

Text: A Chat on Innovation, Experiments, Theory and other Fascinations

In: Decolonising Museology

By: International committee for Museology – ICOFOM

Edited by: Bruno Brulon Soares, Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – UNIRIO

The Special Project Museums, Community Action and Decolonisation is coordinated by ICOFOM in partnership with ICOM LAC, ICOM Brazil, ICOM Canada,

ICOM Chile, MAC and MINOM.

Published in Paris, ICOM/ICOFOM, 2020

ISBN: 978-2-491997-15-1

EAN: 9782491997151

A Chat on Innovation, Experiments, Theory and other Fascinations

By Tomislav Sladojević Šola, 2021.

Introduction

Were it not for Bruno, we would probably not meet, dear reader. Or, maybe we would in Dubrovnik at The Best in Heritage. However, I regard this opportunity to speak to you from my long perspective as a privilege, especially not being obliged to speak from the theoretical high grounds. Being old usually turns into a full time job, but fascinations keep postponing that. Bruno knows that my dishevelled manner and disrespect of form may serve some purpose (in these leaden times) as introduction to other more serious readings. I was easily persuaded, as for decades I am sharing as much of my work as I can. To this purpose, I have created “my own” conference. To share more, I have created a

site www.mnemosophy.com and have put all my texts and books on the Internet freely accessible. I believe that humanist and social science products should be highly accessible, or, to be honest, entirely free.

In the last 40 years I have taken part in hundreds of conferences and symposia, but since 1991, when war was raging in my part of Europe, - only upon invitation that covers at least all the expenses. It was not arrogance but the safe way to know that one travels only when one is needed and welcome, while sparing public money in the scarce circumstances. It has remained my habit ever since.

Roughly, the first out of the four decades was the time of my quasi-religious enchantment with ICOM and ICOFOM. My first impression of ICOM was that of a certain elitist gathering meant to advance the nascent profession. Being part of such progressive group sparked enthusiasm. Georges Henri Riviere was still occupying his honorary office there and running his courses on contemporary museology. As a bursary of the French government, I was for a year a daily visitor in the perfectly equipped and charmingly run of the documentation centre. I became an adept. My PhD thesis, *Towards the Total Museum*, was conceived there. I came back with a small library, thousands of notes and, though I was not aware, with a decision to change the world, - at least that of museums. Though naïve at the time, I must add that the hope for a better world was still part of our lives. The ugly transformation of the world into a libertarian paradise and permanently warring planet was still behind the corner. We genuinely believed that progress existed, that humankind can advance, that social cybernetics may face the task to manage the planet. The ambition turned into a dream. Reality started to be elusive, quality retreated into resorts, humanism made its way back into books and superficial media, - behind the political lecterns and clerical pulpits.

Even the “conferencing around” that followed took on the illusion of sacred missionary work, - no less so, when I got elected a member of ICOM’s Executive Council. For a provincial priest like me it was like serving a mass in St. Peter's in the Vatican. But fervent believers are always close to heresy. The first temptations happened to me, early, - in the 1982 when, at the ICOFOM conference at the Louvre, I proposed founding the science of heritology instead of museology. The two reactions in the conference hall marked the rest of my professional life: three prominent colleagues laughed loudly in the auditorium - the first and the last time I was publicly laughed at. I survived the rest of the presentation (at the time, we read the papers for 45 minutes, can you believe?). However, at the exit of the conference hall I was awarded. My mentor from the courses of contemporary museology, Georges Henri Rivière said to me: « Excellent, mon petit, excellent ! ». Ever since I retained that it was me who was right. When my term in the EC ended, I left active engagement in ICOM. An established Jesuit slowly turned into poor Franciscan, tolerated but frowned upon.

Kenneth Hudson, one of the greatest museum connoisseurs sympathised with my restless approach to career. I have often enjoyed his company and then he invited me to join EMYA. It was a splendid opportunity to inspect museums from within. European Museum of the Year Award (Now: EMF- European Museum Forum), founded in 1977 was a way to commend the excellence in museum performance, - a disputed initiative because it was ahead of the sector. Thus, I have upgraded my experience as a curator and director with this superb exercise on best practices. Later on I joined Europa Nostra and was a member and a chairman of one of its award scheme juries. This time it was a precious insight into the expanding sector of civil society and private museums.

I was lucky to have had the best mentors. All my projects and sites since beginning bear dedication to Georges Henri Rivière and Kenneth Hudson.

A few years after my escapade with heritology (1987), I have found the proper neologism for the science of public memory, practically revealing its very nature, mnemosophy, - memory as wisdom. Applied to public memory institutions it explains well that memory institutions are a value system maintenance sector. But, since in 2015 I have written a book on that innovation (at the time, at least, - by the way freely accessible at my blog/site), I do not intend to elaborate it here.

Some starting hypes

The age of museums is turning into the age of heritage. We were part of conquest, be it nature or culture. But, the time of giving back has arrived. Museography as a theory of museum methods and technologies was a logical ambition. Museology is as lovely and cosy an idea as campanology. If science on institutions would be possible, we would have had school-ology, church-ology, hospital-ology... but institutions are only means to a goal. They materialize the concept behind and the societal ideals that created them. So pedagogy, theology and medicine seem to have a better chance to claim the status of science. The concept behind museums and all memory institutions is societal memory. When selected, responsible and ethically founded in a permanent transfer of human experience, the public memory sediments into a dynamic wisdom, - probably the quintessence of democratic process. Mnemosophy or theory X (if you hate self-explanatory neologisms) should have been a science unifying all the memory institutions and processes into a profession. On the other hand, a profession cannot exist without its own science. Any of the public memory occupations would retain all the autonomy within the common endeavour, like it happens in medicine. Public memory is probably the donjon of the welfare society, - the salutary but intentionally vilified concept. Societies should be run by professions, now terminally compromised by the

corporate and financial world and their vassal politicians. We cannot afford the risk of letting **their** media determine what we should remember or what to forget. With knowledge, one can run a company but it takes wisdom to run the society. Museums are a formidable institution, but curators failed to take the lead of the sector and turn it into a partner of the social contract. The recent assault upon professions and their systematic erosion and disavowment is hardly a consolation.

The only guarantee, - a job well done

But, if well intended one starts with self-criticism. It took me an entire book (*Eternity does not live here anymore*, freely accessible at my web site, of course) to explain the “sins” of conventional museums. They are failing to assist society. The transfer of collective experience is what museums are supposed to maintain in the best possible shape. This delicate and continuous process is prone to depletion and degradation. Much of quality information and affective qualities of the past deteriorate or get distorted by frictions, inertia, (mis-)interpretations and other losses in transmission. The task is immense, and cannot be either ignored or left to particular interests. The basically conservative and undemocratic mind-set of traditional museums makes them more the scribes of the power holders instead of popular tribunes. At their best, museums are forums where insight into the nature of the world and society is incessantly discussed and the quality of inherited experience researched, selected, cared for and communicated; that turns them into mechanisms of value system maintenance by which, inherently, they serve democratic process. The best among curators and museums follow this understanding. The worst enjoy the advantage of life in a safe way, guarded by scientific privileges and societal conventions. In the hard times ahead, nothing will be spared of reconsideration. This is why being part of the problem is a failure for museums because they are apt to be the

corrective, constructive force of society, - maybe part of what we have discarded together with the dream of socialism, - the progress.

Innovation is about experimenting through deliberating of fascinations

But, being restless and engaged may mean a general attitude as it was my case. I am very socially minded so in three decisive moments of my country's destiny I became politically active, - a total miss: In my part of the world, people of integrity get soon expelled. The scarcity during the post-war years was an uncomfortable experience. I have created lucrative chances and opportunities but, to be honest, lacked courage (or despair) to be successful. However, these temporary trips into the “real sector”, besides being a considerable loss of time and energy, added to my credibility. Concerning most aspects of life, I am well-traveled. But, I ended up preferring more to create theories than to learn about them.

By trying to change the world, one learns much about it. Eventually, a thorough understanding of the world should be the underlying knowledge of any public memory professional. It is impossible to create a successful product without knowing the market. Since we are there to make the world better (like poets, according to W. H. Auden) our task is even less comfortable but more noble, as our operation is proactive and counter-active. Museums are either falsely “neutral” or wrongly aligned. An insecure person seeks security in the past, while a secure one seeks inspiration. If we cannot be inspirational and offer security of insight and understanding, we are failing at our job.

Innovation is a solitary destiny. I thought that being an innovator would be more rewarding, but be it for the amount of work it requires or strain it puts on family and social life, it is, indeed, more a destiny than a choice. I don't take myself too seriously to make claims except for those deriving from my fascination with the world of museums. As fascinations take people to many unexpected

experiences, thus I came to understand that important inventors, like artists, should probably sustain from having a family. Being neither of the two, I managed to maintain mine. Since this is not a scientific paper, a benevolent reader will accept anecdotal experience. Through my long hundreds of travels and thousands of contacts I have met many brave, creative and hardworking museum directors. Would it surprise you to know that strikingly many of them were divorced?

Innovation is always a certain heresy but contrary to the usual myth presenting it as desirable good, only rare people and organisations are willing to consider it. To the contrary, false innovations as pretence of courage and creativity is an easy, well paid choice. But illusions, being presumably harmless substitutes for the risky change, come rather expensive. The best example, and it will remain such, is technology. Buying new generations of hardware has rarely coincided with changing mind-set, advance in public quality of services let alone in a better human condition. Technology is like knowledge: advantageous or harmful, depending upon the ways we use it. It may encourage certain developments but if they happen it is first in the minds and in the quality of social contract. But so are the museum institutions themselves: always to curators who adapt them for the intended role in society. As a sort of temples of secular spirituality, museums should be well designed but never masterminded by the architects and designers. Any new museum building reveals whether it is populated by sovereign, self-conscious professionals or traumatized academics forced into the role of communicators. Museums are communicational business: if one does not start with this premise all further claims and assertions are wrong. I have written a book on museum marketing and that was a revelation of the research done for it.

Any innovation is always also an experiment, a check-up upon theory as it takes time to check its viability and potentials of any idea. In a sense, the practice of

experimenting and derived experience fit well the underlying ambition of any fully-fledged profession. Ours, seemingly in a permanent *statu nascendi*, needs its own science, language, autonomy, ethics, idealist (societal) objective, obligatory professional education, license etc.

Proposing innovation is like running a shop with unfamiliar goods

Since innovation is somewhat compulsive engagement, proposing ideas and projects one should understand as constant experimenting. Some projects were repeatedly proposed, occasionally in a very elaborate form, to numerous different parties all over the world. Some remained my own dream for decades, being adjusted to the changing circumstances or withering with time. A list of them is accessible at www.mnemosophy.com/solutions. Though I cannot deny some benefit in constant readiness to offer solutions to different problem situations or untapped potentials, the overall impression is that innovation on the whole was but a useful, inspirational exercise. Some of it found ways into consultancy assignments while some coloured my frequent lecturing. An innovator is always more useful to his/her environment than to oneself, being an inspiration to the creative and a free deposit for uninventive compilers. It resembles plowing and fertilizing the soil, an activity that is commendable in every way, no matter who does the sowing.

My first idea in the career was probably proposing “Museums and politics” as a theme for the conference of ICOFOM in 1981, - dismissed immediately as awkward and displaced. My proposal of establishing a World museum shop, supposedly run by/for ICOM, in Paris, was never considered officially. ICOM was very influential and I was convinced that individual museums, not only members, would gladly consent to show their “secondary” collection to the world and support it by waiving copyright dues. Clearly, besides being a unique place, the only shop of the kind, besides the prestige it would bring to ICOM

and Paris, - the museum shop of the kind would have been a source of finances. My immediate inspiration was an extremely successful project of a museum shop in Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris (by the friend Fabienne de Seze) immediately franchised in New York.

I also thought that Paris could have hosted a Museum of Museums, - a sort of exhibition spot where museums of the world would present themselves, - again, an attraction more to Paris and more prestige to the international organisation. I am still taken away by the idea and thought at the time that no museum would dismiss such an opportunity, - at no cost to ICOM itself. International Museum of Bridges (a proposal that never reached further than to be published in Museum International magazine, 2001) has become to me almost an obsessive initiative but knew nothing but failures. The version I have proposed to various European institutions had no support whatsoever. We are talking about the middle 1990s. However, it did exist for a short while as a virtual museum of Europe, run by the Haus der Geschichte in Bonn. The remnant of the site Bridges of Europe is still accessible at <https://www.mnemosophy.com/links> In the meantime, European Council and even the Commission have fully acknowledged that only culture and common, “shared heritage” will keep Europe together; they did so in many initiatives and occasions, turning it into documents, declarations and newly created organisations.

Among the dozens of projects I have been conceiving, promoting and learning from, I will elaborate for this occasion and to some extent only two. One is the Global Love Museum which has existed as a site since 2006; only recently I decided to add to it some innovation that may finally turn it into a relevant project, outgrowing its present correct air of ongoing experiment. The other is The Best in Heritage conference that in 2021 will have celebrated its 20th edition, - started by the letter of support from ICOM and since 2019 enjoying the partnership with the organisation that is globally leading the heritage sector.

A global museum that collects places and their noble memory

In the late 1980s I conceived the idea of a museum of love. At the time, even temporary exhibitions on concepts and values were rarely envisaged and carried out. There were some in Paris (La Villette), some in Neuchâtel (Musée d'Ethnographie de Neuchâtel, curated by Jacques Hainard), some in Quebec City (Musée de la Civilisation) but none upon love. Ever since, I have been trying in vain to persuade many museums and authorities to participate in my project or to adopt it or take it seriously, at least. The project finally gained shape and a title around the turn of the century and was realized in 2006 as a web site (www.globallovemuseum.net). The concept has exercised a certain influence and inspired others, not so much as a global network, but as a reminder that practically any community can afford a place like this, dedicated to what people like to call “romantic love” and make it truly global, with the local story in the centre. We made a few exhibitions of the project in Croatia and, the best one in Belgrade, Serbia (Museum of Ethnography); for a short period, a small public space in our family home (on the island of Hvar) simulated successfully what a typical outpost of a museum could be. Love is, of course, a universal concept and this “romantic” variation is merely a reminder of the broader fact.

The Global Love Museum collects places and their memories. The site advocates that love as inspiration may help us in times when obsessive materialism, selfishness and fear of different others trivialize our lives. Love is the most perfect communication we can imagine. By its total lack of selfishness, it has a unique place in the human condition. The site implies that museums are about values and their place in our world view, whether we define our planet by recognizing places of love or by building walls and memorializing sites of hatred and suffering, which is prevalently the case. These two opposed visions

of life might make all the difference for our future. The Global Love Museum (GLM) is at any rate a contribution to a workable future, as most of the troubles of this world can be attributed to a lack of love. In one form or another, love is the solution to any problem. What water is to the body, love is to the soul, and this is likely to apply to any individual as well as any community.

The experiment was long and instructive but in managerial or pragmatic terms it is still a failure. Compared to the Museum of Broken Relationships (Zagreb), which became a global sensation, it offers a less attractive concept. People are innately more easily interested in bizarre, intriguing, controversial and sensational themes. Media are discouraging and trivializing romantic idealism and dealing with the subtleties of human nature. Legendary loves are often unwanted reminders of difficult or contested memories. Why would anybody risk a political conflict or assume any loss of public credibility in the name of some irresistible, emotional story? While love is acceptable being about life and hope, its conflicting destinies can be noble but, alas, permeated by suffering and failure. This controversial potential hits well the contemporary sensitivity and the need for quick and witty sensation. Zagreb has some few international class museums but tourists are likely to spend their museum quota on the witty irony of this one. Luckily, the museum is a pleasant and comfortable place. The booming scene of museum-like art concepts, edutainment centres or simply commercial pop-ups for selfies, conspicuously follows this logic. But, the experiment on GLM is not finished as it holds great potential for some “agape”, love tourism and may grow more attractive by a conceptual shift still remaining as a possibility which I wish to introduce.

How can a conference be innovative and contribute to creating a profession?

“Best practice” is generic and general term and it implies that anybody using it obliges herself/himself with the task of defining the criteria of quality. Four decades ago when I became national chairman of (Yugoslav) national committee of ICOM, the organisation was widely understood as uniting the ambitious, creative curators who regarded their job as mission in a society, - in short, the best among individuals and institutions. Then Kenneth Hudson got me deeply involved in the European Museum of The Year Award (EMYA) that dealt, implicitly, with criteria of quality. When established in 1977 (Kennet Hudson, Richard Hoggart and John Letts) in 1977 it was quite disregarded by the museum establishment. Many understood it not as a public exercise in quality visibility but as a competition which was inappropriate to museums. My vision was that it turns more into a conference, placed on permanence in Barcelona. Louis Monreal of La Caixa Foundation (assuring lavish financing) and Kennet Hudson director of EMYA, agreed and we were granted support by the Mayor of Barcelona, but the deal finally failed.

From it, I developed the project as a self-sufficient conference by the title “The Best in Heritage”. Why not “best in museums”? Because I was already for some years teaching Heritology as a subject at the University of Zagreb. Because I thought that, though museums are the most communicative and attractive among memory institutions, they are still only a part of the nascent heritage or public memory sector (and a profession, by the way). Touring the places and people trying to prove that the idea deserves realization was much in vain. The greatest authority on the matters at the time, told me bluntly that I did not understand the museum world and that a conference like this had no chance. By that time, I was for 25 years a curator, director, editor, professor, author... in museums. Coming out of his office I felt so embittered that the situation left me no choice but to do

the conference to prove myself professionally. The innovative proposal for others thus became a personal challenge and a sort of touchstone of my own credibility. Innovation needs to be a play, not a frustration, but that is rarely the case. In the next years I have learned all the misery and rapture of proverbial inventors working in their garage while hoping to get their machine airborne. We all do things with others and for others and never without some decisive consent that makes our vision a reality. Finally, it did fly. The two decades of success were gratifying but kept me tied to it; I guess, all inventors would most probably prefer others to realize their inventions so that they can move on.

But, back to the core of the usable innovation: the patent needs to be simple enough. By that time there were many competitions for the institution or project of the year. “The best”, obviously meant most advanced, creative or innovative museums, be it on the national, European or wider international level and the title is usually granted by accomplished, professional juries. There was no place to gather a handpicked choice of them, and let them tell their success story. Unlike other conferences “mine” was supposed to be “same time, same place”, and, finally in a city that, after the war, needed its international image back, - Dubrovnik. So, since the beginning (but never failing to mention it), we were harvesting the results of the work of some 50 award schemes from all over the world. Choosing annually some forty projects out of a few hundred from four or five continents is therefore a rather delicate but enjoyable task.

The impression, in general, is that the public quality, itself part of general concern with quality, is what finally decides upon all other criteria. Shortest: if you know why and for whom you work, you are likely to learn how this can be best achieved. As zen stories would put, - how can you miss the target if you are the same with it. Figuratively put, with a little demanding customer in one’s head, any trade is bound to flourish. Our questionnaires demonstrate that participants (up to 150 from some 30 countries) mostly appreciate

multidisciplinarity of experience and praise inspiration as the best outcome of it. We know that we encourage commitment and innovation. Moreover, our conference is a year round experience because all presentations are put for free access at our web site, representing by now an archive of 400 projects, - a material of great educational potential for the profession. Our repeated attempts to develop that use of the conference were not successful. However, with ICOM as the conference's main partner since 2019, it has become more instrumental to the museum sector. As its author, I knew that without ICOM's stamp of excellence, - without its patronage the very start would fail: an individual is not convincing enough. It was not an immediate consent but it was nevertheless a decisive moment. The conference implied many conceptual ambitions from the beginning, so it needed and gained the patronage of ICOMOS, ICCROM, IFLA, ICA and WFFM. At least in my little corner, the dismembered army was symbolically united. For the starting years the Ministry of culture of Croatia was financing it 100%, - now reduced to the varying 5 to 10 %. I mention it to underline the correct use of incentives in public financing of the NGO sector.

The conference was a response to a world growing more and more competitive, but also one in constant search of quality criteria, - in the heritage domain too. At its beginning, two decades ago, excellence in professional practice was still an emerging concept. The idea behind was to contribute to a nascent heritage profession while, discreetly, providing practical arguments for its science of public memory. However, for the working agenda it was enough to concentrate upon public responsibility of the bursting variety of museums. As life of heritage started to blur the limits and definitions, the best performance increasingly meant the capacity to support quality development. Museums, with their unique attractiveness always seemed qualified to lead the way among the memory institutions. They still seem the strongest case in point when we advocate the importance of public memory in the world so troubled. But to make it possible, we need the platforms which make it obvious that libraries, archives,

virtual museums, digitally born heritage institutions and activities, private museums, civil society museums... all belong to the same mega-brain, a pulsating *mnemosphere* which decides which memory merits to be our departing premise in daily or strategic decision making. Awards proved very instrumental in increasing public, national or international visibility of museums. Especially in the cases of very small or distant institutions; we were often investing in making their presence at the conference possible as they were bringing with themselves specific experience in working with and for the community. The conference itself was acting as an additional filter and amplifier, like the additional international presentations of the projects that we arrange every year (alternatively, at Exponatec in Cologne or at MTP fair in China). Some of the presenters at our conference would have a decisive kick-off in their biography, being invited as many as ten times after the conference to repeat their presentations or elaborate their theses. It was so obvious that the conference started to be an inspirational, opinion making occasion that we decided to offer the participating international public an opportunity to vote for two “Projects of Influence”, one in each part of the programme. So, this experiment worked but the condition was that I personally prove it would, - by investing time and energy and assuming the issuing risks.

To all that assume my delight with private initiative, which is the case with this innovation, I would simply tell you that I still find it best if innovative ideas spring from public institutions. That would be an encouraging sign of a ripe profession.

Some other fascinations experimented upon

Trying to provide specific answers to particular situations is more a function of a consultant. Innovation and experiments are more the matter of strategic proposals. So, as eternal homo duplex, - practitioner and theoretician, I was

instinctively looking for ideas that would function for the entire sector, - as, say, some “generic” projects. Being a direct disciple of G. H. Riviere, I claim that the capacity of the grand idea of ecomuseums is still productive, unspent inspiration, - not a model, or a long-gone fashion.

Back in times when the former country was counting twenty million inhabitants, I was director of the Museum documentation centre, designed as a first of the kind, rather soon (1955) after the one created by ICOM (1946). In 1983, at the “Interliber” book fair in Zagreb, as a director, I organized an annual museum publication exhibition. All museums could participate under the condition that they leave one copy to our library. Virtual insight was still way ahead, so we soon became the only place in the whole country where one could have gain an overview of otherwise hardly perceptible and yet splendid publishing output of the museum sector. I was so inspired by ICOM’s mission that the same centre was in the early 1980s the cradle of latter development of dynamic and vast contemporary practice of museums’ days, or rather nights as they prefer nowadays in the region or wider in Europe.

I worked upon solutions which were applicable everywhere. Any country would do good to have one or more interpretative entrance points into its identity, - something like a master picture on the lid of the puzzle-box. What we are offered is a generous multitude of pieces cut in different times, from different mindsets, in different scales and by different issuing concerns. I never convinced anybody that such central orientation and interpretation points of a territory could, similarly to the ecomuseum logic, offer otherwise unlikely insight into the entirety of the public memory of the country or region. We worked for a year in Slovenia (“Slovenianum”) and for months in Finland (“Tama on Suomi”) but, basically, the it was not the cultural administration that refused it but rather the museum establishment which saw it as an “umbrella” institution endangering their prestige and impact.

All the project proposals have led, in any case, to useful contacts or beneficial research. When I gave up upon my repeated tries on the International Museum of Bridges, Heidegger made me continue and elaborate it. He thought that bridges not only connected two banks of the river but made them aware of their differences. However, the project(s) though most of them turned unsuccessful, left some traces, be it in my biography or on the Internet, the latter still existing as a model on my mentioned web-site. I even reflected on publishing them all as a sort of biography of failures.

A series of project proposals for cultures and places which have raised great fascinations were also a miss. It appeared to me that, say, setting up in Athens a permanent museum/exhibition “Fascination Greece” with all representations of most remarkable Greek heritage scattered all around the world and out of reach would be a symbolic and yet proper way of returning it home. Elaborated, (I thought) it gave quite an impression, but not to the Greek Ministry of culture or, say, Chinese because they were also the case in the point. I wrote about and discussed Chinese museum boom¹ To the director of their National Museum I proposed the similar permanent and yet changing exhibition on the formidable treasure of Chinese heritage plundered or exported to the rest of the world. At no avail, of course. Such proposals were founded upon conviction that only the place of origin supports substitutes and representations. There is a certain right to heritage that makes it a grand issue for the future, so some of my abandoned projects may have a bright future.

I also thought that Ancient Greece with its more than 200 colonies deserved a network of this fascinating heritage and a set of exhibitions and routes. In Sicily, at Taormina (Naxos), we have even come close to the real start of the

¹https://www.academia.edu/38088304/Museums_and_public_engagement_four_decades_of_changing_concepts_and_strategies_in_China

project, but it remains an exercise in heritology, an experiment by which one learns about oneself and the world.

I also thought that every country deserves to have “Made in ...”, a sort of museum where economic viability would be best served as partly a history of given society, partly that of its technological past, and in part as a proud reminder of local creative potentials. I also thought that any country unifying Europe should have had an interpretative centre, say, like “Croatian contribution” in which locals and the visitors could have a reminder and insight into the reality of European political, economic, scientific and cultural heritage and how the mosaic was possible to be composed. I was often criticizing the EU as too political, too economic and too little cultural to prosper as, otherwise realistic, collective identity. This has become obvious now but 15 or 20 years ago it was yet another uncomfortable innovation, disqualifying to my social or professional position. Some of the critical lectures and texts I have left behind harmed my reputation but I like to believe that they may have ignited a spark here or there that brought us to heritage being exclaimed in most European strategies. (I will not sustain from noticing that it may not be necessarily a blessing for an idea to be appropriated by the bureaucracy).

Conclusion

That some soldiers volunteer to become scouts, leaving the relative security of the trenches, has to do with their character and personal destiny. Not even courage. I have spent most of my professional life trying to prove my relevance, whereas it would have been so easy to thrive upon the tolerated shifts of originality and tolerable difference within my own segment of the museum world. A very few ideas, if any, sufficed to make it. But, meeting supporters and opponents or even having them both, was an enlightening experience. It made me write and lecture, making sure that I use correct arguments in a legible way.

Every innovative idea scattered in books and texts or turned into a project proposal was part of the same strive for a certain vision of the world and that of the eventual profession. I am still pursuing the same ambition (www.mnemosophy.com), because this curious world continues to be inspiring. In fact, becoming perilous, it is bringing drama to what is a certain regular innovation. Why do we still keep teaching people how to remember and machines how to think? All we take as important depends directly upon world view, upon mindset, upon the vision of human condition and we keep on saying that we are after knowledge society. Why not wisdom society? AI machines will never learn that! Do we really need mob rule, ochlocracy, masked into democracy by corrupted civil society sectors, manipulated media and chaos of the Internet? Why do we expect that the world could be run well enough by private interests and by ignorant masses? To this end we ousted tribunes and granted legitimacy to lobbyists. Privatization of resources by the nature of culture is wrong. Privatized heritage (like privatized public health, like privatized education, like privatized water...) can be but another business, - however soft it may be declared. Businesses earn money, they don't have a societal mission. Society does not need patrons, but professions that point to the best that deserve everyone's support. We do not need philanthropists as a solution to public needs. They are bonuses, especially if they only give and do not trade. (In a recent tradition, unlike now, the donor's name on a marble plaque in the museum's entrance hall was sufficient to mark a donated collection). What we do need is a prosperous community of solidarity that considers poverty a social vice and public needs as priority. Money? It is there in lavish quantities but scandalously poorly distributed. The aspiration of any individual to support what he or she considers valuable, or assist those in need - remains welcome. However, society must not depend on ambitions, criteria or, indeed, on the goodwill of mighty individuals or groups, - especially not in the ways it chooses to memorize. That is public privilege and responsibility.

Accepting it, would redefine our post humanist and post-democratic AI eugenic project into a proper humanist and democratic challenge.