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Where Do We Come From? Who Are We? Where Are We Going? Ethnographic Museology at the Crossroads of the 21st Century

The title of this paper, echoing a Gauguinesque sentiment,[1] aims to trace the evolution of ethnographic museology from its 19th-century origins, through the paradigm shifts of the second half of the 20th century, to the present day—a period marked by significant changes in ethnology and anthropology. The central question is whether, and how, ethnographic museums should adapt to the profound transformations currently reshaping the field. Equally important is how to address the legacy of these institutions, particularly in light of the strong decolonising movements that have become dogma in contemporary anthropology. This concern is relevant even to Polish collections, which are largely non-colonial or colonial in a different sense. A crucial aspect of this discussion is the relationship between academic and museum ethnology. As I previously wrote: "[just] as an archaeological museum embodies archaeology, an art museum reflects art history, and a history museum represents history, so too should an ethnographic museum serve as a manifestation of ethnography,

[1] I am, of course, referring to Paul Gauguin's renowned painting *D'où venons nous? Que sommes nous? Où allons nous?*, created between 1897 and 1898 in Tahiti, which now resides in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

ethnology, and anthropology[2] (Czachowski 2007: 55). For me, it has always been essential to demonstrate that museum ethnography is intrinsically linked to academic anthropology—essentially two sides of the same coin, differing only in their institutional application.

I will focus primarily on Polish examples and the history of Polish museology, as this is the context we navigate and draw from, both in the past and present. However, it is essential to stay mindful of current global trends. While I do not advocate for their uncritical adoption, recognising and engaging with them is certainly valuable. Looking to the past will also help us recall the roles museology has historically played in ethnoanthropology. Naturally, as with any synthesis, I will have to rely on certain generalisations, leaving out finer details. Nonetheless, this approach will allow us to identify the key objectives that guided the founding of ethnographic museums in the past and examine how these relate to contemporary perspectives.

At the outset, I would like to highlight that Polish ethnomuseology can be divided into three subgroups, which, while sharing similarities, also exhibit notable differences. These are: open-air museology (involving open-air museums), ethnographic pavilion museology focused on Poland, and museology concerning non-Polish regions, with particular emphasis on non-European areas.

Where Do We Come From…

I will begin at the very origins of ethnographic museums, when these institutions were first conceived. A detailed analysis of their inception can be found in my text "Święty obowiązek. Etnologiczne drogi do muzealnictwa przed rokiem 1918" (Sacred Duty: Ethnological Routes to Museology Before 1918), included in the volume *Studia o muzealnej pamięci na ziemiach dawnej Rzeczpospolitej do roku 1918* (Studies on Museum Memory in the Former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth up to 1918), published in 2020.[3] The title of that article, borrowed from a text by Franciszek Gawełek, who heralded the creation of the Ethnographic Museum in Kraków, encapsulates the entire ethos behind such institutions: "Let us consider this museum as

[2] I omit here the terminological differentiation of the three terms as referring to the same discipline. Additionally, I sometimes use terms like *ethnoanthropology* or *ethnomuseum* as convenient shorthand.

[3] In the passages quoted in this text that address the vision of ethnographic museology up to 1918, I rely on the conclusions presented in that article.

a ‘Church of National Memorabilia’, and let us lay on its altar everything we can afford. [...] Let us consider the creation of an ethnographic museum a sacred civic duty” (Gawełek 1911: 13–14). This sentiment reflects the mindset of scholars at the time, who saw the establishment of ethnographic museums as both a temporal and historical necessity. It was not only crucial for the emerging field of ethnography but also deeply intertwined with strong patriotic motivations.

Importantly, the scope they aimed to address was quite precisely defined, clear, and certain, focusing on the culture of rural areas—what we now refer to as folk culture. During this early, pioneering period, the emphasis was primarily on objects crafted by villagers for their own use. Numerous publications were dedicated to this topic, and it was the focus of the first ethnographic exhibitions, which were enthusiastically presented at industrial and agricultural fairs—a global trend that spanned much of the 19th century. These exhibitions highlighted folk crafts, especially handmade items like cooperage, carpentry, basketry, pottery, weaving, drapery, and folk tailoring, though occasionally they also featured Easter egg decoration or paper cut-outs. The aesthetic and artistic value of these artefacts was recognised, with efforts made to clearly articulate this, often by referencing mythologised traditional and ancient motifs (Turkawski 1880: 9).

An interesting example of shifting paradigms and changing areas of interest can be found in contemporary ethnographic collections. They now include agricultural machinery that was once exhibited as cutting-edge technology at industrial-agricultural fairs, entirely separate from the ethnographic displays or sections on home industry. Today, however, these machines hold a significant place in open-air museum exhibitions, no longer telling a story of the nation’s mythical origins or ancient civilisations, but instead reflecting the everyday life of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the dynamic nature of cultural processes.

The primary goal of these exhibitions was economic development, with a strong emphasis on economic factors. In today’s terms, they would more accurately be described as fairs. Folk items, which appeared in varying degrees across exhibitions, were meant to highlight the potential of such production, ultimately aiming to stimulate the growth of folk craft centres. Prominent figures like Adrian Baraniecki and Włodzimierz Dzieduszycki were key contributors to advancing production based on available forms of folk craftsmanship. Dzieduszycki facilitated the founding of a school of

Pokuttya pottery in Kolomyia, led by the notable Hutsul potter Aleksander Bachmiński. Meanwhile, Baraniecki organised courses for craftsmen, using models from the Technical and Industrial Museum, which he established in Kraków in 1868. Underlying this effort was likely a deliberate attempt to aestheticise folk objects, enhancing their visual appeal. Both museum creation and the promotion of folk skills often occurred simultaneously, with each influencing the other—an interplay that continued into later periods. While some exhibitions were organised by institutions connected to the administrative powers of the partitioning states, many were distinctly Polish, serving as important expressions of patriotism. They showcased the capabilities of Polish (or native) producers, symbolising the maturity and independence of Polish-administered institutions. In this context, folk products were seen as reflecting national identity, imbuing them with historical, political, and cultural significance.

The main objective of the 1880 Pokuttya Exhibition in Kolomyia, which is considered the first exclusively ethnographic Polish exhibition,[4] was to improve the welfare of the local population. It was believed that enhancing home industries and farming practices would increase earning potential (Turkawski 1880: 3), thus offering a clear path to improving people's lives. The exhibition drew attention to the financial hardships of the Pokuttya region and the poor state of education and hygiene (Bujak 1979: 95). Additionally, it aimed to promote the area's tourism potential, which was gaining interest from the emerging tourism industry. These initiatives were intended to drive significant social and cultural change. However, the defining elements of folk culture, considered emblematic, were largely expected to remain unchanged. The exhibition also served an important scientific purpose: by collecting artefacts in one place, it facilitated observation and research. Not only was it the first purely ethnographic exhibition organised by the Poles, but it also introduced a level of scientific and didactic structure to the material collected.[5]

In the context of emerging ethnographic collections and museums, peasant culture became increasingly tied to national identity and was

[4] The exhibition, however, adhered to a fair-like format and did not yet fully adopt a museum-based approach.

[5] It is important to note that this first strictly ethnographic Polish exposition did not focus on Polish culture but rather on Ruthenian culture, with particular emphasis on Hutsul culture, which was the most prominently represented within the broader context of Pokuttya.

simultaneously idealised: "From all this, our successors will know how people once lived, how many beautiful and good things, nurtured by the nation's spirit for centuries, could be found in the humble, lowly country huts" (Gawełek 1911: 12). As in many European countries at the time, the peasantry came to be seen not only as a key component of national culture but also as holding an important socio-political role. There was a top-down recognition that the people should protect their cultural heritage and resist the spread of "cosmopolitanism" (a term used as early as 1911!), and that the role of the museum would be to preserve these cultural patterns: "In this way, we can also encourage the people to cherish their traditions, to hold fast to all that is sacred and should remain untainted from their ancestors" (Gawełek 1911: 12).

At the turn of the 20th century, thinking about folk culture clearly followed two distinct tracks. On the one hand, the creations found were valued for their reflection of ancient traditions; on the other, they often influenced the development and form of new objects produced by the people. Interestingly, early ethnographic collections brought together artefacts from both of these trajectories There was also a strong desire to educate the people themselves. It is worth quoting Aleksander Majkowski's words from 1911, spoken at the Kashubian exhibition in Kościerzyna. In his view, the Kashubian people had become "so demoralised that they do not value specimens of their own culture and even despise them. Hence, they show distrust towards collectors of such specimens, thinking that their work serves to ridicule their tribal properties." Yet, Majkowski believed that these activities could "reverse this tendency and arouse the Kashubians' respect for their own culture" (Majkowski 1911: 13). This reflects significant efforts towards identity-building and education, with a clear intention to preserve and document cultural relics—activities that align with the modern historical perspective. As was already noted at the turn of the 20th century, there was a very strong unification of cultural patterns, and ethnographic museums were seen as key institutions for preserving and highlighting these cultural distinctions.[6]

[6] Seweryn Udziela articulated this very clearly: "we all see that in the present day there is a rapid change in ancient traditions, customs, and habits; we observe a general trend towards erasing all differences between peoples; and we notice a movement towards creating one grey society, living in a hectic and colourless existence amidst the uniform conditions imposed by modern culture." (Udziela 1904: 322–327).

Where Do We Come From … Consolidation

During the interwar period, following Poland's regain of independence, museums continued to develop along the same lines, maintaining their established features and objectives. It is evident from the history of this period that academic and museum ethnology advanced in tandem. Many scholars engaged with museums, collecting artefacts and integrating them into museum collections. Notable figures such as Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutz, Kazimierz Moszyński, and Eugeniusz Frankowski worked within museum institutions, while other leading ethnologists, including Jan Stanisław Bystroń, Adam Fischer, Jan Czekanowski, and Stanisław Poniatowski, served on museum boards (Bujak 1975: 61). The subjects they explored were often the same or closely related, with no significant disagreements regarding the scope of the discipline. Key scholarly journals in ethnology frequently covered organised exhibitions and reported on notable artefacts entering various collections.

Jan Bujak noted that one of the most prominent museums of this period was established at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius in 1925 by Professor Cezaria Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutz. She was the author of the famous phrase, repeatedly recalled in various contexts (especially in the Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, as we feel like the heirs of this idea): a museum is "a laboratory of culture in which the audience, not only on the basis of book material, could exercise themselves in the morphology of cultural products and phenomena" (Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutz 1938: 82). It is also worth mentioning that she differentiated between two types of ethnographic museums: a museum-laboratory and a demonstration museum, intended for the general public.

In essence, the approach to creating museums, their motivations, and their scopes remained consistent with earlier practices—primarily focused on capturing and documenting the life of the people. The thematic scope persisted, with a continued emphasis on relics and ancient objects (Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutz 1926). But there was also a tendency to pay more attention to the typical aspects of culture rather than the extraordinary, and a greater focus on presenting entire cultures rather than just select, particularly beautiful fragments (Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutz 1938: 86; Bujak 1975: 83).

However, the motivations were broader, influenced by the categorisation and perception of contemporary culture as being in crisis: "I have pursued

[the establishment of the museum] all the more because I consider one of the causes of the bankruptcies and crises of modern civilisation to be the lack of knowledge and orientation among the creators of culture—human societies—in the structure and functions of their own cultural creations" (Baudouin de Courtenay-Ehrenkreutz 1938: 82). Alongside cognitive and scientific goals, the social, historical, and political dimensions of ethnographic museums were consistently highlighted. It is hardly surprising that after regaining independence, the patriotic factor was strongly emphasised. However, this patriotism was not expressed in a nationalistic manner. For instance, the museum in Vilnius included the cultures of various ethnic and national minorities within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, such as Lithuanians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Jews, Armenians, Karaites, and Russians.

The situation was quite different from the other side of the state. The way in which the Silesian Museum in Katowice, established in 1927, acquired its collection is interesting: the focus was on documenting Silesian folk culture as a symbol of Polishness, distinct from German culture. Mieczysław Gładysz, who organised the collection, even illegally acquired artefacts from the German-occupied part of Silesia to emphasise the connection between Silesian culture and Poland. To further demonstrate the genetic commonality with Poland, comparative collections of artefacts from other regions of the country were created, with significant contributions from various researchers. As can be guessed, the artefacts collected showed similarities and proved the Polishness of the population concerned, above all the Silesians. However, excessive aestheticisation was also evident, with art collections dominating the exhibits (Bujak 1975: 121–124). As late as July 1939, efforts were still underway to establish the connection between Silesia, including Trans-Olza, and Poland. This activity clearly had strong political motivations.

Consolidation … Continued …

The Second World War saw the destruction of many museum collections, including ethnographic ones (outside Kraków). Artefacts perceived by the Nazi Germans as linked to Polish culture were systematically removed. After 1945, the reconstruction of museology had to begin almost from scratch, a process also noted by Nadolska-Styczyńska (2011: 61). The scope of museum activities and the discipline of ethnology—referred to as ethnography in line with Soviet terminology—changed very little in this period. One major development in the post-war era was the rapid growth of open-air

museology. Nearly every region established its own open-air museum, showcasing the folk cultures of various ethnographic groups—a practice that continues today. For many years, these exhibitions followed a remarkably similar structure. Most often, the layout of a typical village was spatially recreated, with buildings (primarily wooden) being relocated to the site and interior exhibitions meticulously arranged. These reconstructions predominantly focused on the late 19th and early 20th centuries, though some buildings were older. The collected artefacts themselves often dictated this temporal limitation. This is not an accusation, just a statement of fact. This approach was not unique to Poland but mirrored practices across Europe and beyond.

Similarly, the so-called pavilion museums operated, developing collections that documented rural culture, especially up until 1939. They focused primarily on folk art, broadly defined to encompass all decorative elements, documenting contemporary folk art, or rather what was considered folk art at the time. The creations often followed old patterns, but as far as artistic elements were concerned, the subject matter was expanded while maintaining traditional forms. Political and social ideologisation led to the imposition of new themes in folk art, as ethnographers played a role in delineating what was authentically "folk" and what was not. They essentially "approved" certain changes in peasant production while rejecting others. The influence of state ideology was clear, with instructions on form and content subliminally legitimising the socialist state.

Throughout the communist period, museum activities and the research and work of university ethnographers overlapped significantly. The relationship was mutual and seems to have been quite close. Academic topics were, of course, addressed, though not always reflected in exhibitions (one of the main slogans of academic research was the transformation of folk culture). The exhibitions typically presented topics derived from the ethnographic systematics of Kazimierz Moszyński, which were largely evolutionary in nature. The focus remained primarily on rural culture, though there were attempts to shift attention to urban workers' culture as well (including their art, e.g. coal sculptures made in Silesia). After all, the worker-peasant alliance had to be considered. These themes were explored by both academic institutions and some museums.

Regarding non-European ethnography, collections were built in two primary ways. On one hand, they were formed through acquisitions such

as donations from various collectors and travellers, or from objects collected during certain research expeditions. On the other hand, there were museum expeditions, though relatively few, that resulted from a planned collecting strategy and specific research goals. This approach was extensively analysed by Anna Nadolska-Styczyńska in her 2011 book *Pośród zabytków z odległych stron. Muzealnicy i polskie etnograficzne kolekcje pozaeuropejskie* (Among Monuments From Distant Lands. Museums and Polish Ethnographic Collections Outside Europe). A key point for discussion is how these strategies were developed—whether they focused more on visual appeal and exoticism or on methodical tasks. One must also consider the formal, political, and economic constraints that non-European research and collecting activities faced during the communist period. However, it seems the central category, used somewhat vaguely (in all types of museology), was the "traditionality" of a given culture.

At the same time, there was a gradual shift in the methodologies used to study folk culture. Museologists remained focused on the object itself rather than on the socio-cultural processes occurring in the present. This approach—later criticised mostly by younger ethnologists—often presented a more mythicised version of rural life. Aside from the so-called folk art mentioned earlier, the orientation of museums was decidedly towards the past rather than the present. Another criticism was the strong interference in shaping folk production and determining what was considered "folk". There was discussion about ethnographers and museologists creating their own object of interest. Towards the end of this period, there were calls to avoid evaluating the cultures being studied. This seemed somewhat contradictory, given the substantial role ethnographers played in organising and judging folk art competitions.

Who Are We...

A significant breakthrough in ethnology occurred in Poland during the 1980s, marked by an expansion in the scope of academic ethnological research. No longer confined to the countryside or the working class, the field began to broaden its focus with a shift in the understanding of the term "people." Interest expanded to include popular and mass culture, with increasing attention to the present rather than the past. By the time I was studying in the latter half of the decade, this change was already clearly noticeable.

However, this shift was not without its challenges. Allow me to share an example from my own experience in the early 1990s. When I attempted to curate a collection—and later, an exhibition—on military subculture (Czachowski 1997), it received mixed reactions. Some of my older colleagues understood the effort, but others questioned how I could verify that military artefacts purchased at an antique market or shop had originated in rural areas. The belief that ethnography was exclusively concerned with rural culture remained strong, and still lingers in popular discourse today. In any case, during the 1990s, the museum in Toruń began to diversify its collections (military subculture, candles documenting the Feast of All Saints, and contemporary devotional objects). At the same time, it continued to enrich existing collections with contemporary items, particularly household objects, often arranged according to ethnographic categories reflecting different stages of development—what one might describe as a vestige of evolutionist thinking (cf. Robotycki 1998: 140). A noteworthy, though still underappreciated, experiment was a project by the museum in Włocławek, which undertook a comprehensive inventory of a contemporary rural homestead, documenting every object within it (Szacki, Święch 1990; Święch 2009: 48).

In the years that followed, particularly in the 21st century, ethnographic museums have embraced the widespread conviction that their thematic and temporal scope is virtually limitless. This shift has led to a wide range of broad and comprehensive initiatives. A particularly interesting example was the 2005 exhibition at the Ethnographic Museum in Poznań, *Special effect. Mój telefon komórkowy* (Special effect. My mobile phone) in 2005 (Przewoźny 2009: 81). Though small and ephemeral, the exhibition explored the phenomena surrounding the emerging mobile phone technology, which was rapidly transforming the world.

Afterwards, there was an abundance of ideas. For instance, the Ethnographic Museum in Krakow presented the much-cited and already discussed exhibitions *Dzieło-działka* (Work-Allotment) (Szczurek, Zych, ed. 2012) and *Wesela 21* (Weddings 21) (Majkowska-Szajer, Zych, ed. 2015). Meanwhile, the museum in Toruń hosted exhibitions like *Peace, Love i PRL. Lokalny pejzaż kontrkultury* (Peace, Love and PRL. The Local Landscape of Counterculture) (Trapszyc 2013) and *Po wodę i słońce. Moda i obyczaje plażowe* (For Water and Sunshine: Fashion and Beach Customs) (Łopatyńska 2011).

It also became apparent that when addressing such contemporary topics, the typology of individual artefacts, the systematic categorisation of objects, and exploring the workings of various mechanisms became less important, if not irrelevant. Instead, artefacts were increasingly seen as representations of ideas. Exhibitions took on a new role as platforms for social discourse, offering ways to reflect on everyday life and interpret the world around us.

One could say there was a gradual shift away from viewing history as the sole perspective, returning instead to ethnography's original focus—the documentation of culture in the here and now. This shift brought a sense of creative freedom, reliant only on the ingenuity of ethnographers, ethnologists, and anthropologists. Problem-based approaches also emerged, such as the exhibition *Biały, Czarny, Czerwony? O symbolice kolorów* (White, Black, Red? About the Symbolism of Colours) (Kostrzewa, Łopatyńska, Ziółkowska-Mówka 2016) and *Macierzyństwo od początku i bez końca. Antropologiczna opowieść* (Motherhood From the Beginning and Without End: an Anthropological Story) (Jarysz 2018). Importantly, museum collections have continued to expand to include artefacts related to these themes. Moreover, museums have increasingly embraced the inclusion of contemporary artists—especially those with anthropological backgrounds—within their exhibitions. These artists engage in a dialogue with tradition on one hand, while on the other, they challenge the present in various ways (e.g. Czachowski 2011).

Most ethnographic museums began collecting contemporary artefacts from diverse perspectives. However, this endeavour presents significant challenges for museum curators, particularly when deciding what to collect and acknowledging that collecting everything is impossible.

Open-air museums also encountered unique challenges. With ethnology's growing focus on the present, the question arose as to whether these museums would retain their purely historical role or expand to include more recent time periods. Initial attempts to address this appeared with exhibitions featuring hut interiors from the 1950s, and more recently, from the 1970s at the Museum in Wdzydze. These exhibitions often take place in wooden huts that were built much earlier. However, the Kashubian Ethnographic Park marked a notable departure from tradition by incorporating a village Ruch kiosk, equipped with items from the 1980s, into its exhibition.

Where Are We Going?

I will not attempt to answer this question definitively, as I do not yet know the exact answer myself. However, I can outline some emerging phenomena and the challenges that come with them. The changes unfolding in anthropology (including ethnology and ethnography) today are profound, and it feels as though the process is still ongoing. It seems as if thematic boundaries no longer exist—what remains distinctly anthropological is the way problems and questions are framed. More often than not, contemporary perspectives take precedence over historical research.[7]

What does the future hold? In the realm of anthropology that deals with heritage, the path seems relatively clear. We have historical collections, and it is fairly straightforward to gather contemporary expressions of both rural and urban cultures, which creatively reinterpret or transform their mythic traditions. However, equally significant are the cultural elements that do not reference these traditions, yet play a dominant role in shaping present-day reality. One key issue, of course, is the preservation of digital heritage.

At the same time, it is essential to acknowledge the so-called "folk turn" in the social sciences and draw conclusions from it, one way or another, as it cannot be overlooked. After numerous publications on this topic, the first museum exhibition reflecting this orientation was introduced this year: *Chłop – niewolnik?* (Peasant – Slave?) at the National Museum of Agriculture in Szreniawa (Jełowicki, Kuligowski, eds. 2024).

As for open-air ethnographic museums, the primary questions—largely due to the unique nature of these exhibitions—concern changes in the time frame and, potentially, in the spatial dimension. In 2007, I mentioned in a text that I envisioned an "open-air museum" from the 1970s, located in a city block, with milk bottles left outside apartment doors, just as in that era (Czachowski 2007: 60). From a cognitive standpoint, such a presentation is no different from displaying an 18th-century wooden hut and its furnishings. In these types of museums, I also anticipate seeing state-farm blocks or buildings from the People's Poland period (such as cube-shaped houses). However, the question of the degree to which these structures have been mythologised should always remain central to these projects.

[7] It is also important to note the role of historical anthropology as a sub-discipline, which can be applied within ethnological museology.

Presenting non-Polish, particularly non-European, cultures also poses significant challenges. It is all too easy to fall into the trap of over-aestheticising and exoticising these cultures, emphasising “traditional” cultural patterns. Objects from entirely different time periods often appear side by side in such exhibitions. While they may coexist, it is crucial to remember that an ethnic group from Africa, for instance, is no longer the same today as it was in the late 19th century, even if some of its objects resemble those from that time. Moreover, it is important to consider the ongoing global discussion on decolonisation and the risk of viewing the world’s cultures solely through a Western lens.

Janusz Barański made an important observation that “the ethnographic (anthropological) museum, following in the footsteps of the ethnological sciences, examines the worlds and thoughts of humans from a conceptual meta-level, providing arguments that deny the possibility of establishing indisputable truths, including scientific ones”. Similarly, Katarzyna Kaniowska noted that “museum exhibitions must respond to the current needs of the museum audience”. This trend is highly visible in contemporary culture, not just in museology. The participatory nature of creating collections and exhibitions is strongly emphasised, which I find appealing, but it also raises fundamental questions. There is a risk that entirely different visions of culture could emerge between cultural players, shaped by their varying needs. The website of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the University of Warsaw states: “collaborative anthropology assumes that research participants also produce full-fledged knowledge. Research thus becomes a space of exchange and joint knowledge production. Its aim is no longer just analysis. In this kind of research practice, the explicit goal is to influence the community involved or, in other words, to bring about social change. Collaborative research is intended to be useful to the community in which it is carried out.” Yet, this prompts further questions: what does *useful* mean, and who decides that? What if the group being studied prefers only a positive and mythologised image of itself, erasing any negative aspects?[8] This also makes me wonder if the hitherto criticised ethnographic instructions from the past, which dictated what was considered “folk” and what was not, fit into this new paradigm. Can we reinterpret the

[8] A reverse example would be the aforementioned folk turn in historiography, where no one asked “the people” if they wanted such an image to be perpetuated. Instead, journalists and academics made that decision themselves, determining the “usefulness” of these activities.

19th-century museum mandate of educating the public about traditions through such a lens? And what happens when the social change desired by one group conflicts with the interests or vision of another group—or, at the very least, the project leaders?

Another significant challenge arises from the major shifts in anthropology today, driven by rapid civilisational changes. New topics are emerging that offer entirely different perspectives. For example, consider some of the research topics recently explored at anthropology institutes in Poznań and Warsaw:

— "Energetyzując świat: STS i antropologia ku społecznym studiom nad nowymi energiami" (Energising the World: STS and Anthropology Towards a Social Study of New Energies),
— "Ocena ryzyka i niepewności związanych z nowymi technologiami jako wyzwanie dla demokracji. Kontrowersje wokół wydobywania gazu łupkowego w Polsce" (Assessing the Risks and Uncertainties of New Technologies as a Challenge for Democracy. The Controversy of Shale Gas Extraction in Poland),
— "Doświadczanie zmian klimatycznych. Transdyscyplinarne badanie przegrzewania miast" (Experiencing Climate Change. A Transdisciplinary Study of Urban Overheating),
— A research project on narrative-discursive construction of cancer,
— "Rodzina i reprodukcja w kontekście rozwoju genetyki i nowych technologii medycznych. Perspektywa antropologiczna" (Family and Reproduction in the Context of Genetic Developments and New Medical Technology Developments: An Anthropological Perspective),
— "Nowe technologie reprodukcyjne – perspektywa childhood studies" (New Reproductive Technologies: A Childhood Studies Perspective),
— "Instytucja zamknięta z wyrzutami sumienia. Antropologiczne wymiary deinstytucjonalizacji opieki nad chorymi psychicznie" (A Closed Institution With Remorse. Anthropological Dimensions of the Deinstitutionalisation of Mental Health Care).

The current trend in global science has greatly broadened the scope of anthropology, leading it to engage with topics quite different from those of the past. This raises critical questions about how, and whether, museum anthropology can respond—both in terms of collections and exhibitions. Will there be a growing rift between museums and academia, or will the relationship remain as close as it has been in the past? In recent years,

ethnologists and anthropologists working in museums have shown increased awareness of theoretical and methodological issues. There is a wealth of publications, conferences, and sessions dedicated to these topics. Most activities today are grounded in a solid methodological framework. Yet, when it comes to new anthropological fields, such as medical, political, or economic anthropology—which are currently being developed intensively—the challenges appear enormous. This is particularly true in terms of collections, but exhibitions on these subjects would also present significant difficulties.

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