

# Transitioning the Museum: Managing Decolonization at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (2000–2020)

Transitioning the Museum: Verwaltung der Entkolonialisierung des  
Königlichen Museums für Zentralafrika (2000-2020)

**BRUNO VERBERGT\***

University of Antwerp (Belgium), Royal Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren, Belgium)

## *Abstracts*

The challenge of decolonization in the modern world has seldom been articulated from a management perspective. Cultural management as an agent for the decolonization of museums has generally been neglected. This paper offers an inside ex post reflection on the decolonization transition process the Belgian Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) underwent. By explaining how the specific institutional character of museums makes change and transition difficult, this article aims to add a much needed cultural management perspective to the literature on the decolonization of museums. The paper makes four suggestions to implement decolonizing strategies on all levels of museum management thereby fostering an understanding of the decolonization of museums as a holistic transition process and change project.

Die Herausforderung der Dekolonisierung in der gegenwärtigen Welt ist selten aus einer Managementperspektive thematisiert worden, Kulturmanagement als Agent für die Dekolonisierung von Museen wurde im Allgemeinen vernachlässigt. Dieser Beitrag bietet eine Ex-post-Insider-Reflexion eines Dekolonialisierungsprozesses, den das Belgische Königliche Museum für Zentralafrika (RMCA) durchlief. Mit einer Analyse, wie der spezifische institutionelle Charakter von Museen Wandel und Transformation erschwert, ergänzt der Beitrag die vorhandene die Entkolonialisierungsforschung im Hinblick auf Museen um eine Kulturmanagementperspektive. Der Artikel unterbreitet vier Vorschläge, um Strategien zur Dekolonisierung von Museen auf allen Management-Ebenen umzusetzen und trägt so zu einem Verständnis von Dekolonisierung als umfassender Transformationsprozess und Veränderungsprojekt bei.

## *Keywords*

Museum/Museum, development/ Entwicklung, transformation / Transformation, diversity / Diversität, social change / sozialer Wandel, ideology / Ideologie

\* Email: [bruno.verbergt@uantwerpen.be](mailto:bruno.verbergt@uantwerpen.be)

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Institutions anchor meanings, habits, and cultural and social conventions in a society. The museum is one such institution. Performing an important stabilizing function in nation-states, museums have traditionally functioned as places of instruction. Yet, as Tony Bennett (1985) has argued, the museum should be understood not just as a place of instruction but also as a reformatory of manners where a wide range of regulated social routines and performances take place. Museums, then, are at the center of modern relations between culture and government and between government and society.

Society is changing ever more quickly. Globalization and digital technologies have increased the scope and speed of societal change, and by definition social change causes friction with institutions. The anchoring of meanings, habits, customs, and social agreements is put under pressure. In the case of museums, activists often drive this friction, and (new) media amplify their message. Climate activists' protests against certain sponsors of museums provides a good example of how the relation between museums, government, and society works. The actions of activists do not usually affect the institutional core of the museum: the museum itself (its collection, exhibitions, research, activities, etc.) is not questioned. In the case of the above-mentioned climate activists, only one specific sponsor has been contested. When, by contrast, the core of an institution is targeted, revolution, disruption, or even destruction can take place. Iconoclasm and book burning are extreme examples of this; less extreme are changes of ownership, such as the expropriation of churches and monasteries under Napoleon's regime and of nobility- and bourgeoisie-owned art collections after the communist revolution in Russia. Other changes resulting from fundamental substantive criticism, such as the civil rights movement's demand for proportional attention to Black artists in American museums, have only become a reality over the course of several decades.

For some years now, ethnographic museums, especially those located in former colonizing countries, have faced a demand for radical change under the banner of decolonization. The concept of decolonization is

<sup>1</sup> The author wishes to thank RMCA director Guido Gryseels, the exhibition commissioners, and the Public Services team for contributing to the ideas developed in this essay, as well as Marie-Gabrielle Verbergt for her critical assessment and Jaclyn Arndt for the final language editing.

broad and its definition varies. The classical encyclopedia definition is “the process by which colonies become independent from the colonizing country” (Encyclopaedia Britannica: July 20, 2020). Initially indicating a political phenomenon, the meaning of decolonization soon extended to include all elements incurred in the colonial experience, “whether political, economic, cultural or psychological” (historian David Gardiner cited in BETTS 2012). In the museological context, decolonization thus minimally refers to the “process that institutions undergo to expand the perspectives they portray beyond those of the dominant cultural group, particularly white colonizers” (SCHOENBERGER 2020 citing The Washington Post) and describes “resisting the reproduction of colonial taxonomies, while simultaneously vindicating radical multiplicity” (L’Internationale online, cited by FIORIN/MUGNAINI/ROSSI 2020). Both definitions leave intact the decision-making power of museum professionals. This understanding is, however, often expanded to include a more radical questioning of structures of power in general:

Decolonisation can be thought of as a set of practices and processes that seek to reckon with the consequences of colonial encounter, dismantle the coloniser/colonised binary and rectify the material, social, political and cultural dispossession of people and the histories to which they belong. Power is central in understanding what decolonisation means; not only does this process seek to make visible the invisible structures that determine relationships between the Global North and South, it endeavours to destroy those relationships of power and exploitation all together. (OLUFEMI 2019)

With such a definition, ethnographic museums are, by their very nature, seen as perpetuators of exploitative colonial power relations. Not only is the Eurocentric perspective problematic, but so is the very mission of the museum to show and preserve objects or works of art that do not belong to it, be it in a moral or a legal sense. For many European museums, the social movement that demands decolonization is therefore a different and farther-reaching appeal than any other social movement since the postwar democratization and emancipation movement. Similar issues have been dealt with by museums in the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand regarding collections related to Indigenous Peoples (see, e.g., bicultural governance at the National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa: HENARE 2004). A clear overlap thus exists between current decolonial demands in Europe and the demands of Indigenous people in these countries. Though this issue certainly requires our attention, this paper will focus on European ethnographic museums, and

more specifically the case of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium.

In Belgium, the appeal to decolonize is related to its particular colonial history and specifically how the Musée du Congo, renamed the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in 1960, serves as a crystallization of colonial ideology and propaganda. Congo was from 1885 an independent state (Congo Free State) under the personal sovereignty of King Leopold II, who in 1908 was forced to render 'his' Congo to the Belgian state following international accusations and national investigations of large-scale atrocities and severe violence. Congo remained a Belgian colony until its independence in 1960. After World War I, Rwanda-Urundi also became a Belgian protectorate, lasting until 1962 when Rwanda and Burundi obtained their independence.

The RMCA was founded in 1898 by Leopold II, who financed its construction with large profits made in Congo, mainly from rubber and ivory as well as income from land concessions. The museum's founding followed the 1897 World Exhibition in Brussels, which included a *zoo humain* and tapped into the widespread fascination with the "exoticism" of European colonies. The RMCA's initial function was one of propaganda for the colonial project, displaying the way "Belgians brought civilization to the Kongo" (as read the title of one of the statues in the original museum's grand entrance hall). Still today, the museum has the world's largest collection of Congolese ethnographic objects, approximately three times more than Congolese museums currently hold. Within this context, I define decolonization as the continuous process of challenging and erasing colonial ideologies and power structures.

## 2. Outline and Methodology

This paper investigates at both an empirical and an analytical level how museums as stabilizing institutions can effectively act upon decolonial critiques. So far, scholars in museum studies and museology, taking inspiration from art history, history, anthropology, sociology, and – to a lesser extent – political science, have dominated reflection on decolonization within the museum. This reflection is often undertaken by scholars and professionals outside those museums. Museum management literature has put significant effort into reflecting on change, but so far not on decolonization as a driver of it (BLACK 2012; JANES 2009, 2013; SANDELL/JANES 2007; SIMON 2010), with Janes/Sandell (2019) be-

ing the first to address ‘museum activism.’ This paper is written from the perspective of inside the museum and aims to add insights from cultural management and institutional practice to the question of how museums can decolonize. Decolonizing a museum is, indeed, a management problem. By focusing on the case of the RMCA, this paper provides four suggestions to museum professionals faced with – and willing to respond to – decolonial criticism: (1) decolonizing as a strategy should be regarded as a transition process, in addition to being a change project; (2) a mission statement that introduces a value-centered approach to the institution is crucial; (3) decolonization implies sharing power and concerns the strategic core of the institution, making a stakeholder partnership policy essential; and (4) the previous suggestions are bound by the inherent slowness of museums and institutions as well as by practical and political contingencies, hence the importance of (a) quick wins and from-scratch methods, such as hiring a new leader and major renovations, and (b) agility in dealing with paradoxes and compromises.

The paper consists of two parts. In the first part, I sketch the origins and (some of) the defining features of decolonial criticism as pertains to the current European museum world. I give a brief overview of how the literature on museums and decolonization has up to now dealt with management issues, and I explain why a cultural management approach is at this moment much needed. In the second part, I focus on the RMCA and develop my core suggestions for museums challenged by transition management. The overarching point is to think of transition not as a change but rather as a transformation, a move to the next level. Decolonizing a museum is not like rebranding a hotel by fixing up rooms and introducing a new booking system; it is about embracing an entirely new idea of what the museum is. If the above hoteliers had undergone such a process when rethinking their business, they would have invented Airbnb.

Methodologically, the case study’s starting point is a published *ex ante* reflection on how the RMCA approached managing the change process (GRYSEELS/LANDRY/CLAESSENS 2005), as well as some internal strategic and planning documents, such as the museum’s mission statement and the 2016 operational plan for its public services. This last document dates from the year I joined the RMCA as operational director of public-oriented services. The research advantage of being among the museum’s executive staff is that I have firsthand experience as a manager and access to all internal documents and information. This information has been processed over several years, and specifically for this paper

I have revisited the most important internal documents. For this paper, I have also tried to actively engage with several researcher biases that can ensnare museum professionals such as myself: confirmation bias, culture bias, and the halo effect. To offset these biases as much as possible, the data concerning the outcome of the museum's decolonization efforts were gathered from published academic articles, essays, and theses, as well as from discussions with scholars<sup>2</sup> and museum professionals<sup>3</sup> who have visited the museum since 2018 (with emphasis on the most critical contributions). These discussions and conversations with museum professionals also focused on management challenges. I have tried to challenge my culture bias by debating and conversing with African and Afro-Belgian experts, activists, and associations.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the conclusions of this ex post evaluation were discussed in an informal working group comprising staff from agonistic museums in Flanders<sup>5</sup> and as part of three panels<sup>6</sup>.

### 3. Twenty Years of Critical Reflection – But Little Reflection on Managerial Praxis

To better understand the current call for the decolonization of museums, it is necessary to dig a little deeper into the origins of decolonial thought. Indeed, as the topic has been hotly debated in recent years – this issue of the *Journal for Cultural Management and Cultural Policy* being a

- 2 Master's and PhD students and professors in history, anthropology, critical studies, African studies, and museum studies from the University of Ghent, Catholic University of Leuven, University of Antwerp, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Sandberg Instituut Amsterdam, University of Pittsburgh, Europäisches Kolleg Jena, and University of Amsterdam.
- 3 Colleagues from the European Ethnology Museum Directors Group, the SWICH-network, WereldCulturenMuseum Nederland, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, Humboldt Forum Berlin, British Museum, Linden-Museum Stüttgart, Royal Pavilion and Museums Brighton and Hove, Smithsonian African Art Museum, and Musée des Civilisations Noires Dakar.
- 4 Specifically, members of COMRAF, Groupe de six, AfricaTube, and BAMKO/CRAN.
- 5 Members include the directors of Museum Dr. Guislain Gent, Red Star Line Museum Antwerpen, In Flanders Fields Museum Ieper, Kazerne Dossin Mechelen, Royal Museum of Central Africa, Design Museum Gent, Industriemuseum Gent, MoMu Antwerpen, Museum Hof van Busleyden Mechelen, and FARO.
- 6 Seminar 'The End of Empire' at the British Museum Association Conference (October 4, 2019), „Groot onderhoud FARO over meerstemmigheid en conflict“ (November 26, 2019), and Museums Galleries Scotland (January 29, 2020).

clear example – one wonders why it took so long for decolonial critique to arrive in museums.

During a workshop at the RMCA in July 2019, Capucine Boidin (Institut des Hautes Etudes de l'Amérique Latine – Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3; for an early version of her overview, see BOIDIN 2009) provided an overview of the origins and routes of post- and decolonial critical thinking. In the 1980s, academia was very much in a postmodern mode. Postcolonial critique was gaining traction, mainly in literature, film, and cultural studies. The main issue revolved around giving a place to cultural production from former (British) colonies, without recourse to metanarratives or essentialism. Mimicry, hybridity, and irony were key elements. In this intellectual and multicultural context, museum theory saw the development of what is now known as New Museology. The idea that museums should embrace participation was supplemented by a discourse around the social and political roles of museums, which encouraged new communication and new styles of expression in contrast to classical collections-centered museum models (MAIRESSE/DESVALLEES 2010). This New Museology discourse originated at International Council of Museums (ICOM) conferences in Santiago de Chile in 1972 and roundtables in Quebec, Canada, in 1984 and encompassed multiple democratization practices, such as diversification of target audiences and meaningful participation (e.g., in curatorial practices, by stakeholders, nonprofessionals, and (source) communities).

In this context of New Museology and poststructuralism, the decolonization of museums can be understood as a next, more radical, turn. In the 1980s, postcolonial critique, fueled by Indian and Indian English scholars such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha, reflected on othering, hybridity, and logics of power in representation practices and challenged the traditional model of collection organization (FIORIN/MUGNAINI/ROSSI 2020). Led by Latin American scholars at US universities, in the 1990s decolonial studies developed out of sociology, economics, and philosophy. Rooted in the history of the sixteenth-century colonization of South America, with a more Marxist and critical thinking approach, this branch proclaimed a metanarrative of emancipation and an Indigenous philosophy (BOIDIN 2009). Knowledge, economy, and society – and not culture – were seen as central to societal change, and colonization became linked to ideas about so-called epistemicide and cultural and knowledge theft (DE SOUSA SANTOS 2014, 2018; GROSFUGUEL 2007).

In my field experience, the current generation of museum directors and senior staff that embrace the principles of New Museology, graduated in the last decades of the twentieth century and were educated in postmodern and poststructuralist critique. Allergic to big stories, great ideologies, and ideas about ‘true’ and ‘right’ causes, these managers are open-minded relativists. They acknowledge differences and condemn colonization as a result of an ideology gone wrong. The way out of this wrong world is embracing multiculturalism and the multiplicity of opinions and beliefs. This is often conceived in ways that focus on dialogue and consensus, inspired by Jürgen Habermas’s understanding of democracy, and to a lesser extent Hannah Arendt’s.

In the meantime, the (museum) world has evolved from being multicultural to radically global. Economic inequality persists, while global homogeneity puts real cultural and religious differences under pressure. Political activists explain how, even for the generations that thought they could lay bare the ideas and concepts of the world, a substructure of power remains at work. The colonization of knowledge (*la colonialidad del saber*) still needs to be tackled. Democracy is also increasingly being conceived of as a system with room for agonism and dissent (as described by scholars such as Chantal Mouffe).

Not only does this historical evolution show how it took some twenty years for (activists and) museums to take up the issue of decolonization, it also explains why it is still so painful for institutions to do so. To decolonize is not, or not only, about accepting differences and disassembling colonial constructs; it is also about accepting fundamental dissent when sharing (and thus losing) power. The pressure on the (ethnographic) museum as an institution moreover increases when such voices are cited within museum communities. On the website of the museological conference *MuseumNext*, Elisa Schoenberger (2020) writes:

Artist and curator Shaheen Kasmani explains in her *MuseumNext* presentation “How Can We Decolonize Museums” that decolonization efforts may fail and sometimes help replicate colonial behaviors and attitudes. She aptly notes that decolonization is not the same as diversity. She instead posits that decolonization is “the upfront challenge of white supremacy, de-centers the Eurocentric view, values narrative of that [what] has been made Other. It dismantles systems of thoughts [that place] the straight white man as standard.” It’s not just about inviting indigenous and other marginalized people into the museum to help the institution improve its exhibitions; it’s an overhauling [of] the entire system. Otherwise, museums are merely replicating systems of colonialism, exploiting people of color for their emotional and intellectual labor within their institutions without a corollary in respect and power.

Exactly because decolonial demands are so radical, museums have not reached consensus on how to deal with them. In Giblin/Ramos/Grout (2019)'s report on initiatives by the British Museum that enact and reflect upon decolonization, the authors acknowledge that, in contrast to the potential reach of museum decolonization, "it is harder to define what decolonizing should involve in museum praxis, and there is no consensus across the museum sector." They argue that, instead, "over the past twenty years, museums have selectively engaged in a range of more manageable options that are now being concentrated and coordinated under the banner of decolonization. Prominent among these options are the introduction of more critical object-centered representations of European empires." (GIBLIN/RAMOS/GROUT 2019: 472) Specifically referring to the case of the RMCA, Marouf Hasian (2012) also underlines the manageability of and pressure on museum employees when asked to implement ideological changes. He notes that radical requests do not always take into account the constraints that impede museological change and that change will likely be incremental.

Like many other articles, publications, and webinars on decolonizing museums, Giblin/Ramos/Grout (2019), Schoenberger (2020), and Hasian (2012) do not offer any concrete management tips on how to decolonize a museum. However, this does not mean that museum professionals have not been engaging with the questions of how to build more inclusive museums and how to decolonize their institutions. Schoenberger, in her MuseumNext article, provides an overview of attempts and actions to decolonize museums in North America, Australia, Britain, and Scandinavia. During the four year European Commission-funded collaborative project *Sharing a World of Inclusion, Creativity and Heritage (SWICH)*, some twenty European ethnographic and world culture museums exchanged inclusive and decolonization approaches and experiences developed over the course of 2014–18. This project resulted in the publication *Matters of Belonging*, presenting several critical contributions on how these museums locate themselves within societal discussions and their societies' futures (MODEST et al. 2019). Though the contributors rarely write in the language of 'cultural management,' they do often implicitly speak to issues and difficulties of managing the transition toward decolonization. Nicholas Thomas (2019), for example, reflects on the impact that changes in the social contexts and societal environments of ethnographic and world culture museums have had on their strategies and stakeholder management. Laura Peers, who co-coined the term 'source communities' (PEERS/BROWN 2003), elaborates on how to bring the

operational collaboration between these museums and their source communities to a higher, more extensive level of power sharing. Her call for such a transition touches on governance, stakeholder management, (shared) leadership, and reputation management. She argues that the acquisition and subsequent inappropriate use of ethical capital risks being seen as a form of what the 1960s civil rights movement referred to as ‘tokenism’ (PEERS 2019). By reflecting on events programmed and promoted by Vienna’s Weltmuseum that resulted from collaborations with local migrant communities and embassies, Barbara Plankensteiner (2019) also reflects on management structures. In questioning how to build more inclusive museums, she also touches on the inevitable passage every museum curator has to make through the marketing department. She further questions governance matters within the institution, asking: “What should be the museum’s role: to enable such public [exoticizing or self-exoticizing] performances, to interpret them, to mediate or to curate, taking charge and responsibility?” and “Who should have the authority to control what happens?” (PLANKENSTEINER 2019: 65).

None of texts included in *Matters of Belonging* take cultural management as their theoretical or conceptual basis. This is surprising, since the contributions make clear that decolonization issues in the museum are, ultimately, management issues. In relation to the goal of this paper – to probe what can be learned from the case of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren from a cultural management perspective – it is important to note that the case of the RMCA was not included in any of the *Matters of Belonging* reflections. The RMCA had very explicit colonial ambitions from its origins in 1898 until the late twentieth century, when the Belgian government and the museum started to be criticized for the persistent justification of its colonial past and for concealing atrocities that were committed (academic reports making this critique include AYDEMIR 2008; BODENSTEIN/PAGANI 2014; EWANS 2003; HASIAN/WOOD 2010; SAUNDERS 2001, 2005; SILVERMAN 2015). The RMCA is seen as a living example of ‘cloistered remembering’ (CEUPPENS 2014 referring to STORA 1998) or ‘colonial aphasia’ (STOLER 2011, being referred to by FOLSOM 2015; SCHULJIN et al. 2017; VAN DER SCHUEREN et al. 2019). Following a building renovation and reorganization process, the RMCA had its long-awaited reopening in December 2018 and now makes an ideal case for reflecting on how decolonizing museums implies changes in management.

#### 4. The Case of the Royal Museum for Central Africa

In this section, I will reflect from within the RMCA management praxis on how societal change that touches the core of a museum can or cannot be transposed into institutional change. It is of course easier to describe the “museum frictions” (KARP et al. 2006) that arise through societal change and global transformation than to actually incorporate them into an institution’s strategy and management and subsequently evaluate the outcome. Additionally, an interesting paradox for the ex post evaluation of long-durational institutional change (the RMCA’s remodeling easily lasted fifteen years) is that society itself changes over the course of the institution’s transformation. In fact, the RMCA had developed all its intentions and concepts well before the terminology of, and academic, activist, and public pressure for, decolonization became as widespread as it is now. On the contrary, African diasporic communities in Belgium were at that time, in the early 2000s, surprised by Westerners’ obsession with Congolese who died in colonial conflicts one hundred years ago. Afro-Belgians were far more concerned with changing museum visitors’ indifference to millions of Congolese who perished in the two recent Congo wars and the ongoing violence, including sexual violence as a weapon of war, in eastern Congo (CEUPPENS 2014). This observation shows how a change project evaluation based on the societal backdrop present when the project was conceived becomes pointless.

This ex post reflection is thus not a project evaluation that, in management terms, checks whether the change has met the objectives; rather it is an evaluation of how the institution itself has transitioned. Has it been able to cope with new criteria that at the time of planning were yet to be conceived? This challenge is central to strategic management, as strategy is essentially a way to sustain the activities of the firm or organization over time (i.e., to survive) within an always changing environment. It is also the core idea of innovation management, the goal of which is to transform a firm or organization in such a way that it sees itself not as a producer of specific products, services, or experiences in a specific market but rather as a creator of sustainable value to customers or audiences, regardless of the specific products, services, and experiences offered.

#### 4.1 The RMCA and Its Transition Management Challenges

Fifteen years ago, when the renovation of the Royal Museum for Central Africa was conceptualized, RMCA general director Guido Gryseels and two museum staff tried to answer *ex ante* the question: “How does one actually go about instating change in an institution such as the RMCA?” They discussed the following steps as a possible recipe for reform: defining core business, making blueprints for transformation, rebranding, raising awareness and dialogue, and making plans and programs for renovation and a new permanent exhibition. The new RMCA wanted to make “an introspection of choices the institution had made in its past.” It introduced the ‘turning the page’ metaphor, whereby recognizing the painful past comprises a step toward a better future (GRYSEELS/LANDRY/CLAESSENS 2005; GRYSEELS 2014).

To better understand the different aspects of the institutional change and transition that the RMCA underwent, I will first discuss how, when, and with what motivation choices were made or not made. The choices relate to:

1. defining the core business (a new mission statement)
2. not closing, but slowly changing, the museum until complete renovation is possible (awareness raising)
3. making a new permanent exhibition concept (planning)
4. restoring the building to its original state (building)
5. rebranding (marketing)
6. involving people of African descent (participation)

I review these six strategic choices set out in 2001–05 and discuss how the RMCA approach them in the period up to 2018. Then, in section 2.2, I reflect on the management challenges of implementing these strategic choices.

Regarding the first point of change, the RMCA chose to define the museum’s core business by writing a mission statement in 2001, serving as guidance for activities and projects in, the museology, publications, research, and collection management departments. It reads:

The RMCA must aspire to be a world center of research and knowledge dissemination on past and present societies and natural environments of Africa, and in particular Central Africa, to foster – among the public at large and the scientific community – understanding of and interest in this area and, through partnerships, to contribute substantially to its sustainable development. Thus the core endeavors of this Africa-oriented institution consist of acquiring and managing collections,

conducting scientific research, implementing the results of this research, disseminating knowledge, and mounting selected exhibitions of its collections. <[www.africamuseum.be/en/about\\_us/mission\\_organisation](http://www.africamuseum.be/en/about_us/mission_organisation)> [May 27, 2020]

In 2016, an extensive operational plan for the museum's public services was developed. Target groups were expanded to people of African descent, and sustainable development was stressed as a core value – in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. New standards also included decolonization and co-creation approaches. Finally, three main public service programs were defined: presentation (showing and informing), education (transfer of knowledge with the aim of creating world citizenship attitudes and behaviors), and discussion (forum for dialogue).

Secondly, the RMCA chose in 2001 to adopt a twofold implementation strategy. The first involved showing its new decolonized position through specific interventions, such as collaborating on activities with Afro-Belgian associations and organizing a landmark exhibition on colonial history (*The Memory of the Congo: The Colonial Era*, 2005). The other was the announcement of a long-term goal: to refurbish and renew the building. Renovating the museum building was an unsurprising move, since the museum was old and needed repair. That there should be a museum on Central Africa at all was not contested at the time. While anthropologist Jean Muteba Rahier, at a conference at the University of Ghent in 1999, urged a reorientation of the museum's thematic focus (RAHIER 2003), immediate closure was not an option. Later, curator Toma Muteba Luntumbue did defend permanent closure: "The most courageous decision would certainly have been to close the museum. Because this model no longer fits with contemporary society" (DIETL 2018; LUNTUMBUE 2015).

To address the third point, in addition to other acts of blueprinting such as establishing new policies for its publication, research, collection management, and public service activities, the RMCA in 2002 began conceiving a new museum exhibition. The museum decided not only to renovate the building quite early on in the process, but also to renew and reconceptualize its permanent presentations. Eventually, the RMCA chose to thoroughly change the content and design of its permanent exhibition. Acknowledging the power of storytelling and of interdisciplinary creation, the displays now put more focus on the creativity and knowledge present in contemporary Africa. Additionally – and continuing the new openness of the 2005 *Memory of the Congo* exhibition – the RMCA developed a new (i.e., far more explicit) presentation of Belgian

colonial history and its displays without shying away from the abuses of power and propaganda politics of King Leopold II, the Belgian state, its authorities, and the museum itself. The revised narrative explains that, even if Africa's history is largely unknown, its past is very rich. The museum also wants to convey that languages spoken in Central Africa are, including in comparison to European languages, highly complex and refined. The same goal is set for the region's culture and craftsmanship, as well as early economy and agriculture.

A new room deals with the concept of representation. At the explicit request of the African diasporic communities in Belgium, an evolving and interactive zone devoted to the diaspora's history and contribution to sports, culture, and society in Belgium is included in the permanent exhibition. Special care is taken to have African and Afro-descendant experts, professors, scholars, and other such figures provide explanations to visitors through multimedia. With a strong belief that, alongside scientific, academic, and rational interpretations of the collection and history, a poetic approach is needed, the RMCA also invited artists of African origin to contribute. Their interventions stress the power of narration. Besides site-specific installations that counterbalance the explicit colonial architecture of the building, artistic interventions include a commemoration song written for the museum personnel choir and a new Santa Claus narrative, replacing the Black Pete stereotype with a friendly Black Saint Maurice (for critical academic reviews of the new permanent exhibition, see DEBLOCK 2019; HASSETT 2020; HOCHSCHILD 2020; VAN BOCKHAVEN 2019).

To the fourth point, the RMCA decided to restore the building as close to its original state as possible. Restoration took place between 2013 and 2018, during which time the museum was closed.

Fifthly, the museum rebranded itself, concurrent with adopting the new mission statement in 2001. The old logo, with the colonial museum building at its center, was replaced with a logo of the words 'Africa' and 'Tervuren.' The word 'Africa' was mirrored, as this mirroring was felt to best reflect the activities of the museum. A second rebranding occurred a few months before the reopening in 2018: the logo now consists of the word 'Africa,' stylized with new fonts loosely inspired by abstract geometrical figures found on pottery and textiles in the museum's collection, to which the word 'Museum' was added. The brand name 'AfricaMuseum' is now used for the museum activities of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, which remains the official institutional name. A communication strategy accompanied the 2018 rebrand that aimed at

identifying the museum as a welcoming place for people with an (emotional) bond with or interest in the museum and/or Central Africa. The campaign focused on visitors with varying opinions on the colonial past of Belgium in Central Africa and reflected on how to address these differing contemporary attitudes toward the shared history and common future of Europe and Africa.

For the final sixth point, the RMCA chose to involve people of African descent in its processes. In 2003, it created an African organizations council, named COMRAF, and later a group of six Afro-Belgian experts dedicated to conceiving the scenography of the new permanent exhibition. Additionally, one of the two chief exhibition commissioners and another commissioner were an Afropean anthropologist and a linguist working at the museum. For many museum zones, collaboration and input was sought from (academic and nonacademic) African and Afropean experts.

#### **4.2 Discussion: Management Issues and Obstacles When Implementing Changes**

Now that I have touched on the RMCA's core activities of change since 2001, I will discuss the difficulties that confronted the museum while implementing these changes. This reflection is broken into six themes:

1. the contribution of a new mission statement to a value-centered, instead of activity-centered, institution, and to the strengthening of organizational culture
2. specific interventions and infrastructural renovation as triggers for transition
3. the inherent slowness of the museum as a medium, and financial considerations
4. the ways in which opportunities are missed, compromises made, and paradoxes dealt with
5. marketing room for dissent
6. coping with institutional resistance to the sharing of power with 'outside' people of African descent and with changing demands

#### 4.2.1 A New Mission Statement: Introducing a Value-Centered Approach in the Context of a Weak Organizational Culture

Management textbook logic clearly commands starting off with a vision and mission. The new mission statement of the RMCA laid the foundations for an approach that enabled not only change but also transition. Interestingly, the institution for a long time did not feel the need to have a mission statement, let alone a value-centered one. It was a museum, and using the ICOM definition, with its collection management, acquisition, research, and presentation functions, seemed to do the job. This institutional and self-evident approach was very common in (Belgian) cultural institutions until the end of the twentieth century: it was thought that museums-as-institutions did not need explicit missions to explain their existence and activities. These ‘self-evident’ institutions managed their activities, but not so much the value they created. (Meta-)reflection on the value of museums in contemporary society was therefore lacking at the RMCA.

In innovation management theory (e.g., the concept of value innovation in KIM/MAUBORGNE 2005 and of value proposition in OSTERWALDER/PIGNEUR 2010), it is known that a value-centered approach is needed if the organization wants to expand its innovation beyond sheer improvement of the actual activities and services. Only value-centered management enables next-level or disruptive innovation.

While the RMCA’s 2001 mission statement still refers to the well-known ICOM-defined functions and activities, it also includes value-based objectives: “to foster understanding and interest [in Africa, and in particular Central Africa] and, through partnerships, to contribute substantially to its sustainable development.” Partnerships (with African institutions, museums, and organizations) and sustainable development are values that make decolonization-oriented innovation possible.

Another textbook advantage of a new mission is that it enables members of the organization to understand, support, and apply the institution’s goals in their own work praxis. This can and should eventually strengthen the organizational culture, although it is often a long-term process.

The RMCA developed its institutional logic as a museum and scientific institution from its founding in 1898 based on a classical framework of the (colonial) museum. Later, the ICOM-museum deontologies and positivism research (with obligatory guidelines such as peer reviews) became more dominant. Overall, these logics fostered a rather weak or-

ganizational culture. By and large, staff mainly focused on their own research and museum activities, and less on those activities' contribution to the higher goals of the institution. The combination of the mantra of academic freedom – very dominant in scientific research centers – with increasing pressure on personal scientific achievement through publication offered little encouragement for *collaborative* support for emerging societal values such as decolonization.

Such a lack of collaborative support becomes especially detrimental when management attempts to implement decolonization efforts and announces this publicly. Just as universities can be confronted with academic staff whose individual opinions fundamentally differ from the rector's attempt to decolonize the university, the RMCA likewise was – and still is – confronted with scientific collaborators who in public discussions and fora, and in their own museum work, defend or apply completely different opinions and ethics than the museum champions. Changing attitudes through, for example, partnerships with African universities and scientific research centers that the changing institution wants to entrench or being explicit about provenance issues when studying ethnographic objects, is not easily implemented within such an organizational and deontological culture. Moreover, most senior staff is often 'tenure track' and has almost absolute autonomy and inviolability as civil servants. Because research and exhibition projects are only possible through external funding (which does not necessarily require the same focus on the institution's new values and attitudes), the management's financial power is weakened.

The museum director therefore has little other pathway than the slow implementation of new directives, habits, and cultures through a new mission statement. Other factors that accelerate change are (1) recruitment of new staff who embrace the new values (which for the RMCA has become difficult as of 2014, when the Belgian government implemented a major structural budget cut); (2) the organization of new events of high symbolic value, such as a ground-breaking temporary exhibitions, and (3) the use of more fundamental and structural interventions, like the complete renovation or new construction of the museum building.

#### **4.2.2 Specific Interventions and Infrastructural Renovation as a Trigger for Transition**

Transition plays out on various temporal levels. First, quick wins are important elements in change processes (KOTTER 1996). Already in

2003, the first events co-organized with Afro-Belgian associations were held. After a first critical exhibition, *ExitCongoMuseum*, in 2000–01, the 2005 exhibition *Memory of the Congo: The Colonial Era* was a clear sign that new times had arrived. Second, major change projects enhance transition. The choice to use an already needed infrastructural renovation to spur further and more fundamental considerations and reformulations of the museum's *raison d'être* is not surprising. From a change management point of view, renovating a building, and thus investing lots of 'new' money into the institution, acts as a trigger for more thorough change. Examples from other museums (Weltmuseum, Vienna; Linden-Museum, Stuttgart; Humboldt Forum, Berlin; PAGANI 2013 lists thirteen European ethnographic museums with major building programs) show that it is often only after the decision to invest in new or renewed infrastructure that conceptual change really becomes possible, or, within an institutional context, more widely negotiable.

In the case of the RMCA, it is clear that the redefinition of its identity and the urge to renew infrastructure reinforced each other and facilitated the needed transition. Hoenig (2014) explains in depth how the RMCA was confronted with, on the one side, a growing public awareness of the dark side of Belgian colonial history through Adam Hochschild's (1998) bestselling popular history book *King Leopold's Ghost*, and, on the other, pressure from Belgians with family ties to the former colonies. In the absence of any public apology for injustices inflicted on Congo and its inhabitants under Belgian colonialism and those steering it,<sup>7</sup> the RMCA needed to readdress its identity on its own. The best way to do so was an overall 'work in progress' and 'closed for renovation' approach.

#### 4.2.3 The Inherent Slowness of the Museum as a Medium, and Financial Considerations

The renewal of the permanent exhibition was a two-step process. First, even before the arrival of new director Guido Gryseels in 2001, concep-

7 King Philippe of Belgium only expressed his "deepest regrets" for the country's brutal past in a letter to the president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on June 30, 2020, the first public acknowledgment from a member of the Belgian royal family (<[www.rtf.be/info/belgique/detail\\_le-roi-philippe-exprime-au-congo-ses-profonds-regrets-pour-les-blessures-du-passe?id=10532781](http://www.rtf.be/info/belgique/detail_le-roi-philippe-exprime-au-congo-ses-profonds-regrets-pour-les-blessures-du-passe?id=10532781)> (French version); <[www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2020/06/30/koning-flip-betuigt-diepste-spijt-voor-belgische-wandaden-in/](http://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2020/06/30/koning-flip-betuigt-diepste-spijt-voor-belgische-wandaden-in/)> (Dutch version); passages of the letter translated into English: <[www.thebulletin.be/deepest-regrets-belgium-issues-apology-congo-colonial-past](http://www.thebulletin.be/deepest-regrets-belgium-issues-apology-congo-colonial-past)> [September 7, 2020]).

tual notes on the new permanent exhibition were drafted. Later, in 2012, a project manager was hired and commissioners appointed. Over the ensuing six years, blueprints were continually revised and changed.

The new permanent exhibition's development involved extensive internal discussions and resulting delays, characterized by commissioners and collaborators leaving the project disappointed when their ideas or concepts were not fully accepted. After the appointment of a steering committee of head commissioners and a well-established peer-review process (including experts of African descent appointed by COMRAF), the exhibition finally took its intended shape: one of decolonizing the (presented content of) the museum. After its opening, many discussions arose about whether some elements, texts, multimedia, and other interventions were far too, or not enough, in line with the expected outcome.

From 2000 onward, a few museum professionals, from both within and outside the RMCA, determined it would be more thoughtful to restore not only the listed building but also the exhibition content and design to its original state. In short, they wanted to "freeze" the museum the way it was at the end of the twentieth century, thus making the RMCA a museum of colonial imagination and a 'museum of a museum,' to which would be added, in a new building, a contemporary world cultures museum (CAPENBERGHS 2001). Even if this proposal never intended the RMCA to remain fully unchanged, that is, to be visited as a place of nostalgia or as a retrograde institution (GRYSEELS/LANDRY/CLAESSENS 2005), the reason this option was never really considered was far more prosaic: it "proved unfeasible, if only because of the costs" (Gryseels quoted by RASPOET 2017). Acting as a manager, RMCA director Guido Gryseels evaluated concept proposals not only on their intrinsic value but also on their practical, financial implications, constantly considering costs and the potential for attracting sufficient numbers of visitors. Concepts and ideas can be intellectually challenging or even sound, but rarely are their financial implications taken into account. Without enough public support, revenues from ticket sales, sponsors, and potentially even grants will drop, and the whole institution risks collapse.

The difficulties with the seemingly endlessly changing plans for the permanent exhibition are related to the inherent slowness of a museum. Compared to other cultural expressions, museums are bound to their collections, which do not always match the desired narrative. The narrative then needs to be enriched with loans, reproductions, audiovisual elements, and texts, which require management, financing, and person-

nel effort. Three supplementary considerations need to be made for the RMCA. First, being a scientific institution – which implies not only peer review as a general practice but also, and *de facto*, a positivist attitude (truth ought to be neutral and can be obtained when enough scientific evidence supports the thesis) – it took several months and sometimes even more than a year before an exhibition blueprint was fully endorsed. Second, unlike temporary exhibitions that are curated and ‘signed’ by one or more people, a museum’s permanent exhibition is endorsed and ‘signed’ by the institution itself. Third, the sheer undertaking of setting up a new exhibition, certainly when confronted with limited budgets and few human resources, takes time. It sometimes took more than four months for an exhibition text to go from drafting by a museum staff member, to review by peers and African or Afro-descendant experts, to editing, translation, design, printing, and display. Some texts were approved before French President Emmanuel Macron publicly addressed the restitution issue in his November 2017 speech in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. These texts were therefore outdated at the exhibition’s opening in December 2018. When societal demands change at a speed higher than the slow museum setup allows, the museum is always behind.

#### 4.2.4 Missed Opportunities, Compromises, and Paradoxes

The listed RMCA building is a beautiful example of nineteenth-century French architecture, and after ninety years since its inauguration and almost fifty years since its last refurbishment, it begged for restoration. The restoration of the original building seemed self-evident: the mainstream ideology of architecture historians and government restoration officials favored a restoration as close as possible to the architect’s original intention.

In a context where the museum management desires a major investment and change opportunity, any consideration that goes against the mainstream restoration ideology understandably risks postponing the final (budget) decision. Eventually, the opportunity for change can be lost. After the press opening of the restored building in April 2018, one architecture critic pointed out how the mainstream ideology prevented a major opportunity for decolonization (VAN SYNGHEL 2018). Indeed, by retaining and even accentuating the cracks in the marble and the rather cheap, ugly, and superfluous twentieth-century additions, the left-as-is deterioration of the monument would have stood as witness to the deterioration of colonial thinking in the late twentieth century. Yet, as a consequence of the ‘original restoration’ ideology, the RMCA was obliged to

leave colonial and racist sculptures in their original places in the grand rotunda, leading to a stream of criticism after the reopening; the RMCA was accused of continuing to exhibit racist imagery. This situation culminated in a mediatized remark in the United Nations Human Rights Council's *Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent* (UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 2019). The criticism led the RMCA to commission an adaptive intervention by artists Aimé Mpane and Jean Pierre Müller in 2020, whereby they hung printed veils before each colonial statute.

Clearly, the full restoration of the building created a paradox: on the one hand, the building was restored to its original (colonial) glory, while, on the other, the new permanent exhibition aimed to make very clear that the museum is being decolonized. At first sight, there seems to be no way out of this situation other than accepting what is the quintessence of Belgian politics: the compromise. But instead of mere acceptance of the paradoxical situation of doing decolonization work in a restored colonial building, the RMCA came to realize, only one year before its opening, that its decolonization effort should not (only) be seen as a change project, but as a transition process. This insight made it easier to accept and work with criticism, and consequently to keep updating the permanent exhibition.

#### 4.2.5 Marketing Room for Dissent

The RMCA's rebranding aimed at two goals. First, the new logo and internal and external communication plans support the institution's decolonization values and enhance organizational culture, sending the message: "Let there be no doubt, this is the new direction this museum is taking." Second, the communication strategy, specifically of 2018, enhanced inclusivity for all visitors, target groups, and stakeholders.

Over the last few years, the museum-as-an-institution has also taken increasingly explicit stances against its old colonial and neocolonial approaches. For example, the museum now requires its scientific and museum projects to be produced in partnership with African-led organizations or at least to give people of African descent key roles. In the permanent exhibition, official standpoints condemn colonization and racism, including the RMCA's own past contributions to colonialism. The museum moreover supports provenance research and openness toward restitution.

In tandem with these policies and as a federal institution in a democracy, the RMCA's target public needs to be as large as possible. In

the context of declining financial support from the state, the number of visitors is, moreover, an important institutional survival factor. The marketing and communication strategies thus stress that the new AfricaMuseum remains a public institution for everybody, regardless of their opinion on colonial history and decolonization. This has, of course, attracted condemnations from decolonial activists who consider the museum to be insufficiently decolonized. Yet by creating and embracing room for dissent, the museum now aims to acknowledge and institutionalize decolonization far more as a *process* than as a (finished) project.

#### 4.2.6 Institutional Resistance to the Sharing of Power with 'Outside' People of African Descent

Although praised as an example for other museums and initiated as early as 2003, the RMCA collaboration with the COMRAF council and other experts of African descent has not at all been an easy ride. Just before the museum's reopening, the collaboration between some parties regrettably turned sour (detailed descriptions of the relation between the museum and Afro-Belgian diasporic communities can be found in DEMART 2020; FIORIN/MUGNAINI/ROSSI 2020; SCHULJIN et al. 2017).

Once again, the RMCA was confronted with a reaction to changing parameters over time. In 2003, the founding of COMRAF as a consultative committee of interested people associated with organizations of the African diaspora in Belgium seemed to have been met with joy and enthusiasm, as diasporic community members felt recognition in being associated with the museum. Success was especially fueled by the fact that activities at the museum, such as the annual Africa-Tervuren events, were co-organized with several African-led organizations.

By 2012, COMRAF had professionalized and released a self-evaluation. The committee was generally satisfied with its role, welcomed a new charter that changed its consultative role into more of a mediation role, and seemed to be willing to adapt a SMART goals approach. A part-time employee of African origin to support COMRAF's operations was hired. By 2017, however, COMRAF had become a formalized body with many of the same, but fewer, people meeting once every two months. At the same time, the committee proposed a new autonomous structure aimed at decolonizing the museum, claiming more power in the museum's decision-making processes, including the right to veto some of the institution's decisions, have paid personnel present daily in the museums' buildings to monitor processes, and so on. This proposal was rejected by the museum.

In the words of Mary Pratt (1991) and James Clifford (1999), COMRAF was an attempt to be a museum 'contact zone' that eroded over time. The involvement of six experts appointed by COMRAF to review the new exhibition, activists' harsh criticism of the museum, and the RMCA's inability to immediately comply with claims for more power, unfortunately, made it a contact-conflict zone. How did this happen?

The reasons why the RMCA could not meet the claims for more power for the Afro-Belgian diaspora were fourfold. First, the RMCA had originally defined decolonization as a deconstructive activity, with a consultative and to a certain extent also co-creative character. The museum was not ready for decolonization as a full power-sharing process. Second, as Clifford (1999) describes, practical problems arise upon deciding who is best qualified to be involved in terms of experience, knowledge, and representativeness. Specifically, the RMCA wanted to increase inclusion of African experts living and working in Central Africa. Third, given the specific *sui generis* structure of the institution, depending directly on the administration and ministry of science policy, the RMCA director does not have the authority to create new 'real' power-sharing bodies on their own. Fourth, the museum was also unsure about the general financial and legislative feasibility of the proposal. Tony Bennett's (2006) work lucidly explains why this reaction is typical for museums. He claims that museums can all too easily be regarded as public not in the 'civic and governmental' sense but in the 'public sphere' sense. To be a public institution in the public sphere is to be an institution that stands outside the state and functions as a means of criticizing it. Being part of the state, the RMCA has far more difficulty in belonging to the public sphere.

From a management perspective, the most important lesson to be learned from this soured collaboration seems to be the difficulty of implementing stakeholder partnerships in a governmental institution. Indeed, as Harrison/St. John (1996) prescribe, stakeholders who are strategically important should be managed as partners. The RMCA's 2016 operational plan for public services opened the door for sharing power with source communities beyond consultation or mediation. It nevertheless turned out to be impossible to implement a power-sharing instrument outside the institution's existing decision-making structures. The authority, attribution, and legitimization of and access to decision-making power are very precisely anchored in institutions through selection procedures, sworn oaths, rules of delegation, decision-making procedures, and so on. Adding external bodies with representational authority beyond consultation failed at the RMCA. The composition of an internal

expert committee (such as an official scientific council) is, moreover, decided at a governmental level and is subject to political considerations. Recruiting new staff under a positive lens to decolonization is not impossible, but it is inherently slow and painstaking, due to administrative, legal, financial, and political burdens. In fact, it was only through creating new internal procedures (an ethical code for the organization of museum activities and a policy for temporary exhibitions) that the RMCA is managing to gradually include organizations and people of African descent in key positions.

## 5. Conclusion

In her blog post on decolonization, Schoenberger (2020) writes:

All in all, the decolonizing project will have starts and stops as each museum, cultural worker and audiences [will] have difficult conversations and reflections about the meaning of museums and who the institutions are intended to serve. New models of decolonization will continue to arise and give inspiration to other institutions struggling to figure out how to change their own institutions.

The decolonization of the Royal Museum for Central Africa is a radical and still ongoing transformation process that has not only required quick-win projects, partnering with stakeholders, altering exhibition content and narratives, and changing branding and communication. On the contrary, this transition trajectory started off with a new mission statement and a decision to transform museum infrastructure alongside its thought structures. This shows that to decolonize museums, one needs strategic management *pur sang*, ultimately innovating the museum institution in order to survive in a fast-changing society.

On the basis of the RMCA's experience, this paper thus makes four *strategic management suggestions*. First, decolonizing as a strategy should be regarded as a transition process in addition to a change project. The transition process requires change projects: specific interventions enable the institution to experiment and to test public reaction. Major 'invasive' projects, like a new or restored building, create manifold possibilities and momentum. Second, a mission statement that introduces a value-centered approach is crucial. It can be used as a means to strengthen organizational culture and to focus everybody's work on the new values. Moreover, when museum collaborators think in terms of value creation, they are more easily driven toward next-level innovation. Third, as decolonization implies sharing power and concerns the strate-

gic core of the institution, a stakeholder partnership policy is essential. The path to this goal is messy, slippery, and long, but it needs to be taken. Fourth, the three previous suggestions are bound by the inherent slowness of museums-as-institutions, as well as by practical and political contingencies. Quick wins and from-scratch methods help: a new leader, openness to unexpected opportunities, and major renovations can be important change agents. In addition, agility in dealing with paradoxes and compromises is an essential quality of transition managers in museums. These management techniques and qualities enable the museum to embrace decolonization. They enable the institution to survive, as it will have learned to cope with as yet unknown societal change and global transformation.

## References

- AYDEMIR, Murat (2008): Staging Colonialism: The Mise-en-Scene of the Africa Museum in Tervuren. – In: Aydemir, M./Rotas A. (Eds.), *Migratory Settings*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 77–98.
- BENNETT, Tony (1985): *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. New York: Routledge.
- BENNETT, Tony (2006): Exhibition, Difference, and the Logic of Culture. – In: Karp, Ivan/Kratz, Corinne A./Szwaja, Lynn/Ybarra-Frausto Tomás/with Buntinx, Gustavo/Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara/Rassool, Ciraj (Eds.), *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures / Global Transformations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 46–69.
- BETTS, Raymond F. (2012): Decolonization: A brief History of the Word. – In: Bogaerts, Ele/Raben, Remco (Eds.), *Beyond Empire and Nation: The Decolonization of African and Asian Societies 1930s-1970s*. Leiden: Brill.
- BLACK, Graham (2012): *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-first Century*. London: Routledge.
- BODENSTEIN, Felicity/PAGANI Camilla (2014): Decolonising National Museums of Ethnography in Europe: Exposing and Reshaping Colonial Heritage (2000–2012). – In: Chambers, Iain/De Angelis, Alessandra/Ianniciello, Celeste/Orabona, Mariangela/Quadraro, Michaela (Eds.), *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History*. Ashgate: Farnham, 39–50.
- BOIDIN, Capucine (2009): Études décoloniales et postcoloniales dans les débats français. – In: *Cahiers des Amériques latines*, 62, 129–140.
- CAPENBERGHS, Joris (2001): *Re-turning the shadow: Museological reflections on the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, Belgium*. Conference Paper presented at the International Committee for Ethnography Museums (ICME) sessions. ICOM Triennial Conference, Barcelona, 2-4 July, 2001 <[http://icme.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2019/01/ICME\\_2001\\_capenberghs.pdf](http://icme.mini.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2019/01/ICME_2001_capenberghs.pdf)> [May 17, 2020].
- CEUPPENS, Bambi (2014): From Colonial Subjects/Objects to Citizens: The Royal Museum for Central Africa as Contact-Zone. – In: Lanz, Francesca/Montanari, Elena (Eds.): *Advancing Museum Practices*. Torino: Allemandi & C., 83–99 <[http://www.mela-project.polimi.it/upl/cms/attach/20150130/111356858\\_9187.pdf](http://www.mela-project.polimi.it/upl/cms/attach/20150130/111356858_9187.pdf)> [May 27, 2020].

- CLIFFORD, James (1999): Museums as Contact Zones. – In: Boswell, David/Evans, Jessica (Eds.), *Representing the nation: A reader: Histories, heritage and museums*. New York: Routledge, 188–219.
- DEBLOCK, Hugo (2019): Viewpoint. The Africa Museum of Tervuren, Belgium: The Reopening of “The Last Colonial Museum in the World” - Issues on Decolonization and Repatriation. – In: *Museum and Society*, 17, 272–281 <<https://doi.org/10.29311/mas.v17i2.3066>>.
- DEMART, Sarah (2020): Resisting Extraction Politics: Afro-Belgian Claims, Women’s Activism, and the Royal Museum for Central Africa. – In: Oswald, Margareta von/Tinius, Jonas (Eds.), *Across Anthropology: Troubling Colonial Legacies, Museums, and the Curatorial, Leuven*. Leuven University Press, 142–172 <<https://doi.org/10.11116/9789461663177>>.
- DE SOUSA SANTOS, Boaventura (2014): *Epistemologies of the South. Justice against Epistemicida*. Boulder/CO: Paradigm Publishers.
- DE SOUSA SANTOS, Boaventura (2018): *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*. Durham/NC: Duke University Press.
- DIETL, Andreas (2018): Tervuren ist kein Sonderfall [interview with Toma Luntumbue]. – In: *Jungle.world* (13.12.2018) <<https://jungle.world/artikel/2018/50/tervuren-ist-kein-sonderfall>> [May 23, 2020].
- EWANS, Martin (2003): Belgium and the Colonial Experience. – In: *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 11(2), 167–180.
- FIORIN, Fausto/MUGNAINI, Fabio/ROSSI, Emanuela (2020): *Decolonising the Museum: New perspectives for the XXI century ethnographic collections*. Siena: Università di Siena.
- FOLSOM, Jenny (2015): Cheating History: Blocking a Difficult Past at the Royal Museum for Central Africa. – In: *Presentations based on CHESS-sponsored Research* (Cultural Heritage in European Societies and Spaces). Amherst: University of Massachusetts Amherst <[https://scholarworks.umass.edu/chess\\_presentations/3](https://scholarworks.umass.edu/chess_presentations/3)> [May 27, 2020].
- GIBLIN, John/RAMOS, Imma/GROUT, Nikki (2019): Dismantling the Master’s House. – In: *Third Text*, 33(4-5), 471–486 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2019.1653065>>.
- GROSFUGUEL, Ramon (2007): The Epistemic Decolonial Turn: Beyond Political-Economy Paradigms. – In: *Cultural Studies*, 21(2-3), 211–223 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162514>>.
- GRYSEELS, Guido/LANDRY, Gabrielle/CLAESSENS, Koeki (2005): Integrating the Past: Transformation and Renovation of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium. – In: *European Review*, 13(4), 637–647 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798705000852>>.
- GRYSEELS, Guido (2014): *Towards the Renewal and Renovation of the Royal Museum for Central Africa* (Africa – Atlanta Conference: Africa beyond Africa. The future of cultural, social, and scientific research <<https://leading-edge.iac.gatech.edu/aaproceedings/towards-the-renewal-and-the-renovation-of-the-royal-museum-for-central-africa/>> [May 30, 2020].
- HARRISON, Jeffrey S./ST. JOHN, Caron H. (1996): Managing and partnering with external stakeholders. – In: *Academy of Management Executive*, 10(2), 46–60 <<https://doi.org/10.5465/ame.1996.9606161554>>

- HASIAN, Marouf/WOOD, Rolin (2010): Critical Museology, (Post)Colonial Communication, and the Gradual Mastering of Traumatic Pasts at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA). – In: *Western Journal of Communication*, 74(2), 128–149 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/10570311003614484>>.
- HASIAN, Marouf Jr. (2012): Colonial Amnesias, Photographic Memories, and Demographic Biopolitics at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA). – In: *Third World Quarterly* 33(3), 475–493 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.657485>>.
- HASSETT, Dónal (2020): Acknowledging or Occluding “The System of Violence”? The Representation of Colonial Pasts and Presents in Belgium’s AfricaMuseum. – In: *Journal of Genocide Research*, 22(1), 26–45 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2019.1653522>>.
- HENARE, Amiria (2004): Rewriting the Script: Te Papa Tongarewa the Museum of New Zealand. – In: *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 48(1), 55–63.
- HOCHSCHILD, Adam (1998): *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- HOCHSCHILD, Adam (2020): When Museums Have Ugly Pasts. – In: *The Atlantic* (January-February) <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/01/when-museums-have-ugly-pasts/603133/>> [July 20, 2020].
- HOENIG, Patrick (2014): Visualizing trauma: the Belgian Museum for Central Africa and its discontents. – In: *Postcolonial Studies*, 17(4), 343–366 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2014.967334>>.
- JANES, Robert R. (2009): *Museums in a Troubled World*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- JANES, Robert R. (2013): *Museums and the Paradox of Change*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- JANES, Robert R./SANDELL, Richard (Eds.) (2019): *Museum Activism*. London: Routledge.
- KARP, Ivan/KRATZ, Corinne A./SZWAJA, Lynn/YBARRA-FRAUSTO, Tomás/with Buntinx, Gustavo/Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara/Rassool, Ciraj (Eds.) (2006): *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures / Global Transformations*. Durham/NC: Duke University Press.
- KIM, Chan W./MAUBORGNE, Renée (2005): *Blue Ocean Strategy: How to Create Uncontested Market Space and Make Competition Irrelevant*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School.
- KOTTER, John P. (1996): *Leading Change*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- LUNTUMBUE, Toma Muteba (2015): Rénovation au Musée de Tervuren: questions, défis et perspectives. – In: *L’Art Mème*, 65, 15–17.
- MAIRESSE, Francois/ DESVALLÉES, André (2010): *Key Concepts of Museology*, International Council of Museums. Paris: Armand Colin.
- MODEST, Wayne/NICHOLAS, Thomas/PRLIC, Doris/AUGUSTAT, Claudia (Eds.) (2019): *Matters of Belonging: Ethnographic Museums in a Changing Europe*. Leiden: Sidestone Press.
- OLUFEMI, Lola (2019): What is Decolonisation? – In: *Poetry Translation Center Articles* <<https://www.poetrytranslation.org/articles/what-is-decolonisation>> [July 20, 2020].
- OSTERWALDER, Alexander/PIGNEUR, Yves (2010): *Business Model Generation: A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers, and Challengers*. Hoboken/NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

- PAGANI, Camilla (2013): Ethnographic Museums: Towards a New Paradigm? – In Basso Peressut, Luca/Lanz, Francesca/Postiglione, Gennaro (Eds.), *European Museums in the 21st Century: Setting the Framework*, Vol. 1. Milan: Politecnico di Milano.
- PEERS, Laura/BROWN, Alison K. (Eds.) (2003): *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader*. London: Routledge.
- PEERS, Laura (2019): Museums and Source Communities: Reflections and Implications. – In: Modest, Wayne/Nicholas, Thomas/Prlic, Doris/Augustat, Claudia (Eds.), *Matters of Belonging: Ethnographic Museums in a Changing Europe*. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 37–52.
- PLANKENSTEINER, Barbara (2019): Collaboration and the Dilemma of the Exotic: A Research Note. – In: Modest, Wayne/Nicholas, Thomas/Prlic, Doris/Augustat, Claudia (Eds.), *Matters of Belonging: Ethnographic Museums in a Changing Europe*. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 55–67.
- PRATT, Mary Louise (1991): Arts of the Contact Zone. – In: *Profession*, 91, 33–40.
- RAHIER, Jean Muteba (2003): The Ghost of Leopold II: The Belgian Royal Museum of Central Africa and its Dusty Colonialist Exhibition. – In: *Research in African Literatures*, 34(1), 58–84 <<https://doi.org/10.2979/RAL.2003.34.1.58>>.
- RASPOET, Erik (2017): Koloniale monumentenstrijd in Vlaanderen. – In: *Knack.be* (11 January 2017) <<https://www.erikraspoet.be/?p=1081>> [May 17, 2020].
- SANDELL, Richard/JANES, Robert R. (Eds.) (2007): *Museum Management and Marketing (Leicester Readers in Museum Studies)*, Abingdon: Routledge.
- SAUNDERS, Barbara (2001): The photological apparatus and the desiring machine: unexpected congruences between the Koninklijk Museum, Tervuren and the Umistà Centre, Alert Bay. – In: Bouquet, Mary (Ed.), *Academic anthropology and the museum: back to the future*. New York: Berghahn, 18–35.
- SAUNDERS, Barbara (2005): Congo-Vision. – In: Bouquet, Mary/Porto, Nuno (Eds.), *Science, Magic and Religion: The Ritual Processes of Museum Magic*. New York: Berghahn, 75–94.
- SCHOENBERGER, Elisa (2020): What does it mean to decolonize a museum? – In: *MuseumNext* (Museumnext.com blog June 15, 2020; original post February 2019) <<https://www.museumnext.com/article/what-does-it-mean-to-decolonize-a-museum/>> [July 20, 2020].
- SCHULJIN, Raf/BEVERNAGE, Berber/MATHYS, Gillian (2017): *New Museology in het Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika: Van een koloniale “lieu de mémoire” naar een postkoloniale “lieu de rencontre”*. Gent: Universiteit Gent <[https://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/375/899/RUG01-002375899\\_2017\\_0001\\_AC.pdf](https://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/375/899/RUG01-002375899_2017_0001_AC.pdf)> [May 22, 2020].
- SILVERMAN, Debora L. (2015): Diasporas of Art: History, the Tervuren Royal Museum for Central Africa, and the Politics of Memory in Belgium, 1885–2014. – In: *The Journal of Modern History*, 87(3), 615–667.
- SIMON, Nina (2010): *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0.
- STOLER, Laura Ann (2011): Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France. – In: *Public Culture*, 23(1), 121–156.
- STORA, Benjamin (1998): *La gangrène et l’oubli: La mémoire de la guerre d’Algérie*. Paris: Editions de la Découverte.

- THOMAS, Nicholas (2019): The Museum Inside-out: Twenty Observations. – In: Modest, Wayne/Nicholas, Thomas/Prlic, Doris/Augustat, Claudia (Eds.), *Matters of Belonging: Ethnographic Museums in a Changing Europe*. Leiden: Sidestone Press, 25–35.
- UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (2019): *Visit to Belgium: Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent. General Assembly: Forty-second session, 9-27 April 2019, Agenda item 1, Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action* <<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/243/13/PDF/G1924313.pdf?OpenElement>> [May 17, 2020].
- VAN BOCKHAVEN, Vicky (2019): Decolonising the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium's Second Museum Age. – In: *Antiquity* 93(370), 1082–1087 <[doi:10.15184/aqy.2019.83](https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2019.83)>.
- VAN DER SCHUEREN, Brecht/DE WEVER, Bruno/MATHYS, Gillian/VERBUYST, Rafaël (2019): *Koloniale afasie in het 'Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika.'* Analyse van de vernieuwde permanente tentoonstelling en pistes voor een verdere dekolonisering. Gent: Universiteit Gent <[https://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/789/985/RUG01-002789985\\_2019\\_0001\\_AC.pdf](https://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/789/985/RUG01-002789985_2019_0001_AC.pdf)> [May 22, 2020].
- VAN SYNGHEL, Koen (2018): Moet architectuur spreken of zwijgen? – In: *De Standaard* (4 Juni 2018) <[https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20180603\\_03543758](https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20180603_03543758)> [May 17, 2020].