitable as living area for an intercultural society and will therefore be restructured in a few years' time. The women did not sit down and passively await their uncertain future. They joined forces and started an informal group, which meets on a weekly basis and has become the contact group for local officials and social housing agencies. They breakfast together and discuss the major social issues of living in this neighbourhood. Together they plan social activities, are involved in helping other parents with the education of their children, and do much more still.

In order to catalogue these women's stories, the Museum Rotterdam team created a glossy, *Every Woman*.¹⁴ As in the case of the District Six Museum, exhibition installers and artists are involved in turning the heritage project into a public performance and sculpture that will be shown to the public and become part of the museum's collections. The programme will be thoroughly evaluated in due time, but already now the responses are very positive. Most importantly, the experiments will be very useful for turning the Museum Rotterdam, and other city museums operating in a transnational context, into a network museum based on new concepts of social curatorship and participatory heritage.

¹⁴ www.hmr.rotterdam.nl/hetschielandshuis/activiteiten/actueel/EveryWomen.php.



The "Velden"-neighbourhood, an area in reconstruction. Photo Vergane Glorie.

No clear answers

Will it be possible for Museum Rotterdam, House of Alijn or other European city museums to turn into an 'Intervention Agency', as has been the case in the District Six Museum? There are no clear answers to this question. However, we must be aware of the possibility that city museums turn out to be incapable of adjusting to the new, complex, transnational world. We might have to accept that in some cases urban intercultural institutions are better equipped for the job because their experiments are public driven and less based on the transmission of knowledge traditionally assigned to museums. The case studies presented by Kosmopolis Rotterdam illustrate the feasibility of bridging the gap between culture and a diverse Rotterdam population in backward areas of the city. The fact that Kosmopolis Rotterdam is not a museum, and thus does not have the explicit task of safeguarding the past, stimulates and enables it to offer a flexible urban cultural programme. It makes sense to set up intensive cooperations between city museums and institutions like Kosmopolis and to jointly face the opportunities of exploring and safeguarding memories as part of a new heritage programme; one that is based on social bonding in a complex transnational urban setting.

The city museum or community museum as instrument of empowerment and emancipation: the African example

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Museums are no longer seen as foreign to the African continent. They now form an integral part of peoples' cultural landscape and have with relative success moved away from being places of amusement and curiosity to forming platforms for discussion and reflection. In the present day African setting, museums are becoming diversified institutions that are no longer the preserve of the elite and school children as national museums and museums of natural history once were, nor are they places meant for foreign tourists only. Today museums come in different sizes, shapes and forms, addressing various issues that touch on human relations, environment, living spaces, labour, social development, the arts, generational gaps and experiences, and past lives. Concepts like 'city museum' or 'community museum' are becoming part of the daily museological language in Africa just as they are internationally. Museum audiences have their own expectations of what roles the museums should play and participate actively in shaping them. Thus museums are not silent spaces but lively and refreshing spaces where people meet to discuss and to reflect as a community or group, to re-enact or relive communal experiences. Community museums – whether in the city or rural-based – are not static but constantly evolving and changing, meeting the demands of the present and providing a bonding space for a community or communities. Some of these museums have come to play important roles in peoples' relations, creating spaces for intercultural and intergroup dialogue as well as a sense of belonging. The present paper provides an overview of what can be seen as city or community museums in the African sense and of their social significance.

City museums within the African context: historical background

For many years there was the misconception that prior to the introduction of colonial administration the African continent had no urban centres. The contrary is true: there were numerous major centres of population concentration with centralised authority and well-established administrative structures. The various kingdoms, empires and towns that thrived well before colonization attest to such. In West Africa, for example, major kingdoms and empires existed as early as in the ninth century. Empires like that of Ghana, Mali and Songhai were comparable to any other in their contemporary world and encompassed huge areas of the subcontinent, with large capital cities as administrative centres and hubs of trade and commerce. Some of these places became centres of learning, renown even at international level, such as the city of Timbuktu. From around the twelfth century, numerous city-states developed along the East African coast that became major centres of commerce and education. Today these are referred to as the Swahili towns and some of them – for example, Lamu, Kilwa and Zanzibar – are recognised as World Heritage Sites. Through trade, places like these brought together people from different parts of the world and the resulting population mix is still evident today. Over the years, the continent also witnessed the existence of various states and kingdoms that while gathering large numbers of people under centralised rule remained essentially rural in nature. All these types of territories had their own ways of managing their heritage. Often they had what could be referred to as houses of heritage or sacred places, which were associated with societal rituals and religious practices or the

institutions of kingship and governorship. Such sacred sites and landscapes cannot be classified as museums in the western sense, even if many of the artefacts belonging to them were later exhibited in museums, especially those of ethnography, both during and after the colonial times. In general, the African cities of the past cannot be said to have had city museums.

The concept of city museum is therefore very much tied to the colonial and post-colonial period of the African experience. City museums are found in the long-existing cities that were transformed during the colonial administration or that were created by colonial authorities as seats of governance, administration and sometimes trade. These same cities also became centres of learning, art, entertainment and national political discourse. Given their function, the cities attracted the intelligentsia, large communities of business people and a multitude of civil servants. Naturally the need for a workforce led to migration, particularly from the rural areas, into new and alien spaces. All these people sought some kind of pastime, either in recreational areas or in places meant for socialising.

Museums and the colonial period

In many, if not nearly all parts of the African continent, the concept of the museum – including what we can today refer to as city museum – was introduced together with the colonial occupation. However, the museums created in these periods were meant for a white audience. Only in some exceptional cases would African audiences be allowed entrance and this on specific days. The interests of the colonial audience were therefore crucial in shaping museums. Those of the largely ethnographic type presented colonial collections. Here exhibits often presented the local, indigenous peoples as being ‘exotic’ in order to satisfy the ‘civilising agenda’ of the colonial authority. The Railway Museum in Mutare, Zimbabwe, is a good example of such a museum, showing the development of the train and wagons that allowed for the exploitation of the country and the improvement of communications. Similarly, museums of agriculture only looked at the introduction, development and usage of western farming equipment. In such cases the African narratives were seldom mentioned or were otherwise represented by ethnographic collections of rudimentary tools, drums, spears, skins for clothing and local equipment for brewing and drinking.

The most common type of museum, often the flagship during the colonial times, was the natural history museum. Here the focus of the collection depended on the local white and international researchers’ interest. Every country had at least one natural history museum, generally located in the capital, but at times there were two or three spread over several major cities. This was the case with Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), that had a large natural history museum both in Bulawayo and in Harare. In Kenya the Nairobi National Museum once revolved around the colonial researchers’ interest. Thus, apart from its ethnographic collection and exhibition showing ‘the African’, this museum was well known for its archaeological and paleontological collections as well as for its material related to invertebrate zoology and plant sciences. Up until now it still hosts the East African Herbarium. It was a museum that served both the lay white settlers, who could amuse themselves with the ‘primitive collections’ of the Africans they were ‘civilising’, and the white researchers and scholars carrying out their research to their own liking. Due to the power wielded by the latter group, their operations and influence extended beyond the national boundaries and the Nairobi National Museum also served as the repository of the archaeological and paleontological finds from Tanzania, a situation that is only just starting to be addressed.

Africans naturally felt left out or ridiculed. There was no sense in going to a museum that exhibited the same drinking paraphernalia or drums and spears that they had at home in rural areas. Along the same lines, there was no interest in looking at dead birds, butterflies and plants while they interacted with live ones on a daily basis in the process of living their lives. Even in the archaeological or paleontological field, Africans were involved only as handymen, digging the trenches, sieving the soil and bone-hunting. Kenya, for example, never had a black archaeologist or palaeontologist until the mid-1970s, over ten years after the country obtained its independence. This was common across the continent and so the museum – whether city, community or national,

and whatever its subject matter – only served the interest of a minority elite. The museum was an instrument that provided a few members of the community with privileged access to research and other resources, as well as a place for gathering and identifying with one another as a community.

Museums in the post-colonial period

With independence, the museums were obliged to change – albeit at a slow pace – and to address issues of wider communal interest, including those of the hitherto neglected and voiceless potential audiences and stakeholders. Slow to start due to the vested interests, the change in the African museums' approach to their responsibility can be said to have been considerable and at times radical. Existent museums changed from spaces serving an elitist public to platforms addressing contemporary and people-oriented issues, becoming true inclusive and emancipatory institutions: veritable city and community museums. Museums now started listening to various voices that were not necessarily saying the same thing. This was an unavoidable process as museums of this period were facing new demands and could no longer rely on getting support without sufficient accountability.

The present world that the African museums, including city and community museums, found themselves in was one of challenges as well as expectations. On the one hand, cities were starting to face the prospect of a teeming population, while society at large was confronted with scarcity of opportunities, harsh competition, displaced people, loss of roots and identity, and the need to embrace diversity in unity. On the other hand, museums also found a ready audience in the emerging African elites that were willing to sample the hitherto denied pleasures associated with these 'houses of wonder' but without losing their African roots; the very roots that they wished to reclaim and defend when fighting for independence and freedom. There was therefore an emerging middle class that was willing and ready to associate with, embrace and use the museums.

Since then, although cities have been undergoing rejuvenation, they are still marred by an urban development and growth that lack planning and the allocation of necessary resources. Urban pressure and growth is due to the migration from rural areas, driven by the need to earn a living within the changed economy. This process has led to mushrooming of townships, informal settlements, high density areas and slums; spaces that have in turn created specific social and economic problems, including the rise of poverty levels, criminal activity, destitution and the like, all of which have become part of the urban experience. Urbanisation has also led to high levels of cultural diversity and at times an alienation from rural practices and customs, especially among the subsequent generations born and raised in urban areas. Furthermore, in most cases there are huge inequalities in access to resources such as water, electricity and roads. An exception is formed by the communication infrastructure: connectivity through mobile phones, radio and at times ICT is very well-developed. Thus people are very conscious of the inequalities in society. Rampant unemployment, particularly among the youth, the slow pace of housing provision and an inadequate service delivery all contribute to the significantly challenging environment in which museums have to justify their existence.

The question has been whether museums must respond to these new developments or can remain mere spectators. Do they have a role to play in the current urban constellation? It is in this context that city and community museums in Africa have used their exhibitions to offer alternative spaces for discussion on these issues and have worked with communities in putting up relevant public programmes. Besides providing platforms for dialogue on such topics as society and its development, museums have also been spaces of entertainment and stress relief. Thus while these city and community museums cannot be everything to everybody, they have often been something to everybody.

African city and community museums: a paradigm shift

The other issue concerning these African museums is whether they are city museums per se, in the western sense, or are instead museums located in the city that mostly serve urban communities

simply because reaching out to a wider public, that may not necessarily be city-based, presents too many obstacles. Thus it is common knowledge that museums in cities such as Lagos, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam are 'far away' from where the majority of population - the common people - reside and because infrastructure and transportation are not planned around them, their access is problematic. Although most of them may actually be conceived as national museums, they end up serving the urban population more than others and are seen as city museums. Therefore, understanding city museums in Africa requires a careful analysis of the nature of the cities in relation to the continent. As these cities evolve, inclusive museums emerge that are of relevance to its various audiences, potential and real.

As noted above, museums in cities or city museums in Africa are challenged to consider their collections and representations very carefully due to the greater diversity of their audiences, including new potential ones, and the necessity to appear relevant to a public that is vastly different from the public initially involved in museums. Since the 1990s these museums have often reconstructed themselves not in terms of mortar and brick, but through their presence in peoples' psyche and expectations. A few examples suffice to illustrate how museums have chosen a path defined by their public's needs and national aspirations.

Travelling museums

The Botswana Zebra on the Wheel Project takes the National Museum's collections around the country, visits schools and local communities and allows children and the rest of the community to engage with the collections. In the process, this project is also collecting information and new items that in turn enrich the museum, to the benefit of city residents and others museum visitors. The concept here is that of a city museum engaging with communities beyond the city in a mutually beneficial arrangement. In Cape Town, Republic of South Africa, the Robben Island Museum developed a road show that included the performance of a specially scripted play and a travelling exhibition that were seen by 350,000 school children across the country within six years. In addition to this, for years it organised other travelling exhibitions and participated in television and radio series that became popular beyond the boundaries of South Africa, among others places in Namibia and Botswana. The efforts to deliberately 'make the margins the centre' and to engage with an audience from across the far-flung parts of the country in their own spaces, challenged the notion of a national museum waiting for visitors to come. The museum was no longer a physical space but part of a cultural landscape, mapped across the country in a physical and metaphysical sense.

Similarly, the Lagos National Museum has been involved in a special public programme that stimulates contact between parts of its collections, the scholarly work related to it and sharing diverse cultural practices with its public. The renovation of the Lagos National Museum, together with its exciting new programmes, is part of a city-wide initiative to regenerate and create a cultural and economic hub within the city. The museum's initiatives are therefore supported by a wide range of stakeholders, including the Governor and other influential leaders within Nigeria. This kind of cooperation between a city-based museum, city authorities, private investors and corporate companies is critical in ensuring that the museum does not develop in isolation from other and larger transformative initiatives.

Educational purposes

Through its Nairobi Museum, the National Museums of Kenya set up a Young Researchers Club which offered young learners participation in field trips, access to labs, and face-to-face dialogues with curators, researchers and educationists about museum practice. This Club not only demystifies what goes on in the museum labs but also helps to develop an interest for museums among the youth, with a view to utilizing museum facilities and specimens for educational purposes. In Zambia, the Children's Corner at the Lusaka National Museum was designed with and for this special segment of the museum visitors. Besides making the museum more popular among the youth it has contributed directly to their educational needs.

Fort Jesus in Mombasa, Kenya, was built by the Portuguese at the end of the sixteenth century to control the sea route to the East. Over the years it became the most contested fort on the East African coast, changing hands many times between the Portuguese, the Arabs and later the British when they colonised Kenya. During the British period, from the end of the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, the fort served as a prison. When Kenya gained independence it was declared a park, then a monument and, after thorough archaeological excavation, was turned into a museum; up until today the only city museum in Mombasa. For years the fort remained a heritage site and a museum exhibiting Portuguese and Arab materials and the story of wars that took place within its walls. It became a favourite tourist site visited mostly by foreign tourists as well as those from inland Kenya. To the community around, it was of less relevance and still reminded them of the days when it was a prison. To the young, its sole relevance lay in the opportunity to take people around as a tour guide. Otherwise the fort remained as Portuguese as it had always been, a place of curiosity where once in a while people claimed to have seen spirits of the dead.

In 1993, Fort Jesus celebrated its four hundred years of existence and for the occasion brought together people of diverse origins – Asian, African, Arab and European – who all in one way or another had interacted with the fort during its long and tumultuous history. This act of celebration once and for all redefined the role of the fort. From then on the local community started to ‘claim’ the fort as theirs, using it for their functions, as a place of dialogue and as meeting place for the community. Projects have been developed around that benefit the community directly. The conservation of the old town of Mombasa was started and a training institute was set up to instruct the young community members on the revival and development of Swahili arts and crafts, architecture and building techniques. In front of the fort in the large open space recreational facilities have been provided and today the area around the fort is alive, with local people driving the process.

Heritage professionals

The Centre for Heritage Development in Africa is an international non-governmental organisation dedicated to training heritage professionals on the continent. It is located in the Old Law Court Building of Mombasa and has engaged the local host community, especially the youth, in various educational programmes. It has provided a forum for youth empowerment by facilitating a network of more than six individual youth groups operating in Old Town Mombasa, helping them to identify opportunities and nurturing them to success. This is an example of how a heritage training and capacity-building institution, recognising the value of youth ‘heritage activists’ within a declared city, provides an incubator environment for youth leadership development with heritage at the core.

Taking advantage of the rich and diversified heritage of Tanzania, the Village Museum in Dar es Salaam is one of the museum institutions that try to keep the capital city’s residents in touch with their rural roots. The Village Museum recognises the need to celebrate the cultures and traditions of all Tanzanians. It does so by giving each group an opportunity to present its culture to the other Tanzanian groups. Furthermore, it enables the youth born in the city and without access to their rural roots to experience the heritage from their ‘rural homes’. It is a place of cultural celebration where the various groups’ architecture, cuisine, folklore, storytelling, music and other forms of art and culture are collectively shared for the common good of the nation.

While there are community museums in cities and city museums that are community-based, many community museums are also found in rural areas of Africa. The common denominator, however, is that they tend to cater for their specific communities. One example of such a rural community museum is the Lamu Museum situated on the World Heritage Site Lamu, Kenya. Founded in the 1970s as a place to collect and exhibit the Swahili cultural material, the museum has grown over the years to play a crucial role in the lives of the Lamu community. Today the museum is in charge of the conservation of the Lamu Old Town World Heritage Site, together with the community

organises two international festivals per year and hosts the only public library in the whole district, thereby contributing to knowledge development. Here is a situation where the city or community museum goes beyond the traditional calling of providing exhibitions for education and entertainment to addressing the community's needs, including those regarding sustainability.

Conclusion

Africa has numerous cases of museums that have become the voice of the people by trying to meet their aspirations or by addressing issues that are normally neglected by governments or other bodies. Using their heritage resources and the knowledge databanks, museums have set up activities that take on a large variety of tasks, providing their audience with entertainment, education, defence of rights, generation of knowledge, promotion of excellence in research, custody of a peoples' identity, empowerment, discussion, dialogue and shared experiences. African museums, including city or community museums, have opened up new horizons to include elements that are uncommon in the Western museological practice. As people-oriented institutions that speak many languages, listen to many voices and are not divorced from but in synchrony with their audience, they have indeed a lot to offer to the world.

The District Six Museum and community

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What is the 'museumness' of the District Six Museum? And how can we understand the Museum's beginnings? These have been some of the most contested questions in the District Six Museum as it has undergone deep and thoroughgoing processes of 'museumisation' and professionalisation. These questions are also central in understanding the distinctive principles, methodologies and strategies of the Museum, as well as the sources and influences that have inspired these approaches.¹

Presence in an identifiable building

The processes of museumisation and professionalisation were set in motion almost from the moment the memory work of the District Six Museum Foundation became associated with a presence in an identifiable, 'visitable' building, the 'Freedom Church' building of the Central Methodist Mission on the corner of Buitenkant and Albertus Streets. For some people, 10 December 1994 marked the opening of the exhibition, *Streets: Retracing District Six*, in the 'Freedom Church,' also marked the commencement of the Museum's life. As is now well known, *Streets* was only meant to be open for two weeks, but came to be the core of the Museum's exhibitionary life for four years.

It is not surprising that some came to view the District Six Museum through quite conventional understandings of what museums are. From this perspective, the District Six Museum was a place that made and maintained exhibitions, that acquired and conserved collections and that carried out educational work. This museum work was conducted with different audiences, particularly the 'community' of District Six, the people of Cape Town, the national citizens of South Africa as well as a tourist public in search of the authentic spaces of apartheid. In this conventional view, the District Six Museum was a place where a museum offered knowledge facilities and educational 'services' to defined communities.

Such a conventional understanding saw the Museum's work as driven by a politics of atonement and by a programme of outreach to deprived and marginalised people as well as those interested in how apartheid had been overcome. In this perspective, the District Six Museum was a space that offered the possibility of redemption, for museum professionals in particular, and members of the Museum's visiting public, especially those who saw their visit to the Museum as part of supporting and furthering democracy.

The District Six Museum as a national heritage site

This paradigm of liberal atonement is not just an outsider view of the Museum but is one of the contending arguments for the Museum's life and soul that emerge from its professional practice. The escalation of tourist consumption and the demands of museum professionalism have created pressures for the Museum to immerse itself in memorial methods that rely on relations of expertise, paternalism and atonement. This limited frame also seems to constitute much of the political basis of 'site museums of conscience'. With increasing attention being given to District Six's probable declaration as a national heritage site, it must be pointed out that these methods are also the lifeblood of the discourse of heritage conservation itself. However, it is precisely this seemingly innocent framework that threatens the very sustainability of the District Six Museum as an interventionist project of public scholarship that seeks to build a vibrant, independent, contested public culture as part of the construction of a critical citizenship.

¹ This piece draws on and extends aspects of my previously published article, 'Community Museums, memory politics and social transformation in South Africa: Histories, possibilities, and limits' in: Ivan Karp, Corinne A Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, with Gustavo Buntinx, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Ciraj Rassool, *Museum Frictions: Global Transformations/ Public Cultures*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006)

The District Six Museum is a site of ongoing contestation. As part of these contests it is necessary to strengthen arguments that challenge the liberal framework of atonement and service. The time has also come to take stock of the notion of 'community museum', to understand the debates and contests that have accompanied its inauguration as a cultural category in the growing museum field in South Africa and beyond, and to consider its varied intellectual and political genealogies. This is necessary so that the category becomes more than just a technical term for a museum genre as new local museums are created and features of the District Six Museum are replicated. We also need to revisit the category of 'community' and the kinds of identity and identification it desires and asserts, as well as the ways that it has been put to work in cultural claims and projects.

A hybrid space of research, representation and pedagogy

As I have suggested elsewhere, the focus on the history of District Six and national experiences of forced removals might be at the core of the Museum's work. But its key features are methodological. Since its inception as a museum of the city of Cape Town, the District Six Museum has been an independent, secular site of engagement and a space of questioning and interrogating South African society and its discourses. Far from being a site of museum services, it has operated as a hybrid space of research, representation and pedagogy, which has brokered and mediated relations of knowledge and varied kinds of intellectual and cultural practice between different sites, institutions and sociological domains. Annunciation, conversation and debate formed the lifeblood of its creative and curatorial process and memory politics.²

The Museum's spaces have been filled with argumentation and debate about cultural expression, social history and political life in the District, about local history and national pasts, and how best to reflect these in the work of the Museum. Members of the Museum debated ways of addressing District Six stereotypes, as well as histories of social engineering and forced removal in Cape Town and other parts of South Africa. The District Six Museum became one of the only sites in the city with a sense of legitimacy to address the future of the city and its concept of citizenship. It also gave a platform for ordinary people to get involved in discussions about urban renewal and rebuilding Cape Town.³

A museum by accident

At times these debates and engagements concerned the cultural politics of the very notion of 'museum' itself, the very category that the District Six Museum Foundation chose to define its project of history and memory. Records of planning and policy discussions reveal a productive ambivalence about the categories of 'museum' and 'exhibition'. When the District Six Museum Foundation was created as part of the Hands Off District Six campaign in 1989, the choice of the category of 'museum' did not necessarily express a specific commitment to the institution of the museum. Though it emerged as a museum with a collection in a visitable building, the District Six Museum in many ways became a museum by accident.

The Foundation certainly wanted a project through which it would be able to contest the past and use history and memory as the means of mobilisation around the traumatic landscape of District Six. Some members of the Foundation were concerned about the links between the District Six Museum and other museums in South Africa and beyond. Nevertheless, a strong position was articulated, especially by one of the trustees, Irwin Combrinck, making clear that the mission of the Museum was *not* to network with the official museum structure, but to mobilise the masses of ex-residents and their descendants into a movement of land restitution, community development and political consciousness.⁴

The District Six Museum's independence also implied a questioning position with regard to academia. In many ways, the Museum was marked by academia, in a disciplinary sense, and through the presence of academics on its board and academically trained professionals among its staff. However, many in the Museum worked from an implicit critique on histories of appropriation and hierarchies of knowledge associated with academia, seen as an institution that privileged

² Ciraj Rassool, 'Community Museums, memory politics and social transformation in South Africa', 290.

³ Crain Soudien has spoken articulately on numerous occasions about this special position of the District Six Museum. See also Sandra Prosalendis, Jennifer Marot, Crain Soudien and Anwah Nagia, 'Punctuations: periodic impressions of a museum' in: Ciraj Rassool and Sandra Prosalendis (eds), *Recalling community in Cape Town: Creating and curating the District Six Museum* (Cape Town: District Six Museum, 2001).

⁴ See Irwin Combrinck, 'A museum of consciousness' in: Rassool and Prosalendis (eds), *Recalling community in Cape Town*.

scholarly procedures of research and modes of authorship, and that presumed particular flows of knowledge and forms of 'seepage' or 'trickling down' out of universities and into the public domain. Also more general scepticism was articulated with respect to the claims of academic knowledge, a knowledge relation that actively produced marginality and subalternity.⁵

Alternative knowledge domains

The suspicion towards universities and academics in the District Six Museum also needs to be understood as an effect of a racialised order of university education in South Africa. This entailed systematic forms of exclusion from most universities, with severe limits placed on black access. The 1960s had seen the creation of 'deformed' and largely resourceless universities or 'bush colleges' as features of academic life. In the face of decades of systematic exclusion, partial access through a permit system and resource starvation in universities designed to be inferior, alternative knowledge domains in the public sphere became the only option.

These were the circumstances that saw the creation of a combative intellectual culture in the public domain since the 1930s and 1940s, especially in such formations as the New Era Fellowship, which met at the Stakesby Lewis Hostel between Harrington and Canterbury Streets in District Six, as well as other left-wing discussion clubs such as the Spartacus Club and the Forum Club. While these weren't formal academic spaces, they nevertheless strove to provide platforms for cutting-edge debate and discussion about economic, political and historical questions. They also provided settings for progressive cultural events such as theatre performances, poetry readings and literary

⁵ See John Beverley, *Subalternity and representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).



analysis. These spaces formed the setting for the analysis of power in society and the conditions of resistance and collaboration. A system of representation was created, complete with its own vocabulary, framing categories, concepts, activities and procedures through which the nation was defined, the 'enemy' named and conceptualised, and through which a moral code of behaviour was counter-posed to that of the 'enemy'.

A domain of publishing

This institutional context also saw the evolution of a repertoire of rituals of assembly, research, and knowledge-creation and dissemination, through speeches at public gatherings in meeting halls, which were like lessons in classrooms. A domain of publishing was constituted, that provided leaflets, newspapers, pamphlets and books with the aim of circulating ideas, analyses and concepts

Museum staff and former residents gather on the site of District Six. 11 February 2010. *Staff photographer*

for the edification of people, for the development of their consciousness and the construction of an entire social and political imaginary. Indeed, this was an entire programme in public education, with its own pedagogy, through which the nation was 'taken to school'. Connected to this is the legacy of 'activist librarianship' that found expression in the work of Vincent Kolbe and others in the Hyman Liberman Institute, and which was later practiced in transgressive ways in apartheid's library system on the Cape Flats.

The District Six Museum emerged partly out of this legacy as a combative and contested forum of public scholarship, which was ambivalent about academic forms of knowledge, but which was nevertheless defined and marked by its disciplinary structures and methods. Indeed, the Museum needs to be understood as a hybrid space, which combined scholarship, research, collection and museum aesthetics with community forms of governance and accountability, and land claim politics of representativity and restitution. Here, community-connected academics, and 'activist intellectuals,' with roots in District Six-based political and cultural organisations, came together in a membership mix whose synergies and contestations have been at the heart of the Museum's curatorial methods and reflexive pedagogy. The structures and programmes of the Museum served to mediate and broker exchanges and transactions between knowledge genres and cultural expression and to knit and weave these interactions into its work.

Continual exchange, interpretation and debate

The Museum was shaped and reshaped through a conscious research and curatorial project with participation by artists, activists, researchers, volunteers and embroidery groups, as well as through ongoing contributions of former residents of District Six. In adopting this provocative and unconventional approach, the District Six Museum asserted that its integrity and long-term sustainability were predicated on defending its independent spaces of articulation and criticism, and on ensuring an ongoing construction of its object and its community through practices of continual exchange, interpretation and debate. Many of these transactions and interchanges have occurred in a special forum, a Curatorial and Research Committee consisting of staff, trustees and cultural activists. The participatory and mobilising features of the community museum required a rigorous and enabling disciplinary museum in order to be effective, while disciplinary knowledge needed to hold on to a critical, politicised edge.

From a variety of perspectives, the category of 'community museum' is one that has been used to describe the District Six Museum. The Museum's use of 'community' is one that is not naïve, but is conscious and strategic. The Museum insists on utilising this concept as an organisational device, in asserting a particular politics of governance and institutional orientation, and in expressing a particular commitment to social mobilisation, and to constructing and defending independent spaces of articulation and contestation in the public domain. This strategic position emanates from a complex museum institution that has created a hybrid space of cultural and intellectual production of contestations and transactions among activist intellectuals, public scholars, museum professionals and ex-residents. The central features of the District Six Museum as a space of knowledge draw upon a genealogy of forums of intellectual, cultural and political expression in District Six, which came into existence from the 1930s, as well as the politics of community organisation in the 1980s.

Conception of community as an ever present danger

The idea of a 'community museum' tends to conjure up notions of authenticity and representativeness in a local institution that supposedly works with an audience considered as a bounded community. With a history of racialised group areas in South Africa, this conception of community, defined by seemingly natural ethnic markers, is an ever-present danger. Community museums are sometimes understood as almost one of the simplest units of museum structures considered in a typological system of museums. In this framework, the notions of community and community museum invite a paternalist sentiment and ideas of innocence and naïveté, as 'the community' now has access to modes of cultural and historical expression from which it had previously been excluded. The idea of the community museum also raises the idea of a museum as a focus of educational and cultural services. Here the museum seeks to reach certain

audiences and to deliver benefits through strategies of outreach and inclusion. The museum here is understood as distinct from such communities with whom it may wish to extend formal relations of service and consultation, and with whom it may even introduce forms of partnership, joint management and relations of reciprocity.

The concept of community has also been the subject of much suspicion because of its uses under apartheid. It tended to be used in racialised, bounded ways to refer to racial and ethnic units of the population, as defined through the workings of the state and its apparatuses. Even when community was understood in geo-political terms to refer to localities and neighbourhoods where people lived, it was racialised because of the operation of racial legislation. One of the ironies of the post-apartheid period is that ethnic forms of community identity and identification have had new life as primordial and static cultures are reproduced either for tourism or in search of state benefits through land claims. But community was also the focus of anti-apartheid mobilisation, particularly in the 1980s, when community organising emerged as one of the most decisive 'sites of struggle'. With the emergence of community organisations, in the form of civic bodies and tenant structures, community also became a category through which to think about local social history and in turn question the teleologies of national history.⁶

Framework of interpretation and empowerment

The District Six Museum defines itself as a 'community museum' because it sees its work as a locus of social organisation and mobilisation. From the Museum's early beginnings, this definition also signalled a desire to create a participatory and enabling framework of interpretation and empowerment, and to generate the museum project as an ongoing process. A community museum wishing to influence the identity-making processes of recreating and redefining a community from the ruins of apartheid's destruction required a strong museum infrastructure and more decisive means of balancing social activism with professional museum skills. The work of balancing these productive tensions strategically and finding the appropriate means of determining priorities under rapidly shifting cultural and political conditions remains one of the most important challenges of the District Six Museum's creative development.

As the land in District Six was being prepared for the first phase of redevelopment for a reconstituted District Six community, it was clear that the work of the District Six Museum had entered a new phase: that of intervention in the cultural and political work of 'reconstituting community' out of a disparate layer of returnees, who had experienced apartheid's lived spaces and mindsets. It was hoped that the interchanges and transactions in the Museum's forums would enable the challenges of community formation to be faced successfully. In this subsequent phase of 'Hands on District Six', new challenges have been emerging for the Museum, of memory work and memorial inscription in relation to a reconstructed landscape.

Long-term sustainability

Finally, the community museum as a project can only have longevity and sustainability through the generation of internal institutional capacity and expertise, and through enhancing internal processes of debate and argumentation. While the Museum's existence parallels the prosecution and ongoing settlement of the land claim by a legally defined claimant community, primarily of tenants, the notions of 'community-ness' that it works with are not determined by descent, mere historic claim or spatial presence.

Instead the Museum's idea of community is strategic, and expresses a desire for particular forms of social reconstruction. Community itself is an imagined identity of commonality and interest. Its parameters are the very essence of contestation. Through its exhibitions, programmes and forums, and in its internal processes of negotiation and brokerage, the District Six Museum is constantly involved in redefining and reframing its notions of community. It continues to be a site where post-apartheid identities are being imagined and self-fashioned, and not simply imbibed passively from those that apartheid produced. It is precisely this critical approach to 'community' and 'museum' that will ensure that the politics of atonement can be transcended. It is also through this approach that the long-term sustainability of the District Six Museum can be achieved.

⁶ See Belinda Bozzoli (ed), *Class, community and conflict: South African perspectives* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1987).

Kosmopolis Rotterdam: the local and the global community benefitting from their interconnectedness through art

Karen Klijnhout

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The arts seldom conceive the 'emancipation' or 'empowerment' of groups within society as their first and foremost task. Museums and cultural institutions, however, can choose to set this priority. By deciding how and what to exhibit, museums determine their own *raison d'être*. Kosmopolis Rotterdam, though not a museum, takes this notion one step further: it invites artists to create and stage projects together with different parties, in order to reflect on society. Confronted with the question what role it aims to play in the local community, Kosmopolis Rotterdam has had to ask itself: what do communities nowadays look like? It is our assessment that local communities are as much local as they are global and we see it as our task to make this interplay between the local and the global dimension not only visible but also productive.



Ahmet Aslan, Istanbul, Burger King.
Photo from the exhibition 'nl.de.tr./turkishconnections'. Photo Otto Snoek

Visible

Illustrative of a Kosmopolis-project that envisions the interconnectedness of global and local elements of daily life is 'nl.de.tr./turkishconnections', a travelling exhibition of photographs by Otto Snoek. It presents thirteen people – students, business people, managers and artists – in the Netherlands, Germany and Turkey. They all have a Turkish cultural background, a shared history of migration and a transnational network. They feel at ease in their country of origin and in the country they live in, while travelling a lot between these countries both for business and private affairs. In addition, they know people from other cultures and countries as well. Thanks to internet, mobile phones, Skype and cheap flights they are able to maintain their networks. Through such a project Kosmopolis Rotterdam can realise an important part of its work. We are able to signal

current global and local developments and bring these into the public debate. We look at the growing complexity and diversity of society, and the consequences for cultural institutions, policy makers and, of course, citizens.



Bridal shop, Duisburg. Photo from the exhibition 'nl.de.tr/turkishconnections'. Photo Otto Snoek

Productive

Once we have made these developments visible or tangible, the next step is to look for a way of making them productive. The aim hereby is to show how different people can complement each other and how new influence can be a force of welcome change.

According to our experience, activating transnational connections in local communities can bring about new activity. By creating common working spaces, gathering people around a shared interest, and combining individual knowledge and skills, it is possible to create new things together. Hence, for the project 'Fashion Rotterdam Istanbul' Kosmopolis Rotterdam invited the young, upcoming fashion designer Hatice Gökçe from Istanbul, who has her own label there and is internationally well-known. She worked for two weeks with students from different schools in Rotterdam and with women from Afrikaanderwijk, a multicultural area of the city. The students were studying fashion at different educational levels: at the art academy as well as at lower and medium level vocational schools. The women from the neighbourhood were first generation migrants with good sewing skills. Together they spent two weeks in a workshop set up in Afrikaanderwijk. Assisted by Hatice Gökçe, they designed and made a collection that was subsequently presented in a fashion show and in the shop windows of De Bijenkorf, the most exclusive department store in Rotterdam. There was also a fashion show and an exhibition about the project in the neighbourhood itself. One of the designs will be taken into production by the women of the neighbourhood, who will then sell the outfits at the local market on the Afrikaander Square.

This project demonstrated how the different skills could complement each other. While the art students were used to working with conceptual designs, they were unable to produce the actual garments. By contrast, students receiving vocational training liked thinking about the designs but felt at their best making them. The Turkish women of the Afrikaanderwijk were familiar with traditional sewing techniques not known by the students and had the advantage that they could speak to the designer without the need for an interpreter.

Bridging the divide

Another key part of how Kosmopolis operates is the combination of different partners. These combinations represent the complexity and diversity of our society. The cooperation between the



Semiha Unal, Istanbul. Photo from the exhibition 'nl.de.tr/turkishconnections'. Photo Otto Snoek

sometimes unorthodox partners that are brought together can lead to unexpected and always insightful results. In 2009 Kosmopolis Rotterdam staged a cooperative project called In Koor (In Choir), gathering eighteen different religious choirs around a shared passion for religious music. Among them were a Moroccan Anasheed children's choir, a Christian Philippine ladies' choir, and a number of musicians and singers with a Hindustan background. They performed in each other's sacred houses and sang each other's songs. Whereas religion is often seen as a dividing force, in this case it united these various choirs. Participatory projects such as these require a relaxed attitude with regard to how a process evolves, but can bridge divides in extraordinary ways.

Kosmopolis' intention is to make abstract ideas like globalisation more understandable by translating them to a local and personal scale. That is why we use developments like growing cultural diversity as inspiration in our programme of activities. We make sure our projects have partners with a wide range of perspectives and knowledge. Furthermore, we work with a variety of stories, music styles and crafts. We look for what binds people and design our projects around it. In this respect, like city museums we work to emancipate the neighborhood and its inhabitants and do so by expanding the participants' networks, by involving their cultural heritage and by offering them a platform. However, we prefer see to this approach as a method through which every partner gains something. It is important to give everyone a proper place in society and cultural life, just as it is to profit from the specific knowledge and skills people have. After all, we firmly believe that the only way to create a sustainable society in such a complex world is by finding ways of incorporating diversity.



The House of Alijn: for and through the public, touching hearts and arousing spirits

Els Veraverbeke

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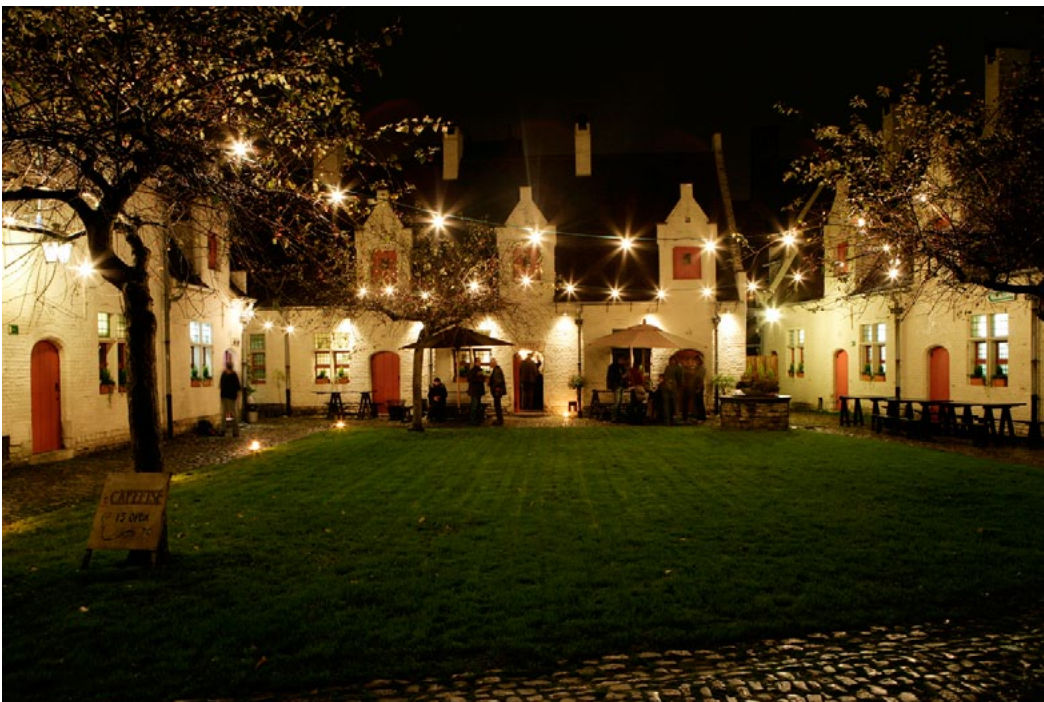


A museum in motion

The House of Alijn in Ghent, Belgium, has a passion for the culture of everyday life. It is a regional heritage institution for collection management that has been recognised as such by the Flemish Community. Today, its collection includes objects and pictures, as well as film excerpts and sound-recordings. Although the museum has only been operating under its present name since 2000, its earlier history goes as far back as the 1920s. What was once known as the Museum of Folklore was officially opened on 16 July 1932. Its foundation was an initiative of the Royal Society of East-Flemish Folklorists that had been founded in 1926 to promote the study of popular life. The first folklore exhibition in 1927 was the start of a permanent collection, which through an intensive collecting-policy rapidly expanded, enabled the organisation of several more exhibitions and led to the creation of a museum.

Museum of Popular Culture

When in 1962 the Museum of Folklore moved into the former Alijn Children's Hospice, the name changed into Museum of Popular Culture. The museum's festive re-opening coincided with the 'European Conference on Folklore' that took place that year in five Belgian cities. Its exhibition concentrated on various crafts, showing visitors the tools and products of the hatter, the cobbler, the domestic weaver and other craftsmen. In line with the spirit of the times, the folklorists tried to



The courtyard. Photo Huis van Alijn

evoke the atmosphere in which craftsmen practised their trade around 1900 by presenting faithful and striking replicas of historic interiors. The initiators aimed at portraying a variety of crafts that had fallen into disuse or that had become rare. It was equally important to them to collect material evidence of folk life in Flanders and, by doing so, to save it from oblivion. As a result of its urban background, the museum also collected objects that illustrated life and work in the city. People could see the interior of the typical drawing room used by the lower middle classes, as well as a room that evoked the daily environment of the poorer social classes amongst the population.

The size and variety of the collection grew steadily over the years. All the inspiration came from the folklorists: they were the motor behind the Museum of Folklore and the Museum of Popular Culture, which in a narrow sense of the word could be called community museums even before the term existed. It was through the work of folklorists, especially those specialised in crafts such as the local production of lace and in religious folklore, that the community was thought to be represented.



New heritage paradigm

In 2000 the museum entered a third phase of existence under the new name 'The House of Alijn'. The change of name was meant to underline the fact that the museum was embedded in the history of the Alijn Children's Hospice but also to symbolise the new position the museum had taken: from now on it was the 'museum of things that (never) pass'. This reflected the general shift in Flanders towards a new heritage paradigm. The views on folklore and popular culture changed radically in the last decade. Not only was there a theoretical reorientation; inspired by the Dutch Meertens Institute, the entire outlook on folk culture became more dynamic and was broadened to encompass the culture of everyday life. Along with the change of name, the museum building itself was redesigned and renovated, while the collection was reorganised. The focus was on the reevaluation of the acquired collection. More in particular, the question was how to present a folkloric collection that has been created in the past and is the product of a particular vision and socio-historical context, while approaching it with a contemporary outlook. Since its origin, the museum has been primarily dedicated to urban folklore. For the new House of Alijn, the choice was made to let the thousands of objects and documents illustrate the many traditions of daily life in the past. By means of a thematic approach to the collection – with themes regarding the life cycle, popular religion, leisure time & recreation, trades & crafts, and home interiors – human love, pain, faith, passion, inventiveness and creativity are poignantly portrayed. In fact, the museum tells

The fifties. Photo Huis van Alijn

a timeless story about people and the way they shape their lives. It offers the public a startling introduction to the culture of everyday life in the city of Ghent, with a focus on the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.

In Flanders, given the difference in competencies for the Flemish Region and the Flemish Community, acknowledged museums are classified into three levels: the local, the regional and the Flemish level. In 2001 the Flemish Community officially recognised the House of Alijn as a museum at regional level. As a result of this recognition, the House of Alijn was granted funds in order to develop action on a supra-local level. From 2004 onwards the museum expanded its focus in time and space to everyday life in twentieth-century Flanders. New impulses come from important projects such as the development of a digital photo album and of film archives. The museum's collection has been extended to cover the post-war period and rooms have been furnished in the style of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. In January 2009 the Flemish Community recognised the House of Alijn as a museum at the Flemish Community level. Only thirteen museums have been recognised at the Flemish level, among which the SMAK (the Museum of Contemporary Art) and the Museum of Fine Arts in Ghent, and in the field of folk culture only the House of Alijn and the open-air museum Bokrijk belong to that category.

In spite of its long history, the museum has taken on an explicit new profile since 2000. A new mission and vision text was written in 2009, presenting the choice of policies and method of the House of Alijn: 'Since the House of Alijn has a passion for the culture of everyday life – then and now, here and elsewhere – it likes to share that passion in a dynamic, reflective, inspiring and mind-broadening way with everybody, young and old, in order to bring forward and pass on ideas, stories and images that generate meanings. The House of Alijn wants to be a meeting place, a real and virtual workplace of memory where hyperlinks can be established between past, present and future.'

This mission determines the heartbeat of our organisation. Not only does it tell something about our way of working and thinking, and our organisational culture; it also indicates the direction in which we conceive the future of the museum as an exchange platform and as an institution anchored in a heritage community.

Heritage communities and community museums

The introduction of the concept 'heritage community' is an important key to the modernisation of Flemish cultural heritage policy and to its adjustment to international developments. The origins of this concept are to be found in the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. This framework convention makes a link between right to heritage and the obligation to respect one's own heritage and the heritage of others. Why is this concept so interesting? And what is meant by 'a cultural heritage community'? A cultural heritage community is a community consisting of organisations and persons who have a passion for cultural heritage. By means of public action they want to value, preserve and pass on this heritage to future generations. The concept 'heritage communities' is interesting because such communities can evolve around every possible aspect of the preservation and valorisation of cultural heritage, ranging from religious heritage to computer heritage, both material and immaterial.

The binding force of such a heritage community is of the utmost importance to the House of Alijn: people are brought together and their interest in or their concern about a certain aspect of heritage is recognised. Not only do we enable participation, but also sharing. People are allowed to determine what is heritage. In addition, the introduction of the concept 'heritage community' has another important surplus value: by using the concept in its Heritage Decree (passed in 2004 and as of 2008 part of the Decree on the Development, Organisation and Funding of the Flemish Cultural Heritage), the Flemish Community acknowledged its genuine belief in the power and creativity of people and organisations. A heritage community can stimulate interaction and it can incite people to become committed and involved. At the same time the notion of diversity is introduced, making it possible to distinguish a large variety of heritage communities. In this set-up the concepts heritage community and community museum are very much related.

It is obvious that the concept of heritage communities plays a significant role in the Flemish Heritage Decree. Hence, the House of Alijn also chose to emphasise its significance and to work with and for a community consisting of various heritage communities, comprising both individuals and organisations with a passion for the culture of everyday life. The idea underlying community museums and heritage communities is networking: in other words, the abovementioned binding force. The House of Alijn participates in multiple networks and achieves many goals through them. Structural cooperation on a policy level has been established in various areas with for example the City of Ghent, with interface centres such as FARO, with intrinsic partners such as the heritage cells and with 'soul-mates' like the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. In addition to these structural collaborations, the House of Alijn also continuously takes part in thematic cooperation. One such cooperative project was the exhibition 'This is boxing!' that took place in spring 2010. During the preparation of this exhibition the House of Alijn worked closely with several local boxing clubs and contacted various boxing leagues, as well as the Sportimonium, the Flemish Sports Museum. Every project of the House of Alijn implies the collaboration with experts, be it professional organisations, amateur associations or private persons. Each time sharing passion and knowledge is the main objective.



The museum. Photo Huis van Alijn

Empowerment and emancipation for all

How does a heritage institution for the collection management of items pertaining to everyday life in the twentieth century relate to issues of empowerment and emancipation? The House of Alijn gives a multiple interpretation to those concepts. Not only does it aim for empowerment with regard to content and subject matter; the empowerment of people, both within the museum practice and through the museum's interaction with the outside world, is also at the forefront of its goals.

In Flanders the House of Alijn is one of the pioneers among the innovatory movements in the field of folk culture heritage. Since 1999, the basis and growth potential of cultural heritage, especially in the field of folk culture, have expanded enormously. The foundation for this evolution was laid in 1998 with the Decree of Popular Culture. Thanks to the creation of the Flemish Centre for Popular Culture, nowadays incorporated in FARO, the interest in and support for the field of folk culture and local history could be developed considerably. For the House of Alijn these were the ground-breaking years. As a result, nowadays the House of Alijn does not use the concept 'folklore', but 'cultural heritage of everyday life'. This designation enables the museum to show new themes, views and approaches that are different from the traditional subjects. The new heritage debate allows to cut across the classical construction of the 'folkloristic norm' and to broaden perspectives to an interdisciplinary level. Every aspect of everyday life is dealt with. Under the common denominator of heritage both typical and traditional folkloristic subjects and new, contemporary themes are treated together and side by side. In the end, the combination and the interaction of those two aspects lead to beautiful, meaningful stories.

Heritage of everyday life

Thanks to the Heritage Decree and the new heritage debate, the appreciation of 'folk culture' has been reinvented; what is more, it has been saved and has obtained a new future. The heritage of everyday life has been given a new meaning and a new interpretation. The concept has been broadened and is no longer the privilege of specialists. The House of Alijn was one of the pioneers who put this model into practice through its collaboration with the public and who realised it in a museum environment. When in 2001 the House of Alijn celebrated its first birthday, it organised 'Men with beards', an exhibition about the garden gnomes which cheer up many Flemish gardens. This exhibition consisted of three night-time invasions of garden gnomes in the city of Ghent: 13,000 white gnomes were spread out on specifically chosen spots. A manifesto accompanied each invasion, stating that garden gnomes are an expression of folk culture and folk culture is cultural heritage. The gnomes conquered both the city centre and the nineteenth-century outskirts, which are labour and migrant districts.

On another level, the theme 'culture of everyday life' and the common ground it shares with personal life create a special bond with the public. The specific approach of the House of Alijn enhances that relationship with the public. By maintaining an open approach to the world, the museum strives to treat heritage with an inventive mind which guarantees quality while consolidating the interaction with the contemporary external environment. The use of the verbs 'share, bring forward and pass on a passion' in the mission statement illustrates the way in which the House of Alijn wants to define its relationship vis-à-vis the outside world and the public at large, including visitors, colleagues, as well as researchers and producers. Hereby the museum does not restrict itself to one-way traffic, but makes an explicit choice for two-way communication relying on dedicated staff that aims actively at interaction with the public. The public is invited to make a contribution, to participate and to be involved. This is a fundamental choice implying radical consequences. It means that empowering the public and the collaborators is a major challenge that must be dealt with.

To the House of Alijn the concept of 'community museum' means a lot more than mere public participation in the existing museum 'hardware'. It is clear that many projects could not be realised or take place without the active contribution of the public. The public is not seen as mere visitors; on the contrary, they are seen as participants. In years to come, public involvement will have to be broadened and deepened. The House of Alijn strongly believes in that aim: it justifies the museum's existence and it represents its future. In Flanders it has earned a strong reputation because of its appeals to the people. Reactions to those appeals often determine the results, both with regard to content as to the form. One illustrative example is the film project for which the House of Alijn asked the public to contribute with amateur films about twentieth-century family life. The response to the appeal was such that this resulted in an exhibition and even in a small permanent section of the museum. Another example is the search for an original can of the

Belgian canning factory Marie Thumas, which the museum for a publication. There were so many reactions that the museum was able to organize a Marie Thumas exhibition as part of the Week of Taste.

Volunteer group

Consequently, the Huis of Alijn has chosen to present itself as an easily accessible institution. The museum works with professionals, organisations and collectors, but also with people who have little or no experience in visiting museums or collaborating with them. Thereby, the museum's thematic approach is oriented towards specific target groups or communities. One of the major pillars in the operation of the museum is its strong volunteer group. The Friends of the House of Alijn is a very heterogeneous group of people, ranging from professors and directors to semi-skilled workers. They have one thing in common: they are ardent supporters of the museum. The volunteers and friends act as ambassadors for the museum: they promote the museum, respond to appeals and offer other forms of support.

The cooperation with volunteers can take unexpected forms. As a matter of fact, volunteers have organised their own exhibition. For 'Baekelandt's eureka moment. One century of bakelite' the museum cooperated with a private collector and authority on early plastics. In the end this person became the actual curator of the exhibition, writing the museum texts and giving guided tours. Since then, he publishes blogs, takes pictures for the museum and has further developed his expertise on plastics. As for the museum attendants, these are retired people who are committed to the House of Alijn and who support the philosophy and mission of the museum. Far from acting like robots, they are there to make visitors feel at ease. They are real people and every one of them has his or her own style. Some of the attendants are retired teachers, others have had limited schooling, but they are all equally involved in the museum.

Altogether, the House of Alijn cannot be defined as a one-track community museum: none of the target groups have a priority over others. The House of Alijn is a convinced advocate of a broad view. It does not appeal to you because you are young or old, because you are a migrant, because you practice a particular sport or because you have a pet. No, everybody can make a claim to the 'heritage of everyday life'. Here is a place where heritage is there to touch hearts and arouse spirits!

REMEMBERING STORY AND PLACE

'Privileged places', 'lieux de mémoire' and their meaning for a city or community museum

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Remembering story and place ‘Privileged places’, ‘lieux de mémoire’ and their meaning for a city or community museums: introduction

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An interesting, and in relation to city museums relevant development, is the development that has been identified as topographical or spatial turn (Döring & Thielmann eds. 2008). The amalgamation of the concepts of ‘museum’ and ‘place’ has a long tradition in museological practice, from the Landesmuseen of the early 19th century, through the Heimatmuseen of the early twentieth century to ecomuseums (Meijer-van Mensch & Van Mensch 2010). In 1983, Hermann Lübke’s use of the term ‘musealisation’ was an expression of a radical dispersion of the concept of ‘museum’ in the concept of ‘place’ (Lübke 1983). At the same time, museologists started to talk about fragmented museums (De Varine 1973) or de-concentrated museums (Van Mensch 1989), or used metaphors such as ‘string-of-pearls’ or ‘necklace model’ (Davis 1999). The paradox of the topographical turn in museology is that fragmentation serves the idea of integration. Museality as museum specific value or significance merges with concepts such as *genius loci*, power of place, sense of place, landscape character, cultural biography, privileged place, and *lieu de mémoire*.

Lieu de mémoire

Pierre Nora’s concept of ‘lieu de mémoire’ has proven to be a very powerful concept, even though not always well understood, as Paul Knevel explains in his paper. Knevel challenges the tendency to take ‘lieu’ literally, as physical place. On the other hand, the *lieu de mémoire* approach does help to identify the multilayered (and sometimes contested) meanings of sites.

Knevel’s description of *lieu de mémoire* as concept reminds us of Laurajane Smith’s use of the concept of heritage (Smith 2006). It is, in Knevel’s words, ‘above all about the way history is remembered and used’. Or, as Smith puts it, heritage is ‘not so much as a “thing”, but a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present’ (Smith 2006: 2). Thus, by definition, memory and heritage are contested.

The case study presented by Knevel (the Battle of Blood River, between Zulu and British armies), is an interesting example showing two conflicting interpretations of one historical event, resulting in two interpretation centres. Considering the case study, it does not come as a surprise that Knevel suggests to speak of museums as places of selective instead of collective memory.

Privileged place

Solange Macamo introduces the concept of ‘privileged place’. Like *lieu de mémoire* the concept basically refers to collective signification, ranging from use value through social value to spiritual value. To illustrate the concept, Macamo analyses four (pre)historic sites in Mozambique. Her emphasis is on the continuity of indigenous, colonial and post-colonial interpretations, rather than focussing on contested interpretations.

The same emphasis on continuity is found in Renger de Bruin’s description of the cultural biography of the square in front of the cathedral at Utrecht, Netherlands (Domplein), reflecting 2000 years

of history. A multi-layered historical site might be a privileged place, but is not automatically a *lieu de mémoire*. In the case of the Domplein, only recently the different layers are made explicit by 'commemorative items' such as lines in the pavement, concrete boundary posts, and tablets. But still one can ask the question whether the site is functioning as a place of collective meaning. To be (come) a *lieu de mémoire*, a site needs to be appropriated. This doesn't seem to be the case; neither is the square a contested site. The references to different historical layers exist side by side and do not conflict. If there is any relevance in the present, the site's identity fosters inclusion, rather than exclusion.

Conflicting interpretations

The case study presented by Patrick Abungu shows that behind an apparent inclusive site conflicting interpretations may be hidden. Abungu analyses the heritage value(s) of historical caves at Shimoni, in the coastal region of Kenya, formerly used by Arab slave traders. The conflict inherent of the heritage value is the conflicting significance of the caves to the descendants of those that were sold as slaves, and the descendants of those that played a role in the slave trade. 'Does the cave belong to those whose kinsmen were sold or those who sold others?' asks Abungu, adding 'Or does it belong to the visitor who determines how the presentation is done and shapes the narrative in order to have a certain desired experience?' The interests of the visitors generate economic conditions that increasingly determine the broad acceptance of one, i.e. a one-dimensional interpretation of the site.



Abungu emphasises that the caves are part of a rich heritage landscape. However, the local community has decided to develop the caves and their role in the slave trade as tourist destination at the cost of all other layers of significance of the area.

Multi-site

In contrast to Shimoni, the destination of the Belgian city of Bruges is based on the complementary use of a diversity of sites throughout the city. Aleid Hemelryck describes how the Bruggemuseum has developed as a multi-site museum. Its ten sites 'offer a thematic look at the history of Bruges. In this thematic-chronological approach, each site focuses on one particular theme across the ages'. This 'horizontal' approach is enriched by a 'vertical' approach in which the historical development of one site is explored. A case in point is the Provincial Court showing a succession of conflicting architectural reflections on the historicity of the place. The museum uses this site to discuss the concepts of heritage and authenticity in contemporary city planning.



In case of Bruges, the sites are part of the museum infrastructure. In case of Shimoni, the National Museum of Kenya plays a complementary role, based on partnership with the Shimoni Slave Cave Management Committee. One could say that the museum contextualises the interpretation of the caves by focussing on the heritage landscape of the whole area. The role of the Centraal Museum at Utrecht is more detached. Whereas in Bruges and Shimoni the museums look for *in situ* involvement, the approach in Utrecht is based on *ex situ* preservation of objects related to the site.

The case studies of Mozambique, Utrecht, Shimoni and Bruges illustrate three positions in dealing with the management of a multi-layered cultural biography, from an integrated approach (Mozambique, Bruges), through the application of a 'principle of equivalence', i.e. the equality of all layers (Utrecht) to the application of a 'principle of preference', i.e. giving preference to one

layer and one interpretation (Shimoni). In Bruges and Utrecht the role of the museum follows the principle behind the management of the site(s). In Shimoni the museum counterbalances the one-dimensional interpretation of the site.

The authors have dealt with different ways as to how museums can conceptually and physically relate to specific sites and their cultural biography. Each approach brings about its own balance between selective and collective memory. Contrary to Knevel's example, the case studies emphasise reflection and contextualisation as the core of the museum approach. To what extent a museum (fragmented or not) is or should be a battlefield of conflicting interpretations is a question that still waits to be answered.

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The Lieux de Mémoire or a plea for more historiography in city and history museums

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It is a well-known secret that famous books are much talked about but seldom read. This also seems to be true in the case of Pierre Nora's seminal series *Les lieux de mémoire*, published in seven volumes between 1984 and 1992. In it some 130 of these *lieux* are comprehensively described and discussed by a pick of the best French historians around. Nora himself defined a *lieu de mémoire* as 'any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by hint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of memorial heritage of any community'.¹ The seven volumes reveal the enormous scope of possible entities that fit that definition for the French community, varying from statues of great men to symbols like the 'tricolore' and the Marseillaise, from the Notre Dame to Versailles, from the medieval *Grandes Chroniques de France* to the historical work of the Annales school, and from Descartes to 'le café'.² The project wasn't an instant success. The first volumes in the series received, at best, a lukewarm reception. But then it took the critics by storm. 'La révolution des lieux de mémoire', acclaimed *Le Monde* on its front page when the last volumes were published.³ And a revolution it was. All over Europe Nora's concept was copied. Italy got its *luoghi della memoria* (1987), the Germans their *Erinnerungsorte* (2001), the Britons their *Theatres of Memory* (1996), the Dutch their *Plaatsen van herinnering* (2005-2007) and the Belgians recently their *Parcours van herinnering* (2008). All these multi-volumes series could be seen as proof of Nora's amazing success. But at the same time, they illustrate the flexibility and adaptability of his concept, or to put it differently, its elusiveness and lack of conceptual rigour. Anything goes; one is almost inclined to think. But does it?

The Dutch version: Plaatsen van herinnering

Take for instance the Dutch version, the four volumes series *Plaatsen van herinnering*. At first sight, Nora's original concept seems to be all over the place, in the title, in the introductions to the different volumes and in the accompanying marketing strategy: at last a Dutch version of Nora's masterwork. But then something strange happens: one of the editors duly presents the series as a genuine history book.⁴ And indeed, the aim of the series seems to tell the stories behind 160 important topographical sites in Dutch history. The series of books could, in other words, be used as an extraordinary tourist guide, a 'green Michelin', guiding you to 'the most beautiful historical places', conveniently organised in a chronological order, from 'Hunebedden', the megalithic tombs of 3200 B.C.E. till the Palazzo di Pietro, the Rotterdam city villa of the murdered populist politician Pim Fortuyn (2002). And although every site is, according to the editors, selected because it 'remembers radical developments in the political, cultural and social history' of the Netherlands, in reality, the memory-part in most of the essays is reduced to an afterthought, a 'now and then' or a 'what still does remind of the place'. The selected places are thus the main actors in these books and not the people who selected them as important sites, worshipped them or just forgot them.⁵ I would like to argue that this Dutch elaboration is a watering down of Nora's original concept and in a way characteristic for the more popular use of the concept. Nowadays, everybody seems to be talking about *lieux de mémoire* and defining more and more of these extraordinary places. But what does that really mean? And what is the relevance of the concept for city and history museums?

Pierre Nora: between memory and history

Let me return briefly to *Plaatsen of Herinnering*. This Dutch version of the *lieux de mémoire*

¹ Pierre Nora, "From Lieux de mémoire to Realms of memory. Preface to the English language edition," in *Realms of Memory: The construction of the French past* (Columbia University Press 1998): I xv-xxiv, xvii. This wide-ranging definition flabbergasted some commentators: 'Is there anything that isn't a "lieu de mémoire"?' Cited after Tony Judd, "À la recherche du temps perdu: France and its pasts," in *Idem, Reappraisals. Reflections on the forgotten twentieth century* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008), 196-218, 203.

² *Les Lieux de mémoire*. Vol 1, La République; Vol 2, La Nation; Vol 3, Les France (Paris: Galimard, 1984-1992).

³ Niek van Sas, "Towards a new national history: Lieux de mémoire and other theaters of memory," in Joep Leerssen and Ann Rigney, eds., *Historians and social values* (Amsterdam: AUP, 2000): 169-183, 173.

⁴ W. van der Doel, "Amsterdam: het Anne Frank Huis", in *Plaatsen van herinnering. Nederland in de twintigste eeuw*, ed. W. Van der Doel (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2007): 19.

⁵ Compare Frank van Vree, "Locale geschiedenis, lieux de mémoire en de dynamiek van de historische cultuur", *Stadsgeschiedenis* 3, 1 (2008): 62-70, 66-67.

was published between 2005-2007, at a moment that the discussion in the Netherlands about the relevance of national history and national identity had reached its zenith, symbolised by the government's decision to compile a historical canon and build a national historical museum in Arnhem. Seen from this perspective the series was a clever response to the needs and insecurities of a society in historical disorder. It was meant as 'a contribution to the discussion about the historical canon, the Dutch identity and the national past'.⁶

Pierre Nora, in a way, had had similar intentions when he developed his concept in the late 1970s and 1980s. France had, according to Nora, gone through what he called a 'grande passage', a drastic transformation in which the old certainties, questions and problems that had preoccupied and defined France for so long, were gone or no longer relevant. 'Few eras', he wrote, 'have experienced such a questioning of the coherence and continuity of its national past ... We knew formerly whose sons we were, [but] ... today we are the sons of no one, and of everyone'.⁷ As a consequence, the old past-present relationship had lost its function and meaning. The past had become a world apart, a foreign country where they do things differently.

As the genuine French intellectual he is, Nora not only observed this transformation but diagnosed it in a poetic and profound way. Due to modernisation, democratisation, mass culture and globalisation, France, his argument went, had lost its traditional *milieux de mémoire*, its 'real environments of memory' of before the French revolution. At times, Nora could be emphatically nostalgic about these old *milieux de mémoire*, infused as he thought they were with the spirit of real life. There he situated a 'true memory', found in 'gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body's inherent self-knowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories'.⁸ These lively *milieux de mémoire* were, however, in modern times overtaken by what had become their antithesis, history, that rational, cool, and scientific study of the past by professionals.⁹

Somewhere in modern society memory and history had grown apart: whereas memory had lost its obvious meaning and function, and had become a private phenomenon, history had developed into a social science, no longer naturally connected to the communities at large.

Cementing memory, history and nation

Contemporary France thus needed a new relationship with its past and a rethinking of the role of the historian. For a short time, Nora argued, memory and history had had a symbiotic relationship, bounded together through the nation state of the nineteenth century. The role of the historian had, however, always been a complicated one. On the one hand, the professional historian was a creature of the modern nation, a 'half preacher, half soldier', who had to acquire for the holy nation a holy history, a sacred foundation.¹⁰ But in becoming a professional, the new-born historian had, on the other hand, developed a critical attitude that was potentially dangerous to the new nation. 'Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation', Eric Hobsbawm once crudely summarised the more profound analysis by Ernest Renan of the role of myths and selective memory for the new nation state.¹¹ 'Getting history wrong', is, of course, not what professional historians think they are doing. And indeed, more and more they started to discuss and disprove the myths the nation needed, with a scientific rigour that a non-professional audience hardly could appreciate. Consequently, the genre that had cemented memory, history and nation together, that of national history, became in the eyes of the twentieth century professional historians more and more suspect. It was old-fashioned, conservative or even worse.¹²

The new past-present relationship contemporary France needed could thus neither be based on history nor on true memory. The last one was gone forever. History, however, was not an alternative, therefore it was simply too cool, too distant and too rational, 'a forever problematic and incomplete reconstruction of whatever was', in the words of Nora.¹³ But happily there was a way out of this uneasy situation: the '*lieux de mémoire*'. The warm *milieux* of traditional France may no longer exist, but the realms of memory are still around, trying to stop time, to block the work of forgetting. They are, in Nora's poetic language, 'moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea

⁶ H.L. Wesseling, "Plaatsen van herinnering: een nieuwe visie op het verleden. Algemene inleiding bij de reeks," in *Plaatsen van herinnering. Nederland van prehistorie tot Beeldenstorm*, ed. Wim Blockmans and Herman Pleij (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker 2007):21.

⁷ Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire I. La République* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984) xii, xxxiii.

⁸ Pierre Nora, "Between memory and history: Les lieux de mémoire", *Representation* 26 (1989): 7-24, 8-9.

⁹ *Ibidem*: 8-9, 11.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*: 10-11.

¹¹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalists since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 12; Ernest Renan, "Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?", in Ernest Renan, *Discours et conférences* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1887): 284-285.

¹² Paul Knevel, "Public History. The European reception of an American idea?", *Levend erfgoed. Vakblad voor public folklore & public history* 6, 2 (2009): 4-8.

¹³ Nora, "Between memory and history": 8.

of living memory has receded'.¹⁴ Such a *lieu de mémoire* is however never given, but by definition a construction, developed in a long process of annexation, attaching meanings, articulation and forgetting. And here the professional historian comes in again. He has to analyse and decipher this complex process of construction; he is writing 'history in the second degree'.¹⁵



Search for the essence

It took Nora and his team eight years to finish the project. During these years Nora's *lieux de mémoire* underwent some profound changes and generated some new ambitions.¹⁶ What had started in the first volume as a way out of the wrestling with the difference between history and memory, ended in the last volume with an essay about how to write the history of France ('comment écrire l'histoire de France'). The series *lieux de mémoire* had developed, in other words, into a search for the essence of French history. In the end, each and every studied *lieu* is supposed to be 'toute la France, à sa manière'.¹⁷ And it was this ambition to write a new national history for new times that generated the most scholarly criticism: what was really new about the whole project?

This is not the place to dwell too long on this discussion.¹⁸ Nora and his team may indeed at times be imprecise about the meaning of such relevant concepts as nation, too reverential about the lieux they selected and too silent about the dark pages of French history. Nonetheless, the best essays in the series demonstrate the surplus value that could be gained by their approach. Instead of the exclamation marks of the grand narratives of former days, Nora uses question marks as a starting point for a series of excavations into the national history of France. Seen from that perspective, the series offered an intriguing alternative to the national histories of the old days.

¹⁴ Ibidem, 12

¹⁵ Nora, "From Lieux de mémoire to Realms of memory", xxiv: 'A history that is interested in memory not as remembrance but as the overall structure of the past within the present: history of the second degree'.

The victorious Boers were the first to claim and annex the battle site. In 1886 they erected a simple stone pillar, which has been part of a replica of their laager of ox-wagons since 1971. Photo Angelique Hardoar

The Boer laager of ox-wagons. Photo Angelique Hardoar

¹⁶ Compare the lucid analysis by Judt, "À la recherche du temps perdu".

¹⁷ P. Nora, *Les lieux de mémoire*, III, *Les France*, I (Paris: Gallimard, 1986) 9-32, 22-23.

¹⁸ See, for instance Steven Englund, "The ghosts of nation past", *The Journal of modern history* 64,2 (1992): 299-320. Further on the reception: Van Sas, "Towards a new national history".



In the second half of the 1950s, the multiracial Johannesburg township Sophiatown was destroyed by the Apartheid's regime. On the ruins of it, a completely new, all-white neighbourhood was then built: Triomf. Situated in one of the few original buildings of old Sophiatown, the former residency of ANC-president A.B. Xuma

'The originality of *Lieux de mémoire*', Nora, humble as always, writes, 'consists in the effort to decompose ... [the] unity [of the old national histories of France], to dismantle its chronological and teleological continuity, and to scrutinize under the historian's microscope the very building blocks of which traditional representations of France were constructed'.¹⁹ Nora's ambition is to think about the nation without nationalism.



Nora is a Frenchman. Consequently, his project had a profound French character, organised around typical French themes as 'La République', 'La Nation' and 'Les France' (in plural). But Nora's wrestling with the relationship between history and memory, his dislike of the old national histories, and his ambition to write a relevant history for a new time was felt all over Europe, albeit everywhere with different emphasises and perspectives. So the German historians used their *Erinnerungsorte* to find out what Germany after the 'German century' (with its two world wars, dictatorship, holocaust, division and reunification) was all about, while in the Belgian version the continuing crisis of the Belgian federal state defined much of its content. Some followed Nora's loosely definition of a *lieu*, presenting a varied collection of monuments, places, buildings, institutions, ideas and symbols; others, like the Dutch and the Belgians, opted for a more specific definition by only selecting real existing places of memory. Nora's own question, if his concept was exportable to other countries, could thus be answered in the affirmative.²⁰

¹⁹ Nora, "From *Lieux de mémoire* to Realms of memory," xix.

A historiographical concept

I may have been dwelling too long on Nora's intentions and ambitions. But I did it on purpose, to demonstrate that *lieux de mémoire* is above all a historiographical concept. All too often the concept is too easily equated with historical places, with the idea that it means telling what happened at a certain site or telling the history of a place. There is nothing wrong with stressing the importance of historical places. On the contrary, I am a big fan of using specific historical sites to retell or illustrate history.²¹ But the emphasis in *lieux de mémoire* is not on generating a sense of place to bring history alive, it is not even on the histories that took place on a particular spot. 'It is', Nora writes, 'one thing to describe the prehistoric paintings on the walls of Lascaux and quite another to analyse, using the speech delivered by the President of the Republic on the fiftieth anniversary of the cave's discovery, how archaeology provided France with a memory extending back in time well beyond "our ancestors the Gauls"'.²²

²⁰ Pierre Nora, "La notion de 'lieu de mémoire' est-elle exportable ?" in *Lieux de mémoire et identités nationales*, ed. P. den Boer and W. Frijhoff (Amsterdam: AUP, 1993): 3-10.

A *Lieu de mémoire* is thus above all about the way history is remembered and used, about questions like who owns history, who attaches meaning to a specific event, symbol or site or who tries to forget it. Any study of a *lieu de mémoire* illustrates, in other words, the dynamics of the historical culture or, in the words of the Dutch historian Frank van Vree, 'the thought that the past is shaped in many theatres, each with its own rules and public, its own traditions and dynamics'.²³ 'History is the memory of things said and done', the famous American historian Carl Becker once stated,²⁴ and the concept of *lieux de mémoire* takes the memory-part of history-making deadly serious: how history lives on in memory, and is thus made by people, in the past and the present.

²¹ I used the concept of historical places and sense of place for instance in Herman Beliën and Paul Knevel, *Geschiedenis op straat. Wandelen door historisch Nederland* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005).

²² Nora, "From *Lieux de mémoire* to Realms of memory", xx.

²³ Frank van Vree, *De scherven van de geschiedenis. Over crisisverschijnselen in de hedendaagse historische cultuur* (Amsterdam: Vossius AUP, 1998).

²⁴ Carl Becker, "Everyman his own historian", *The American Historical Review* 37, 2 (1932): 221-236, 223.

Seen from this perspective, Nora's project fits into the broader memory boom that started in the 1980s and is closely related to the rethinking of the nation and nationalism that took place at the same time, resulting in such influential concepts as 'invention of tradition' and 'imagined communities'.²⁵

Historiography in the museum

But how do history and city museums come into all this 'history cum memory'? The concept of *Lieux de mémoire*, in the first place, helps museums to rethink the history and identity of a nation, a city, or groups, by questioning many of its presuppositions and manifestations: who, at what time, via what kind of media is talking to whom? Instead of 'celebrating' or just duly presenting the familiar 'grand narrative', the proper use of the *lieux de mémoire* concept helps to place cool question-marks, and to analyse what the studied history and sites have meant in the past and still mean today. And what are the best *lieux* to study: the familiar well-known sites and symbols, or the unknown, the forgotten or hidden ones? One of the most charming aspects of the many *lieux de mémoire* -projects around is their combining of low- and high-culture, of textbook and connoisseur examples and their highlighting of the unexpected. So in the German version, familiar sites as the *Brandenburger Tor*, the Hitler-Bunker and the 'Berlin Wall' are easily combined with the *Weisswurstel*, the Volkswagen and Karl May. As a consequence, the concept of *lieux de mémoire* generates alternative and surprising ways of presenting history. The Belgian version is a case in point. Their editors developed in the book five different tracks, all chronologically organised but from different perspectives, around places of history, places of expansion, places of discord, places of conflict and places of nostalgia.²⁶ The concept of *lieux de mémoire* thus helps to break through the ordinary, all too familiar, chronological presentations so often found in many history museums. It brings in new creativity.

Secondly, the use of the concept enforces us to think about the multi-layered meanings of a monument, a site, an object or a place. All too often a lieu is duly presented in museums or visitor centres as an important or interesting relic from the past, whose story has to be told, without asking about the relevance and meaning for the people of today. All too easily, a lieu transforms into a heritage site, a sanitised, easy-to-please version of the past, with all the raw edges left out. The *lieux de mémoire* approach may function as a counterbalance, as it underlines the process of selecting and forgetting, of inclusion and exclusion, as it illustrates the active process of history and memory-making.²⁷ The attractiveness of the site or object is still the starting-point of the *lieux de mémoire* method, but it avoids the less palatable aspects of the heritage boom by illustrating time and again that important or unknown icons are hard-won symbols, whose meaning is not given and fixed but changing over time due to the activities and agendas of real people.

Case study: Battle of the Bloodriver

Such a use of memory or historiography can help to deal with historical conflicts in transitional historical cultures. Let me give you an example from South Africa. On 16 December 1838 a bloody battle took place on the banks of the Ncome River, some 50 km from Dundee in nowadays KwaZulu Natal. On the morning of that December-day, an army of about 10,000 Zulu soldiers charged the *laager* of the white "voortrekkers", where some 500 armed men had withdrawn themselves in a ring of wagons. Wave upon wave of Zulu soldiers charged the *laager*, but their short spears were useless against the voortrekkers' rifles and cannons. Finally the Zulu attack faltered and the leading commander of the voortrekkers sent out a party of mounted commandos to pursue the shattered Zulus. The voortrekkers were merciless and shot every Zulu in sight. Some 3,000 people were killed, colouring according to legend the water of the river red. The 'trekkers' thought they had revenged their leader Piet Retief, who, earlier that year, was beaten to death at the Zulu king Dingala's kraal. The story of the Battle of the Bloodriver was for long one of the pillars of the white Afrikaner tradition and identity. No wonder they claimed and annexed the site of the battlefield, first by



On the other site of the river, the new Ncome Museum tells the story from the perspective of the Zulu

²⁵ Van Sas, "Towards a new national history".

²⁶ Jo Tollebeek, ed., *België, een parcours van herinnering. I Plaatsen van geschiedenis en expansie. II Plaatsen van tweedracht, crisis en nostalgie* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2008).

²⁷ Compare on the importance of memory-making Michael Frisch, *A shared authority. Essays on the craft and meaning of oral and public history* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990). bany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990).

erecting a simple stone pile in 1866, later by installing an ox wagon monument and in 1971, a replica of the original *laager*. For long, the site told the romantic and unproblematic story of the winners, of the brave white voortrekkers who, with God on their side, defeated an over-mighty enemy in their own terrain.

Lately, however, everything has changed. The visitor of today is confronted with two heritage sites, the old one of the voortrekkers, west of the river, and a brand new one, the Ncome Museum, on the east side of the river.²⁸ There the battle and the events leading to it are re-interpreted from the perspective of the Zulus. And although in words both visitor centres stress their willingness to collaborate, the heritage site itself tells a different story: both centres are worlds apart as they illustrate what Lucette Valensi has called the 'unfinished business of memory'.²⁹ In such a disputed situation the normal, critical historical inquiry of what really happened easily becomes a hazardous affair, due to the strong emotions involved and the powerful myths surrounding it. The *lieux de mémoire* approach, however, may be a way out of this situation, by analyzing the conflicting representations and linking the past and the present 'in a manner which is both historically responsible and relevant to a larger public'.³⁰

²⁸ www.ncomemuseum.org.za

²⁹ Lucette Valensi, "Traumatic events and historical consciousness. Who is in charge?" in *Historians and social values*, ed Leerssen/Rigney, 185-195. For the history culture after the fall of the Apartheid regime, see Anne E. Coombes, *History after Apartheid. Visual culture and public memory in a democratic South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004).

³⁰ Van Sas, "Towards a new national history", 179-182.



The Trevor Huddleston Centre tries to restore a world we have lost by showing the visitor a mix of exhibits, old photographs and lively testimonies of former residents. Photo Angelique Hardoar

Anchoring official memory

Probably this all sounds too intellectual and bookish. Reflecting on memory and history-making is something for specialised journals and books, but not for popular exhibits in a museum, is it? Probably, that is true, at least in some respects. Museums are above all places of beauty, entertainment, leisure and knowledge. Nor do I want to suggest that museums should always present a complex web of interpretations and images. Sometimes (or maybe most of the time) history is just the story of how things came about, of how and why change over times occurs. But museums are at the same time key-institutions in mediating the past, in giving material form to what seem reliable versions of the past; they anchor, in other words, official memory. But at the same time, they are not the neutral, objective and authoritative institutions they are often held by their visitors.³¹ Museum collections are not fixed or simply around, as you all know, but the result of decisions about collecting policy. 'Objects held by museums', Patricia Davidson once wrote, 'constitute a material archive not only of preserved pasts but also of the concerns that motivated museum practice over time. These concerns can seldom be separated from relations of power and cultural dominance. Museums have often been described as places of collective memory, but selective memory may be a more accurate description'.³² They are, in other words, perfect *lieux de mémoire* themselves, and they should, now and then, tell their visitors what that means. Sometimes, I admit, I am a bit of a dreamer, and in these idealistic moments I believe that history should provoke, not dictate meaning. It must, I still believe, be possible to present in museums history with layers, so that it evokes and involves. Maybe using the concept of *lieux de mémoire* is one way to achieve this. Obviously, it needs a lot of creativity, imagination and knowledge, but that is nothing new.

³¹ See on the popularity and trustworthiness of museums Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The presence of the past. Popular uses of history in American life* (New York: Columbia University Press 1998): 105-108.

³² Patricia Davidson, "Museums and the reshaping of memory", in *Negotiating the past. The making of memory in South Africa*, ed. Sarah Nuttal/Carli Coetzee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 146.

Towards a definition of privileged places for archaeological sites in Mozambique

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The concept of 'privileged places' * sheds light on pre-colonial utilization of natural places in Mozambique, in relation to political power, social dynamics and cultural and environmental interactions (Macamo 2006a). This changed over history. For example in Manyikeni, a pre-colonial Zimbabwe stone enclosure (13th-17th century), located in southern Mozambique, power relations were defined by the spatial division of the living areas. The elite ruling society was surrounded by walling, while the majority was living outside. I believe that stone buildings alone are insufficient indicators of elite settlement. Other factors should be taken into account to define privileged places, such as the availability of major resources namely, water, pastures, fertility of the land, river communication facilities and the Indian Ocean trade opportunities. However, the availability of resources was not static, since people were re-inventing, in the sense of creating, their own places through time, as is evidenced by the different forms of socialising occurring at these places (c.f. Castro Henriques 1998).

The prazo system

This is the case of the *prazo* system, an institution created by the Portuguese, in Mozambique, with influences from the local African society of the Zambezi Valley in the 17th century CE. Its function was to serve as a base for the gold and ivory trade and to guarantee income from peasant agriculture (Isaacman 1979: 27-36). The participation of *prazo* lords in the slave trade, between 1790 and 1830 sped up the decline of the whole system, since they concentrated on collecting income (p 31-2).

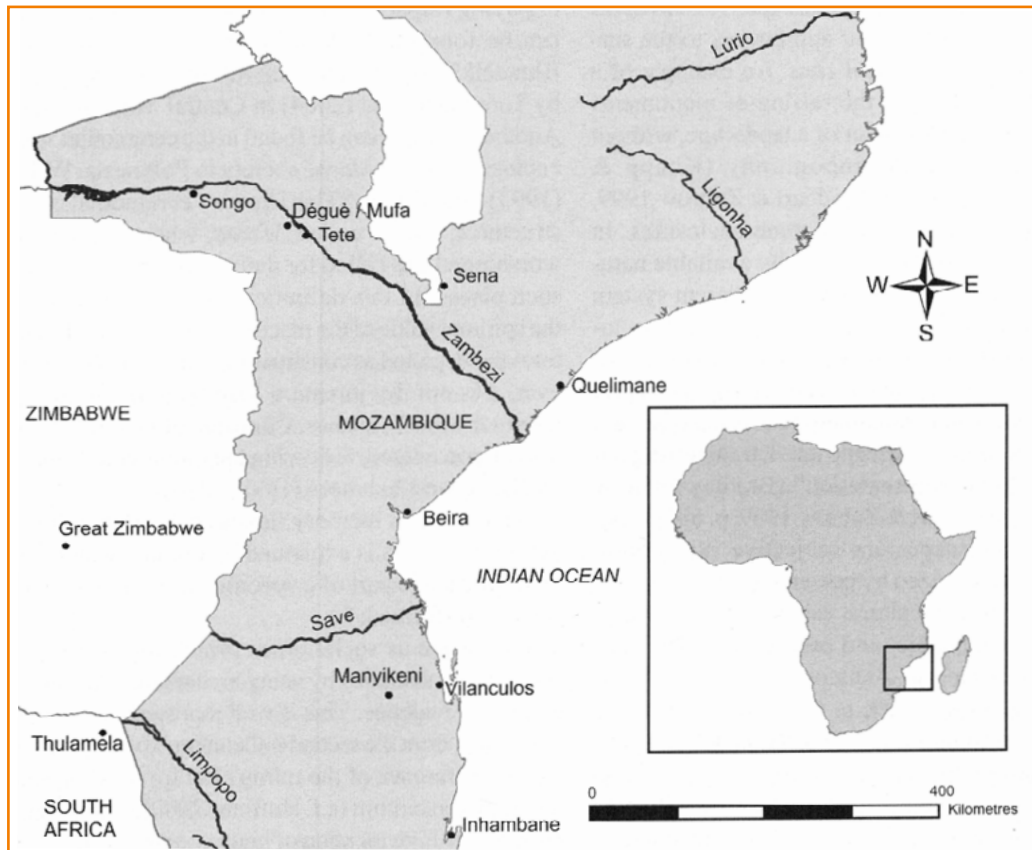
From some studied cases of *prazo* systems located in the Zambezi Valley, it was observed that, in the nineteenth century, the plantation area was generally associated with the workers from the local community (Castro Henriques 1998: 27). In contrast, the *prazo* holders were associated with the built place, where they lived (ibid). Thus, the identity can be linked to material patterning at different scales in the landscape, garden, town and region (c.f. Kealhofer 1999). This also indicates that the creation of landscapes of social hierarchy and government control took a long time. For example, initially, colonists constructed immediate landscapes, which tended to be small. Homestead and garden stood in contrast to their surroundings. Gradually, the landscape conformed to the colonist lifestyle and the nature of the space changed (p.59).

In this discussion, I thus avoid only using the environmental parameters as determinant criteria for the positioning of privileged places. Human ability to create benefits from the environment and the internal social, ideological and political dynamics were in the end the most important factors for the emergence of privileged places. Furthermore, the practice of living in a place transforms the landscape from being a set of natural resources to being a culturally and emotionally meaningful experience (Sørensen 2000: 153; Tilley 1994: 14-15). Although far from static, the meaning and feelings afforded to a place may be re-invented and transmitted through generations. The creation of privileged places was also constituted through the relations between local people and the physical and cultural environment, a fact that is evidenced through the archaeological material. For instance, the societal dynamics in the Zambezi Valley in Mozambique have testified to the establishment of the early cultural contacts. Thus the *muzungo* society, established on the basis of Swahili, African and Portuguese interactions is an example and underlines the cultural diversity of the country. This is also shown through the archaeological material in the area (Macamo 2006a).

* I thank Professor Paul Sinclair for suggesting this concept as applied to the Zimbabwe Tradition in Mozambique.

The cases selected for study

There is a tendency amongst archaeologists to face the past to define privileged places, as only the built environment, such as the stone enclosures *madzimbabwe*. The main *madzimbabwe* of Mozambique were previously studied by Oliveira (1973) who provided a general description about their existence. An integrated discussion of the best known site of Manyikeni was provided by Morais and Sinclair (1980) and Sinclair (1987) with a methodology of interpretation given within the Zimbabwe Tradition. This has allowed further discussion on the concept of privileged places (Macamo 2006).



The cases selected for study comprise four sites here considered privileged places.

Manyikeni The Manyikeni stone enclosure is situated 120 km south of the Save River and 50 km west of the Vilankulo Bay in the Mozambique province of Inhambane. It is on the coastal plains of the Indian Ocean, c. 112 m above sea level (Morais & Sinclair 1980). So far, this is the only Zimbabwe Tradition stone enclosure found relatively near the coast. This explains the importance of the site as a privileged place, mainly for trading. Manyikeni is also strategically located on an elevated area, although not a plateau. Here the first open air Museum was established in Mozambique, in 1979, which comprised an interpretive centre, now reconstructed with the support of OCPA (Observatory of Cultural Policy in Africa) and sponsorship by the Prince Claus Fund. The site of Manyikeni comprises an elliptical stone wall, about 50 m long and 65 m across, and surrounding settlement. Originally the walls were 2.50 m high and 1.50 m wide, made with undressed limestone. Manyikeni had trade links with the early first millennium coastal site of Chibuene, in Mozambique and with the interior especially Great Zimbabwe, in the present Zimbabwe.

Niamara The Niamara stone enclosure is located in central Mozambique in the Choa mountain range. It was constructed on the peak of Mount Niamara, or M. Nhacangara, southeast of the town Catandica, the capital of the district of Bárue in the Mozambique province of Manica. It is situated 880 km from Maputo, 20 km from the Zimbabwe border and 9 km from Catandica (Gerhartz 1973). The location of Niamara indicates that it is a privileged place. The view from the mountain

on which the stone enclosure is located is a wonderful one. It permits a wide view over the plain and the Gorongoza Mountains. The visibility is so good that the mountains more than 200 km away and also the Pungwe River can easily be photographed (Wieschhoff 1941: 38).

The Niamara stone enclosure is a testimony to the complexity of the Zimbabwe and Khami architecture. In the 1970s, Gerharz (1973) attempted to discuss the possible functions of Niamara excluding the possibility that it was a trading centre, a fortification or a residence of a ruler. He ventured to suggest, 'that Niamara could have been some sort of sacrificial site' (p.232). He based this on the spatial organisation of the enclosure, because 'the inner room probably contained materials or individuals which (sic) were supposed to be hidden from sight' and also on some architectural details since the inner room of one of the enclosures 'was also likely not (sic) a common living room as the threshold of its entrance is unusually high' (p.232). [Sic: The German text suggests that the inner room was a shrine or ritual place]. This opinion, however, needs further confirmation, with comparative material of similar sites. It is a fact that a ritual or ceremonial place in Niamara was also located outside the enclosure. The site of Niamara on the hilltop, differed from the Valley enclosure of Magure, but the two maintained gendered relations (Macamo 2006 b).



Campos and Kaphesse on a foot find survey in Songo, 1995

Songo The Songo platform is situated in the small town of Songo, established in the late 1960s (Plate 3). Songo is now the capital of Cahora Bassa district in the Mozambique province of Tete. The site is located on a small bedrock outcrop ca 130 km northwest from Tete City and about 10-12 km south of the Zambezi River. The location of the Songo stone enclosure in the central part of the plateau denotes the positioning of this settlement as a privileged place. This also means that the elite ruling class was able to manipulate the local environmental resources and keep control over the population. The Songo site was probably a conspicuous dwelling or reception platform with four houses and storage shed for salt or glass goods, which melted when the platform was burnt (Liesegang, pers.communication, 2006). It is a granite building of the Zimbabwe and Khami traditions, raised on a terrace slope.

Degue-Mufa Degue-Mufa is situated c. 25 km northwest of Tete town at an altitude of c. 180 m above sea level. It is located close to the village of Mufa, where a river with the same name enters the Zambezi River. This geographic position might have created a favourable situation for agriculture (c.f. Huffman 2000). The site is only 3 km southeast of Boroma, a locality and former *prazo* in the Changara district. The site Degue-Mufa refers to Degue, now a suburb of the Tete town, and Mufa, a tributary of the Zambezi River (Macamo, Risberg & Ekblom in prep.). Degue

is one of the *prazo* that Isaacman (1979) indicated on a map of the lower Zambezi Valley. The late 19th century CE Jesuit church of Boroma is located close to Degue-Mufa. In Tete town, the major Portuguese fortress of São Tiago Maior, which is related to the establishment of the town, is located close to the river. The fortress of Dom Luís, established in the 19th century, marks the west end of the town in ca 1870. The Songo stone enclosure is only 125 km away.

The definitions for privileged places: an overview

Privileged places in Mozambique are defined, in connection with the availability of natural resources, where they are located. They are preferably located near major river courses, such as the Zambezi valley (Songo and Degue-Mufa), because of the facilities for cattle breeding and agriculture, the major economic basis for privileged places. Other location factors include landscapes with extensive views, mountain high position (Niamara) and communication facilities for regional and long distance trade, offered both by river courses and the Indian Ocean (Manyikeni). Trade relations with the coast were held initially with the Limpopo and Save Rivers and later on with the Zambezi, in connection with the decline of the Great Zimbabwe State (Phillipson 1985). However, it is argued that the existing natural resources were not static, since privileged places were created to be transformed into a cultural and emotional experience.

Landscape definitions

Since people are part of the landscape, the various landscape elements will affect people's choice regarding everyday needs, including gender relations. The choices of privileged places are influenced by environmental parameters, such as water, vegetation, soil types, grazing possibilities, iron sources, topography, drainage system, transport facilities along the river and long-distance trade over the sea.

Places are privileged at different scales. There is also a correlation between physical and intangible values. The location concepts include both the constructed and conceptualised landscape. This involves the combination of different approaches to the surroundings of archaeological sites. An example of a constructed landscape is the raising of monuments that alter the visual character of a landscape, without radically changing the topography (Knapp & Ashmore 1999: 10-11; Stoddard & Zubrow 1999: 687). This is the case with stone enclosures. In many cases, apart from using locally available natural resources they are adjusted in a coherent system of construction, which incorporates the existing topography (Garlake 1970). The stone enclosure of Niamara was constructed in such a way. In addition, 'some monuments can reflect the very conformation of the landscape itself, transferring nature into cultural representation' (Bradley 1988: 123, quoted by Stoddard & Zubrow 1999, 687). Conceptualised landscapes are subjective. Such landscapes are characterized by powerful religious, artistic, political and other cultural values, with which they are endowed by people, and passed on through the generations (Knapp & Ashmore 1999: 10-11; Stoddard & Zubrow 1999: 687). The concept of landscape as meaning is linked to the broad category of conceptualised landscape, in terms of 'place-making' and understanding of which can be achieved through socio-anthropological studies (Stoddard & Zubrow 1999: 687).

'Ideational' landscapes

Therefore, landscape does not mean only the availability of resources for providing food, but can also be cognitive, a domain known by archaeologists as 'sacred landscapes' (Knapp & Ashmore 1999,1) or places with ceremonial and spiritual values. For example, Brink (2001) describes some of the sacred places and spaces found in Scandinavian landscapes (such as sacred islands, water and the tree or grove). There are also many examples of sacred places in Mozambique, including sacred forests (c.f. Ekblom 2004). One of these sacred forests is Chirindzene, located in Gaza province, in Southern Mozambique. By examining pottery found at the site, Ricardo Duarte suggested a probable association of the forest with the 19th century Gaza Nguni state (Duarte, pers.com. 2001 following Liesegang 1970; 1974a). Knapp and Ashmore (1999: 12) present another concept of 'ideational landscape'. It is both 'imaginative' (because it is a mental image of something) and emotional (because it cultivates spiritual values).

Local communities in Southern Africa, including Mozambique, value archaeological sites mainly because of their spiritual significance in relation to the ancestors (for example the realisation of rainmaking ceremonies in most sites has been a common means of paying respect to the ancestors). Examples of this can be found in rock art studies (see for example Blundell 2004, on San Rock Art and the recent work by Tore Saetersdal (2004) in Central Mozambique). Another example can be found in the ceremonial stone enclosures of the Marae society in Polynesia. Wallin (1993) found that 'The islands' ceremonial stone structures, the so called Marae, where the natives worshipped and called for their gods' (p.17) defined such places. In this definition, emphasis is given to the spiritual value of the place and the stone built structures are depicted as constructions and symbols. However, it is not my intention here only to discuss the spiritual value of places. Concepts of landscape will also be considered, following the themes put forward by Knapp and Ashmore (1999: 13-19):



Degue-Mufa view from the Chicolodwe hill.

Landscape as memory linked to the identity of its inhabitants. This is explained by the fact that generally, people are part of a specific environment, natural or transformed.

Landscape as social order, which offers a key to interpreting societies by using archaeological sources and other evidence. This is well represented in Southern Africa, from the second millennium CE, for instance, by the preference of the ruling elite for locating their dwellings on hilltops (c.f. Huffman 2000), as privileged places. The high location of houses is consequently an indication of power exercised by their occupants, as well as social differentiation. This reasoning cannot, however, be rigid, since there are other reasons for the higher location of houses. These are dictated by the need for keeping the houses away from areas near the rivers that are vulnerable to flooding. This was evidenced from the present location of some houses at the Degue-Mufa site.

Landscape as transformation. This concept includes the after-life of a monument. The remains of a monument are called ruins. People unfortunately often neglect them as they consider them not to have any use or function. Following Summers (1971: xiii), 'ruins' are things built by human hands, totally destroyed and impossible to restore to their original role. Ruins or the after-life monuments need constant care to avoid natural decay and humanly induced damage such as theft and treasure hunting.

The discussion on the landscape also includes resource areas (c.f. Fairhead & Leach 1999). These resources include items such as gold, iron and ivory. Their overexploitation for trade needs

greatly changed the landscape. Slaves were another resource for trade and they were used to produce more wealth. Several places in Mozambique became sources for the extraction of slaves that were traded as far away as the Comoro Islands and Madagascar during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Hundreds of thousands of people from Mozambique were captured and sold far away. Slaves were exchanged for cloths, firearms, beads, alcohol and other goods (Capela 1985; Liesegang pers.comm. 2005). Around 1750, the slave trade in Mozambique became more important when the sale of firearms was legitimised (Ellert 1993: 81).

Gendered places

Following Casimiro (1996), powerful women were also represented (such as queens and other most important women). Clear examples, in Mozambique, are the so-called *donas*, designating the land holding women of the Zambezi *prazos*. 'The Zambezi *donas*, on the whole, maintained their power and status until the beginning of the twentieth century, defying numerous decrees designed to put an end to the old *prazo* system. This shows the extent to which female succession had been accepted and recognised as the custom of the country, and not just an administrative order of an alien government' (Newitt 1973: 98, Serra 1986a: 49). However, the records are not clear 'whether a man, who is *senhor* of a *prazo* holds the position in his own right or through his wife' (p.98). It is likely that there were still a significant number of men who acquired land for themselves, and the dona's husband and father, in practice, decided issues related to the *prazos* (Newitt 1997: 212-214). This is one of the reasons why in the literature for the period here considered, there is still a tendency of focusing more on the role played by men for ruling the state and procuring resources, such as ivory and iron, for trade. However, I agree with Susan Kent when she says that 'women today and in prehistory never operated in isolation from men' (Kent 1998: 10) and the opposite is also true.

Another aspect to add to this discussion is that 'women, *in the past and today* live, work, fight and make sense of their lives in different social contexts, in the world and among different groups of women' (Casimiro 1996: 17; my translation and italics). There are also relations of subordination among women themselves and frequently of women over men (c.f. Casimiro 1996). This issue needs to be explored more archaeologically by studying the settlement organisation and distribution of resources through history. The ethno-archaeological theories combined with cognitive studies undertaken on Farming Community sites of Southern Africa offer some possibilities for this (Huffman 1986, 84-95), even if the methodology used has not always been well-understood by some scholars (see for example Chipunza 1994; Beach 1998: 47-72).

Previously, African Archaeology mostly emphasised the reconstruction of palaeo-environments, on early hominids, ruins, faunal remains and lithic artefacts. Gender in African Prehistory, edited by Susan Kent in 1998, attempts to fill this gap in African Archaeology (c.f. Kent 1998: 10). 'My focus here is gendered space (c.f. Sørensen 2000). It cannot automatically be assumed, without support from empirical data, that all societies divide space either by gender or by task function' (Kent 1988: 45). In defining privileged places, the understanding of architectural features is important for learning who one is, including confirmation of gender identity (Sørensen 2000: 165). This discussion helps to contextualize the selected sites of Songo and Degue-Mufa in the Zambeze Valley under the cultural influence of the *prazo* system.

Conclusion

During the twentieth century, archaeologists interpreted the *madzimbabwe* stone buildings of Southern Africa as the major indicator of prestige and power relations, dating from at least the tenth century. The elite stone enclosure at Manyikeni, a pre-colonial settlement in Inhambane province, Southern Mozambique, exemplifies social differentiation from the 13th-18th century after which the site was completely abandoned. Such an architectural approach is challenged by a broader definition of a site which includes the place itself. A close examination of different sources departing from archaeology, environmental evidence, including topography and landscape, as well as architecture, documentary sources and oral history has enabled the formulation of a concept

of 'privileged place' in Mozambique. In particular, environmental evidence indicates that prestige settlements were strategically located, for example, in relation to water, soils for agriculture, pasture, resource areas for mining and trade opportunities. The site of Degue-Mufa, located in the Zambezi valley and dated from the seventeenth century, demonstrates this. Finds from the site, local and imported ceramic and beads, indicate that this site enjoyed a privileged position for cultural interactions long established via the Indian Ocean, between African, Asian and European people based on trade. The stone enclosure of Songo dated from the eighteenth century, was a trading post with direct contact to the hinterland.

The meaning of privileged place has also changed over time in the history of Mozambique. The excavated materials in conjunction with the documentary sources show this. Places that were used mostly for agriculture and pasture were gradually converted into new uses, starting from the 16th century. The study of the *prazo* system of land tenure, developed in the Zambezi Valley, indicates that a process of *Africanization* also took place.

Privileged places also relate to gender. From cognitive studies undertaken in Southern Africa, it is believed that the hill-top is commonly associated with men, who exercise power over the rest of the population, while the valley is a female place. Other means of male power were cattle, for the accumulation of wealth and authority over women because of their role as reproductive labor. Women played a significant role in society through agricultural activities. This theoretical assumption is illustrated empirically by the fifteenth century hill-top settlement of Niamara and the valley settlement of Magure located in the highlands of Manica. The definition of privileged places essentially aims to assist heritage managers and decision makers in Mozambique by furnishing adequate criteria for evaluating archaeological sites, and some approaches were here discussed.

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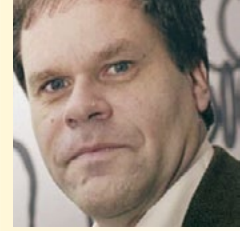
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Domplein: Utrecht's 'lieu de mémoire'

Renger de Bruin

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How else to characterise an article on this small patch at the heart of the Netherlands than with a title in three languages? A title in seven or eight might do it justice. For twenty centuries this spot has been at the crossroads of European cultures: Roman soldiers, English mercenaries, German emperors, a French philosopher, Hungarian students, and residents from all levels of society have all left their mark there. Its on-going development started in the first century Common Era when the Romans founded their fort at Trajectum, on the exact site of what is now Domplein in Utrecht's cathedral square. After outlining these early stages, I identify elements of two thousand years of history that are still visible in the square today, and then outline the bearing of Domplein on the collection in the city's Centraal Museum.

Site history in Roman and medieval times

First arriving in the Netherlands in the pre-Christian era, the Romans needed several decades to establish a permanent military and administrative infrastructure. In 47 CE, Emperor Claudius decided that the Rhine would be the northern border of the empire. Plans for further expansion were abandoned, making way for a defensive line whereby a chain of forts would protect the Rhine border against attacks from the opposite shore. One of these forts was Trajectum.

Archaeological excavations that started there in the 1920s confirmed earlier assumptions that this is where Utrecht's origins lay. Much more recently, excavations in the city's new Leidsche Rijn quarter cast entirely new light on the Roman border defences, the *limes*. In 69 BCE, the first wooden fort was destroyed during the uprising of the Batavians, a Germanic people who had been integrated within the Roman imperial structure. A later stone fort was abandoned at the end of the third century CE, during a period of deep crisis in the empire; as the surroundings were becoming increasingly marshy, the soldiers never returned to it. More than a century later, the Roman Empire collapsed entirely under the pressure of Germanic invasions.

Though it was long uncertain how the site of today's Domplein had fared, new research continues to provide answers. It seems that the abandoned fort remained and was occasionally occupied by Germanic groups. These were peoples referred to as Frisians and Franks. Though it is certain that the Frankish king Dagobert had a small wooden church built there in 629, a permanent Christian presence came only at the end of the same century when the Frankish ruler Pippin granted the old fort to the English monk Willibrord for use as a mission. Here Willibrord, whom the Pope had appointed archbishop of the Frisians, built a church dedicated to St Martin, the patron saint of the Franks. As bishops of Utrecht, Willibrord's successors had the church of St Martin as their cathedral.



The Cathedral
Photo: Renger de Bruin

In the mid-ninth century, pillaging Vikings sacked Utrecht and drove out the bishop. Eventually, sometime around 925, a successor returned to the Roman fort, which was still standing and which had a new use as a stronghold at the heart of the rebuilt St Martin's Cathedral. By then, the area was part of the East Frankish or German Empire, whose monarchs regularly visited Utrecht. Their own palace in the city, Lofen, stood near the Cathedral. St Martin's was rebuilt a number of times. In the years around 1020 a Romanesque church was built. After the great city fire of 1253, work started on a Gothic successor. Construction was to continue for several centuries, constantly interrupted by a lack of funds. In 1517 it ceased altogether, due to the sermons of the Protestant Martin Luther; indulgences had become too controversial a method of funding.

Site history in the Protestant Era

Initially, Protestants were severely persecuted in the Netherlands, but after 1560 a breakthrough finally came. The persecution had taken place largely at the insistence of the Spanish king Philip II, who owed his authority over Utrecht to his father Charles V, under whom the city's autonomy had come to an end. In 1566, mounting dissatisfaction exploded in a wave of iconoclasm. Though the Cathedral was spared, other churches in the city were plundered. Authority was quickly re-established, but Spanish domination ended when Utrecht joined the uprising of William the Silent in 1577.

Freedom of religion was established in the city. The Cathedral and most other churches remained Catholic, but a few others became Protestant. On 23 January 1579, the Union of Utrecht was signed in the Cathedral chapter house. This brought further union of some of the rebellious districts, displeasing William the Silent, who feared that the nature of the rising would become too Calvinistic and thereby repel Catholics. The next year, Catholic worship was indeed forbidden; the churches were confiscated. The two churches that stood on the site of the present Domplein were prepared for so-called 'Reformed' (i.e. Calvinist) services, while the second church on the square, the Old Minster, was demolished. Fifty years later, the Cathedral's chapter buildings were put at the disposal of the new university. The university's founder and standard-bearer was the orthodox Reformed theologian Gisbertus Voetius, a man who was involved in numerous debates, some of them with the French philosopher René Descartes who stayed for a time in Utrecht. The university gained a considerable reputation for Reformed theology and attracted students from all the countries in which Calvinism had become established. At one time, a Hungarian Reformed congregation even had its own room near the Cathedral. Voetius often preached in the Cathedral. In 1672, he was also to see the declaration by Louis XIV, whose troops had occupied the city, which made the Cathedral Catholic once more. Only eighteen months later, however, the French army left Utrecht and the Cathedral regained its Reformed status.

During a storm shortly afterwards, part of the Cathedral building collapsed. Due to the prevailing economic crisis and the debts incurred in repairing the devastation inflicted by the retreating French troops, its reconstruction was out of the question. The rubble from the fallen nave remained for many years and was even used for burials. During the eighteenth century, the ruins and tower also became notorious as a venue for homosexual encounters, which took place with the utmost caution; there were severe penalties for *sodomy*, as homosexual activities were termed. In 1730 a scandal erupted after a series of arrests, including those of such prominent citizens as Frederik Adriaan van Reede van Renswoude. Nearly twenty years earlier, van Reede had been Utrecht's negotiator at the Treaty of Utrecht, an international event which contemporaries saw as having brought *sodomy* to the city.



The 19th century models of the Cathedral and the Dom tower taken apart on scale. In the background a large reproduction of the Cathedral interior with the 15th sculptures. Presentation on city history concentrated on the Cathedral in the Centraal Museum. Photo Renger de Bruin

The condition of the buildings on Domplein became worse and worse until, in the 1820s, it was finally decided that radical restoration work was needed. Architect T.F. Suys was commissioned to renovate the choir and transepts, whose comfort and acoustics were also to be raised to contemporary standards. The remains of the nave were removed, as was the neighbouring Chapel of the Holy Cross. The tower was dealt with slightly later in 1901. Then the Cathedral had further restoration once more. By then, another project had long been completed in the cathedral square in 1892, when the main university building was opened. In this period, Domplein gained a completely new use as a major intersection. The tramways, the providers of a new means of transportation, laid ever more lines through the rapidly expanding town. These came together in Domplein. To provide space for the increasing flows of traffic, demolition started at Domsteeg, for example, transforming an alley into Domstraat, a much wider street.



View of the Domplein. The transepts and the choir of the Cathedral, separated from the tower. In the front, the monument of Jan van Nassau.
Photo Renger de Bruin

After World War II, much greater demolition was planned, both around Domplein and elsewhere. Work kicked off with the demolition of the western side of Korte Nieuwstraat, the street which enters the square. Then the tide changed; in the 1970s, a new awareness of national heritage developed. Plans for demolition gave way to extensive restoration projects, including those involving the Cathedral and its tower. In the 1970s, the university, which now had 25,000 students, continued the process it had started ten years earlier, gradually transferring eastwards to its new science centre at De Uithof. After much discussion, it was nonetheless decided that the main university building on Domplein would be retained and restored.

The visible and invisible history of the square

While many signs of this eventful history have disappeared, many have also remained both visible and hidden below ground. In 1913, the name 'Domplein' was given to the square created by the clearance work that had started in the 1820s. By then, the square already contained a monument to an historical event that had occurred there, a statue of Jan van Nassau, the initiator of the Union of Utrecht, which had been signed on the same site. The statue, a bronze designed by Jean Theodore Stracké, had eventually been unveiled in 1883.

In the same period, the southern side of the square changed much more radically. After lengthy debate about its design, construction began on the university's main building. After some 375 years later, this building still symbolises the site's connection with Utrecht's alma mater. The early twentieth-century restorations of the Cathedral and its tower, which had also removed the entrance created during the round of restoration a century earlier, revealed the full effects of the

1674 storm. The sheer size of the hole it created is apparent both from the roughly plastered opening left by the nave, and also from the remaining chapels, which now serve as the new entrance. The floor plan of the destroyed part of the church is indicated by paving laid in the 1970s, which enables visitors to see how large the nave would have been. The outlines of the earlier Old Minster and Chapel of the Holy Cross are indicated in similar fashion, providing an impression of the intensive construction that had been under way before the Minster's demolition in 1587. It also shows the complex situation with regard to rights of way, which had ensured that the nave and tower were never fully connected, at least not at ground level.

In recent years, various commemorative items have appeared in and around Domplein. In 1997, to mark the so-called Roman Year announced by the provincial authorities, concrete boundary posts bearing the years 47-1997 were placed along the *limes*. Since then, one such post has stood on the edge of the square, next to the site of the southern entrance to the former *castellum*. From a much later period of history, there are also the gravestones that were restored to the site of the nave. Between them is a tablet commemorating the persecution of homosexuals in 1730. Initiatives for making Domplein's history visible were given a powerful boost by a foundation, Stichting Domplein 2013, the brainchild of architect Theo van Wijk, who has developed an ambitious plan for exposing the treasures buried under the square. By providing a long-term perspective, he has generated the support not only of provincial and local authorities but also of businesses and funding agencies. The reason for choosing 2013 is that Utrecht will then be at the centre of celebrations marking the three-hundredth anniversary of the Treaty of Utrecht. Some of the plans have already been carried out. For example, the walls of the Roman *castellum* have been indicated in the paving in three places: on the southern side of Domplein near the concrete boundary post, in Servetstraat, next to the Cathedral tower and in Domstraat. Moreover in one of the buildings on the western side of the square, archaeologists have arranged two display windows showing finds from early twentieth-century excavations.

In September 2010, Stichting Domplein 2013 took the first step towards providing a glimpse into this buried world by opening the Treasury under the town's arts centre, Utrechts Centrum voor de Kunsten, on the northern side of the square at Domplein 5. Lying below this former primary school are the foundations of the *castellum* walls, which can now be seen during a guided tour. As well as display cabinets containing finds, there is also a film on the history of the site. A very different initiative has been launched by a second foundation, Stichting Herbouw Schip Domkerk 2013 (the 2013 Foundation for Rebuilding the Cathedral Nave). The intention is not to reveal ancient remains, but to reverse the effects of the calamitous storm of 1674 and of the nineteenth-century clearances. Using medieval construction techniques (but working much more quickly than their earlier counterparts), the project is intended to recreate the nave that was destroyed. Its completion is projected for around 2050.

The reconstruction of the Cathedral is an idea that has recurred with some frequency. In 2004, during the celebrations marking the 750th anniversary of the Gothic Cathedral, scaffolding was used to indicate the shape of the former building. In early 2008, during the year of religious heritage, the Chapel of the Holy Cross (demolished in 1826) was recreated at half its real size in ice. Unfortunately, due to a combination of heavy rain and extremely mild temperatures, it melted entirely within three days.

Domplein and the Centraal Museum

There are close links between Domplein and the development of the collection in the Centraal Museum. The museum's founder, Mayor H.M.A.J. van Asch van Wijck, had a great interest in cultural heritage; in a time of rapid change, he saved for posterity many relics of earlier ages. In 1836, for example, he prevented the demolition of the lantern of the Cathedral tower, which had been damaged by extreme weather. He also saved fragments of buildings that had fallen to the demolition hammer. To preserve them, he founded the Stedelijk Museum van Oudheden (City Antiquities Museum), which first opened to the public in September 1838 on the top floor of the

town hall. It was the Netherlands' first city museum, whose mission was to collect items pertaining to the history of the city of Utrecht. With the death of its founder in 1843, the museum lost some impetus, but items continued to arrive. Unfortunately the rubble of the collapsed Cathedral had been cleared several years before, but the scale models made for the restoration of nave and tower were given to the museum. The most important acquisitions in the museum's early years were five statutes which had been stored undamaged in the archives of the Cathedral chapter in 1581. When the chapters had been abolished by Napoleon in 1811, these and other church property had come onto the market. Because they had found their way into private collections in Utrecht, the city was able to acquire them for the opening of the museum in 1838. They were among its foremost showpieces.

Many more items from Domplein entered the museum's collection due to the various excavation, building and renovation projects that started after 1880. Work on the erection of the statue of Jan van Nassau revealed the foundations of the Old Minster, producing a number of damaged statues which had been dumped as rubble. They were taken to the museum, in all, nearly a hundred small exhibits. During the restoration of the Cathedral and the construction of the Academy Building, many more fragments from the buildings and statuary of the Cathedral complex arrived, representing several phases of architectural history.



View of the Domplein. The transepts and the choir of the Cathedral, separated from the tower. In the front, the monument of Jan van Nassau.
Photo Renger de Bruin

Under its energetic director and archivist, Samuel Muller, who was appointed in 1874, the museum pursued an active acquisitions policy. Heading the museum for nearly half a century, Muller was to catalogue the entire collection twice, and to arrange it in full three times: once in the original premises in the town hall, once at 'Het Hoogeland', a large house on the edge of the city to which the museum moved in 1890, and, finally, when the new Centraal Museum was installed in Agnietenklooster, a former convent. The latter opened to the public in 1921. By bringing together the collections of various city museums under a single roof, Muller was able to realise his longstanding ambition.

Unlike its predecessor, the new museum was not a historical museum, but contained a varied collection whose art-historical character became increasingly pronounced. Even after 1921 it, nonetheless, acquired important pieces reflecting the city's past. This was primarily the doing of Muller's successor, Dr. W.C. Schuylenburg, under whose directorship finds arrived from the Cathedral restorations of the 1920s. These included fragments of the Romanesque cathedral dating from the early eleventh century. Similarly, the most valuable items found during the excavations of the 1929-1949 period, which also exposed the foundations of Trajectum, the Roman *castellum*, were given to the museum. As well as part of a doorway, there was real treasure in the form of fifty gold coins, presumably the savings of a Roman officer who had buried them during the

Batavian uprising and had never returned to collect them. Unfortunately, some of these coins were stolen from the museum collection in 2003.

Domplein representations

As well as items from Domplein itself, the Centraal Museum has many paintings of the tower, Cathedral and square. Even in its early years, the museum acquired such works, old and contemporary alike. Among them is a canvas by Johan van Kessel that dates from 1675; looking towards the tower, it shows the ruined building. Such acquisitions continued in the twentieth century. The Cathedral is so prominent on the city's skyline that many topographical works show at least some of it. In 1997 a large painting was purchased in which a leading role was played by Cathedral and tower together. This was a *View of the chancel and tower of the Domkerk in Utrecht* painted by the Utrecht artist Jan Hendrik Verheyen in the years around 1829. The museum also has two anonymous paintings of the second church on the square, the Old Minster that was demolished in 1587. Each was painted sometime around 1630; they were acquired by the city in 1758 and 1876.

Like its predecessor, the Centraal Museum has always given great importance to statues, replicas, archaeological finds, and architectural fragments and illustrations. For example, Cathedral statuary was shown in 1838, when the Museum's first predecessor opened on the top floor of the town hall. And, as at 'Het Hoogeland', the new Centraal Museum has always shown reminders of Domplein. The current arrangement shows replicas dating from 1826 and 1840, as well as the painting by Verheyen and a selection of Roman finds from the excavations of the late 1930s. Items from Domplein have been shown not only in the Centraal Museum and the Cathedral itself, but also in venues such as The Utrecht Archives and Museum het Catharijneconvent. There, part of each permanent exhibition is devoted to the Cathedral, a reminder, if one were needed, of its enormous influence on the city's life.



Fragment of the main gate of the principia (head office) in the Roman castellum. Here as part of the presentation of Roman archaeology in the Centraal Museum

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The power of memorial culture: the case of Shimoni historical slave cave in Kenya

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Shimoni is a fishing village situated about seventy five (75) kilometers from Mombasa town along the south coast region of Kenya, close to the Kenya - Tanzania border. Within Shimoni village are caves that were formed as a result of natural forces and are estimated to extend up to seven kilometers inland from the Indian Ocean shoreline. Shimoni is derived from the Swahili language word 'shimo,' which means a hole or a place of the hole. Oral traditions say that the caves were used by the inhabitants of the area to hide from neighbouring communities who would occasionally make raids for cattle. Due to darkness inside the caves, the people used the Swahili word "haoni" (can't see) and eventually the name Shimoni. The location and proximity of Shimoni to both Pemba and Zanzibar in Tanzania made it an ideal place for holding slaves before shipment to the Zanzibar slave market for auction.

Slave trade

The caves are believed to have been used by slave traders (mainly Arabs) in the nineteenth century as a slave pen for their human cargo before the Dhows arrived to ship them to the slave market in Zanzibar and Pemba in Tanzania and Oman (Kiriama 2005: 158). The cave also received slaves from Zanzibar, as well as those traded internally to work in vast plantations such as those owned by the Mazrui families in Gazi and Takaungu on the south and north coasts of Kenya respectively. Morton points out that in 1876, after the end of the overland slave trade, slave trading on the Kenyan coastal hinterland began with coastal Muslims enslaving and exporting thousands (Morton 1990, 2005: 40). However, despite a wide range of other slave-linked heritage resources found in Shimoni, it is only the cave that has been selected and presented by the community as a place of memory (*lieu de mémoire*) open to paying visitors. This paper will interrogate among other things: the possible reasons for the selective choice of the cave for presentation, the memory presented and identity creations, heritage ownership and the role of Museums (the National Museums of Kenya) in conservation and management of the site.

Legal status

Shimoni was declared a conservation area in 2001 by the National Museums of Kenya (NMK). Its organisation is under the Museums and Heritage Act of 2006. The Act gives the NMK, legal authority to conserve and sustainably manage heritage resources within the conservation area in partnership with the local communities. This means that the NMK is actively involved in the approval and control of development plans and undertakings in order to safeguard the integrity and values of heritage resources in the region. The control by the NMK is to minimise negative impacts that may result from *ad hoc* development undertakings that might erode both tangible and intangible values of the heritage resources.

Shimoni heritage resources

Heritage resources found in Shimoni Conservation area include; the Slave cave now opened for tourists as a place of memory under the Shimoni Slave Cave Management Committee. The committee manages the heritage site on behalf of the community with technical assistance from the NMK. Other places of significance include the colonial buildings that were erected by the British under the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) in the later part of the nineteenth century during their quest to try to stop slave trade in the region, among other interests. These resources signify colonial history in Kenya, including the ruins of the first administrative building and prison

house built in 1888 by the British colonial government in the then British East Africa Protectorate that covered the Kenya coast, the colonial residential building, which was built around 1895, a pier and flag mast area of the same period, and a cemetery where a British soldier, Capt. Fredrick Lawrence, who was killed when leading an anti-slavery expedition at Gasi, just outside Shimoni, was buried. Also found within the conservation area are the indigenous forest located on top of the cave, the Indian Ocean that made it possible for the interactions between the local people and the outside world possible, and Kichangani area, the first settlement of the indigenous people of Shimoni before they moved to the current location.

Kichangani

Kichangani area, which is about a kilometer south of the present settlement, was the former home to the current Shimoni inhabitants. It still embodies remnants of an old Mosque and a burial ground for the local community. According to the elders, the site of Kichangani was abandoned after a band of *Wasurs* (Arabised African slaves) invaded the area and killed their spiritual leader, Hassan Mwalago. The inhabitants then moved one kilometer to the north and founded the “Kaoni” settlement, which is present day Shimoni (Kiriama 2009).



Part of the slave confinement area with the semi-salty water well used by the slaves for drinking

Slave Cave

After the abolition of the slave trade, a section of the cave has been used over the years by a segment of the community as a shrine to offer sacrifices and to seek divine intervention from their gods. Before it was cleaned up in 2001, a section was also used by the residents as a garbage dumping ground and subsequently presented to the public as a place of slavery and slave trade memory. On top of the caves is a forest cover that symbolises effective methods for conservation of heritage resources by a way of invoking taboos.

The forest is believed to be a sacred dwelling place for the protector spirit of the cave shrine ‘*Mwanangoto*’ (Kiriama 2009). As a result of the fear of this spirit, the forest has remained intact and is very rich in both flora and fauna. The forest is the only place in the East African region where the rare and threatened Colubush Monkeys are still found. Currently, the cave is used by the community as a tourist site presented as a place of slavery and slave trade memory (*lieu de memoire*) open to paying visitors. Since its official opening in 2001, the cave has over the years been visited by a large number of people that includes schools, middle level colleges, and universities from within and outside Kenya. Other visitors to the cave include local and foreign tourists, especially organised trips from the Diaspora by people whose ancestors were sold as slaves.

Selective representation

As stated above, Shimoni conservation area has a number of identified heritage resources due to their historical, social, political and spiritual values amongst other significances. The cave forms part of this heritage landscape and has many multilayered values. However, it is worth noting that it is only the cave that has been selected by the community and its slave heritage re/constructed to give value and identity to Shimoni as a place of memory.



Part of the cave leading to the Sea with a Stalactite Coral projection

The narrative has been very silent on the other heritage resources, and visitors are more aware of the cave and its history than the rest of the monuments that are of equal importance. This selective memory, to some extent, has minimised the potential of the area as a cultural heritage tourist destination. The selective choice leads to the critical questions; whose heritage is it? Does the cave belong to those whose kinsmen were sold or those who sold others? Or does it belong to the visitor who determines how the presentation is done and shapes the narrative in order to have a certain desired experience?

Despite the above questions, Shimoni communities have partnered with the NMK to co-manage their heritage resource in a sustainable manner for community benefit. The money accrued from the entry charges to the cave have been utilized by the community under the Slave Cave Management committee to improve services in fundamental areas such as education, health, sanitation and infrastructural development, amongst others within Shimoni.

The people

Shimoni is cosmopolitan in that it is inhabited by various groups that include the local (indigenous) communities such as the Digos (original settlers) and Shirazis (a mix of Arabs and Africans), as well as communities from different parts of Kenya and the rest of the world in general. The original inhabitants of Shimoni were the Bantu speaking Digo who at about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries CE were joined by Arabs (Vumba) who came from Vanga, which lies south of Shimoni on the Kenya/Tanzania border. The Arabs first occupied the opposite Island of Wasini before crossing over and conquering the Shimoni mainland. According to Digo elders, the inter-marriage that ensued between the Arabs and Digos gave rise to the Wa-kivundi, who are currently said to be the majority inhabitants of Shimoni. The other inhabitants of Shimoni are the Shirazi, who are said to have come from Persia, and remnants of the Segeju (Kiriama 2005: 157).



Shrine area with ritual paraphanelia at the far end

Due to the diverse cultural backgrounds of its inhabitants, Shimoni makes a good case study in terms of heritage landscape presentation as a place of memory. The diversity is bound to generate contestations when the heritage landscape is presented. The contestations revolve around the historical layer to be presented, how to present, whose version is to be presented and the reasons behind a particular narrative at any given time. This scenario automatically leads to the question of ownership of the heritage resources, as mentioned as one of the critical questions the paper undertook to address.

Whose heritage is it?

To answer the above questions it is good to understand that although Shimoni is a cosmopolitan town, there are two distinct communities recognised as the first settlers of the region. Indigenous groups in the region are the Shirazis, who are believed to have sold, and the Digos, who were sold as slaves. Both groups have conflicting facts about the use of the cave as a slave pen and the slave trade in general. Those who are believed to have collaborated with the Arabs to sell their kinsmen deny the existence of slave trade and the use of the cave as a holding warehouse, while those whose kinsmen were sold say that it was a reality. However, both groups, through the Shimoni Slave Cave Committee, collectively present the cave as a place of memory of slave trade and are all beneficiaries of initiated community benefits realised from the money accrued from the gate collections. This fact not only makes Shimoni slave cave a place of individual and collective memories, but it is also a place where heritage is adopted and/or discarded and identities are created and recreated for economic, social and political gains.



Shimoni slave cave ticket office

The tour guides on their part present the slavery narrative in a manner geared towards raising visitors' emotions either consciously or unconsciously, probably to generate more donations to the community kitty. If the raising of visitors' emotions is a conscious decision by the guides, then it can be argued that the visitors become the owners of the heritage while visiting, since they determine how the experience is presented, what is adopted for remembrance and how it is remembered. On the other hand, if the guides are presenting their history naturally, then it can be argued that they retain some measure of ownership of their heritage site (Kiriana 2009). However, there is a strong indication that the visitor assumes the ownership of the heritage resource, since even those who claim that the cave was not used for slave activities forfeit their right of denial to present the cave as a place of slave memory.

The museums' role (NMK)

The NMK through Fort Jesus Museum Mombasa is working with Shimoni communities to safeguard the integrity of the heritage landscape by expanding the historical layers to be presented in the narrative. This is done by enhancing the experience through the expansion of the memory experience. The expansion process of memory experience involved the restoration of the colonial buildings, as well as having adequate information panels on the ground to give values to other places of significance in the region. One of the colonial buildings is being prepared to serve as an information centre, where a museum is being put up to give a presentation of the regions' heritage including that of slavery to complement the cave's activities. The restored building will house the upcoming "Shimoni Slavery Museum" that is currently being developed. The NMK is therefore looking at Shimoni as one multilayered heritage landscape with interlinking values that needs to be developed to complement each other by inclusive presentations. Some of the activities being undertaken to improve the presentation include putting up information signage, restoration and stabilization of the existing structures, cleaning and landscaping the entire area and marketing the entire landscape as one entity. All these activities are guided by a management plan that was prepared specifically for the area with local community input. All these activities are geared towards the economic, social, and political wellbeing of the Shimoni community.

Conclusion

Places of memory such as Shimoni slave cave and the surrounding heritage landscape offer a good chance for museums to work closely with the communities to uplift their livelihood. The partnership between the NMK and the Shimoni Slave Cave Management Committee co-managing a heritage resource is a good example of an integrated management approach between heritage organisations, their communities and relevant government departments. The slave cave project alone has impacted positively on the lives of the community through the use of money accrued from entry charges to improve services and facilities in the area. Some of the areas that have benefited include education, sanitation and medical.

The tangible benefits have translated into more awareness of heritage values by the communities and better protection of the same since realising their relevance as potential development tools. It is good to note that places of memory such as Shimoni offer a good platform for spiritual reflections, social, economic and political advancements, as well as awareness and identity creations. Shimoni as a place of memory provides a forum for knowledge generation through debates between the NMK and different communities due to its diverse values. As an active shrine which contributes to its spiritual significance, and a place that offers a platform for educational, social, economic and political dialogue, Shimoni slave cave and its surrounding heritage landscape has transformed its dark and painful history into a place of hope for many individuals and families.

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The memory of history in the Bruggemuseum. The Bruggemuseum as a multi-site museum

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The Bruggemuseum is the historical museum of the city of Bruges. Its primary aim is to tell the city's history and share its rich and diverse story. The Bruggemuseum wants to do this by using its different sites. In other words, the historical museum of Bruges is a multi-site museum which, at its ten sites, offers a thematic look at the history of Bruges. In this thematic-chronological approach, each site focuses on one particular theme across the ages.

The ten sites

The flagship of the Bruggemuseum is Gruuthuse. This museum is housed in the former Palace of the Lords of Gruuthuse, an important patrician family in medieval Bruges that held the monopoly in the sale of *gruut* (an herbal mixture traditionally used in the brewing of beer). The Gruuthuse collection consists of over 17,000 applied art objects: ceramics, stained-glass windows and table glass, silversmith's work, copper, bronze and tin artefacts, tapestries, furniture, coins, musical instruments, weapons and sculptures. Until mid-2006, the Bruggemuseum-Gruuthuse had been displaying these objects as works of art, without reference to their remarkable history. The Bruggemuseum now wants to integrate these objects into a wider historical story of the city. For Gruuthuse, it has decided on the perspective of 'wealth versus poverty'; the residence of the Lords of Gruuthuse is a typical example of a late-medieval residence of the top echelon of Bruges society (wealth). Later, the purpose of the building changed and it became a pawnshop (Berg van Barmhartigheid) which fits in with the theme of "poverty".

At the Bruggemuseum we see the 'Volkskunde', Folklore, site as an important pendant to Gruuthuse. It is situated in the almshouses of the cobbler's apprentices in Balstraat. This seventeenth century building consists of eight small single-storey houses and, as buildings of special historic and architectural interest, are on the city's listed buildings register. The Bruggemuseum-Volkskunde will focus on the theme of 'everyday life' with a special emphasis on urban material culture.

The Archeologie, Archaeology, site also plays a major part in the Bruggemuseum story. The Bruggemuseum-Archeologie is housed in the old eye clinic of Sint-Janshospitaal. The outer walls of this building, front and side walls, date from the 16th century, and in 1913, a new neo-Gothic building was constructed behind these walls. The motto of the Bruggemuseum-Archeologie is 'Walk in the footsteps of history'. The central theme is 'everyday life'. Across the different time periods, from prehistory via the late Middle Ages, through to the present, visitors will be able to see the themes of living, residing and working in Bruges represented.

At each of its sites, the Bruggemuseum also pays a lot of attention to the historical background and building history of these remarkable monuments. After all, most of its museums are housed in historic monuments, each and every one of them top locations, known to the people of Bruges and the wider public for their exquisite architecture and their value as monuments.

Take, for instance, the Stadhuis, the Town Hall of Bruges, one of the oldest town halls in Belgium. Both the architecture of this late-Gothic building and its interior certainly do not fail to stir the imagination. The most important area in the building is the Gotische Zaal, the Gothic Hall, which with its 19th century murals and polychromatic vaulted ceiling is a work of art in itself. Both the ground floor and the Historische Zaal, the Historic Hall, of the town hall were completely

reorganised in 2005 based on the chosen theme of 'citizen and government'. Situated in the same square is the Brugse Vrije, the Liberty of Bruges. The Landhuis van het Brugse Vrije, the Palace of the Liberty of Bruges, is situated on the Burg. The museum part consists of the former alderman's room, built in the period from 1520 to 1524. The most eye-catching feature of the room is the impressive fireplace, homage by the Liberty of Bruges to Emperor Charles V. As part of its reorganisation, the Bruggemuseum-Brugse Vrije will focus on the theme of 'law and memory' to remedy the fact that its past use as a courthouse is not apparent from the way it is currently organised.

One of the great iconic monuments of Bruges is the Belfort, the Belfry, and halls. The Bruggemuseum only manages the belfry tower. The oldest part of the Belfry dates back to 1280. Here at the Belfry, the Bruggemuseum wants to give people more information about the use of the tower and its halls, under the theme of 'identity and communication'.

The Onthaalkerk Onze-Lieve-Vrouw, the Welcome Church of Our Lady, is the perfect location for the Bruggemuseum to illustrate the importance of religion and community spirit in the development of the city of Bruges. The museum part consists of the presbytery of the church, the choir aisle and a few chapels, the most important one being the Lanckhalskapel. Situated in the centre of the choir are the 16th century tombs of Mary of Burgundy and Charles the Bold.

The Gentpoort, Ghent Gate, is one of the four remaining medieval city gates of Bruges. The organisation of the Gentpoort as a museum will be based around the symbolic value of the building. For instance, the Bruggemuseum will use the notion of city gates to explain the difference between urbanism and non-urbanism. Here at this site, they will also depict the story of the nine city gates, the expansion of the city walls of Bruges and the role of the city's fortifications.

Situated on the edge of the Bruggemuseum's museum trail are the Molens, the windmills. Two of the four historic mills standing on the ramparts of Bruges are open to the public and are managed by the museum. Eventually, they will help to tell the story of the city's development and explain the significance of the ramparts.

And finally, anyone keen to learn more about the life and work of Guido Gezelle, one of the great nineteenth century Flemish poets, can do so by visiting the house where he was born. This is also where you will be able to make the connection between language and contemporary art.

History and memory

In a way, the literature and theory concerning *lieux de mémoire* or sites of memory are relatively far removed from the museum floor. Even so, it is still interesting to also briefly look at our activities from this perspective. Earlier, I introduced you to the Bruggemuseum and its various sites and you will probably agree that several of these sites are places that remind us of the collective past of the city of Bruges (and, by extension, of the Flemish region or Belgium). The urban



Belfry of Bruges.
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context, in particular, has been highly significant in the creation of present-day Flanders. Then again, the literature has also made us aware of the fact that there is an actual difference between 'historic places' and history, on the one hand, and the memories associated with those places, as a dynamic means of commemoration, on the other hand.



The Provincial Court, Bruges.
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As I have already mentioned, the Bruggemuseum's main aim as a city museum is to offer visitors a visual representation of the city's history, through all these different places. But, in addition to this, or perhaps even as a result of doing so, we will also often bring up the memories associated with some (or the majority) of these places.

The Belfry

Here, I would like to use the Belfry as an example. Up until now, the Belfry has primarily been a monument which is open to the public. In the eighties, a limited part of the building was dedicated to museum display, but both the interior of the building and the way this display is organised need to be totally refreshed. The Bruggemuseum is currently busy drawing up the plans for this investment which we hope to be able to achieve by the end of 2011. Anyway, the whole issue of organising a monument as a museum is not all that clear-cut. There are several factors that have to be considered, such as the limited amount of space available for instructive displays, the high visitor numbers (over 200,000 visitors per year), the restrictions on the number of visitors allowed in the building at any one time (with only one narrow set of steps), safety, a smooth visitor flow etc.

Bearing all these factors in mind, the Bruggemuseum, nevertheless, endeavours to present an interesting, multilayered story about the halls and the Belfry of Bruges. A multifaceted story about the building itself, about the uses of the building but also about the meaning and the memory associated with the building.

The Belfry and the halls have a complex building history, which can be reconstructed by means of source material, iconography and clues on the building itself. The idea is to represent the history of this building in the best visual way, eventually in 3D. In the treasury room, we want to draw people's attention to the authentic fourteenth century wrought-iron gates behind which valuable documents and charters containing the privileges of Bruges used to be stored. The whole monument, through the presence of the carillon, also tells us something about the regulating role of bells in a medieval city, about chronology and how the carillon grew to be a musical instrument.

Finally, we also want to draw the visitors' attention to the symbolic significance of the Belfry of Bruges as they go about their panoramic sightseeing tour. The Belfry, together with the tower of the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk, the Church of Our Lady, and of Sint-Salvatorskathedraal, St Saviour's Cathedral, is considered one of the three iconic landmarks of the Bruges skyline. This is a building that carries many meanings: as the oldest monument, as the cradle of the urban identity of Bruges, as a defining feature in the city's soundscape and as an instrument for telling time in the city. It is a huge draw for the people and visitors of Bruges, both past and present.

Building history, history and evolution, these are the things we want to tell people about and show them. Through display panels, multimedia, plenty of visual aids, and a rather limited number of objects, due to, among other reasons, storage conditions. This will help us explain what the Belfry means in terms of the history and evolution of Bruges as a city. In addition to this, we also want to point out some of the other aspects associated with the Belfry to visitors. These days, we find it hard to imagine what life in a medieval city must have been like. In the society of the time, bells used to play a crucial role. A passage from the book *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* by Dutch historian Johan Huizinga summarises this particularly well: 'there was one sound that always drowned out the din of busy life and that, however much the different sounds blended together, though never chaotically, managed to temporarily suspend all other activity, in an orderly manner: the bells'. One option would be to give visitors an interactive experience of what these bells must have sounded like, for instance the cacophony of the ringing bells and the din of the bell warning of an invasion.

In addition, we also want to take a look at the meaning the Romantic Movement of the 19th century associated with the carillon and the Belfry of Bruges. During this era, the building emerged as one of the symbols used to remind people of the city's important medieval past. Carillon music was enjoying a major revival in Bruges at that time. Through his book *Le Carillonneur* or 'The Carillonneur', the Belgian author Georges Rodenbach added an important layer to the meaning of the Belfry/the carillon. Following in his wake, operas were written in this period about the Belfry of Bruges, pictures were published, and the building and its sounds were documented in travel memoirs. These days, the meaning of the Belfry is mostly associated with tourism. It is *the* ultimate postcard image, preferably with a carriage pictured in the front. It would be quite interesting if the Bruggemuseum could also find out what meaning the people of Bruges associate with the Belfry today.

The city as a place of memory

By telling you about the planned reorganisation of the Belfry, we want to show you that the Bruggemuseum sees its museum sites as places that inform people about the past but also as places that are associated with several layers of memories.

The Bruggemuseum, a multi-site museum which tells the city's history, was our starting point. But the museum's mission goes further than that. We want to involve the entire city in what we do *and* we want to find out what this city means to today's inhabitants and visitors.

In the late 19th century, Bruges witnessed a significant development of historical consciousness. Those at one end of the spectrum based their beliefs primarily around the novel *Bruges-la-morte*. To them, the Belfry, for instance, represented the ultimate realisation of transience and melancholic memory. Whereas those at the other end of the spectrum, consisting of a group of prominent inhabitants of Bruges, believed that Bruges had not yet completely lost the standing it had enjoyed in the Middle Ages. It is in this context, we should view neo-Gothic architecture.

The city of Delacenserie

The exhibition 'De uitvinding van Brugge. De stad van Delacenserie' is currently still running at the Bruggemuseum-Gruuthuse. This project starts from an exhibition on the life and work of Louis Delacenserie, the city architect of Bruges in the late 19th century. Incidentally, the exhibition takes place in a building which was completely renovated by Delacenserie (and as such, he, too,

ended up adding another layer of meaning to this building). With this exhibition, we wanted to guide the people and visitors of Bruges through an important, but also delicate, issue for the city, namely the construction of neo-Gothic buildings and renovation of existing buildings in this style at the end of the nineteenth century to well into the twentieth century. But, as part of this project, the Bruggemuseum, together with the heritage organisation of Bruges, Erfgoedcel Brugge, took great care to really involve and consult the city through a series of extra activities. A walk through Bruges will take visitors around all of Delacenserie's work in the city while a multimedia game questions people's view of Bruges.

One of the important side projects was 'Gat in de Markt', 'Whole in the Market'. The site at the centre of the 'Gat in de Markt' project was the Provinciaal Hof, the Provincial Court. This monument, situated in the market square of Bruges, sits in a place which is of significant townscape value and which is a historically charged site. In the Middle Ages, this is where the Waterhalle, Water Hall, stood, followed by a neoclassical building which, after it was destroyed in a fire, made way for a spectacular neo-Gothic complex, created by Delacenserie. So this is an important place in the city's history but also a place that has many meanings associated with it, a *lieu de mémoire*, if you like, of the city's important trade history, of a link with the city's once thriving port activities, of a period in time when there were many neoclassical, whitewashed walls in the city, of a huge public debate circa 1878 about architecture which referred to the great history of Bruges. This is a building many tourists, and even some of the people of Bruges, today believe to be an authentic medieval building, in other words, they have associated a false meaning with it. The building was or is, therefore, also a symbol of what some people would describe as hideous fake architecture. So much so that, in the sixties, the demolition of the building was even briefly contemplated.



Contemporary architecture

The Bruggemuseum and Erfgoedcel Brugge have seized the opportunity to use this building to throw open the debate in this city about contemporary architecture. We asked student architects to come up with a fictitious new design for this site. The question at the centre of this fascinating and challenging thought process was: 'How can you incorporate contemporary architecture in the heart of Bruges?' The results of the students' efforts will be presented to the public for a short period of time at the Provinciaal Hof itself.

A discussion about contemporary architecture in a historic city such as Bruges will always cause a lot of fuss and will be expressed in extremes (pro and contra). The ideas these students came

The Provincial Court, Bruges.
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up with provided an interesting source of inspiration, in any case. Most of them had designed a multipurpose building, with exhibition and meeting areas. The most obvious differences were in the choice of materials and actual designs.

By using the example of the 'Gat in the Markt' project, I wanted to demonstrate that the work of the Bruggemuseum goes much further than simply being the multi-site historical museum of the city of Bruges. Through the way we have organised our sites, or are about to reorganise them, but also through our temporary projects, we try to take a look at history, meaning *and* memory. Our sites help us put Bruges, its history, its development and its folklore in the right perspective. In a way, they allow us to add our own new layer to the existing *lieux de mémoire* of Bruges.

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COLOPHON

City museums on the move

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