



INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

Contemporary Journal of African Studies 2020; 7 (1): 17-37

<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/contjas.v7i1.2>

ISSN 2343-6530

© 2020 The Author(s)

Open Access article distributed under the terms of the

Creative Commons License [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0]

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

Restitution and beyond in contemporary museum work: Re-imagining a paradigm of knowledge production and partnership

Thomas Laely

*Associate Researcher, Department of Social Anthropology and Cultural Studies,
University of Zurich,*

Author email: thomas.laely@panag.ch

Abstract

Today, anthropological museums have to reach out to external stakeholders to reprocess and reappraise the history and acquisition of their collections. They are much more than mere interpreters of a past heritage, but institutions having a place in contemporary history to debate and shape ever-evolving cultures grounded in both local and global concerns. The paper explores these questions using the example of an ongoing trilateral museum partnership in knowledge generation between Uganda and Switzerland.

Keywords: Restitution, cultural heritage, ownership and property rights, African museums, practices of collaboration, museum partnerships, knowledge production

**Restitution and beyond in contemporary museum work:
Re-imagining a paradigm of knowledge production and partnership
Thomas Laely**

Abstract

Restitution has become a popular buzzword in museum work today. However, the return of objects or ancestral remains is usually not the end, but the beginning of a process. Restitution is not simply about undoing past injustices; it also creates new situations and sets new dynamics in motion. More and more, the parties involved are realising that the return of any object can be seen not as a loss, but as a potential gain of new relationships between diverse stakeholders – particularly the museums concerned. Other promising forms of relationships are emerging which can be productive for all involved beyond restitution, a term which is overshadowing alternative ways of thinking and acting. In whatever form, it is in the interest of scientific research that museums holding collections establish contact with, for instance, the artefacts' communities of provenance and countries of origin, with both individuals and official and unofficial institutions, to reprocess and reappraise the history and acquisition of their collections. Research of this kind will make a valuable contribution to the history of knowledge making as well as of the establishment of (ethnographic) museums. This paper explores the case of an ongoing trilateral museum research and exhibition partnership between Uganda and Switzerland. It analyses the premises and modalities of the engagement between the partner institutions involved and elaborates on knowledge generation and dissemination, as well as on the preconditions and requirements of larger long-term partnerships. Museums are no longer merely the interpreters of a past heritage, but institutions having a place in contemporary history to debate and shape ever-evolving cultures grounded in both local and global concerns.

Keywords: Restitution, cultural heritage, ownership and property rights, African museums, practices of collaboration, museum partnerships, knowledge production.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/contjas.v7i1.2>

Dr Thomas Laely (thomas.laely@panag.ch) is a cultural anthropologist at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, with a focus on museology, political anthropology and African studies. From 2010 to 2019, he was the Deputy Director of the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. In previous years between 1994 and 2010, he was active in international arts promotion, establishing and directing the International Department of the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia. Currently, Laely is concentrating on issues of the history and perspectives of ethnological museums, particularly the exploration of new practices of collaboration between cultural history museums in Africa and Europe.

Résumé

La restitution est devenue dans ces dernières années une formule toute faite et bien à la mode. Le retour d'objets ou de restes ancestraux n'est généralement pas la fin mais plutôt le début d'un processus. Les restitutions ne visent pas simplement à réparer les injustices du passé, mais plutôt à mettre en branle une nouvelle dynamique et à créer une nouvelle situation. De plus en plus, les parties concernées commencent à se rendre compte que toute restitution d'un objet peut être considérée non pas comme une perte mais comme un gain potentiel de nouvelles relations entre les divers acteurs et en particulier les musées concernés. Et il existe d'autres formes prometteuses de relations qui peuvent être productives pour toutes les personnes impliquées au-delà de la restitution, un terme qui éclipse à plusieurs reprises d'autres façons de penser et d'agir. Sous quelque forme que ce soit, il est dans l'intérêt de la recherche scientifique que les musées qui détiennent des collections établissent des contacts avec, par exemple, les communautés de provenance et les pays d'origine des artefacts, tant avec des particuliers qu'avec des institutions officielles et non officielles, pour retraiter et réévaluer l'histoire et l'acquisition de leurs collections. Les recherches de ce type apporteront une contribution précieuse à l'histoire de la production du savoir ainsi qu'à la création de musées (ethnographiques). Cet article présente une étude de cas d'un partenariat trilatéral de recherche et d'exposition entre l'Ouganda et la Suisse et analyse les prémisses et les modalités de l'engagement entre les institutions partenaires impliquées. Il traite en détail de la production et de la diffusion des connaissances ainsi que des conditions préalables et des exigences de partenariats à long terme plus larges. Les musées ne sont plus seulement les interprètes d'un patrimoine passé, ils sont également considérés comme des institutions ayant leur place dans l'histoire contemporaine pour débattre et façonner activement des cultures en constante évolution qui sont ancrées dans des préoccupations locales et mondiales.

Mots-clés: Restitution, patrimoine culturel, droits de propriété, musées africains, pratiques de collaboration, partenariats de musée, production de connaissances et du savoir.

Introduction

What can be done, and what should be done with the extensive collections of African objects outside of the continent, mostly in European museums? In December 2018, I took the subway in Brussels to attend the reopening of the Royal Museum for Central Africa on the outskirts of Tervuren; soon I found myself in a conversation with another passenger – a middle-aged white man working for the government. He commented emphatically: 'Oh, they have a lot of treasures out there. But they do not belong to us. We need to give them back'.

After five years of renovation and re-conceptualisation, the former Royal Museum for Central Africa had been renamed 'AfricaMuseum'. The Belgian museum, probably the biggest multi-disciplinary museum dedicated to Africa

with approximately 180,000 ethnographic objects (depending on how you count them), has undertaken substantial efforts to involve in its 'remaking' people and organisations from the African diasporas in Belgium, as well as from the countries where its collections originated – the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Burundi. On the initiative of various external stakeholders and lobbies, different bodies of consultation and dialogue were founded, including a network called '*Voix contemporaines – échos de mémoires*' (Contemporary Voices – Echoes of Memory) which aims to facilitate access to the collections from all sides and to initiate new partnerships. The network has inspired and organised contemplative workshops such as '*Les musées en convers(at)ion. Perspectives congolaises sur la restitution des biens culturels et la transformation des pratiques muséales en Afrique*', commissioned in October 2018 by the German Goethe Institute and organised by the Waza arts centre in Kinshasa.

In the days after the reopening, representatives of civil society and diaspora associations in Belgium came together at the AfricaMuseum for a three-day meeting with the museum staff and directors and authorities of the different museums and public bodies from Kinshasa and Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo. There was a general consensus on the need for restitutions from the museum in Tervuren, but the meeting did not go beyond this point as there was no agreement on the procedures needed to achieve this, or what should be returned to whom, when, and after which preceding steps. However, as in other contexts, the impression gained at this meeting was that the demands for restitution were not simply about the objects concerned, but were connected with the desire to recognise and acknowledge past injustices and the associated claims and rights over the objects, regardless of what is and would be happening to the artefacts themselves. Thus, it can be said that museum objects are often taken hostage, not only in the sense of being held in captivity, but also in the sense that agendas and concerns that go far beyond them are being dealt with at their 'expense'. Objects are always more than just objects; they symbolically represent feelings and conquests, domination and unequal power relations.

The return of objects or ancestral remains is usually not the end, but rather the beginning of a process. Restitution is not simply about undoing past injustices, it always sets new things in motion and creates new situations. The parties involved often begin to realise that any return of an object can be seen not as a loss, but as the potential gain of new relationships between diverse stakeholders – particularly the museums concerned. There are other promising forms of relationships which can be productive for all involved beyond restitution, a term which should not overshadow alternative ways of thinking and acting. This contribution suggests one way for museums in Africa and in Europe to work together to discuss alternative approaches to dealing with collections, as well as with the infrastructure museums provide. It does this by describing the case study of an ongoing trilateral museum research and exhibition partnership between Uganda and Switzerland. In doing so, it analyses the premises and modalities of the engagement between the partner institutions involved and elaborates on the processes of knowledge generation and dissemination, as well as on the preconditions and requirements of larger long-term partnerships. Museums are no longer merely the interpreters of a past heritage, but

institutions having a place in contemporary history and debates, actively shaping ever-evolving cultures that are grounded in both local and global concerns.

The *restitution* of a museum object or the repatriation of ancestral remains generates numerous questions and issues, such as:

- Restitution to whom? Who is legitimately entitled to give away (to de-access, in technical museology terms), and who is legitimately entitled to receive the items? In this regard we have to consider several different individuals, initiatives and institutions, from the direct descendants of the former manufacturers and/or owners via different interest groups and ‘communities of practice’, through to national museums in post-colonial states. So we have at least five or six categories of eligible stakeholders.
- Are there several claimants, parties who lay claim to an artefact or human remains, and which of them qualifies to do so?
- What should happen – or must (not) happen – to the objects once restituted or repatriated? Must they be publicly displayed or, on the contrary, be concealed from public gaze due to, for instance, their (semi-) sacred character? This gives rise to further questions such as: if these objects were already on display in a museum, do they still possess their sacrosanct character? If not, are they still the same objects? Is it possible to restore their sacredness and, if not, what should happen to them?
- How were the objects acquired? Were the circumstances of acquisition legal or illegal at the time? Legal or illegal according to which law – contemporary law in the state of acquisition, or rather in the state, the territory or society from where it was taken? Can we speak of legal pluralism? If so, what – if any – are its consequences for the issue of restitution?

These are just some of the questions we need to ask. Returning an artefact in an isolated way would mean once again separating it from its context and history. Therefore, if an object is restituted, it needs to return with all the documentation and archives linked to it. It is not unusual for a museum object to be entangled with other artefacts or an entire collection within a larger context linked to its place of custody and its repository. All the information documenting this must not remain buried, but be made available together with the restituted artefacts. Anything else would mean repeating the colonial crime by re-enacting the methodologies of colonisation. We need to be mindful and take care that the history of the objects, as well as the documentation linked to them, can be accessed and traced. This makes it clear that both the terms ‘colonial context’ and ‘decolonisation’ do not have to be defined in a narrow, formalistic sense, but should be broadly determined in order to be able to grasp the situation at stake here. The understanding as formulated in the German Museums Association’s ‘*Guidelines on Dealing with Collections from Colonial Contexts*’ is useful for this:

Objects that can be assigned a colonial context thus come from all over the world, not just from the former colonies. In addition, there are objects that served the advancement of colonialism, such as technical equipment for

transportation as well as weapons and uniforms. Moreover, there are objects which reflect colonial situations or which positively anchored colonialism in the public's perception. Advertising should be mentioned here as well as works of visual and performing arts. The museums also have to realise that colonial situations rarely ended with formal decolonisation and can have a lasting effect to the present day. The aim [...], therefore, is to raise awareness that a colonial context can even be assigned to objects made or acquired after decolonisation or to objects from those countries that were themselves never subjected to formal colonial rule (2018: 6).¹

In the last twenty years there has been a major shift internationally in the museum model, with the emergence of the so-called 'New Museology' which has been striving since the 1990s to provide a greater inclusiveness and easier accessibility to museums. While this trend largely concerns ethnographic and ethnological museums in particular, it has definitely influenced cultural history museums in general, as well as art museums. This has brought about a shift, from the idea of the museum being *a site of authority* to the (new, 'post-') museum as *a site of mutuality* and space for knowledge creation. This was also evident in the International Council of Museums (ICOM)'s 139th General Assembly in Kyoto, Japan in September 2019, which extensively discussed how to replace the traditional definition of a museum with a new alternative one that explicitly focuses on diversity and polyphony, on access, participation and partnership.² Although deciding on a new definition, which would have brought about more than just formal innovations was ultimately postponed, all these concerns remain topical and will continue to occupy the international museum community.

Hooper-Greenhill, who has authoritatively shaped the concept of the 'post-museum', understands this new type of museum as being in contrast to the 'modernist' or 'universal' museum type, which was based on the unilateral transmission of knowledge. Hooper-Greenhill asserts that it is not only characterised by new architectural forms, but has a distinctive focus on power and community engagement, by including multiple-epistemic communities in displays and workshops, and by democratising curatorial power. By asking visitors for their input and demystifying museum exhibition procedures, this model of a museum actively encourages visitors to make meaning for themselves (see the example given by Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 157ff). The post-museum is based on cultural approaches to objects and is characterised as a process, which incorporates many voices and perspectives through community outreach and collaborative research, to produce dynamic events and exhibitions:

¹ <https://www.museumbund.de/publikationen/guidelines-on-dealing-with-collections-from-colonial-contexts/>, retrieved 29 July 2019. A second revised edition of the guidelines was published in German in June 2019, and the English version was announced that same year.

² The proposed alternative definition of museums by the ICOM declared them to be "...democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about pasts and futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world.," <https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-announces-the-alternative-museum-definition-that-will-be-subject-to-a-vote/>, retrieved 3 August 2019.

Rather than upholding the values of objectivity, rationality, order and distance, the post-museum will negotiate responsiveness, encourage mutually nurturing partnerships, and celebrate diversity. It is likely too, that much of the intellectual development of the post-museum will take place outside the major European centres which witnessed the birth of the modernist museum (ibid 2000: 153).

It must be added that such a 'post-museum' can hardly be a universally applicable model, and that the issue of visitor engagement or collaboration with 'communities' and the integration of other systems of meaning and knowledge must find different forms and solutions to suit each individual case.

Anthropology and ethnology museums are increasingly being confronted with questions about their collections' provenance and the ways and forms by which they were acquired. In the last two to three years hardly a day has gone by without news and reports on restitutions, on cases of processing the history of cultural heritage from colonial contexts, its management, and associated initiatives, conferences and publications. Museums holding so-called ethnographic collections have truly become political minefields.

The museums themselves have reacted in diverse ways and attempts at renewal: many have changed their names and designations, introduced new concepts for their permanent exhibitions and are working in cooperation with their collections' communities of provenance or with artistic interventions. New notions and terms are being offered up, like *shared heritage* or, even better than this buzzword, *shared history* or *linked history* and *shared knowledge*. Other often-invoked keywords are *decolonisation*, *inclusion*, *diversity*, *plurivocality*, *entanglements*, among others. The main claims concern the processing and working through of the provenance of the museums' collections and, in general, dealing with cultural heritage from colonial contexts. There is a widespread consensus that intense transcultural networks and inter-linkages are necessary in these endeavours.

It is not the case, though, that all museums are only reacting to external pressure and mounting media coverage. Several museums, sometimes together with external scholars, cultural activists or other interest groups, are acting on their own initiative. Numerous efforts have been undertaken in the last three years, and hardly any ethnographic museum can get by without engaging in the matter. Indeed, issues linked to provenance and the ways of acquisition, questions of property and ownership – who is entitled or, rather, legitimised to keep and store artefacts taken from other societies, and under which circumstances – are among the most prominent of the daily preoccupations and pursuits of museums in Europe. How can we explain this shift of attention away from the focus on art that had been looted by the Nazis, which was prevalent until very recently, towards concentrating on artefacts acquired in a colonial context? And why has this shift occurred now? There are several reasons which need to be located in the wider context, reaching far beyond the heritage and museum domain. On the one hand, there is a sharp increase in the significance of questions around identity politics in general. In Europe, there is also the question of South-North migration, which has been strongly shaped by the media and political voices since the autumn of 2015. In the latter context, there is a heightened public sensitivity to the striking

discrepancy with which objects from the Global South find easy access to the North, while people who move in the same direction have not been so warmly welcomed.

Nowadays ethnographic museums holding objects from other cultures are dealing very differently with questions of cultural heritage from colonial contexts. Such artefacts are often labelled 'sensitive objects', because they have a sensitive *history* in terms of their 'object biography', career or trajectory. How should and can ethnographic museums react and deal with such issues? Some of them refrain from exhibiting objects with an unclear or illegal acquisition background, only displaying objects received as part of a friendly exchange relation or given as gifts. This is what the Royal Academy of Arts in London did in its exhibition on Oceania (September to December 2018).³ Was this an expedient solution? Or does the fact of not taking into account and ignoring an essential part of colonial history invest it with an even stronger presence by its sheer absence? Other museums have chosen the opposite strategy: instead of hiding objects with a dubious or evidentially violent form of acquisition to evade public debate and contestation, they deliberately display them as representations of a history of confrontation and violence. Another widespread and popular strategy that ethnographic museums implement to deal with historical collections is juxtaposing them with contemporary art by artists of the region the artefacts originate from, even though such a strategy does not always provide the contemporaneity looked for.

University museums are a special case. As public and scientific institutions, they can be expected to take special care of the provenance and history, as well as the future and legal issues of their collections. The main demand on university collections is to make themselves accessible to the outside world. They might do this by inviting external researchers and other interested parties to come along and do research. Actively communicating that the museum does not want to keep its treasures under wraps, but facilitate their access, would arouse the interest of both scholars and provenance societies, as well as of the general public. At the same time, this would have a beneficial effect on public relations, simply by drawing attention to the existence and significance of these collections. Collections set up in the name of science, as part of a critical European history of science, demand reappraisal, all the more so if they are to make a fundamental contribution to a critique of the museum as an institution. In this regard, European museums are learning more and more that it is in their own best interests to review their collections as an integral part of their own history.

All such observations do not only apply to 'sensitive' objects and claims for restitution, but to all artefacts and ethnographic collections which are bound up with several factors and involve various actors. It is important to realise that any return should not be seen as a loss, but as a potential gain of new relationships between museums, institutions and diverse stakeholders. It is in the interest of scientific research that museums holding collections should be called on to establish contact with the communities and countries of origin, both with individuals and with official and unofficial institutions, to reprocess and reappraise the history and acquisition of their collections. Research of this kind will make a valuable contribution to

³ <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/oceania>, accessed 20 November 2018.

the history of knowledge – and to the establishment of cultural history and the ethnographic museum (see Laely 2016).

It has recently been suggested on several occasions that it may not only be in the interest of the conserving museums in the North to preserve their ethnographic collections, however they might have come into being, but also in the interest of the societies of origin and of their originators. The British anthropologist Paul Basu, among others, furthered the arguments originally put forward by the art historian John Pepper (2005), using the concept ‘diasporic objects,’ and explored them using the example of Sierra Leone (Basu 2011). Roberta Colombo–Dougoud, the Oceania curator of the *Musée d’Ethnographie de Genève* (MEG), pointed out that her Kanak contacts and counterparts in New Caledonia understand the artefacts from their culture in the Geneva Museum as ‘ambassador objects’ (‘*objets ambassadeurs*’). They view them as developing their full value in a foreign country, although they need to return home from time to time for a general ‘re-sourcing’ and new cultural and political ‘reloading’, just like any human diplomatic staff (Colombo Dougoud 2013).⁴ Seen from this perspective, their relational and cultural capital would remain untapped if all these objects were ‘repatriated’ and, as is often the case, disappeared into another museum collection, or, most probably, hardly accessible storage rooms.

Museum institutions in Africa are slowly coming to the fore in these debates about the appropriate use of collections gathered in a colonial context. The British Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM UK) organised a special session on the state of museums in southern Africa under the title ‘Winds of Change’ in 2018; the German Goethe Institutes in Sub-Saharan Africa set up and hosted a series of so-called ‘Museum Conversations’ to bring together ‘international academics, museum experts and curators to discuss the future of African museums from a post-colonial perspective’ as they announced the series. It comprised of meetings in several major African cities in 2018 and 2019, from Kinshasa to Accra, via Lagos and Ouagadougou to Dar es Salaam and more; the closing conversation was held in Windhoek in September 2019. In his often-cited ‘Ougadougou Discourse’, the French President, Emmanuel Macron called for ‘scientific and museological partnerships with museums and research institutions in Africa’ in November 2017 – a speech that was, and still is, ‘sparking a fire that he will have a great deal of trouble extinguishing,’ as a commentator wrote (Debie 2018:149).

In 2018, President Macron commissioned the Senegalese economist and writer Felwine Sarr and the French art historian Bénédicte Savoy to draw up recommendations for returning the African cultural heritage materials stored in French museums and collections. Their report was published at the end of November 2018 under the title, ‘*The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*’, and attracted significant media coverage.⁵ Immediately after

⁴ In 2010, a close collaboration between the Musée d’Ethnographie de Genève and the Musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie gave birth to a elaborated exhibition on engraved bamboos: *Entre-vues sur Bamboos kanak, de Genève à Nouméa*. The presentation of the exhibitions was the occasion to analyse the concepts of dispersed heritage and of objects as ambassadors of Kanak culture.

⁵ The English translation was published at the same time as the original version in French *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain. Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle*.

its publication their recommendations led to a controversial debate that went far beyond France's borders and is now being passionately pursued in Germany, in the run-up to the opening of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin planned for 2020. The report's two authors recommend that artefacts should be returned to their countries of origin if museums cannot prove their origin or consent for their transfer to Europe – but only if their return is demanded by the respective African countries of origin. This important proviso is often ignored. However, this also means that dialogue and negotiations will be a core task in the coming years.

Sarr and Savoy's recommendations are significant when we consider that many of the African collections in Europe's ethnological museums were violently appropriated in the course of colonialism or by taking advantage of African communities. They are of even higher importance if we take account of the fact that a large part of Africa's cultural objects today are located outside the continent. When it comes to figures, the estimate of 90 to 95% is often put forward, by and large adopted uncritically in reference to a UNESCO study published in 2009 that Sarr and Savoy cited in their report (2018: 3, n5). However it remains unclear what this calculation was based on and how the total number of objects was measured. Nonetheless – or rather, all the more – these debates about restitution and the corresponding recommendations can provide a starting point and impetus for a new dialogue between Africa and Europe.

Felwine Sarr's and Bénédicte Savoy's report has given a high degree of momentum and impetus to the debate on restitution. This initiative, kick-started from the French side, swiftly developed an amazing dynamic, unlike the fate of earlier reports whose recommendations leant in a similar direction (cf. Sarr and Savoy 2018: 20).⁶ Why were the conditions of reception better this time around than in previous years? Embedded in a growing societal debate about European colonial history and its significance for the present, ethnological museums are currently facing great challenges. Several of these come to mind. One, the historical contextualisation of the objects and holdings requires vast amounts of provenance research. The challenge of creating public digital access to collections provides a particularly good demonstration of the rapid change in attitudes of political authorities and those responsible for collections and museums in the wake of newly initiated debates. Until a few years ago, many directors of European ethnological museums were of the opinion that it was neither appropriate nor reasonable to make their object databases publicly accessible as they contained far too many gaps and discrepancies. Today, the consensus on this question has changed radically. The goal and willingness to make the object databases accessible online is no longer controversial, nor even questionable. Most museums with ethnological collections are working towards this explicit goal, although, in most cases, considerable resources must first be made available for this laborious task. In addition, there are questions associated with the return of artefacts and, not least, the simultaneous development of dialogue with possible partners from the objects' societies of origin. There are also the moral-ethical perspectives which accompany these issues, as well as (socio-) political negotiation processes

⁶ Sarr and Savoy mention the report Pierre Quoniam submitted to the French Ministry of Foreign Relations in July 1982.

and renegotiations of cultural identity. All of these factors are intrinsically linked with the question of the future role of ethnological museums.

President Macron's statement and mandate regarding restitution may also be connected with (geo-) political motives. Far from being a mere cultural-political initiative, it should be seen in the context of France's international positioning and also in relation to broader French-African relations, the 'Françafrique'. The Congolese collector Sindika Dokolo (himself controversial for his economic behaviour) has commented on the French move towards the end of 2019 as follows: 'This initiative was completely mind-blowing. Yet one year later the French have not done anything substantial. Now, if you look at Germany and the Netherlands, they did not make the same fuss or conduct all this advertising, yet they began to take some concrete steps' (Brown 2019). Nonetheless, the French initiative has triggered a new dynamic on the cultural level, particularly for museum work. The fact that it is an initiative at the state level has contributed to raising the restitution debate from the sub-national, in many cases provincial level, to the national level in some other countries. In Germany, for example, in December 2018 a joint declaration was published by the Minister of State for Culture and Media, Monika Grütters, and the Minister of State for International Cultural Policy, Michelle Müntefering,⁷ entitled '*A gap in our memory. Germany and Europe must face their colonial history. A return of cultural assets is only the beginning*' (2018) – a sure way of raising the restitution question to a national level.

These announcements are also resulting, directly or indirectly, in actions at the museum level. To give an example, in February 2019, the German Linden-Museum in Stuttgart gave back the famous family bible and whip of the Nama Chief Hendrik Witbooi (1830–1905) to Namibia (Sasman 2018), and in June the German government followed by announcing that the Namibian Cape Cross,⁸ exhibited at the German Historical Museum in Berlin, will be restituted to Namibia.⁹ Interestingly, in both these cases, it was symbols of colonial rule important to the national memory-scape being returned, rather than locally manufactured cultural artefacts.

This must be understood against the background that these restitutions were actions closely accompanied by the state, on both sides. Such objects, which are primarily connected with a common colonial history or an anti-colonial liberation struggle, are not very controversial with regard to restitution and a new place of storage (preferably a national museum or monument), in contrast to objects which are more strongly connected with individual groups. In the latter case, the question of where and to whom they belong quickly becomes complicated and controversial. This is precisely the situation that has arisen in the case of the Witbooi bible and whip, where various Nama groups, including Witbooi's direct heirs, are disputing these objects with the Namibian state. The same applies to other artefacts, which is one reason why some African states are very wary of the restitution issue. This shows that restitution is often associated with multiple issues and can trigger complex conflicts.

⁷ Her exact title is Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office.

⁸ The stone cross, also called *padrão*, was erected at Cape Cross by the Portuguese in 1484 and taken to Germany by German navy officers in 1893.

⁹ See e.g. Kahiurika 2019 & <https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/deutsches-historisches-museum-gibt-namibia-die-kreuzkapsaule-zurueck-ld.1482630>, both retrieved 27 July 2019.

The Cameroonian historian and political philosopher Achille Mbembe, who has written widely on post-colonialism, proposed a solution for the future use and custody of African colonial collections: the unlimited circulation of African artefacts beyond state borders, as well as the construction and maintenance of museums in Africa financed by the former colonial powers. In December 2018 a group of European and Nigerian museums, the ‘Benin Dialogue Group’, took the decision to establish a new ‘Benin Royal Museum’ in Benin City, Nigeria, which would exhibit for three years artefacts loaned by the European museums involved, before going back again to the museums in Europe. The Benin Dialogue Group is an ongoing discussion in contexts which have continued to change under public pressure. Today, noticeable shifts in emphasis can be read between the lines of the announcements made in 2018 and the more recent ones. While the term ‘loan’ is now avoided and no longer mentioned, there is repeated talk of ‘permanent display reuniting Benin works of art dispersed in collections around the world’, and reference is made to the ‘significant advance’, compared to the previous planning.¹⁰

It is interesting to follow all these approaches and see their results. But besides all these invocations, it is worth asking: how many times is there genuine cooperation with museums in sub-Saharan Africa, and in what form? Moreover, why do and should African and European museums cooperate? Up to now, cooperation has mainly been unidirectional, for instance displaying European exhibitions in African museums or aiming to coach African institutions in fields such as conservation, restoration or curation, generally following a development approach. Only a few collaborations have demonstrated a joint practical implementation of projects, taking into consideration the expectations, goals and needs of all the stakeholders, sharing project management responsibilities, guaranteeing collective decision-making processes and equal access to shared resources.

The reality is rather different. For instance, when the position of director of the new research campus in Berlin-Dahlem, as part of the new Humboldt Forum-project, was advertised in September 2018, the point about cooperation, above all with ‘cultures of provenance’, was only mentioned at the end of a long list of tasks and assignments in the context of collection and object research. I am convinced that such collaboration should not be exclusively concentrated on material culture and collections, including all their intangible dimensions, but should be conceived of and realised in a larger sense, to also comprise knowledge exchange on all domains of museological practice and theory. That means not focusing on questions of ownership or interpretation of the collections to best capture the value of a joint approach in museum work, but rather on their – probably ‘entangled’ – history, as well as on different kinds and sources of knowledge and possible ways for museum and heritage institutions to work now and in the future.

The Case Study: A Collaborative Initiative Between Museums in Uganda and Switzerland

¹⁰ Compare the press statement dated 11 July 2019 after the 5/6 July 2019 meeting in Benin City, Nigeria – <https://www.tropenmuseum.nl/nl/press-statement-meeting-benin-dialogue-group-1> – to the media release from 19 October 2018 – http://docs.dpaq.de/14096-statement_from_the_benin_dialogue_19_october_2018_16.33.pdf, see also Brown 2018 and Little 2018, all retrieved 4 August 2019.

Let us now turn to the case study. The trilateral research partnership between the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich (EMZ), the Uganda National Museum in Kampala (UNM) and the Igongo Cultural Centre (ICC) in Mbarara, Western Uganda, was initiated in 2015 and is still ongoing. It emerged and developed quite organically out of daily museum work. At the outset, one of the Zurich museum staff got in touch with the Uganda Museum in Kampala to ask for their know-how and support in cleaning and packing smelly milk containers to be transported to Switzerland.

Quite soon both sides grew aware that they could profit from each other's knowledge and expertise. So they decided to stay in touch and try to develop a longer-lasting partnership, which would include a third partner – an independent museum set up in 2012 by a private-public partnership in Western Uganda, the Igongo Cultural Centre. From the outset it was clear to all three partners that the aims and expectations of the contact and exchange would be a long-term institutional partnership, based primarily on research. The different activities decided on later should be instrumental to this overall goal. As a first step, a fairly general Memorandum of Understanding without financial obligations was formulated and agreed between the three partner institutions, in order to have some legal ground and shared understanding upon which to base our activities.

This Memorandum of Understanding stated that the common goal of the cooperation was to “engage in cooperative museological exhibiting as well as educational and research activities, for the mutual benefit of the three institutions”. This ‘mutual benefit’ was expressed in each of the three museums’ different expectations: the Ugandan museums wished to benefit from the expertise of the Swiss museum team in curatorial, scenographic and technical terms – though it was explicitly made clear that the European partner, as a small university museum, did not have much greater experience in this field than the African partners. All three museums hoped for an increase in reputation through implementing an innovative, jointly conceived and curated exhibition. Moreover, they expected that the planned joint research activities would intensify their relationship with local communities and increase the museums’ social relevance. With this practical experience, which contributes to its principles of leaving space for multiple voices and perspectives instead of imposing unilateral representation under its belt, the Swiss museum is now well positioned to contribute to current debates about the restitution of cultural property. Last but not least, all three museums hoped that the cooperation would provide them with broader international networking opportunities and better access to financial resources.

Two additional reasons encouraged the Ethnographic Museum at the Zurich University to engage in cooperation. First, there is the general aim of museum work, as postulated by the International Museums Council as part of its code of ethics, for museums to collaborate and seek partnership with museums and research institutions in the countries where their collections originate.¹¹ This mission is particularly relevant for ethnographic museums, which hold collections

¹¹ http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Codes/code_ethics2013_eng.pdf – Article 6, p. 10, accessed 18 June 2017.



The Igongo Cultural Centre (ICC), Mbarara, West Uganda © ICC, 2017



Team meeting in Zurich seen on a photo displayed at the Uganda Museum. © Thomas Laely, 2016.

assembled from all over the world.¹² Second, partnership in research contributes towards enhancing and improving the knowledge base of the collections and complementing the object databases, which is incomplete in many cases, whilst also making them accessible – particularly to the societies where they originate. This applies to all the participating museums, which, thanks to multilateral cooperation, found opportunities for reciprocal exchange and access to broader know-how and expertise in museology, in strategies of collection, conservation and (inter-) mediation.

One of the core activities of all three partners was to produce a temporary exhibition. It was agreed at an early stage to jointly set up several exhibitions which would lead to building up longer-lasting institutional bonds. In order to implement the agreed activities and action plan, a series of reciprocal meetings were scheduled. First, a meeting of all the curators and scientists involved, called a ‘laboratory’, was held in September 2015 in Zurich. Subsequently, in January 2016, a ‘workshop’ was held at the premises of the two museums in Uganda combined with field research, followed by a Ugandan partners’ research stay in Switzerland in autumn 2016. The geographical direction of the mutual visits and research stays always alternated, with each stay in Uganda followed by one in Switzerland. In addition, in terms of content, the museums focused throughout on the ‘milk complex’, comprising homestead and small-scale farming and industrial production, a topic which was of particular concern to the Ugandan partners. Large livestock and dairy farming are not only of great socio-economic and political importance in many parts of Uganda’s traditional society; they are also essential today from an economic and health policy point of view. This made it all the more interesting to compare it with the Swiss Alpine dairy industry. The corresponding research can be seen as part of conducting a ‘reverse anthropology’ by the Ugandan-Swiss team, comprising steps towards a ‘Europology’ of the Ugandan researchers, an approach which the Indian scholar Claude Alvares (2001) defines as one of the necessary efforts towards decolonisation and the recognition of a ‘multiversity’ of knowledge, by investigating Western societies from an external (‘Southern’) perspective.

¹² Article 6.1. stipulates: ‘Museums should promote the sharing of knowledge, documentation and collections with museums and cultural organisations in the countries and communities of origin. The possibility of developing partnerships with museums in countries or areas that have lost a significant part of their heritage should be explored’ (2013: 10).

In December 2016, the Zurich museum arranged an international conference entitled '*Museum cooperation between Africa and Europe: Opportunities, Challenges and Modalities*',¹³ which attempted to scrutinise and debate current and planned examples of partnership and best practices of cooperation. The majority of the speakers were museum practitioners and scholars attending from the African continent. Some of the contributions were subsequently elaborated and formed the main body of an anthology on international museum cooperation which was co-published in 2018 by transcript Bielefeld in Germany and Fountain Publishers, Kampala in Uganda (Laely, Meyer and Schwere, 2018). From 2017 to 2019 four exhibitions were jointly conceived, curated and run by what came to be known as the 'Ugandan-Swiss core team', comprising the curators of the participating museums. The most recent of these is the 'Mobile Milk Museum', which toured from February to July 2019 through Uganda's regions on a large lorry with an extendable exhibition area, to reach smaller towns in outlying regions. The Uganda Museum is the leading institution in this exhibition, which, like the earlier ones, revolves around the Ugandan and the Swiss-Alpine 'milk complex'.

Requirements and preconditions of long-term partnerships

Many lessons have been learnt from the first four years of this research partnership, not least from the discussions and insights gained during the conference in 2016, which can be distilled into principles and ideas for future cooperation. They are characterised by a fundamental endeavour to diversify knowledge creation and bring in multiple voices – not attempting to produce a 'shared heritage', but to share knowledge on the basis of, amongst other things, a (at times) shared history. As mentioned above, the primary goal and guiding principle was, and remains, mutual scientific and practical exchange. This is associated with developing a knowledge partnership and training for all the museums and researchers involved and it includes the joint debate of museological best practice, which has been implemented directly in the exhibitions devised, prepared and curated jointly throughout all phases, starting with their conception. Setting the agenda together in this way certainly proved to be essential. In the case under study, it was clearly agreed from the very start that the three partner museums must all be equally involved, having equal say and rights in all stages of implementation, including conceptualisation.

It is our opinion that these collaborative activities need to be assessed in a context in which globalisation, global flows of things, ideas and people are not only bringing about greater connection, but simultaneously also creating the contrary: disconnection and fragmentation, including experiences of being left behind, of friction, inequality and incongruence. Thus, the integration of local actors into global networks is not only contingent upon new forms of communication or social relations, but has also led to new opacity. This is not only true for museums in Africa, but also for museums in Europe.

The decision that all three museums would produce their own exhibition with customised titles, communications and so on, resulted from the fact that there was a horizontal, not vertical, distribution of tasks. The three museums involved all entered into the partnership with the same roles and rights. Each museum was

¹³ The conference was organised together with the Swiss Society for African Studies and the Swiss Ethnological Society.

accountable to its own institution. Fundraising efforts were a major issue – and the responsibility of all partners, with quite different results. Not surprisingly, more funds could be raised in Switzerland;¹⁴ however, the Ugandan museums were able to mobilise in-kind support and cover a good part of their travel costs to Europe themselves. The financial resources used by the three museums differed greatly in numerical terms, but in relation to their annually available (exhibition) project funds they were fairly balanced. The different mobilisation potential of external funds brought about a clear financial imbalance which was reflected not least in the required exercise of control. A great deal of effort has been put into making the handling of this issue transparent and binding. For example, a ‘Tripartite Financial Project Agreement’ was concluded, which laid down the rules and procedures for accounting, financial flows, reporting and auditing, as well as intellectual property rights. Experience has shown that a financial imbalance does not necessarily lead to skewed relations between the partners involved.



The ‘Mobile Milk Museum’ touring in North-eastern Uganda, March 2019. © Uganda Museum



Sharing knowledge between experts in milk farming. Switzerland, Sept. 2015. © Thomas Laely

Still, the preconditions between all three museums were different, within either Africa or Europe. The unequal global power relation has become apparent during the collaboration, as each of the museums is entangled in distinct economic and political contexts. Their access to financial means, provided with specific conditions, is very different. Contrasting infrastructural circumstances are also a challenge for the collaboration. Furthermore, each museum has its own institutional mission statement, mandate and goals. All of these factors influence each museum’s processes and affects the ways the partners work together. The divergent conditions determine each partner’s opportunities to promote their own interests, decisions and interpretations within the cooperative project.

Forms of cooperation and possible results

What this experience has shown is that, in order to achieve the best possible results, the most productive partnerships must not be conceived, designed and

¹⁴ By far the largest amount of external funding, approximately USD 200,000, came from the Lottery Fund of the Canton of Zurich was intended exclusively for the exhibitions in Uganda, and was used in the years 2017-2019. The costs of the international conference in December 2016 with numerous speakers from Africa were largely covered by contributions from the Swiss National Science Foundation, other scientific institutions and foundations and the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

targeted too narrowly, but be defined in quite an open way. There already are numerous examples of international cooperation between African and European museums, but most of these operate in a unidirectional way. However, such a consultancy-level knowledge exchange, following a development approach, was explicitly not the aim of the partnership analysed here. According to the approach chosen, it was instead expedient to jointly devise and implement diverse activities, and, in doing so, to share project management responsibilities.

A key aspect of the partnership was that it pooled know-how and knowledge – scientific and social – as well as practical and technical competence for the benefit of all three museums. The starting point of the collaboration was to promote mutual exchange and discussions on museological practices, and this still forms its basis and legitimacy – the intention to learn about museological best practices including presentation and enactment, storage and preservation, (urban) collecting strategies and ethnological knowledge. This manifold knowledge sharing has involved all partners, including junior curators and young staff in each museum. In order to attain this goal, it became crucial to share data and networks. The aim was not only to represent a plurality of perspectives but, in Andrea Witcomb's words, to try 'to also build bridges across those pluralities' (Witcomb 2015: 325) and forge exchanges with them.



Research on Alpine milk farming in Switzerland. © D. Bollinger, 2015.

One of the most valuable results for all the participating museums has been growing a functioning network of additional partners in universities and other culture and heritage institutions.¹⁵ This is the best way to pool the outcomes and benefits, the 'profits and merits' and secure the outcomes of the cooperation. For all parties involved, this meant firstly an expansion of their contact networks and also a significant increase in their visibility, both of which are valuable assets for further work.

¹⁵ Some examples to mention here are the 'African Heritage Initiative' with the University of Michigan and other museum and heritage institutions in Ghana and South Africa, and the inclusion of all three partner museums in the 'Museum Conversations' organised by the Goethe Institutes in sub-Saharan Africa in 2018 and 2019.

Museum Work With, Without and Beyond Collections

All of this means that there are several possible ways to make productive use of the African collections which are predominantly still in European museums, and that the return of objects is not the only course of action and can never be seen in isolation. It should be noted that further options and longer-term collaborations are easier to devise if there is no contested heritage between institutions and countries, as was the case in the example discussed here.

This paper next considers what options of working with objects from museum collections there are today. First is continuing the status quo, where collections and objects would remain largely in storage, with up to roughly only 5% being on display and accessible in exhibitions. Moreover, at this point we should be aware that the original owners or originators of the collections find it almost impossible to trace where the objects are located. Attempts to enquire about and gain an overview of their existence and locations are often hampered by formal requirements which are far beyond the level of possible engagement of the diverse stakeholders of the originating societies, especially for people living in rural areas.

Then there is the option that all possibly reclaimed objects should be returned to their originators or original owners. Today, it is generally understood that a return cannot usually mean just filling an empty space in a drawer or cupboard (which, in most cases, does not even exist), thereby closing a chapter and ‘healing’ a wound. As we have learnt from many previous and current examples of restitution, each return is linked to numerous questions deserving answers. Considering the character of the objects, some of which have spiritual, ritual and political importance, questions arise about what would happen to them if they were removed from local museums or communities. What should the process be for returning these objects, and what forms of agency should be involved in each specific restitution procedure?

In the vast majority of cases, the politics and ethics of restitution are determined by the fact that they take place within official channels. In the coming years this issue will continue to be a constituent part of the relevant states’ cultural policies, shaping the discussion of returning African items. Official state museum institutions usually receive restituted artefacts. It is important to note here that it was precisely this type of colonially-established museum that was responsible for the often reckless ‘collecting’ in the first place, without considering the objects’ character, context and meaning. Does this call into question those institutions’ suitability and entitlement for receiving items returned by the successor states of the former colonial powers, or their right to act as recipients and guardians of the restituted objects? I would definitely say no. Most museums in Africa have changed since independence and most, since the 1980s and 1990s, have been opening up in a number of ways, not least to communities and indeed representing communities’ interests. Nevertheless, any restitution involves many considerations of complex issues.

As was pointed out earlier, there are alternative options for dealing with objects from museum collections than either returning them or keeping them untouched, preserving them as long as possible in the state in which they entered the museum.

‘The museum is not a prison for the objects. They can come and leave again,’ explained Raymond Asombong, the Director of Cameroon’s National Museum at a conference held in Yaounde in July 2019.¹⁶ In several cases important objects in museums are only on loan from their communities, and they are regularly taken out to be used in political, spiritual and religious functions and ceremonies, which sometimes also take place at the museum itself (e.g. the Manhyia Palace Museum of the Asantehene in Kumasi in Ghana, the Uganda Museum in Kampala, and the Palace Museum of the Sultan of Bamun in Foumban, Western Cameroon). In this regard, people sometimes speak of a ‘living museum’, ‘*un musée vivant*’, where the boundaries between museum, environment and originators are more fluid than they are in the West.¹⁷ One subcategory of such practices, for instance, is where objects are used by the communities or the museum in contact with the communities in procedures of conflict resolution and reconciliation.¹⁸

Working with replicas is another option. Here we should first recall the questionable quality of ‘authenticity’ and acknowledge that, in African societies many major spiritual, quasi-sacred or dynastic objects were regularly replicated. This was also the solution found for the exhibition in Kumasi’s Manyhia Palace Museum, where it was decided that further replicas should be made for display, while the existing ones could still be used as ‘working objects’ to perform functions in the continuing operation of the social, religious and political system.¹⁹ As the objects could be useful to or be used by more than one party, whether reclaimed or not, museum practitioners should therefore envisage working with replicas, which nowadays can be manufactured quite easily using digital tools. As a general rule, the ‘original’ – if such a thing exists – should go to the originators and the replicas to the museums. This would mean decolonising the concept of an object’s value, the notion of ‘authenticity’ strongly influenced by the West, and the idea of the existence of an ‘original object’.

Finally, there is the option of using the collections – as small and fragmentary as they may be – to open up new relations between museums, as in the case of the Swiss-Ugandan partnership discussed above, or between museums and communities, integrating different forms of knowledge production. In any case, a focus on objects continues to make sense – for objects tell stories and they mediate (also social) relationships, and all of this goes beyond formalistic conceptions of ownership and property. We should always ask: do we need a reinterpretation of the collections and exhibitions, a contemporisation through new lenses that have been neglected so far?

This also includes the need to disrupt the narrowing of the debate and the reduction of ethnographic collections to just stolen or ‘looted art’ that was acquired illegally. We should not overlook alternative options beyond either storing

¹⁶ ‘Nouveaux Modes de Coopération muséale entre l’Afrique et l’Europe: le cas du Caméroun et de la Suisse’, Institut Français du Caméroun, Yaounde, 4 juillet 2019, organised by the Museum Rietberg, Zurich.

¹⁷ In other cases, for instance in southern Africa, the label ‘living museum’ is instead given to museum sites where local artisans and craftspeople perform for the audience.

¹⁸ See Abiti’s example from Northern Uganda and similar approaches in museum work in Kenya (2018).

¹⁹ Cf. McLeod 2013: 58.

or restituting, evading other constellations and necessary negotiation processes. A differentiated view will pay off in the sense that it is opening up the horizon to alternative options, for instance to diverse forms of partnership like the one in the example given.

Today, there is an awareness of the importance of academic and museographic partnerships and a requirement for ethnological museums to concern themselves with contemporary – as well as historical – issues, which go far beyond the domain of museums. In recent years, many actors have increasingly begun realising how important it is to undertake colonial-era provenance research. At the same time, debates about immigration into Europe, as well as the role and position of ethnological museums in this context, are intensifying. All of these points consistently highlight the significance of international perspectives on present-day ethnological collections. To meet this challenge, we need to carry out more well-researched case studies and gain broader experience in transcontinental partnerships. As is often the case, it can be productive and insightful – if not ‘healing’ – to reverse one’s gaze and thus also ask the question of restitution the other way around: to ask not only what should go, but rather what should remain in Europe within publicly-accessible collections – and under which conditions the remaining artefacts should be researched and possibly presented. The same applies in the opposite direction: under what conditions should the restituted objects be researched and possibly displayed in Africa? Or taken into the forests to die a ‘natural death’, or even be destroyed? It is obvious that the originators must be given an authoritative voice on these issues. And it is equally clear that the subsequent custodians of the objects have a duty to identify them. Answers to these questions are needed from both Africa and from Europe.

Acknowledgements

This text is an outcome of the conference ‘Issues of Restitution and Repatriation of Looted and Illegally Acquired African Objects in European Museums’, held at the University of Ghana in December 2018 under the auspices of the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA). I would like to thank the conference organisers and all participants for their inspiring discussions, interjections and comments; the same applies to all members of the Swiss-Ugandan museum project team: Nelson Abiti Adebo, Samuel Bachmann, Daniela Bollinger, Melanie de Visser, Jacqueline Grigo, Moses Kashure, Marc Meyer, Amon Mugume, Birthe Pater and Raphael Schwere. Not least I am greatly indebted to the CJAS reviewers for their many pertinent comments, as well as to Helen Rana for bringing the text into a reader-friendly form.

References

- Abiti Adebo, N. (2018). The Road to Reconciliation. Museum Practice, Community Memorials and Collaborations in Uganda. In T. Laely, M. Meyer, & R. Schwere (Eds.), *Museum Cooperation between Africa and Europe. A New Field for Museum Studies*, (pp 83–95). Bielefeld and Kampala: transcript-Verlag and Fountain Publishers. DOI 10.14361/9783839443811-008.
- Alvares, C. (2001) Recapturing Worlds. The Original Multiversity Proposal, retrieved from http://vlal.bol.ucla.edu/multiversity/Right_menu_items/Claude_proposal.htm.
- Basu, P. (2011). Object Diasporas, Resourcing Communities: Sierra Leonean Collections in the Global Museumscape. *Museum Anthropology*, 34 (1), 28–42. DOI: 10.1111/j.1548-1379.2010.01105.x.
- Boast, R. (2011). Neocolonial collaboration: Museum as Contact Zone revisited. *Museum Anthropology*, 34 (1) 56–77.
- Bouttiaux, A.M. (2013). Still Tangled in Contradictions After All These Years. ‘Ethnography Museums and World Cultures’ European Project. In S. Ferracuti, E. Frasca, & V. Lattanzi (Eds). *Beyond Modernity, Do Ethnography Museums Need Ethnography?* (pp 37–58). Roma: Espera Libreria Archeologica.
- Brown, K. (2019). ‘The Colonial Effect on Us Is Huge’: Why Congolese Collector Sindika Dokolo Sees Restitution as a Way to Remake African Identity. *Artnet*, 8 October 2019, Interview <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/sindika-dokolo-restitution-africa-1660801>, retrieved 10 October 2019.
- Brown, K. (2018). Europe’s Largest Museums Will Loan Looted Benin Bronzes to Nigeria’s Planned Royal Museum. *Artnet*, 22 October 2018. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/benin-dialogue-group-october-2018-1376824>, retrieved 4 August 2018.
- Colombo-Dougoud, R. (2013). Les bambous gravés, objets ambassadeurs de la culture kanak. *Journal de la société des océanistes*, 136, 119–132.
- Debie, Y.-B. (2018). Restitution: The Tides of History or a Trend of the Times? *Tribal Art Magazine*, 89, autumn 2018, 146–149.
- Deutscher Museumsbund/German Museums Association. (2018). *Guidelines on Dealing with Collections from Colonial Contexts*. Berlin.
- Grütters, M. & Müntefering, M. (2018). Eine Lücke in unserem Gedächtnis. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 December 2018. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/kolonialismus-und-raubkunst-eine-luecke-in-unserem-gedaechtnis-15942413.html>, retrieved 26 January 2019.
- Hooper-Greenhill, E. (2000). *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, London/New York: Routledge.

- Kahiurika, N. (2019). Germany to return Cape Cross padrão. *The Namibian*. 20 May 2019. <https://www.namibian.com.na/188691/archive-read/Germany-to-return-Cape-Cross-padr%C3%A3o>, retrieved 27 July 2019.
- Laely, Th. (2016). Collecting, Revisiting, Reappraising – Restituting? The Schinz Collection of the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Zurich. In D. Collet, M. Füssel, & R. MacLeod (Eds.), *The University of Things. Theory – History – Practice*, pp. 57–70. *Jahrbuch für Europäische Wissenschaftskultur*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Little, B. (2018). Will the British Museum Ever Return These Stolen Artifacts? *History*, 21 December 2018. <https://africhroyale.com/stolen-benin-bronzes-to-be-loaned-back-to-nigeria-by-european-museums/>, retrieved 4 August 2019.
- Loumpet, G. (2018). Cooperation between European and African Museums: A Paradigm for *Démuséalisation*? In L. M. Meyer, & R. Schwere (Eds.), *Museum Cooperation between Africa and Europe. A New Field for Museum Studies*, (pp 43–54). Bielefeld and Kampala: transcript-Verlag and Fountain Publishers. DOI 10.14361/9783839443811-008.
- McLeod, M. (2013 [2004]). *Museums without collections: museum philosophy in West Africa*. In S. J. Knell (Ed). *Museums and the future of collecting*, (pp 52–61). Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- Ogbechie, S.O. (2016). *The Postcolonial African Museum in the Age of Cultural Informatics*. Retrieved from biblioteca.pinacoteca.org.br 9090/publicacoes/index/8– (pp 159–180), accessed 28 November 2019.
- Peffer, J. (2005). Africa’s Diasporas of Images. *Third Text* 19 (4) 339–355. doi.org/10.1080/09528820500124479
- Sarr, F. and Savoy, B. (2018). *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics*, (Burk S. D. Trans) Paris (original work published in French: *Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain. Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle*, 2018)
- Sasman, C. (2018). Witbooi’s stolen Bible coming home with skulls. *Namibian Sun*, 22 August 2018. <https://www.namibiansun.com/news/witboois-stolen-bible-coming-home-with-skulls2018-08-21>. Retrieved 27 July 2019.
- Schrenk, F. (2019). Afrikas Erbe: Wir müssen verhandeln! *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 30 April 2019.
- Schwere, R. (2019). Afrikas Museen haben sich längst emanzipiert. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 17 April 2019.
- Witcomb, A. (2015). Toward a Pedagogy of Feeling: Understanding How Museums Create a Space for Cross-Cultural Encounters. In A. Witcomb, & K. Message (Eds), *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies: Museum Theory*, (pp. 321–344). Chichester, UK: John Wiley.