
THE PERMANENT EXHIBITIONS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY MUSEUMS IN WALLONIA-BRUSSELS

Damien Watteyne

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Regarding the issue of ethnographic and social history museums the same general situation exists in Wallonia and Brussels (Belgium's French Community) as in many other European countries or regions. The recently published "Guide des Musées Wallonie-Bruxelles" lists 405 museums and museological institutions (museums, ecomuseums, "economuseums", heritage collections, interpretation, experimentation and exhibition centres).

Two aspects are similar as in other European regions or countries: the increase of the number of museums and the diversification of the museological/heritage background. The increase in museums which is close to 15 "museums" a year may be partly explained by the cultural crisis in our modern society: confronted with the general globalisation of economic, social and cultural life people need an "anchorage", something they can believe in. Heritage could be the religion of next century.

More than ever events and institutions involve the attraction of the heritage: "patrimony" or heritage days, museums days, international councils (ICOM/ICOMOS, European Museum of the Year Awards, the European Commission's and Council's actions,...). Public authorities increasingly pay attention to the heritage and to museums. Consequently, citizens too take more account of the heritage. This increasing attention has its analogy in the diversification of the nature of the heritage and in the types of expression.

Historically (that is in past centuries), museums were classified into different disciplines: art, archaeology and ethnography, natural history. They were scientific institutions, places of research, temples of knowledge like the universities... While these disciplines still exist in museum classifications, other disciplines have appeared in the last decades: the technical sciences, folk art or folklore, literature,...

The famous institution of the heritage - "the museum" - has thus become more democratic: people are expected not only to visit the exhibition rooms but also to equally participate in collecting and preservation conservation policies.

This is the origin of the ecomuseum. Ecomuseums are often connected with the "great old" / national museums. Such branches are more and more the result of individual or local preservation or collecting actions. Closer to the citizen, the democratic or popular museum follows the diversity of personalities/ individualities. If these hundreds of local museums are still heritage institutions, certainly not all of them carry out the three principal tasks of a museum: to preserve, study and exhibit. These institutions tend to take the different forms I listed above: museums, ecomuseums, "economuseums", heritage collections (for a complete definition, see the "Guide des musées Wallonie-Bruxelles").¹

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And what about ethnographic and social history museums? They present a paradox as they result from a social and subconscious balance. Closer to and established by the citizens, these museums take away the sacred aura of the heritage and are no longer the exclusive domain of the scientific establishment. But they nevertheless fail to meet the citizen's concerns.

Above I mentioned the society's crisis: unemployment, re-localisation of factories, pollution, landscape and nature destruction, new technologies, genetics manipulations... At the same time, we are witnessing new types of social approaches: the decline of totalitarian political systems, tendencies towards general democratisation, pedagogical reforms, more attention to different forms of (physical or social) handicaps, peace and humanitarian operations.

But do we see all these changes or challenges in museums, are they part of the collecting, studying and, above all exhibition and interpretation policies of museums? Only a few museums have made these changes or rather metamorphosis (Musée Ethnographique in Neufchâtel, Musée de la Civilisation in Québec, Musée Dauphinois in Grenoble). In other museums all I can see of these changes are traces here and there.

Of the 405 "institutions muséales" in Wallonia and Brussels, 149 have collections about crafts and manufacturing techniques, 116 have ethnographic/ folk art collections. The largest group of museums is that of "ethnological and social history" issues. The four biggest ones are:

- Musée Royal d'Afrique centrale in Tervuren (the "African Museum"),
- Musée international du Carnaval et du Masque in Binche,
- Musée de la Vie Wallonne in Liège (ATP Museum),
- Musée de la Vie Rural en Wallonie in Fourneau Sant-Michel and in Saint-Hubert (Open Air Museum).

Because it depends on another authority (the Federal Government) I will leave out the Musée Royal d'Afrique central. Just one thing: the museum wavers it is divided between an aesthetic approach (see the exhibition "Trésors cachés") and an ethnic approach (see the exhibition "Ethiopia"). There is nothing about

¹ Damien Watteyne, *Guide des musées Wallonie-Bruxelles*. Bruxelles : Ministère de la Communauté française, 1997, pp. 5-8.

the challenges of nature, politic or military revolutions, the relationship between North and South, or about colonialism which continues in some countries.

The same observation could be made about the Musée international du Carnaval et du Masque in Binche. Beyond its nice aesthetic approach of the Rio Carnival (for instance) the staff does not engage in research or interpretation of the social background of these famous collective processions which take the local people of Binche a whole year to prepare.

When the Museum organised an exhibition about the Indians in the Amazon basin, nothing was said about the continuing deforestation.

The same observation can be made about the Musée de la Vie Wallonne in Liège and the Musée de la Vie Rural en Wallonie in Saint-Hubert. The entire economic and social life of Wallonia is changing: once mighty industries are disappearing, agriculture has become pure business, the natural landscape is metamorphosed (enormous plastic-covered balls of hay weighing 400 kg instead of sheaves weighing a maximum of 20 kg), animals are genetically manipulated... Exhibition and collecting policies are still looking for artefacts from the previous century or from the early 20th century. There is nothing about the 60s or 90s.

I think that the challenge that faces ethnographic and social history museums in the new millennium is quite important for the progress and survival of this kind of museums.

Instead of talking about the past through the past, the same museums of the past could be used to interpret the present.

STALNE RAZSTAVE ETNOGRAFSKIH IN SOCIALNOZGODOVINSKIH MUZEJEV V VALONIJI IN BRUSLJU

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Glede vprašanj etnografskih in socialnozgodovinskih muzejev je splošni položaj v Valoniji in Bruslju (tj. v Francoski skupnosti v Belgiji) podoben kot v mnogih drugih evropskih državah in regijah. Nedavno je izšel Vodič po muzejih Valonije in Bruslja ("Guide des Musées Wallonie-Bruxelles"), ki našteva 405 muzejev in muzeoloških ustanov (muzejev, eko muzejev, podjetniških muzejev ("écomusées"), zbirke dediščine in centrov za interpretacijo, eksperimente in razstave).

Dva vidika sta podobna kot v drugih evropskih regijah in državah: povečanje števila muzejev in diverzifikacija muzeološkega ozadja ali dediščine. Povečanje števila muzejev se približuje številu 15 na leto in ga lahko delno pojasnimo s krizo kulture v sodobni družbi: soočeni s globalizacijo gospodarskega, socialnega in kulturnega življenja ljudje potrebujejo "sidrišče", nekaj, v kar lahko verjamejo. Dediščina bi lahko postala vera naslednjega stoletja.

Bolj kot kdajkoli prej se dogajanje v ustanovah vrti okoli privlačnosti dediščine: dnevi dediščine ali "patrimonija", muzejski dnevi, mednarodni forumi (ICOM/ICOMOS, Evropski muzej leta, aktivnosti Evropske komisije in Evropskega sveta itd.). Oblasti vedno več pozornosti namenjajo dediščini in muzejem. Zaradi tega se tudi občani vedno bolj zanimajo za dediščino. Večja pozornost ima svojo analogijo v oblikovanju raznolikih vrst dediščine in v vrstah izražanja.

Zgodovinsko (tj. v zadnjih stoletjih) so muzeje razvrščali po različnih strokah: umetnostni, arheološki, etnografski in naravoslovni muzeji. Muzeji so bili znanstvene ustanove, središča raziskovanja, svetišča znanosti tako kot univerze. Ta strokovna delitev še vedno velja pri razvrščanju muzejev, vendar so se v zadnjih desetletjih pojavile še druge stroke: tehnične vede, ljudska umetnost ali folklor, literatura,...

Muzeji kot ugledne ustanove, ki hranijo dediščino, so tako postali bolj demokratični. Od ljudi se ne pričakuje samo, da obiskujejo razstavne dvorane,

ampak tudi, da enakovredno sodelujejo pri oblikovanju politike zbiranja in varovanja. Tu je izvor okoljskih muzejev. Okoljski muzeji so pogosto podružnice "velikih" / nacionalnih muzejev. Take podružnice so vse bolj pogosto plod posameznih ali lokalnih zbiralnih in varovalnih ukrepov. Ker so bližje ljudem, se ti demokratični ali ljudski muzeji pogosto oblikujejo po okusu posameznikov. Če so ti lokalni muzeji, ki jih je na stotine, še vedno ustanove za varovanje dediščine, je vendar gotovo, da mnogi izmed njih ne opravljajo treh glavnih nalog vsakega muzeja: hranjenje, preučevanje in razstavljanje. Tovrstne ustanove imajo različne oblike, ki sem jih že zgoraj navedel: muzeji, okoljski muzeji, podjetniški muzeji, zbirke dediščine itd. (za podrobne definicije glej omenjeni Vodič po muzejih Valonije in Bruslja).¹

Kaj pa etnografski in socialnozgodovinski muzeji? Ti pomenijo paradoks, ker so posledice socialnega in podzavestnega ravnovesja. Ker so bližje ljudem, ki so jih tudi ustvarili, dediščini jemljejo sveto avreolo in niso več izključna domena institucionalne znanosti. Vendar kljub temu niso odgovor človekovi stiski.

Zgoraj sem omenil krizo družbe: brezposelnost, selitve tovarn, onesnaženje, uničevanje pokrajine in narave, nove tehnologije, genetske manipulacije itd. Vendar smo hkrati priče tudi pozitivnih sprememb: padeč totalitarnih političnih sistemov, gibanja za splošno demokratizacijo, pedagoške reforme, večja pozornost različnim oblikam (telesne ali socialne) prizadetosti, mirovne in humanitarne akcije.

Ali te spremembe in izzive lahko srečamo tudi v muzejih, ali so vključeni v muzejsko politiko zbiranja, preučevanja in predvsem razstavljanja v muzejih? Za zdaj je le peščica muzejev zmogla sprejeti te spremembe oziroma te metamorfoze (Etnografski muzej v Neufchâtelu, Muzej civilizacije v Quebecu, Muzej Dauphinois v Grenoblu). V drugih muzejih kvečjemu najdemo nekaj sledi.

Izmed "muzejskih ustanov" v Valoniji in Bruslju jih ima 149 zbirke o obrtniških in proizvodnih tehnikah, 116 jih ima etnografske zbirke oz. zbirke ljudske umetnosti. Večja skupina muzejev je tista z "etnološko in socialno zgodovinsko" tematiko. Štirje največji muzeji so:

- Kraljevi muzej Centralne Afrike v Tervurenu ("Afriški muzej"),
- Mednarodni muzej pusta in mask v Binchu,
- Muzej življenja v Valoniji v Liègeu (Muzej ATP),
- Muzej podeželskega življenja v Valoniji v Fourneau Saint-Michelu in v Saint-Hubertu (muzej na prostem).

Ker je pod drugo oblastjo (zvezne vlade), tu ne bom obravnaval Kraljevega muzeja Centralne Afrike. Samo tole: muzej niha med estestkim (razstava "Skriti zakladi") in etničnim pristopom (razstava "Etiopija"). Ničesar pa ni o izzivih narave, političnih ali vojaških revolucijah, o odnosih Sever-Jug, o kolonializmu,

¹ Damien Watteyne, Guide des musées Wallonie-Bruxelles. Bruxelles : Ministère de la Communauté française, 1997, str. 5-8.

ki se v nekaterih državah še vedno nadaljuje.

Isto opombo bi lahko navedli za Mednarodni muzej pusta in mask v Binchu. Poleg mikavnega estetskega pristopa v stilu karnevala v Riu se muzejski delavci ne ukvarjajo z raziskovanjem ali z interpretacijo socialnega ozadja teh slovitih množičnih sprevodov, ki jih prebivalci Bincha pripravljajo vse leto. Ko je muzej organiziral razstavo o amazonskih Indijancih, ni bilo nič rečenega o uničevanju gozdov.

Enako velja za Muzej življenja v Valoniji v Liègeu in za Muzej podeželskega življenja v Valoniji v Saint-Hubertu. Celotno gospodarsko in socialno življenje v Valoniji se spreminja: izginjajo nekoč močne industrije, kmetijstvo postaja zgolj "posel", naravna pokrajina se spreminja (ogromne bale sena, ovite s plastiko, ki tehtajo 400 kg, namesto snopov, ki tehtajo največ 20 kg), z živalmi se genetsko manipulira itd. Vodilo razstav in zbiranja je še vedno iskanje izdelkov prejšnjega stoletja ali z začetka 20. stoletja, ničesar pa ni iz petdesetih ali devetdesetih let.

Menim, da je izziv, s katerim se soočajo etnografski in socialnozgodovinski muzeji v novem tisočletju, zelo pomemben za razvoj in za preživetje muzejev te vrste. Namesto da o preteklosti govorijo skozi preteklost, bi morali ti isti muzeji uporabljati preteklost za interpretacijo sedanjosti.

BESEDA O AVTORJU

Damien Watteyne, umetnostni zgodovinar in arheolog, prvi ataše za kulturno dediščino v Generalni direkciji za kulturo ministrstva Francoske skupnosti Valonija-Bruselj v Belgiji. Je svetovalec za oblikovanje, posodabljanje in vodenje muzejev. Sodeluje pri pripravi in izvedbi programov na področju dediščine, ki jih financira Evropska komisija (npr. pri Raphaelu).

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