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Memories and anxieties

Ethnographic museography across Italy

Building a community of practices

It is appropriate to reflect on the lexicon of basic museum vocabulary used in ethnographic museography in Italy today. These are the words which are the foundation of our work and which, as integral components of our points of view, unite and divide us, even on a national scale. It is necessary to reflect on the origin of these words and, even more importantly, on the usage of these terms.

Thankfully, the intention of this work does not seem to be the simple introduction of order and cleanliness. A point that is worth highlighting is how much the contemporary world has enriched our museum industry, introducing variations and anomalies whose influence should not be reduced or underestimated. It has given us a less preoccupied and more relativistic approach towards the multiple ways that museums can be realised; something which would only be regressive to censor (Padiglione, 1995). Indeed, the objective of reflecting on this vocabulary is explicitly to build a wider community of practices, offering topics for discussion and sharing. Only once the differences across the sector are known will it be possible to take advantage of them, and we can agree on some basic notions about how specific public services should be arranged: is a museum always distinct from a collection or an archive? Is an ethnographic museum different from a historical museum? What disciplines should an 'ecomuseum' be made up of? And so forth.

To us as museum anthropologists, the variety within our industry is close to our hearts. We are proud of it as we consider it a distinctive and representative element of a heritage that, through mediation, reveals the traces of a period's observed culture and of contacts and interactions between cultures. We can only hope that the demand for upgrades to museum facilities and forms of documentation continues to grow. There is certainly no growth of uniformity or standardisation. Our museums are buildings full of different stories and contexts (Clemente, 1996). They often adopt approaches and interpretations to heritage that are not wholly sanctioned by academia or the international community. Even when they are presented in a way that is humble and narrow, they are deserving of attention. This is because they are evidence of particular places, epochs, and people – and because they display a distinctive and important subjectivity. We anthropologists, who are by definition committed to discovering, translating and enhancing the cul-

tural differences rooted within people, places and institutions, are interested in inscribing this relativistic sensibility into the way we approach museological differences. We propose doing this by building a dense language to be used by us and by people interested in museums (historians, archaeologists and naturalists, as well as public officials and tourist programmers).

Museum vocabulary as a conduit into historical and cultural contexts

Museums are institutions which are created to endure, but which are fatally split between stability and modernisation. When they succeed, they do not just conserve artefacts. In their exhibits, and even more so in their names, they retain traces of the recent or remote past. These are the signs left by various cultures and their accumulated subjectivity, preserved in and giving value to these objects. In them, you can find fragments of the history of museography and collecting, academia with its schools and its conflicts, vocations and beliefs, resistances and inventions on a local level. 'Uses and customs', for example, refers to the studies of the Age of Enlightenment; 'arts and traditions' evokes the Romantic Period; an emphasis on 'people' indicates connotations of identity and ethnicity long present in anthropology and recently revitalised, and so forth. The names of museums are also artefacts, which often hint more towards observed culture, giving a flavour of the knowledge and ideologies of the custodians rather than of the culture on display.

Perhaps out of affection or out of simple, acute historical sensibility, it is said among museum workers that it is unlucky to change the name of a museum. It is as though, over time, the word and the thing merged into one, and it was no longer conceivable to wonder about the meaning of the name. As though, over time, the museum became a subject in itself and, as a result, to alter its name would be to cripple or violate its integrity. What remains of the *Museo del folklore e dei poeti romaneschi* now that the Municipal Council of Rome has renamed it (albeit without any sign of a ritual or even prior discussion) the *Museo di Roma in Trastevere*? What destiny is in store for its historical collection of '*Scene romane*' (Roman scenes)? (Padiglione, 2009). Per-

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Paraules clau: Museologia disseminada, museu etnogràfic, antropologia museística, Itàlia

Palabras clave: Museología diseminada, museo etnográfico, antropología museística, Italia

Els museus etnogràfics constitueixen la tipologia de museu més freqüent a Itàlia i transmeten plantejaments i interpretacions del patrimoni que no sempre compten amb el vistiplau dels acadèmics o de la comunitat internacional. I, malgrat que les modalitats expressives que els representen siguin limitades i pobres, mereixen atenció com a testimonis, a la seva manera, d'un territori, una època, unes gents i una subjectivitat particulars. A nosaltres, els antropòlegs, que, per definició, ens esforcem a identificar, interpretar i destacar les diferències culturals de què són objecte les persones, les localitats i les institucions, ens interessa incorporar aquesta sensibilitat relativista també en l'àmbit dels museus. Als museus etnogràfics els devem el fet d'haver aplicat i difós plantejaments interpretatius i col·laboratius que han convertit les comunitats locals en protagonistes de les seves exposicions i dels seus esforços didàctics i d'investigació.

Los museos etnográficos constituyen la tipología de museo más frecuente en Italia y transmiten planteamientos e interpretaciones del patrimonio que no siempre cuentan con la aprobación de los académicos o de la comunidad internacional. Y, a pesar de que las modalidades expresivas que los representan son limitadas y pobres, merecen atención como testimonios, a su manera, de un territorio, una época, unas gentes y una subjetividad particulares. A nosotros, los antropólogos, que, por definición, nos esforzamos en identificar, interpretar y destacar las diferencias culturales de las cuales son objeto las personas, las localidades y las instituciones, nos interesa incorporar esta sensibilidad relativista también en el ámbito de los museos. A los museos etnográficos les debemos el hecho de haber aplicado y difundido planteamientos interpretativos y colaborativos que han convertido a las comunidades locales en protagonistas de sus exposiciones y de sus esfuerzos didácticos y de investigación.

Ethnographic museums are the most popular type of museum in Italy, and often adopt approaches to and interpretations of heritage that are not wholly sanctioned by academia or the international community. Even when they are presented in a way that is humble and narrow, they are deserving of attention. This is because they are evidence of particular places, epochs, and people – and because they display a distinctive and important subjectivity. We anthropologists, who are by definition committed to discovering, translating and enhancing the cultural differences rooted within people, places and institutions, are interested in inscribing this relativistic sensibility into the context of museums. Ethnographic museums must practise and share their interpretative and collaborative approaches; those which make local communities the focus of research and didactic work.

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haps the museum's re-denomination was just a way of removing the term *folklore*, long ambiguous and unpalatable to the majority of people. Nevertheless, in doing so, memories have been removed – and this can lead to radical transformations.

Museum names are synthetic and explicit mission statements and, over time, they can become obscure, losing their conceptual or explicitly self-evident seductive characters, even if such characters were often appreciated at the outset. In their multiplicity and heterogeneity, they can create a few problems: they point out the existence of a plurality of cultural references, unstable perspectives and disciplines, of various concepts of 'museum' that are not unified. That is, the many and diverse names of ethnographic museums in Italy can denounce academic inconvenience, the limits of scientific hegemony, viscous provincialism, effervescence and local wealth, all in one fell swoop.

In between the text and the footnotes of the first issue of AM[1] in 2002, I wrote that:

> "The names of museums oscillate between *perspectives* (e.g. ethnographic) and *local heritage*, considered to be of value in itself; assets to be understood as *totality* (rural civilisation, village, people, territory, mountain, valley), *combinations of expressive forms* (habits and customs) or *specific goods* (wine, agricultural wagon, linen, footwear, etc.)" (...) "From the census data of ethnographic and agricultural museums compiled by Roberto Togni, Gaetano Forni and Francesca Pisani (1997), it can be noted that 'Rural Life', 'Arts and Traditions', 'Arts and Crafts', 'Uses and Customs' and 'Ethnographic' remain the most common denominations in use. They tend to use terminology from beyond the Alps, such as 'Ecomuseum'. Local preferences are also noted, which highlight regional politics, academic influences and authors' bias: for example, the *Museo Etno-antropologico* in Sicily, the *Museo Etnografico* in Sardinia, the *Museo storico etnografico* in Lombardy and the *Museo del villaggio* in Trentino, and local language terms used in the border regions. Even more varied and growing significantly is the landscape of the museums whose names already dedicate them to a thematic focus: fragments of life forms, agricultural cycles (olives, wine, hemp, bread), basic foods (salt, bread, chestnuts, pasta), work and crafts (wagons, nails, umbrellas, bagpipes), habitats (mountains, valleys, swamps, forests, sea, mines) and historical-cultural demarcations (emigration, malaria, reclamation)." (Padiglione, 2002a)

I refer to the continuation of the text cited above for an initial examination of the elements of institutional heterogeneity and weakness which characterise small ethnographic museums, but also for recognition of the original breadth of their 'exhibition complex'.

Here I would like to focus on the two main denominations (ethnographic museum and museum of rural life) that are spread across the Italian museum scene, on the subject of the representation of local cultures.

Ethnographic Museum

The term *ethnographic* corresponds to the most widespread way in which our museums are described and known in various parts of the world. This term makes reference to the ICME (International Committee of Ethnographic Museums), which was founded in 1946 by ICOM (The International Council of Museums) and which is a privileged place for debate at an international level. It is a meeting place for researchers and curators of exotic and western collections, of material and immaterial testimonies. What they have in common is their recognition of the relevance of the anthropological perspective, their preference for contextual design, and their propensity to discuss the fundamentals (art, museum, heritage, as well as subjects such as marriage, economy...)

1
In 2002, the quarterly *AM Antropologia museale* (AM Museum Anthropology) magazine was launched. The editorial team consists of Vincenzo Padiglione (director), Pietro Clemente, Alessandra Broccolini, Vito Lattanzi, Marco D'Aureli, Sandra Ferracuti, Katia Ballacchino, Susanna Guerini.

in collaboration with the representatives of local cultures.

According to Raffaele Corso (1942: 5) the concept of ethnography became widespread in the period of geographical and linguistic classifications, and was coined by the Italian geographer Adriano Balbi in his work *Atlante Etnografico del Globo* (Ethnographic Atlas of the Globe) (1826). The coexistence and variability of elements within a single territory has constituted a privileged modality since the eighteenth century, combining climate, environment, somatic traits and moral character in a more or less causal way.

In the following decades, however, disciplinary systematisation began in earnest. Italian Giovenale Vegezzi Ruscalla contributed significantly to this, but with an evident Franco-German influence. For this scholar from Piedmont, "Ethnology is a science of the nations" (Vegezzi Ruscalla, 1991: 77), which, in order to generalise, compares ethnic societies, physical-moral aggregations, and (as he went on to state a few years later) 'discuss[es] origins, characters, and events' (Vegezzi Ruscalla, 1991: 81). Sandra Puccini states that ethnography plays a preliminary and complementary role – one that is "more modest than descriptive and ideological disciplines – with respect to the cognitive ambitions of the time" (Puccini, 1998: 194). Over the next few decades, the distinction between ethnography and ethnology was still unclear. For example, for Bartolomeo Malfatti (1878) their roles were interchangeable and, in general, both Italian and foreign scholars freely used them in a way that was indifferent to any distinction[2].

There were still, however, considerable uncertainties, which remained until the early decades of the next century, and which largely left ambiguous the separation between cultural and bio-somatological approaches. History records an increasing association of ethnography first with the direct collection of the material culture of an ethnic group, and then by extension with the same phase of field research, with the description of a particular area within an explicitly or implicitly comparative scenario, in an attempt to synthesise its relevance by objectifying the culture to specific evidence. The privileged background, the contextual framework within which most of these cognitive and sampling exercises are made, is nevertheless represented by primitive society. A society which evolutionary anthropology was configuring as living fossils, excellent traces on which to rebuild the history of humanity, to mark the distance from the experience of progress experienced by civilians.

But it was the focus on the origins, connected with the importance of comparisons, that expanded the scope of ethnography even further, and that increased its heuristic power and its limitations towards the end of the nineteenth century (Lattanzi, 2000). In 1876, Luigi Pigorini established the Royal Ethnographic Prehistoric Museum in Rome, bringing objects from primitive and exotic societies together with artefacts from the Stone Age. By 1881, he was already planning to extend his mission and, in a letter to the Minister of Public Education, he outlined what he saw as an opportunity to create a section on the customs and collections of the domestic lives of everyday people: peasants, shepherds and mountain people, considering them 'living fossils' as significant as the primitive ones.

When at the beginning of the twentieth century (1902) Aldobrandino Mochi started a collection of "all kinds of objects and artefacts, in every category, spontaneously used and manufactured by our less civilised people", he intended to define this collection as *Etnografia italiana* (Italian Ethnography), making a direct analogy with non-European ethnography.

> "Ethnographers are right to collect in their museums and their writings the greatest possible copy of news and artefacts from geographically distant populations with different civilisations from our own ... before these different civilisations disappear

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The later case of Marcell Mauss and his *Manuale di etnografia* (Ethnographic Manual) is exemplary in this respect. And this was still the case in 1942 when Corso wrote that terminological confusion reigned dominant. "Despite the advances in science, we cannot say that the terms used to name it are well regulated. Generally, the names Ethnography and Ethnology are used interchangeably, without taking into account their special significance; and, sometimes, the two branches, which respond to these names, are confused with anthropology or are even called anthropological sciences". In the footnotes: "In the old debates there is great confusion regarding the use of the terms ethnology and ethnography. The first is the study of natural races or natural human groupings; and the latter, the study of populations (Broca). That is, the significance of the term 'ethnology' is a little differently from that of 'sociology'; and at the end of the day, ethnography has an essentially somatological meaning (Hovelacque, Martin, Papillaut, etc.)" (Corso, 1942: 11).

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First room in the *Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico*, Luigi Pigorini, Rome, where you can see a reconstruction of Pigorini's office (April 2012).
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or change. But to find documents and traces of civilisations very different from ours in Europe, you do not need to go back very far. Also close to us, in the same geographic field and still surviving today, are people who in some of their manifestations are still very similar to barbarians and savages. They are the people of our countryside, of our mountains, of all the corners of the world where the rays of civilisation from the city centres have not yet reached. The study of this population and of these survivals should, in my opinion, interest the anthropologist as much as that of Indigenous peoples from Central Africa and Australia. Actually, it should really interest us more, as it is a subject closer to home. Sometimes an object can tell the story of the national spirit better than many written pages. If we do not hasten to pick up these characteristic products of history and of popular taste, soon there will be no more to find." (Mochi, 1902: 642-646).

These were the motives which led Mochi and Lamberto Loria to start the research for and the construction of the *Museo di Etnografia Italiana* (1906). This is how Italy's most important museum project, looking at heritage on a national scale, began. The *Mostra Nazionale di Etnografia italiana* was organised with the aim of establishing the museum's collection and celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Unification of Italy, providing the nation's first 'institutional legitimacy' for significant and important internal cultural differences[3] .The project soon failed, however, and was never resumed. After 1911, the collection remained in storage for a long time and didn't become the *Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni popolari* (National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions) until much later in the 1950s. The collection had an aesthetic heritage that was to be a mark of the institution's ambiguity throughout its life, including at present.

The aim of documenting territorial cultural differences progressively diminished and in the decades following 1911, Fascism attempted to emphasise local cultures in a form that resembled the *quadri viventi* (living paintings) of the universal expositions, but which had much more to do with the

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"An attempt that connected the romantic valorisation of the various national spirits and the positivist nature of the documents of 'the wills of the civilian people', and which unfolds in the construction of objects marked by aesthetic particularity, regional differentiation or typicality, or being involved in disused processes- local arts, testimonies of cultural variety, attestations of archaeology of the recent past. At the same time, these are signs of deep and diverse roots, and of a common civilisation which surpassed them. Objective testimonies of the variety of origins of a population who are now recognised in a common design." (Clemente, Candeloro, 2000: 198).

format teatrale (theatrical format), to the choreographic rendering of representations and parties, which were mainly initiated to organise and display the mass consensus towards the regime.

Let us refer to the extensive historical literature on the studies of the National Exhibition in 1911, and the broader context that precipitated them. This is a good point at which to emphasise that Mochi and Loria's conceptual notion of ethnography, loaded with cognitive and social urgencies, gradually began to lose its restrictive identification with non-European societies and with a solely material culture, become a key concept in a totalising approach consisting of surveys of local culture. 'The two scholars (Loria, Mochi 1906) assign the task of collecting and documenting oral traditions to the field of Italian Ethnography. Until this time, it was instead pertinent to those of Folklore and Folk Traditions' (Puccini, 1998: 195).

In Italy, the Second World War began, taking away the inter-class harmony of 'operetta folklore'. It was the remarkable spectacle of heritage, which started to be practised under Fascism that made the relationship between professional researchers and expressive regeneration groups difficult for a long time. Essentially, in the 1950s, researchers radically turned the page on the image of cartographic folklore, and aimed to show more: documenting hard everyday life, denouncing misery, the same ability to survive by relying on the protection of symbology and magic-religious rites, a legacy of an ancient history that was never definitively set aside because of the backward living conditions of the population.

For Italian anthropologists, as well as their foreign colleagues, ethnography was, in those years, the identification of a notion that was less compromised than others (folklore, tradition, ...), a *passpartout* concept of professionalism. It was used to qualify the wide and varied work of research and documentation: the specificity of fieldwork, as well as the gathering of artefacts for museums or information for monographs. In the

View of the current exhibitions in the Museo Nazionale delle Arti e Tradizioni popolari, Rome (April 2012).
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meantime, the evolutionary implications that were explicitly present in the vision of those active early in the last century, such as Mochi and Loria, but also Pigorini before, disappeared, being replaced with a growing interest in the study of primitives or peasants looking to survive, living fossils. From the original matrix, the idea remained that an ethnographic investigation is concerned with long-lasting cultural traits. In others words, that an ethnographic museum exhibits 'traditional' artefacts that, although collected in contemporaneity, have a long lived temporality or represent specimens of models of viscous permanence that have only been placed into disuse and disintegration as a result of modernity and which therefore an anthropology devoted to spiritual salvation must save.

Thus, when the demand for local museums began to be widespread in the 1970s, the notion of latent ethnography became active, and it was clearly preferred by the academic community over other expressions. Its presence, in the main, is valid as a disciplinary mark, i.e. to indicate a specific method of withdrawal and a contextual type of exhibition. But this is often only a formal declaration, which does not correspond to actual research work and documentation (Padiglione, 1995). To prevent an entirely ethnographic outcome, it is important to highlight the very limited involvement professional anthropologists have had in the creation of ethnographic museums, the names of which have often been labels for collections of often heterogeneous testimonies of material culture, related to a single territorial unit. The weak link between professional researchers and local museographers has, for over two decades, made the majority of the small ethnographic museums less permeable to the innovations and debates unfolding in the anthropological community. For example, it is difficult to find evidence in these museums of the rationalist theories successfully proposed by Alberto Mario Cirese since 1967. For a long time, ethnographic museums have also been resistant to creating the cultural heritage that Cirese called 'volatile', 'non-concrete', and which, in as much as it is constituted by knowledge, performances, rituals and stories, corresponds to the most specific and original type of heritage in the sector.

And for a long time there has been no trace in the museums of the interpretive turnaround that has radically altered the epistemological and theoretical landscape of the anthropological sciences since the 1970s, focusing precisely on ethnographic practice, as a dialogic and reflective approach, the leading carrier of the new cultural hermeneutics. It was only in the 90s that there began to be experimentation in Italy's museums. In keeping with some already famous examples (the Ethnographic Museum in Neutchatel, but also the one in Grenoble), they exaggerated peremptory categories (art, culture, ...) and hybrid temporality (present history as well as the invention of tradition) in their exhibitions, gave emphasis to the local point of view and proposed a radically reflexive approach to cultural differences.

The current landscape seems to slowly absorb these innovations and points to significant changes, including increased dialogue between local museographers and research professionals, between anthropologists of and in museums, but also the most direct assumption of project and management tasks on the part of university lecturers and ethnographic researchers who have chosen a museum career. This landscape, as a section of the AISEA (Italian Association for Ethno-Anthropological Sciences), then as an autonomous association, would make convincing indicators.

Museum of Rural Life

"In June 1976, on the occasion of the annual Stadura summer festival, we opened the first permanent exhibition in Italy, and named it the *Museo della Civiltà Contadina*" (Gruppo della Stadura, 1985: 60). Thus proudly writes Ivano Trigari, one of the main animators of that group of former farmers

(Gruppo della Stadura) who gave life to an unprecedented rural museum experience that culminated in the foundation of the S. Marino di Bentivoglio Museum of Rural Life. The significant and entirely voluntary tasks of gathering objects of material culture (relating to work and the home environment), carrying out research and creating archives (through a non-subordinate relationship with the academic world) were based on a common cultural activism that greatly impressed the general public. The initiative soon gained a vast resonance and became an exemplary model of the fundamental role played by workers in the history of humanity. This model was recognised politically and was extremely significant. Recognition of the creativity of popular culture and the centrality of the world of work in biographies and production reports became interpretive keys with which to read the landscape and history as a whole. From then onwards, small museums began to multiply throughout Italy. They were established on the basis of collections of humble objects, without set-up costs and by the will of small groups or ex-farmers who, more than others, had experienced the sometimes devastating effects of modernisation.

They contributed significantly to the success of this typology of museum, including the invention of the name: *Museum of Rural Life.* The name immediately invoked – to both historians and sympathetic anthropologists – the initiative of St. Marino di Bentivoglio, who wrote of fearing the 'mythical charge' and, more generally, of the fallacy of assuming the peasant world as 'totally autonomous and closed in itself', as if it was something outside of broader cultural circulation processes. The rural inhabitants showed they were not something external to history and instead displayed *their way of being part of history*. As a result, Cirese would have preferred the name of the museum to be *Museo della condizione contadina* (State of Peasantry Museum) (Cirese, 1977: 20): a place where technique, relationships and modes of production, and even nostalgia in the Marxian sense of the price paid for the progress of the "breaking of continuity between domestic, working and associative life which, despite misery, characterised the demise of the peasant state" took centre stage (Cirese, 1977: 23 and et seq.).

The problem, still very obvious but today almost completely incomprehensible, was that behind that name (*Civiltà contadina*) was the work of Carlo Levi – a fundamental but highly controversial body of work about left-wing culture. He reproached him for being heavy handed over the autonomy of popular peasant culture, to dissect – as certain forces in heritage and conservation did – the unity of the proletariat, dividing the peasants from the workers, describing the former in mythical images, anchoring them to an immobile way of life, refracted through history.

Levi's work is thus dealt with strangely and distrusted by most anthropologists[4]. Levi focuses the same look, which is at the same time sympathetic and denounces backwardness, on the subordinate rural classes with anthropological sensibility completely unpublished in Italy and derived from specific readings. "Carlo Levi read about anthropology and it would appear that his observations carefully re-establishing levels of alterity in the mentality of the southern peasants are indebted to Lévy-Bruhl's writings" (Padiglione, 1997: 72).

At the end of the 1960s when the promoters of the Museo di Bentivoglio resorted to the Levian notion of rural life, it became necessary to characterise it in a Marxist sense, a sense of social economic formation, overlapping the image of people struggling for the release of Levian denunciation with a world that was left out of emancipation. In a presentation of the museum, the historian Carlo Poni in fact declares that this "concept must be verified, rethought and deepened, but also involve the consideration of social economic formations, modes of production and labour struggles for their own liberation for more worthy life" (Poni, 1985: 120).

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Consequently, in the 1950s and 1960s ethnographic studies in southern Italy, though often inspired by Levi (Padiglione, 1997), were more explicitly measured by Gramsci's readings, to articulate discourse on class and culture (see authors such as de Martino and Cirese), and to show that in the circulation processes besides hegemony, resistance is also consumed ("the islands of backwardness are sometimes also places of resistance", wrote Bosio); and therefore subordinate classes intervened significantly in the cultural processes, producing by positioning difference.

In just a few decades, museums of rural life have multiplied, supported by humble collections and essential museography that has been intermittently availing itself of ethnographic sources and agricultural history (Padiglione, 1996). Several unlikely museums have emerged, museums that act as cultural services and as centres for the documentation and interpretation of a territory, but which set themselves aside as institutions of community affection, presiding over rural memories in towns, gradually building an idea of heritage: a cultural heritage, the result of shared social conditions, of cultural processes elaborated in distance, exclusion and resistance.

It seems apt to share Pietro Clemente's thoughts (1996) who, in a recent rehabilitation of the notion of peasant civilisation, has emphasised the value local reinvention that is able to summon museographical grains of culture that might otherwise have been forgotten.

Annotations

The launch of the Code of Cultural Heritage has introduced a very important novelty: our sector has had its name changed from "demoethnoanthropological" (which remains in use as a disciplinary grouping in universities) to "ethnoanthropologic" (a possible influence from the Italian Association of ethno-anthropological sciences and/or Sicily?). The reference to the study in the societies known as 'superior' of the 'inner differences of culture', of 'cultural diversity that accompanies or corresponds to social diversity' has been skipped (Cirese, 1973: 13), or *demography* (originally *Demopsicology*, a term introduced in 1911 by Giuseppe Pitré but coined by Vittorio Imbriani in the German version of the 'Psychology of the People'). To the demo-ethno-anthropological adjective, coined by Cirese in 1973, an almost impossible mission has been entrusted for the past three decades. "It had to make visible – even in the innovations – traces of identity, our specific history of studies. To put together, at least with a dash, jealous perspectives of their autonomy, taking part in long-time distinct orders of cultural differences (demography, ethnology, our anthropology). A complex and articulated field where we better perceive the contours by virtue of the established connections of this ugly term" (Padiglione, 2003). It is hoped that the censorship on demography (a term which is not really diffused elsewhere) does not mean that there isn't a research program among the most original deployed by Italian anthropology in the wake of the stimulation offered by the pages of Gramsci, and that the new ethno-anthropology label emphasises the tension within our field of study between research practice (ethnography) and commitment to generalisation (anthropology). After all, a colleague, Silvana Miceli, reminded us during a conference in Rome that "Anthropologists do not know *Anthropos's* address. They get an idea of it by travelling through the *Ethne*".

Academic textural posture and museographic spontaneity

Rendering the cultural field of small ethnographic museums as 'undisciplined' has contributed to the lack of a connection between them and a large part of the community of anthropologists, from the second post-war period up until the 1980s. One can speak of mutual disapproval. The logic followed, especially in their layout, has often lost sight of the main topics and latest developments in the evolution of the anthropological perspective. In particular, on a museum level, the notions of ethnography and tradition have been applied in ways which are now out-dated and opposed by contemporary anthropologists (Padiglione, 2008: 93-105). But the difficult, problematic relationship between anthropologists and small local ethnographic museums during the second half of the 20th century seems to be attributed to an increasing refractoriness in museum practices (accomplices, in the sixties and seventies, to the symbolic anthropology that appeared as a simplification of interpretative complexity), which did not become part of the cultural and political centre of anthropology until the nineties.

The lack of constant mediation by the anthropological community, especially that of the academic world, which for a long time has shown, with some exceptions, a substantial indifference, cannot be said to be entirely alien to the negative representation of local museums among the larger public. Or rather, it can be said that in the sixties, seventies and eighties, to the lively visual and objectivistic visualisation of local museums of demographic interest, the university world of anthropology responded either with strangulation and distrust, or made use of an alternative code that favoured itself – choosing, that is, textual writing in the mode of indexing, the essay or the convention report. Only since the nineties have there been cases of direct involvement of professors of anthropology in design (Cirese, Bronzini, Clemente, Padiglione, Gri), in museographic practice, in the management of museums and in tune and alliance with a new generation of professional museographer anthropologists, in the meantime (Vito Lattanzi, Mario Turci, Giovanni Kezich, Gianfranco Molteni, Daniela Perco and Paolo Piquereddu).

The 1960s and subsequent years were characterised by a range of expressive actions that had references to themes and styles of popular culture, without being subject to the dictates and discourses of disciplines such as Cultural Anthropology and History of popular traditions, which in those years were finally gaining academic recognition. They were years of ethnographic spontaneity which gave rise to the first local ethnographic museums, which corresponded to other converging sympathetic phenomena present on the artistic scene; first of all, for the echo it received, the revival of *popular 'pop'* music, (where pop was united and confused with *folklore*, thus exploiting a rich and varied regional repertoire, and to the *proletarian*, loading new subversive force, rebellious on the political scene). To undertake this retrieval in research and reproduction works, there were countless basic musical and theatrical groups, appearing almost everywhere during that period, in the wake of the investigations carried out in Italy by the new Ernesto de Martino Institute (linked with Cesare Bermani, Franco Coggiola), and they found performances in the Italian *Canzoniere* and in the first scandalous "*Ci ragiono e canto*" (1964) directed by Dario Fo (the original title was: "*Nasco, piango, grido, ammazzo, mi faccio ammazzare, faccio all'amore, rido, mi affatico, credo, prego, non credo, crepo, ci ragiono e canto*" (I am born, I cry, I shout, I kill, I am killed, I make love, I laugh, I get tired, believe, pray, do not believe, fall, think and sing), in the experiences of the New Folk Song Company and the *Circolo Gianni Bosio.*

In a landscape characterised by a plurality of heterogeneous attitudes, one figure stands out who has, over the years, maintained a special cultural influence allowing him to connect different phenomena focused on popular culture. It is important to see the writer and painter Carlo Levi as an initiator and an activator of discourses on several different levels, cognitive and expressive, but nevertheless as having the peasant world and its grains of cultural alterity as his primary theme (Padiglione, 1997: 69-74). It is well known that de Martino's research was inspired by *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (Christ Stopped at Eboli) (1945), and that this also directed his work on similar topics, from a different perspective.

Even Rocco Scotellaro, mayor, researcher and poet, was very close to Levi. His surveys, which have made the use of biophysics in the socio-anthropological field known, show how cognitive engagement has solid roots in ethical and political instances, suggesting a line of research that became increasingly important in the 1970s, contributing to the legitimisation of the growing movement of museums of ethnography and rural civilisation. But another converging stream helped to create a climate conducive to the emergence of museography from the south and, in this case, Levi had an initial central role. The reference applies not only to intellectuals noted for their interest in the people, but also to artists who after the post-war period, in a

crescendo that culminated in the seventies, undertook expressive research with the peasant world at its core: land occupation, social struggles, emigration, peasantry in contrast the relatively victorious urban world. These are themes that are found, for example, in the exhibition catalogue *Arte e mondo contadino (Art and the peasant world)* (edited by M. De Micheli, 1980), an exhibition whose move from Turin to Matera was significant. In many works, there is a particular connection between realism and populism, nostalgia and anticipation, compensation and the perception of a past that is long gone. This is certainly present as an evocative matrix in many museums of ethnography and rural civilisation.

For ethnographic museography, these artistic experiments proved to be a sympathetic background, but unfortunately not an operational agent, nor a pragmatic or programmatic connection. So it is to be considered that attention – already strong since the post-war period – that contemporary art turned to popular culture and that, despite the ever-strong outcomes of Levian poetics and realism, it returned to express itself in the 1960s in relation to Jerzy Grotowski's *teatro povero* 'poor theatre' and the *arte povera* (poor art) of Alberto Burri (and other artists), namely the thematic and stylistic focus on the historicity of matter, dense objects and landscapes.

Heritage. The growth and decline of indexing

Many young anthropologists who left university between the 1960s and 1970s forged closer connections with museums when convergent museographic approaches in France (George-Henri Rivière) and Italy (Cirese) began to preach the centrality of research, and anthropology began to engage in developing scientific instruments for sorting collections and museums. Searching for a museum or a territory meant filing and documentation, having a complex ethnographic background made up of sources (people, objects, scriptures) and the possibility of establishing a new type of relationship that provided for restitution and therefore also evaluation by those who, elsewhere or in ethnology, continued to be called 'indigenous', 'natives'. Carrying out scientific indexing was considered, in the academic world, a way to complement and complete the somewhat 'wild' documentation that, in those years, was often initiated and undertaken in a widespread manner by regional authorities and basic groups and which, centred on the recovery of popular culture, was fuelled by a vibrant ethno-political tension (Kezich, 1999: 51-55).

It is worth pointing out that the interest of academics was often directed towards the construction and validation of scientific documentation, or to establishing and safeguarding sources, rather than to museums and their objects. And this was perhaps appropriate, since there is no doubt that the recognition of the existence of a specific 'good', called demoethnoanthropology (DEA), is – as with other goods – indebted to the existence of specific catalogue cards. Thus, the "*farsi*" of the DEA foresaw a long stage of gestation, that is, an emphasis on documentation and experimentation with ways of indexing, in a collaborative relationship between the university world (Cirese, Gian Luigi Bravo, Enrica Delitala), state agencies (State Discotheque) and regional centres, which then slowly fell. The catalogues FKN (narrative), FKM (music) and FKC (ceremonies), developed by the National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions in agreement with the Central Institute for Catalogues and Documentation, were experimented with primarily on a regional level and, at the end of the seventies, it was possible to make an initial assessment of the work carried out by the territorial museum (Biagiola et al., 1978). This attention to documentation continued in the following decades, eventually requiring a more systematic and functional definition. The was implemented through the production of a new inventory of heritage objects (2000), called *Demoethnoanthropological Material Goods* (BDM), and a supplementary inventory of intangible heritage assets, which was

to be used intensively, especially in the territories, called *Immaterial demoethnoanthropological goods* (BDI), and which was carried out between 2002 and 2006 (Bravo, Tucci, 2006). The "rise of indexing" in this field is best understood through its commitment to attribute documentary value to goods that do not manifest it explicitly, and to credit the field of science with a new order of cognitive practices, such as, for example, ethnography, which will become a major part of the philological skillset, especially with the BDI card. From the first indexes, called FKO (Folklore objects), which referred to mobile and immobile real objects, the project moved on to cataloguing, designing and ultimately making the BDI card operational.

In the early 1990s, ethnographic museums took a similar pathway and abandoned the centrality of material culture to represent intangible heritage, consisting of performances, festivals, knowledge and narratives. We see a change of theoretical paradigm in these interpretations. They abandoned the positivistic illusions that were often active in making the catalogue card more than an object identification card, continuously subject to updating due to foreseeable reinterpretations, and at the same time it opened the identification and filing not only of 'exemplary objects' (Solinas, 1989), but also of 'objects of affection': things whose value does not consist of being representative on a collective level, but which have a firm meaning for individuals, that is, which invite you to explore the ways in which the life story of people intertwines with the history and social life of objects (Clemente, 1999). This is a perspective that went on to have very significant effects on local ethnographic museography, inviting immaterial research and narrative to complete exhibitions of material items, in essence freeing them from repetition. In this different landscape, the way in which museological and heritage research was carried out also changed direction and perspective, losing the rhetoric of the inventory. We began to accept more diverse cognitive practices and stopped submitting the effective work of documentation in the territories to the rational, deductive and generalising academic model, prevalent at the time (Clemente, 1996). But these positions bring us to the mid-1990s, when divergences between local anthropologists and museums were increasing.

A festive revenant

Tullio Seppilli, a current dean of university anthropologists and prominent figure in the history of Italian studies, deals with the theme of museums in an essay that recalls the conference '*Commitments and perspectives of the speaking drum' in the context of the museums of society and their cultural policies*, which took place in 2003 at a local Umbrian museum, one definitely not of a conventional type (*Museo del tamburo parlante* of Montone, Perugia). The essay is a good pretext with which to point out the changes of perspective relative to museums that Italian anthropology has experienced in previous decades, and that were highlighted in a very vague and problematic way at the beginning of the year 2000.

"There is something in meetings dedicated to ethnographic museums or their variant of so-called folkloric museums or folk culture that always comes back as an annoying *revenant*, and since the late nineteenth century, has characterised all the history of debates that is used nowadays as "museum anthropology" (but it would be more precise, I think, to speak rather than "anthropological museography" or perhaps "ethnographic museography")" (Seppilli, 2005: 173).

There is a long note at this point in which Seppilli shows an aspect of his disorder, an element of his discomfort, a target of his controversy: he reasons on the subject of discipline, reiterating his rejection of the notion of *museum anthropology* (which, if anything, could only be used to indicate the 'anthropological museum study') in favour of *museography ethnographic*, in the wake of anthropological cinematography, since it is a theoretical methodological dimension that embraces all research sectors. Seppilli

writes from an academic viewpoint that many (largely internal anthropologists in the world of museums) have been allowed to create a new denomination from below, causing confusion in hierarchies and conventions in the wake of postmodernism and of the *new museology*.

But the annoying *revenant* evoked by Seppilli relates to a deeper and wider discomfort, which is not limited to terminology and difficult philology problems within a group of troubled museum anthropologists. That disturbing thing relates to the subject itself, the content and the sense, in the anthropological work of 'muse-ing' (*museificare*) (Seppilli, 2005: 174). Note the use of this verb that, unlike others already in use, recalls ghosts and violent and definitive actions, or, as it turns out and as Seppilli explains, the work of embalming, or freezing. In it you can perceive the anthropologist's fastidiousness in reducing research to an object, to definitive things, museum life. It is like an allergy, a vitalistic legacy of anthropology regarding the museum as a privileged terrain, as a space of visual representations and impure professionalism, from a communicative and scientific point of view. Local museography is considered to be an effect of the reduction in local production and the deluge of information, which produce alienation and consequently demand for 'reassuring rooting mechanisms'.

Here is a kind of emotional, defensive interpretation, one which is preferred within the community of anthropologists and which aims to have museums capture emotions as well as cognitions, reactive feelings rather than memories and assets to be safeguarded and valued; an interpretation that, in a guarded way, as nostalgia for the 'prices paid to progress', in Cirese (1977) becomes predominant and a common place of inferiorising reality when the anthropologist performs at a cognitive level whilst considering native local museographers who are anchored to an emotional, rational and project-free condition. It is a 'primitivist', 'prelogic' reading that captures reassuring mechanisms, anxieties of rooting, logical axioms, dangerous forms of appropriation in museums made by collectors and small communities. In the volume *Museo oggi in Italia, Ottavio Cavalcanti describes the identity crisis that would lead the rustic villages to find 'alleviation' in the 'cult of the past' and in 'material relics' (Cavalcanti, 1990: 28). In the introduction to the volume Il patrimonio museale antropologico – Itinerari nelle regioni italiane (Anthropological museum heritage. Itineraries in the Italian regions), Valeria Cottini Petrucci attributes the origin of many small museums scattered across rural villages to an annoyance at a loss of identity (AA. VV, 2002/2003: 7); Luigi Maria Lombardi Satriani finds misunderstandings and ingenuity in local ethnographic museums, and accuses positivism of diverting demographic attention in the direction of museum of making museums "the show of this trust in reality" (AA. VV, 2002 / 2003 19); Antonino Buttitta criticises a "sleepy reason" that would produce museums as "cultural golems" and underlines the "limits": a) decontextualization of objects; b) processes of refunctionalisation, of change of an unstructured meaning; c) resulting in cognitive impairment of the proposed reality (Buttitta, 2002: 31) Francesco Remotti is no different when he expresses an explicit criticism of the practice of creating local museums guilty of 'spreading' for 'identity' possessions' unspiritual appropriations of cultural differences, irretrievably far removed from the past and change that has already happened (Remotti, 2000: VII -XXIX).*

Even if through countless hesitations, this psycho-cultural view, which is concerned with the defensive and non-progressive nature of local museums, will change with its entry into the field of museum anthropology and in particular to the Italian Society for Museums and Demoetnoanthropological Goods (SIMBDEA[5]) .

From the preoccupied gaze to a patrimonial turning point

From the symposium in which the SIMBDEA (2001) was founded, and then from the pages of the magazine "AM Antrop-

5
SIMBDEA is a non-profit Italian association which brings together professionals, scholars and volunteers actively working with demo-ethnoantropological assets, museums and material and immaterial cultural heritage.

ologia museale" (2002), a sympathetic approach to local museums was born. Certainly, it also continued to criticise and attribute 'passions' to these museums, but from this stage onwards the argument exhibited a deeply recognisable cultural recognition evident in the opening and in the concluding paragraphs of one of Clemente's essays. There is a definite change in perspective, the idea that these types of museum have a strategic mission is unusual and new: broadening the narrow forms of life imagined for the future. In this sense, museums can be considered as "a resource of possible alternatives to civilisation, increasingly necessary for our society [...] to imagine forms of sociality, of the relationship with nature, of civilisations that can be spent in the imagination of the future" (Clemente, 1996: 176). It is understood why the scholar, in rehabilitating the notion of peasant civilisation, emphasised the value of being a local reinvention able to summon museographically forms of cultural alterity otherwise denied (Padiglione, 2008).

What Clemente inaugurates is no more critical-analytical writing but dialogue, participatory research, and shared interpretation (see also the catalogue *Il bosco delle cose. Il Museo Guatelli di Ozzano Taro*, edited by P. Clemente, E. Guatelli, 1996). Clemente, who had studied oral sources and, through these, had experienced the coauthority of researcher and informer when it came to life stories, introduced participatory and collaborative initiatives to the museum industry, deploying his significant understanding (combining piety and a sense of the meaning of the future).

It should be emphasised at this point that the success of this 'close look' approach and the ability to sympathetically read the stories of museums and collectors (the Guatelli case is paradigmatic) received a strong impetus from the founding of SIMBDEA. For the first time, the 'museums' of demographic orientation and ethnological orientation, traditionally separated by a mutual wall of indifference, declared themselves interested in collaborating and learning from each

Pietro Clemente at the Guatelli Museum in Ozzano Taro (Region: Emilia-Romagna) (date unknown).
VINCENZO PADIGLIONE

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other. It marked the start of a new historical phase, which saw the 'decline of traditional breakdowns', vanquished by social scenarios, from the unproductive dynamics of post-industrialism – also due to the emergence of 'new cultural differences within European countries'. The preoccupied look exhibited by many university anthropologists was thus overcome – or at least ameliorated. That look which saw only cognitive weaknesses in small ethnographic museums – epistemological confusion, narrow contextualization – was somewhat abated.

After a few decades at the margins, this specific type of museum came – at the end of the eighties and, fully, in the nineties – to be recognised as one of the foremost sectors of contemporary anthropological and museological debate, and ended up with steadily increasing importance and visibility, not only culturally but also politically. The local communities did not appear willing to delegate to foreigners the public management of their representations, to sign blank cheques without being involved, as bearers of culture, at the major decision-making levels of research. The sphere of heritage and museums, precisely because of the transparent pressure and contractuality that emerged (as well as the communication challenge launched in the context of postmodernism – of fierce competition), became an area where knowledge and anthropological research practices, indebted to collaborative approaches, allowed us to experience unusual ways of representation and new sources, both internally and externally, of legitimacy (Padiglione, 2008).

Within SIMBDEA new perspectives and practices emerged, generally centred on a collaborative and reflective local museography, giving new centrality to ethnography, to the plurality of voices, to local interpretations and aesthetics; to highlight to visitors the tension between the subject and the context, between scene and stage, to summon intercultural comparison in order to prevent sacralisation of local identities (AA. VV, 1996).

The museum scope makes these pragmatic values even more transparent, requiring from operators a constant review of classifications, categories, approaches adopted, that the time and symbolic strength of the museum tends to materialise, naturalise, transform into monumental complexes, in excellence emancipated by the ranks of history.

Pietro Clemente at the Guatelli Museum in Ozzano Taro (Region: Emilia-Romagna) (date unknown).
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In general, from the 1990s, SIMBDEA and the museum movement created a patrimonial perspective able to attract investment into exhibits and the future of individuals and collectives, the appreciation of know-how, aesthetics and local society, which had previously been invisible. And thus, from the pages of *AM Antropologia museale* and in the lobbying work of SIMBDEA, these museums came to be recognised; their incredible dispersal across the Italian territory, with a particular presence in areas without other museums, can also be seen as an increase in cultural democracy. It is a museography made up of effervescence and local affection and state indifference. With a state often lacking in museums, but an augmented range of exhibitions, there are many and varied activities possible.

In the essay *Vita sociale di musei locali* (The Social Life of local museums), Berardino Palumbo moves in a critical direction as he reflects on the incompleteness of the local museum as a public space, assuming as the subject of his local ethnography the local historical and artistic museums that are expressions of antique contrasts between factions, limited by the modern conception of the museum as a public space. The question which Palumbo poses, initially indirectly, raises limits and criticisms that extend to small ethnographic museums:

What happens to spaces that political actors define as "museums", which practices and which poetics are implemented in a political context in which relations between the state and the local community, between "public" and "private spaces" (and also between "history and other stories", between "document and monument") do not appear readable through the classic categories of "tradition", "modernity", "postmodernity"? (Palumbo, 2000: 281).

These are studies that, unlike the semiotics of the museum as a *metacodice*, such as non-life, reinstate the museum into forms of coexistence, make it a place of belonging, a '*hyperluogo*' – as Palumbo called it – dense with conflicts. But this contiguity with social life is not a serious impediment and impurity; in fact, it creates the possibility that the museum represents something beyond the culture of the elite, that it can transmit instances and perspectives from the community that wanted it, welcomes it and feels represented by it.

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The new generation of DEA museums [6]

Some of the collections set up in the 1960s and 1970s, which became museums, could enjoy resources, grow and become established, sometimes with the help of institutions, including regions and universities. But what Mario Turci writes about regarding the affairs of DEA museums in Emilia-Romagna is of general significance:

[The] Eighties until the mid-1990s were years in stasis and, in some ways, of the crisis of the certainties that had led to the years before the establishment of exhibition centres. The economic crisis and the stagnation of the debate about museums of material culture led to a sort of selection of which initiatives would be given life. Collections that found support in public administrations could initiate development programs and, in some ways, consolidate themselves. From the end of the 1990s, a resumption of interest in the ethnographic museum was recorded, this time with the caution imposed by regional and provincial coordinators under the aegis of [...] public administrations (Turci, 2006: 13).

In terms of content (themes and installations), the nineties – and in particular the end of the decade – represent a phase of profound change in the DEA museum landscape of in Italy. 1999 can be considered the watershed year in a conventional (but not arbitrary) manner. It was during this year that the inauguration of the EtnoMuseo Monti Lepini of Roccagorga was planned by Padiglione.

With this experience, which started a new period of ethnographic museography, a different way of understanding the relationship between ethnography and museums was formed.

From this moment on, and on the basis of what happened in those same years over national borders is a case for everyone: The *Musée d'ethnographie di Neuchâtel* – "at the heart of the exhibition path and as a focus of the visitor's attention" is an "anthropolog-

6
This paragraph was written in collaboration with Marco D'Aureli

Portrait of the EtnoMuseo Monti Lepini, in Roccagorga (Region: Lazio) (date unknown).
VINCENZO PADIGLIONE

ical discourse (communicated through an organised sequence of visions, dramatisations and other suggestive multi-sensorial stimuli) which aim to represent cultural diversity in a symbolic, metaphorical, evocative and analogous way, even in its implicit and less-themed elements" (Padiglione, 2001: 89). From spontaneous museums to the anthropological museums, it is possible to define them properly insofar as objects around them finally find space for evocation and representation of forms of life, values, practices and knowledge. Underway in this period, thanks to both the changed approach and the optimisation of the available resources, the design and then the realisation of a series of narrative and reflective-themed museums dedicated to subjects left somewhat at the margins of DEA museums. Lazio is the region that has witnessed this new model of museum the most, thanks to serious systematic programming work, and it is where, between 1999 and 2010, many innovative thematic museums were founded. For example, a museum dedicated to the brigands of Itri and Cellere; to games and toys in Sezze, the *Infiorata* in Genzano, the *scritture* (scriptures) in Bassiano, and the *terre di confine* in Sonnino. The intention of these museums is to value various aspects of the local cultural heritage.

In the same period, among the objects of museum documentation intangible heritage takes up increasing space, made available through multimedia installations that are becoming increasingly more popular in museums. In this phase of the history of DEA museums, some historical collectors and local scholars, promoters and animators of important museum initiatives became active and took shape, primarily in the 1980s. Many of these have long since established a relationship with the scientific community, activating networks, implementing ways in which the community can participate in the activities of the institutes.

The crisis from the point of view of small ethnographic museums

The general picture emerging from the analysis of the current situation of local DEA museums definitely shows areas for acute concern.

The brigand Tiburzi, in the *Museo del brigantaggio* in Cellere (Region: Lazio) (date unknown).
VINCENZO PADIGLIONE

In the introduction to the volume *Il patrimonio museale antropologico* (2002), Giuliano Urbani, the creator of the Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape, who identified and recognised the value of DEA assets, states that such goods do not belong to the state, but to regional and local associations and

private entities. He adds that directors are not interested, and that it will also be difficult to incorporate anthropologists into this context, redefining the scientific spheres formed by 'traditional' attendees (art historians, archaeologists, architects). The state seems to be able to do without local museums and anthropological perspectives as a type of knowledge that can offer the cultural heritage rooting in the national and local community and a comparative and reflective sensibility. Although with new elements and greater inclusion of ethnographic experiences in national museography, the minority status of our sector seems to already be perpetuated in the future, where increasing signs of uncertainty are felt.

The state of increasing inequality experienced on a national level by DEA museums remains and is perceived in an even more acute way due to the current economic crisis. There is a disadvantage in comparison with archaeological, historical, artistic and naturalistic museums which, despite being forced to reduce their work as a result of the crisis, can still count on far superior budgets and a greater availability of staff. To attract tourists and young people, many museums have identified the possibility of modernisation through increasing the presence of IT installations in exhibitions. If they are of good quality (e.g. Studio Azzurro installations) the production and management costs of these digital media are very considerable, and exclude most DEA museums.

But the most obvious inequality, the element that most significantly impedes the DEA sector and its ability to be representative of Italian territory, is regional imbalance: the allocation of funds to ethnographic museums is not comparable between the north and the south not even just for survival – funds that southern museums can count on, except for partially isolated exceptions. It is only right to mitigate this complaint, this posturing, which, by attributing the responsibility of social discomfort to the Italian state, covers the inability of many local institutions in the South to have effective intervention and development tools. How can you say that DEA museums in the South's failure to take off is related to some difficulty in designing and implementing themselves as propulsive centres of life and community activity? It is certain that, as suggested by Emanuele Felice in *Perché il Sud è rimasto indietro (Why the South has been left behind) (2014), there is a recurrent weakness in regional and provincial institutions, in the southern mountain communities that have operated in the extractive terms (draining resources in favour of elites) rather than inclusive (involving large sections of the population in diversified economic and political activities etc.), to evoke a perhaps too schematic but effective historiographical conceptualisation to understand the continuing inequality between the north, centre and south of Italy (see also D. Acemoglu and JA Robinson, Perché le nazioni falliscono (Why Nations Fail) 2013. Felice's analysis even suggests that the evils of the South are reproducing and also spreading in the North.*

The Italian state has weakened so much that in the end it has become incapable of any effort to modernise [...]. And even the North's economic and political institutions have become progressively like those of the South. If this continues, over the next few decades the gap could perhaps close, but downwards, with the North increasingly approaching the Italian southern regions. By then, another even deeper gap will be created between Italy and more advanced countries (Felice, 2014: 21).

Yet on the whole, many local museums resist. Cenerentola (Cinderella) (the usual name with which the symbolic statute of DEA museography is defined) has always been aware of the crisis. Its story is often talked about in terms of 'an unfortunate birth' and a 'life of labour', a conventional narrative mode studied by de Martino amongst the farm workers of the south in the 1950s; a cultural elaboration of inequality and misfortune. Small ethnographic museums in Italy are accustomed to the crisis; discomfort is a part of their way of life; it constitutes a permanence that has hardened and marked their identity.

They have also opted for sustainable ways of living on social and economic levels, and this quality should be learned as a resource for other museums, which have so far benefited from lavish funding.

Can they resist more effectively than the others? Certainly a continuous thematic and stylistic update is required, and an even more lively ability to activate local research and community participation. ■

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