

A NEW LOOK AT OPEN-AIR MUSEUMS

With the new impetus received by the conservation of the architectural heritage in situ after the "Year of the Monument", the meaning of open-air museums has again been brought into question. The new social function given to the conservation of the historical architectural heritage makes many people think of open-air museums as superfluous, outdated institutions.

Collecting, transporting and exploiting historical buildings as museums in an artificial museum situation has been rejected because it was thought that buildings first needed to be re-evaluated in their authentic function as living spaces.

The qualitative merits of the historical architectural heritage in relation to the living environment form the basis of this thesis, especially when it is borne in mind that the creation of a living environment, "of human dimensions" applies as one of the material conditions to the development of a meaningful human existence and a basic condition, if you like for people's "well-being".

The positions taken up by people in monument conservation projects with regard to open-air museums, however, still depart from the old objectives and working-methods which were in the beginning in application in the open-air museums and which have now been adapted by the new social needs and the development of the museum science.

The misunderstanding with regard to open-air museums can best be understood if the origin and working of this sort of museum is examined more closely. The first open-air museums originated from the notion that an important part of the cultural heritage, the rural architecture, was destined to disappear through the development of society.

The well-known open-air museums of the nineteenth century did not just simply appear. Before this time a Swiss, Karl Viktor von Bonstetten, had already developed the idea of an open-air museum in 1793. At an exhibition of statues with various costumes from different areas of Denmark, held in Fredensborg Castle, Von Bonstetten dreamt of an English park in which buildings including Lapp huts, houses from the Faroe islands and Rasen were reconstructed with their own furnishings.

The intention was obviously to be able to draw useful ethnographical comparisons from it.

This new museum idea is part of the sphere of the romantic glorification of rural life at the end of the eighteenth century, which had undoubtedly influenced Von Bonstetten's plans. However in the eighteenth century conception the farms and rural buildings were seen only as refuges in which people could, without restraint, give full rein to their romantic emotions. The idea of a museum was then still to come.

Von Bonstetten's plans only received attention at the end of the nineteenth century when folklore began to develop.

It seems unlikely that at that time any interest was shown for rural life outside this new science.

Folklore had grown out of the cultural flows which had crossed Europe in the beginning of the nineteenth century. After neo-classicism, romanticism had glorified the individual sphere of emotions, the relations with nature, the supernatural and the past. A special value was attached to natural innate qualities which had not been spoiled by "culture" and were rooted in the national history of a nation. People were seeking a national identity, a national spirit and a dynamic national soul, from which they believed they were continuously declining through the development of society. The impression that these pure and natural national characteristics had best been conserved in rural cultures directed the research directly toward the peasantry.

At the outset the specific character, the national identity, was sought in the spiritual and social items of popular traditions. The material aspect of this popular culture was researched later. Interest in the so called "material" popular culture was further stimulated by the technological changes taking place in society, especially in rural culture, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This revolution had pushed aside a number of tools, activities and techniques which were of vital importance to the countryside. The objects belonging to this historical culture context fell into disuse and were absorbed into collections, in which they were appreciated as cu-



Fig. General plan of the open air museum at Bokrijk.

rios of popular tradition mainly because of their functional qualities.

The particular character of the open-air museums cannot, however, be explained solely through the nationalistic background of folklore and the interest in the "material popular culture" due to industrial development. The experiments in presentation techniques which were being tried out in museums and exhibitions in the second half of the nineteenth century are of essential importance for the origin of open-air museums. The understanding that objects belonged to a context of historical culture had brought museums towards reconstructions of interiors of houses in the exhibition halls. The step towards open-air presentation was made possible by the appreciation of the buildings themselves and

by the dismantling, transportation and reconstruction of the first museum buildings. Indeed, from the beginning open-air museums were considering furnishing the houses and buildings being brought in with objects and equipment, putting them where they belonged in the buildings. The functional equipment of the museum buildings resulted in an integral reconstruction of the immediate environment of the inhabitants and users of the buildings. However, the intention of this initiative extended further than pure material reconstruction of the environment. It was intended that the identity of a national group or a social stratum should become apparent from the union of the buildings with the interiors. The educational significance of this new sort of museum was based on the integral way of displaying the living environment of national communities and on the educational

possibility of comparing units with each other in a museum situation.

At the end of the nineteenth century Arthur Hazelius, a Stockholm philologist, had begun building up a collection of objects from everyday life of Swedish country folk. In 1873 he had proceeded to make a reconstruction of a Lapp hut in the Nordiska Museum. When the well-known Morahof was threatened with demolition around 1885 the building was dismantled and transported to the Djurgården island, better known as Skansen, in Stockholm, to be reconstructed and refurnished there as a museum building. In 1891 the collection is Skansen, which had meanwhile been expanded, was officially opened. A similar initiative had been going on in Norway since 1887: Anders Sandvig, a dentist from Lillehammer, had already begun some time before to collect objects from everyday life in the countryside, when a Lillehammer association bought the collection in 1902 and transported it to Maihaugen, where it was opened in 1904. King Oskar II too had a wooden church from Gol brought to his country seat on the island of Bygdøy, near Oslo. The royal project was developed by Hans J. Aall into a fully fledged museum that was opened in 1902. In 1901 Bernard Olsen's collection was transported to the Frilands Museum at Lingby.

Arhus followed in 1909. During the period 1912-1918 various other countries followed the examples which had been set up in the North, including Holland with the Open-air Museum at Arnhem.

As open-air museums developed in Europe there arose various types and variants in the principles of content, form and realization. The definition and description of the purpose of the open-air museums was then also revised and adapted several times. In 1956 the purpose of open-air museums had been defined at Geneva: «It is the scope of open-air museums to select, dismantle, transport, reconstruct and maintain in an appropriate site and with their original equipment authentic architectural groups or elements, which are characteristic of the ways of life, the dwelling, the agricultural activities, crafts ... of disappearing cultures.

This definition was more concretely established during the "Icom meeting on open-air museums" in Denmark and Sweden in 1957, where an open-air museum was defined as "a collection of buildings open to the public, composed as a rule of elements of popular and pre-industrial architecture, the dwellings of farmers, shepherds, fishermen, craftsmen, shopkeepers and labourers, with their outhouses (barns, sheds, etc.) places of business (mills, potteries, etc.), shops and in general a variety of examples of rural, urban, secular, ecclesiastic, private or public architecture of this kind, comprising eventually examples of great architecture (manor houses, chapels, historic houses, etc.) which it has not been possible to preserve in situ, and architectural examples dating from the industrial era. These various items are displayed with their appropriate fur-

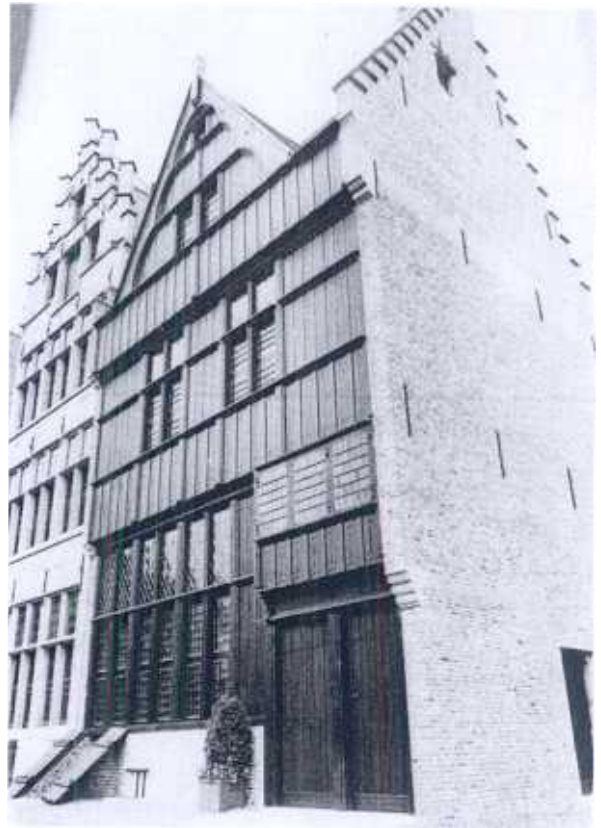


Fig. 2. - Wooden front of a 15th century house from Antwerp. Open Air Museum Bokrijk.

Fig. 3. - General view of the first section of the urban part. Open Air Museum Bokrijk.



niture and equipment. The whole is completed, if possible, by facilities for the education and amenity of visitors, such as a room giving general information on the museum's programme (with summary displays and audio-visual aids) an open-air theatre for performances by folk groups, a restaurant, etc.”.

The 1956-1957 definitions have already been commented upon in detail by A.J. Bernet Kempers in his synthesis on the substance and working of open-air museums written on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the Arnhem Open-air Museum and by A. Zippelius in the Handbook of European Open-air Museums. The definitions of 1956 and 1957 limit themselves to an enumeration of the types of buildings which can figure in an open-air museum and to a succinct record of the way of displaying the objects in the buildings.

However, the definitions were broadened and generalized in the definition which was developed by the Association of European Open-air Museums in 1972; since then the following can be regarded as a definition of open-air museums: “Wissenschaftlich geführte oder unter wissenschaftliche Aufsicht stehende Sammlungen ganzheitlich dargestellter Siedlung-; Bau, Wohn- und Wirtschaftsformen im freien Gelände”. The importance of these definitions lies mainly in the shifting of the criteria of content towards more formal conditions and the stressing of the scientific justification of the museum units represented.

The 1957 definition reflected strikingly the principles of conservation in situ recognized at that time. The conservation of buildings in situ was reserved for religious and official buildings, examples which were of

importance for historical reasons, for arthistorical or for esthetic reasons and which can in many cases be considered as “examples of great architecture”. The other specimens of the architectural heritage, including vernacular architecture, were not at that time given any attention as to conservation in situ. This also explains why the open-air museums saved these buildings from destruction at the very outset from a specific interest for this type of architecture, and also why the pre-condition that the buildings cannot be conserved on their original site can be fixed before “great architecture” can be considered for inclusion in open-air museums.

The role of the open-air museums as rescuers in those times is undeniable. The buildings coming into an open-air museum are, by the very fact of being taken into the museum collection, saved from destruction. However, it would be incorrect to infer from this that open-air museums are solely created in order to save buildings which cannot be conserved on their original site, as this would confer on them the function of an architectural reserve or sanctuary. Starting from the assumption that each museum has a particular content which is defined by the specific intention of the museum and which must be achieved, the role of the open-air museums cannot remain limited to a pure passive, receptive function. Should, for instance, an open-air museum have fixed itself the objective of recreating the feel of the popular life of a particular region then the global plan and the selection criteria for the acquisition of museum pieces are defined by representativeness of the popular tradition and by the meaning and evolution that this project is designed to

Fig. 4. - Fotogrammetry of a gallery (17th century) and the front of the back premises of a house out of the urban section of the open air museum Bokrijk.

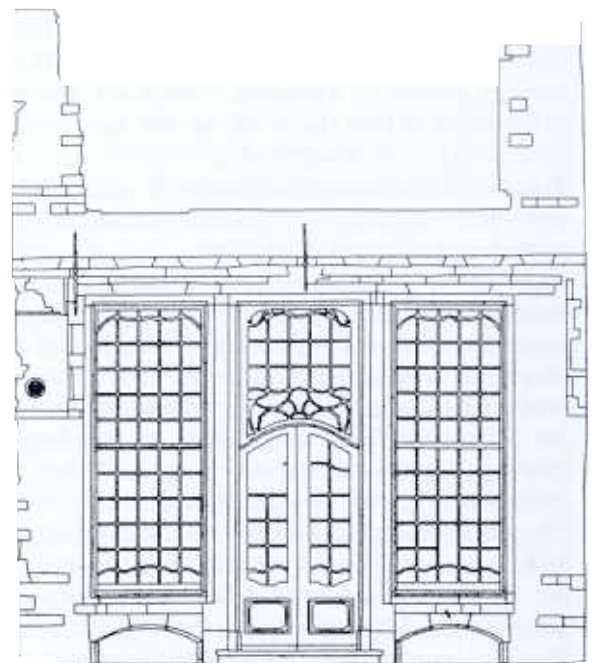
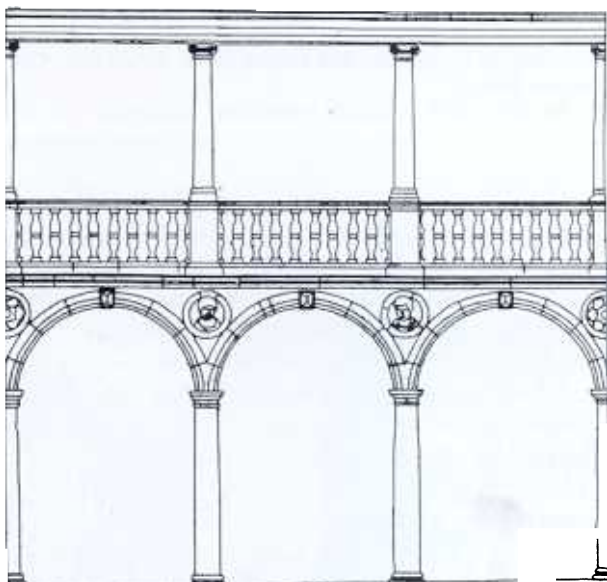




Fig. 5. - End 18th century stable from Oostcappel. Open air Museum Bokrijk.

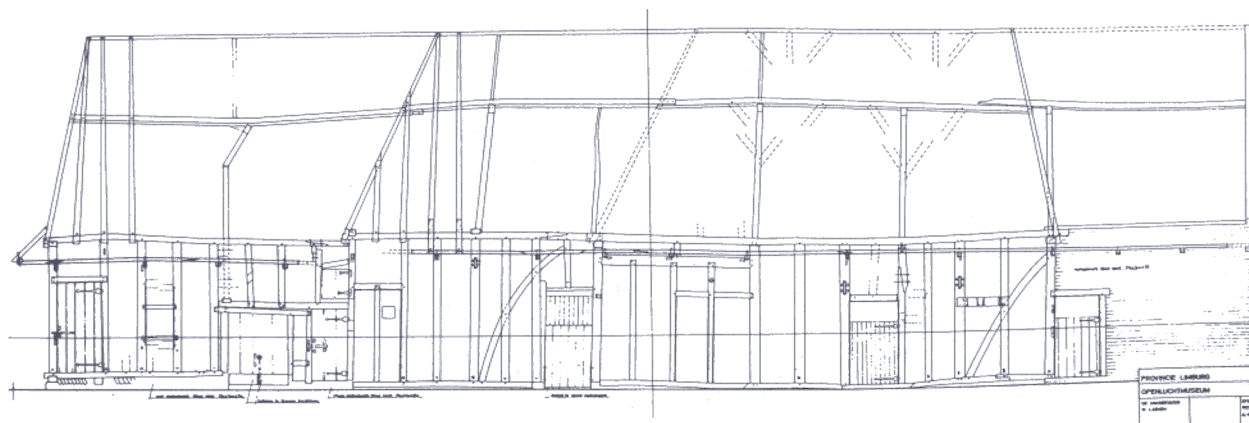
show. Thus buildings which are important to the history of art, or which are exceptional, may not necessarily agree with the central theme, and less spectacular but good items of a genre from a specific region can be of very great use in the realization of the pre-established objective in the museum. The same also applies to open-air museums of technology or architecture. The criteria for representativity are somewhat different in these cases, but remain binding for the acquisition of museum pieces. Rescuing the buildings can consequently be only an incidental function. One of the consequences of this is that when an offer is received then the guiding principles resulting from the global concept of the museum should be respected as far as the acquisition of museum pieces is concerned.

When the situation of the open-air museums in Belgium is examined it can be seen that the view of open-air

museum entities corresponds with the points of view recognised by H. Logeman about a Belgian open-air museum, characterized by a pronounced national awareness and by a sense of the educational role which open-air museums could fill in the development and continuation of popular traditions. Logeman's vision in this sense corresponds to a great degree to the circumstances in which the Scandinavian open-air museums came about and also to the conception of folklore in Flanders, which was especially developed by P. de Mont in the second half of the nineteenth century. Information about folklore was gathered and studied to serve a cultural and political ideology. The root of the systematic research for the "Flemish" lifestyle was the solicitude for the reevaluation and the continuity of the particular Flemish national character, which was thought of as being threatened by the influence of the French language and culture on the Flemish social and cultural life. H. Logeman's contribution to this movement was to emphasize the exemplary value and the educational possibilities of the open-air museum in the framework of a Flemish cultural and political renaissance.

The exemplary purpose of the open-air museums is less pronounced in the vision developed by the Brabant and Antwerp folklorists between and subsequent to the two World Wars. Open-air museums were originally intended to form an image of the "lifestyle" by reconstructing and refurbishing the museum buildings. The didactic value of open-air museums lay in the original vision then of the suitability of these museums for the folklore imagery. This type of museum was called an "open book on the old way of life of the people", "the history of ancestral everyday life", or "the living past". The awakening of the particular national character has evidently continued to survive in this conception, and corresponds with the vision of folklore recognized in Flanders after the Second World War. The open-air mu-

Fig. 6. Plan of the front of a stable from Oost-Cappel (end 18th century) before dismantling (Open air museum Bokrijk,



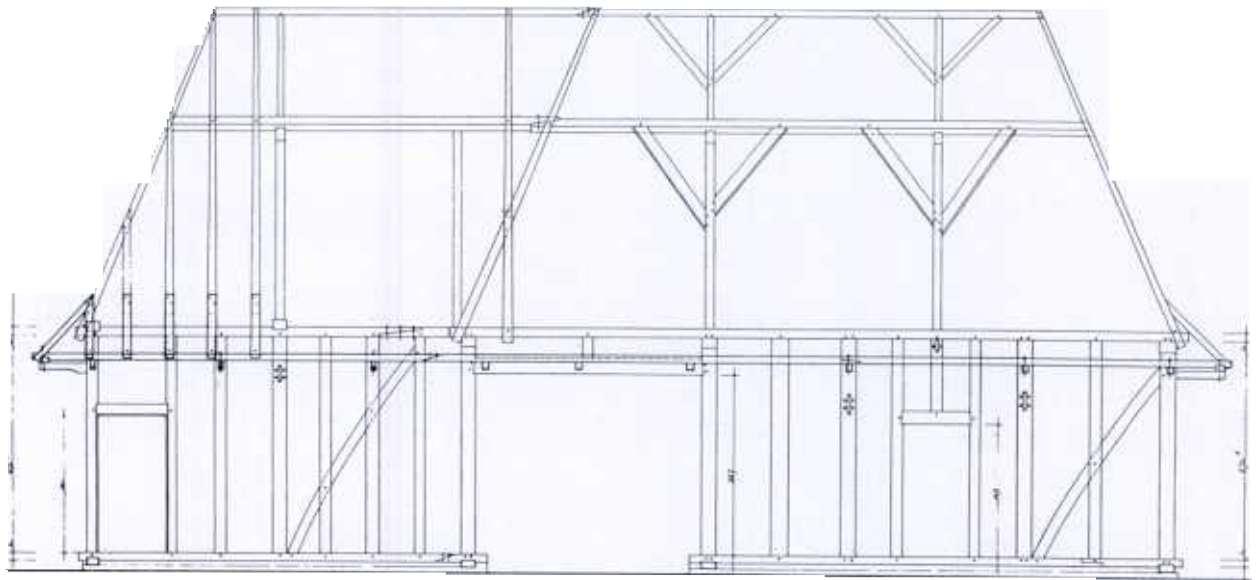


Fig. Reconstruction plan of the stable from Oost Cappel (Open air museum Bokrijk).

seums were considered as the ideal museums for the presentation of a national life-style, as "gardens of the national life of the people".

The desire to preserve this precious heritage for posterity can clearly be seen in this conception. When speaking about a "national tradition reserve" in this connection, what is meant is not only the conservation of the buildings and the furniture, but also the social aspects of the life of the people. The open-air museum is seen to be a unit of popular traditions in which not only the dwellings of the people of yesteryear, but also their work and their social life, should be shown and preserved.

However, before defining the educational possibilities of open-air museums, the particular working-methods of these museums should be outlined. The definitions formulated in 1957 at the special session of the Icom meeting on open-air museums were concentrated on the material content of the museums. In 1972 these definitions were adapted and amplified and the accent was placed on the methodological foundations and on the formal requirements which open-air museums should fulfil. At that time an open-air museum was "a scientifically justified unit of settlement, living, building or trading complexes shown in an integral manner in the open-air". The integral manner of presentation spoken of in this definition results in specific aspects of the popular tradition being illustrated, such as their popular beliefs, devotion, daily needs, work and life. The crosses over the cellar windows and doors, the elder-bushes and the witches' crosses are again fixed as material witnesses of superstition. The roadside crosses, the houseleek and the crosses on the barns

and chapels illustrate the popular belief and devotion that were tangible in the popular traditions of that time. The functionalistic furnishing of barns, stables and dwellings also contributes to the integral presentation of the daily life of the people of yesteryear. In this presentation the object itself is not so important (as is the case in other types of museums in which the objects are presented because of their own form or formal development) but what really matters is the socio-historical context to which the objects belong. The objects are present in the farms and commercial buildings, it is true, but are pushed into the background. They are once again placed in the setting in which they belong.

Fig. 8. - Dwelling house of a farmstead from Abele (1771). Open Air Museum Bokrijk.



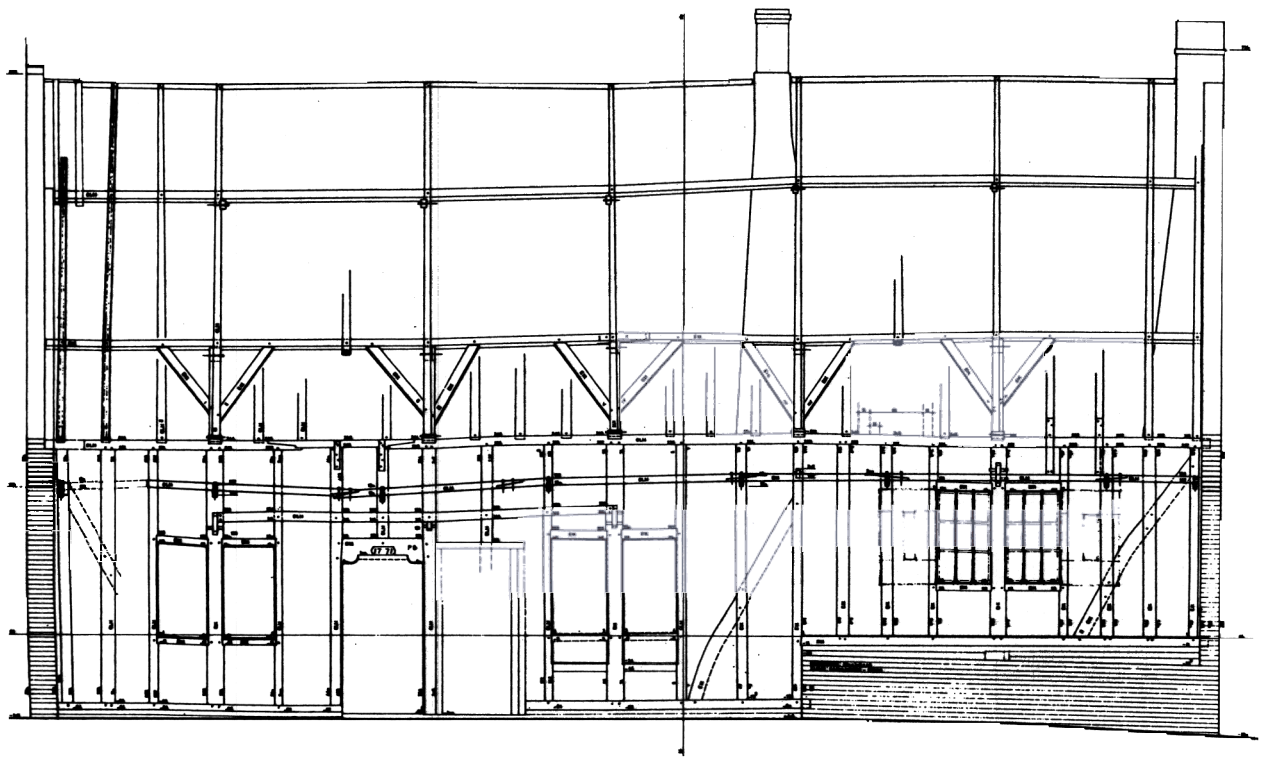


Fig. 9. Plan of the front of a farm from Abele (1771) before dismantling (Open Air Museum Bokrijk).

Fig. 10. Reconstruction plan of the front of a farm from Abele (Open Air Museum Bokrijk).

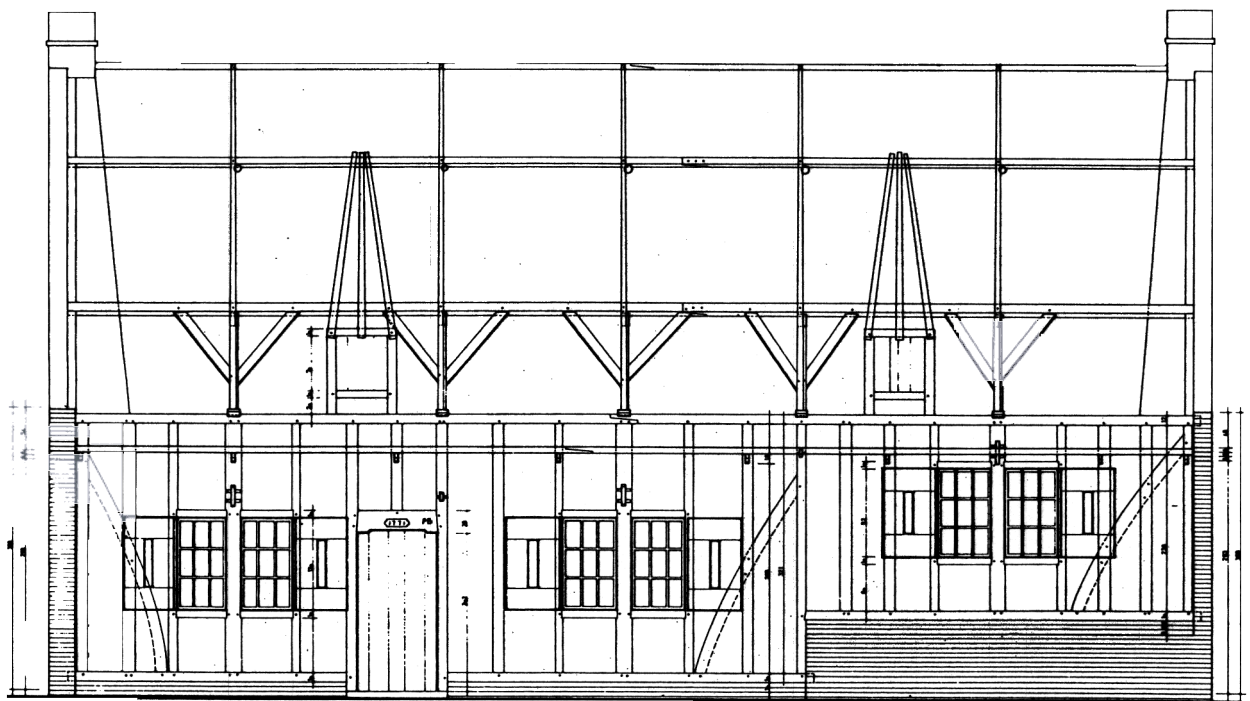




Fig. 11. Church from Erpekom (12th century). Open Air Museum Bokrijk

Through the approximately integral re-creation of the social and natural setting of these cultural units a material infrastructure is built up in which the people must be assumed to be in communication. In this setting and with the necessary guidance the people can be felt and understood in their circumstances in life; their daily activities, needs, limitations with respect to the moral values of the time in relation to property, community, religion and family, and their scale of values can be felt if the appropriate guidance is provided.

Through the integral extension of the living surroundings of the past the open-air museums are given a significance different to that of folklore museums in which the material aspect of the culture, the objects, are displayed for their own sake. They make it possible for utensils and buildings to be made familiar in an experimental manner and in the same manner, via this material, to allow people to penetrate to the most fundamental characteristics of the life of people, the social aspects, the pressure of tradition and the conceptual world of the inhabitants resulting from these. In this sense the open-air museums have brought a renewal.

Nevertheless, it was frequently observed that open-air museums are soulless villages or dead hamlets, from which the very people referred to in the cultural transfer process are missing. Many museums show the houses, the churches, the taverns and other buildings as if the inhabitants "have just this minute left". It was intended that this shortcoming should be made up by livening the museum villages up with festive events built around the framework of the museum's educational function.

When visiting a museum the impression can be gained that the infrastructure of the reconstructed setting, in which the popular traditions were acted out, is insufficient for the evaluation of the life of the people. In this perspective the open-air museum would be no more than a passive framework, a hollow infrastructure, in which we must simply attempt to imagine the life of people. The visitor must then possess enough imaginative power to picture the everyday life of the people in all its aspects. It goes without saying that this brings with it the danger of the visitor's interpretation progressing in an uncontrolled manner. This determination leads to the conclusion that a policy of program-

med educational discovery is an absolute necessity. Indeed, should the impression be gained that more information is needed about the exhibits, especially concerning the aspects of society which are not immediately apparent, then this indicates that the management of museums cannot be restricted to the building and furnishing of houses and settlements. This type of limitation could be compared with the building of a traditional museum and exhibition halls.

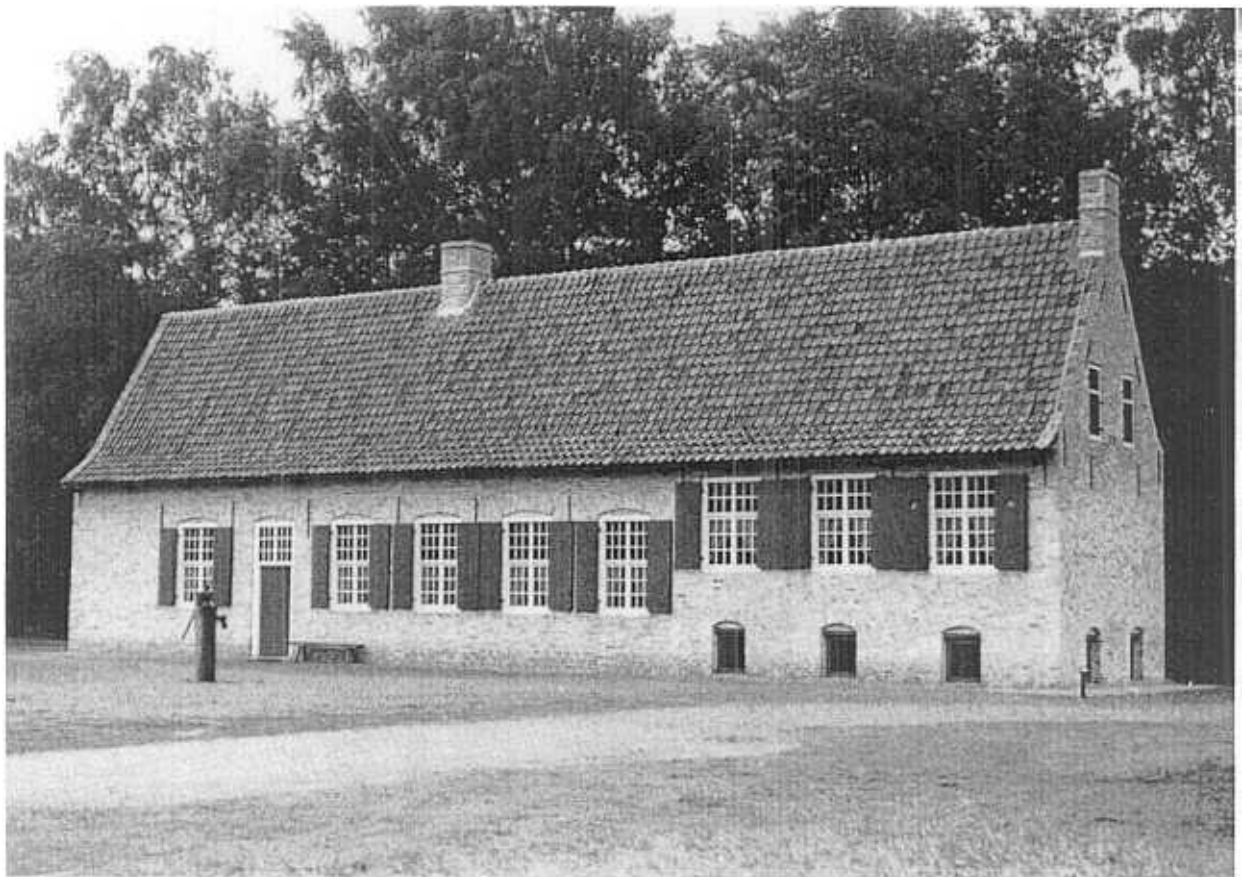
The old objectives and working-methods must be revised in the light of the development of folklore, museum science and society.

Firstly, the accents within the museum operation are being shifted. The 1974 Icom definition extended the museum concept and made museums into cultural educational instruments of well-being-directed cultural policy. Museums were given a particular social func-



Fig. 12. - General view of the rural park. Campines section. Open Air Museum Bokrijk.

Fig. 13. Dwelling house of a farmstead from Hoogstade (end 18th century). Open Air Museum Bokrijk.



tion by the accentuation of their operation to the public. Alongside the old function of pure object-based research and conservation the museums were assigned an essential communication or educational without nevertheless neglecting the object-directed work. The object-directed operations of museums (scientific research, formation of collections, conservation and management) are considered as prime conditions before information and education can be passed on since it is precisely these cultural objects which are used by the museums as their starting point. Both are therefore complementary in relation to each other: one is conditional upon the other.

However, the communication function of museums is essentially and primordially established. Cultural values will be discovered and put into context, and conveyed to the broadest possible public in the form of presentations of exhibitions, training courses, education, recreation and sociocultural renovation.

The specific direction from which the museums approach this communication programme is of great importance; as opposed to institutions such as libraries, training centres, archives, cultural centres, etc., which contribute to the qualification of the human condition from another basis, the museums set out from objects of cultural significance. As a result of this, one of the tasks of a museum will be to seek out, collect and preserve objects of cultural significance.

In doing so the objects themselves are of lesser importance than the sociocultural context of which they are exponents. Scientific research and communication will be directed thereupon in order to show the exponential relationship to the background of which these objects are an indication. It will bring these backgrounds into the forefront in the transfer process and will demonstrate and evaluate their socio-cultural value. From this it can seek possibilities of reintegrating or renovating these cultural values into society; either by itself or in cooperation with institutions which realize this integration in practice, it can then apply and develop them.

This means that a museum becomes an institution in which cultural values are interpreted socially. It also means that the museum itself organizes constructive contributions to the well-being-orientated construction of society or, in cooperation with other institutions, brings about a process of integration into society on the understanding that the role of the museum is an accessory to the provision of services, and is educational and instructive, while the coproducers perform the actions.

The functioning of museums for the public and society takes place through information, presentation, training, education, the development of culturo-pedagogical recreation and the reintegration of cultural values into society. This means that as far as the structure of

museums is concerned, alongside their own culturo-pedagogical operation they have a linking educational function with institutions which achieve the true integration process of these cultural values. A museum is, in other words, no longer a spatial concept, but indeed an organizing form in which a process of transference is made real. This also means that the operations of the museums are not limited to the spatial frontiers of the museum building and that their operation reaches further "than the walls". Simultaneously the conclusion may be reached that the operation should take a much more flexible form and that a museum does not limit its means to within its spatial frontiers; the operation of museums is rather the organization and coordination of means within and outside the museums which can facilitate the transference process, notwithstanding the strict spatial frontiers of the museum site.

The extension of the museums field of action to collections and cultural objects in situ is likewise a necessity for the scientific veracity of the museum itself. Bringing together objects of cultural interest which in situ have an integrated significance for didactical reasons diminishes their scientific and therefore didactic value if the objects are wrenched from the vital context of their social function and end up in an abstract, pure museum situation. If they are shown in the open-air in showcase areas, just like in art museums and technical museums, as pure exhibition items, then these objects, which are an indication of the relationship between man and the environment, the history of everyday life, then the umbilical cord, the vital link which binds them with their authentic in situ social relation, is severed. The buildings rebuilt for educational reasons in the open-air museums have grown up and had a social function in situ during the course of real life. These very social functions belong to the social aspects of these museum objects, and they would totally disappear if the museums should take up a simply reflective position within its spatial boundaries neglecting the sociocultural aspects, thus causing it to be a scientific failure.

If the museum does not wish to reduce its didactic collection to soulless and sterile museum pieces, completely stripped of their social meaning, then it must respect precisely this relationship with the social functions in situ. This can be done in two ways; firstly by presenting the collection within the spatial boundaries of the museum in its relation to life in situ, i.e. to relate its cultural objects exhibited to the objects still functioning in situ, or to match up the museological valorization of the museum's collection with what is still to be found in situ; secondly by studying in situ as many as possible of the objects still in current use in society, by conserving them and extending the cultural transfer beyond the spatial boundaries of the museum. This means that the concrete limitations of the museum's study, conservation, information and transfer process do not coincide with the spatial boundaries of

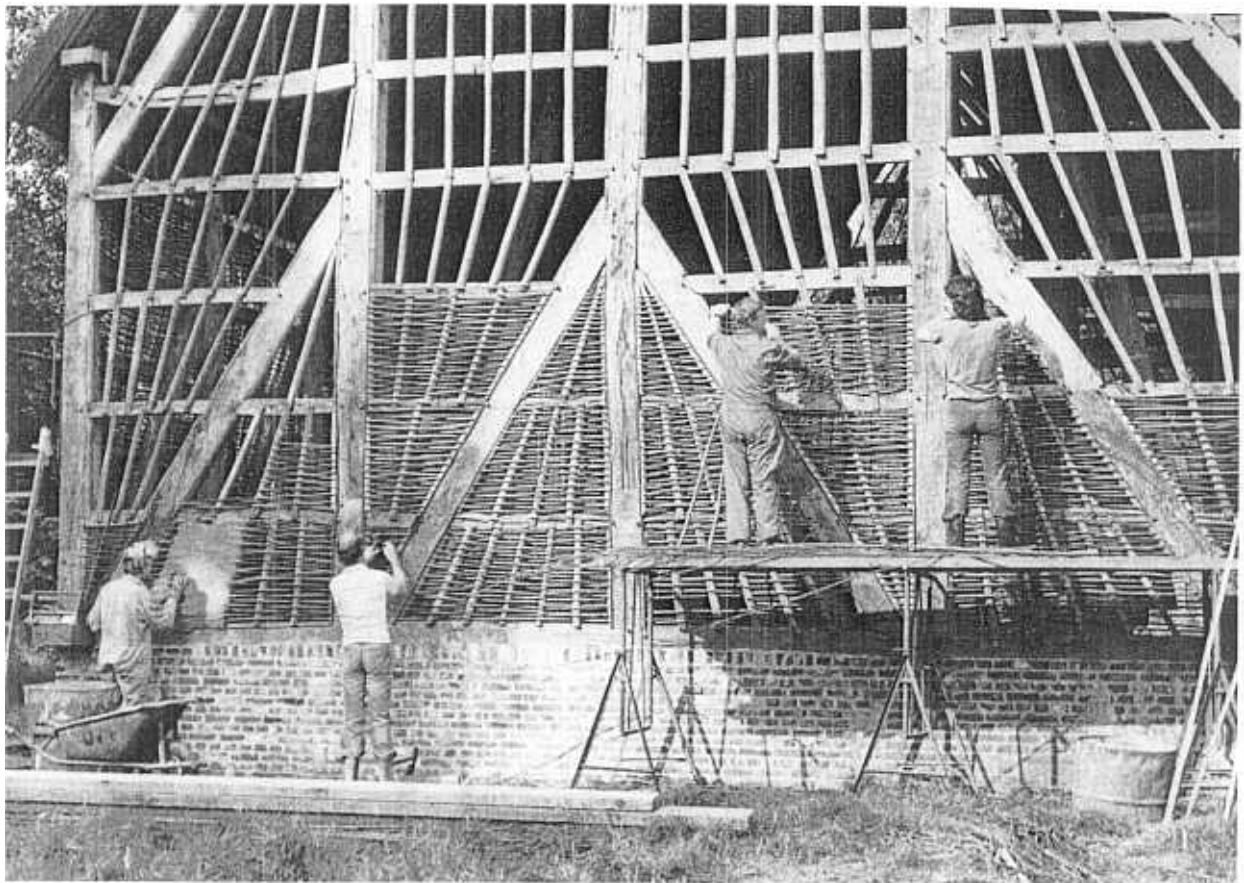


Fig. 14. Training course of wall restoring 1980. Open Air Museum Bokrijk.

the museum site (the collection *within* the museum) but that the definition of acceptability of content is one of a thematic nature.

It follows from this point of view that the operation of the museum is to a great extent one of providing services. Firstly and very generally it can be established that museums have a social service role and that they can no longer be regarded as free-standing, closed collection and conservation projects. A concrete role of provision of services follows from the above-mentioned extension of the objectives and tasks of the museums, and starts from the basic operating forms of the museum. In reality museums must develop the provision of services firstly for the cultural property within the particular collections, but also and especially outside them.

In this view museums are no longer an end in themselves, an endpoint for cultural objects, but a starting point. They are, parallel with other socio-cultural facilities (local centres, libraries, archives, cultural centres), institutions which from a well-defined angle

bring objects of cultural interest into the well-being-directed cultural integration process. They are an essential instrument for the upkeep and social use of cultural items.

Both folklore and the cultural image that this science tries to project has evolved to a great degree. The thesis in which an attempt is made to describe the national identity and to show this particular disposition in the museums has been abandoned.

The particular disposition which was still being sought until after the second World War was evidently not so fundamental that the population groups differed so basically from each other.

The differences between specific groups were in many cases the results of historical, geographical isolation and/or of social stratification. These regional and social differences were partially made uniform and levelled by the development of society after the second World War. The destruction of the old identity, the old cultural values and traditions went along with this,

so that folklore strated to direct itself much more towards the developing society.

Attention is directed essentially toward the development processes which show up in the relationship between man and the environment, towards the course of the development process itself. The causes and factors which make these developments possible, influence and determine them, must be studied in order to fully understand them.

In this option sufficient attention will be devoted to social, economic, technological and cultural backgrounds which have as a sort of climate or spirit of the time, made the development processes possible, shaped the conditions for them, prepared them or brought them forth.

In order to understand, explain and visualize these development processes, folklore makes use of the results of the scientific research in disciplines such as economic history, agricultural history, technology, social history, political history, religious history, law, art, architecture, etc. Neither these facets of cultural history nor what we would call their greatest achievements or high points in themselves are the subject of study and transfer.

On the museological and folklore level the evolution has demonstrated the insufficiency of the old working-methods and objectives which used to be almost classically operative in open-air museums. The manner of presentation in which the building, the interior and the surroundings were complementary to visualization cannot demonstrate the development processes in society and the factors which have caused them. Moreover, man, who should ultimately remain central to the transfer process, remains absent. Lastly, the social significance of the subjects is not interpreted. In this manner of presentation the subjects disappear into a background situation. They are, as it were, implicit but not explicitly present. The classic operating methods of open-air museums reaches no further than setting up a static image of society, a historical moment in a particular region. This determination has awakened the necessity to adapt the general transfer techniques in open-air museums and to add a more analytically conceived programme to the old methods of presentation, and further, to precisely meter out and limit the collection, rebuilding and refurnishing of historic houses according to educational standards.

The open-air museums' former presentation methods may still be maintained for the sake of their didactic value, no matter how limited this might be.

They must, nevertheless, be examined carefully to ensure the right amount of educational perspective and be subordinated to the broader educational plan. The didactic value of these old methods of presentation lies in the new possibilities which the system offers. The objects can be experienced together in their historico-

cultural context. A historical synthesis (in fact an attempted reconstruction) can, as it were, thus be experienced experimentally and directly, resulting in some kind of integral experience. The historical synthesis remains an important educational experiment which requires an analytical introductory accompaniment for didactic reasons. Systematic arrangement and explicit formulation are consequently necessary, especially as the development processes and the influences which have acted upon them in purely open-air presentation cannot be demonstrated. In the historical synthetic approximation the cultural values too as such do not come forward.

The problem thus becomes the balanced distribution and dosage of the analysis and the synthesis. There is no sense in the open-air museum reconstructing everything from every period and every region on a one-to-one scale in the strict sense. The planning of the one-to-one scale reconstructions specifically must be carefully gauged and is a factor of a didactical selective plan.

In the general educational attitude the starting point must be the determination that the objects of cultural interest should be interpreted in their socio-cultural context.

It is better expressed the other way round by saying that the objects and documents must be illustrations of the cultural image and that they fill in, demonstrate and establish the ideas which are being presented in the cultural image. The objects thus form the visual part of the cultural image. This reversal of the exhibition viewpoint means that the objects are shown not for their own sake but as an indication of something. The objects are thus not alienated from their context but are in fact interpreted.

One of the important consequences which this thesis brings with it is the necessary reference in the exhibitions to the topical development still continuing in situ.

This is of special importance for the scientific integrality of the museum work. A museum remains an artificial environment for the cultural objects which are to be found there. Sometimes the objects are indeed de facto wrenched out of their vital socio-cultural context by the museum situation. The authentic situation of the objects in their socio-cultural context is an integrated and global datum which opens the way to complex and direct experiences. The museum type of presentation, the concentration of a number of objects of cultural interest, can, nevertheless, be justified not so much for conservation reasons as in fact for didactical reasons. Analysis and comparison (morphological, chronological, functional, etc.), if undertaken in a didactic manner, can be an indirect (analytical) introduction or accompaniment to the direct complex and integral experience in situ (synthetis). In this refer-



Fig. 15. Training of furniture restoring, 1981. Open Air Museum Bokrijk.

ential and introductory relationship the museum presentation can not only be justified but is even necessary. What remains essential is that the objects in situ be recognizable and that the values they represent in the complex social cultural situation occur in a vital functional whole; and possibly the renovation thereof.

This thesis implies that the museum project is a starting point for education in situ and that the projects themselves must develop outwards from within the didactic museum unit.

The evolution of society has given rise to a number of new needs which give museums the opportunity to take up a socially subservient position. Previously in open-air museums there was already a tendency to give an exemplary or standardized character to the cultural image being represented. The conception that a particular identity of a popular tradition was represented in the houses displayed was coupled to the thesis that the cultural values illustrated were images to be imitated in order to promote the continuity of this identity. The development of folklore has, however, demonstrated that it was more concerned with social

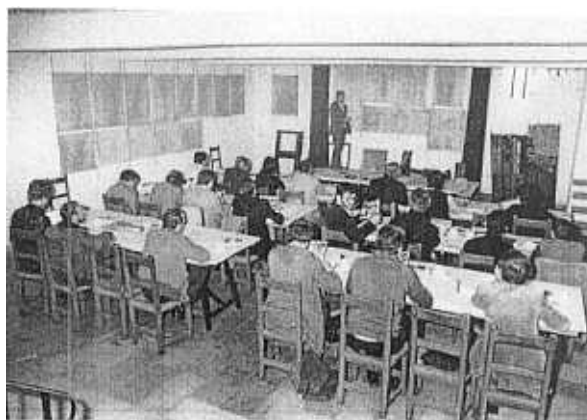


Fig. 16. - Training Course of carpentry techniques 1980. Open Air Museum Bokrijk.

cultural values than with particular values which belong specifically to a definite population group.

The evolution of society has not always had favourable consequences.

Social evolution after the second World War has brought about a process of affluence which has satisfied a number of material needs and fulfilled basic conditions for the development of the spiritual needs of a fully worthwhile humane existence. The unilateral cultivation of these material matters, obviously a confusion between the objective and the means to it, brought about self-alienation rather than a process of integration of man. Exaggerated dependence on consumer goods, importance of possession and extreme excesses of consumption are some of the many results of a biased affluent society which consciously

Fig. 17. - Educational project basket weaving 1979. Open Air Museum Bokrijk.





Fig. 18. - Educational project, rope making, 1980. Open Air Museum Bokrijk.

negligently ignores the other needs of the human condition.

The concept of the destruction of cultural values and its associated lowering of the quality of community life gave rise to the necessity for seeking out the cultural values of the past, recognizing them, and conserving and socializing them in the framework of a well-being-directed cultural policy, i.e. integrating them into society in an adapted contemporary form. This well-being-directed process of cultural integration is no longer a dissemination of culture which "drops" "culture" into society from "above", but in fact the bringing about of a process in which culture is brought into everyday life in the degree that it is qualified by it.

The integration of cultural values into society has placed new accents on the cultural operation of various institutions concerned with culture. A change has been made from a static, purely scientific technological, administrative or conservatory policy to one that is active and dynamic, in which the cultural values being conserved are developed socially, used purposefully and integrated into the community. This new opera-



Fig. 19. - Tatching roofs, a technique only conserved in the Open Air Museum. Open Air Museum Bokrijk.

tion invokes a new scientific methodology which must enable the integration of the cultural past into that of today.

The problem lies, nevertheless, in the correct attitude which should be developed in relation to the past.

It is wrong to propound that the past was always better. This thesis is readily baptized with slogans such as "the good old days". For many this has become the occasion to copy or continue the ways of the past, thus choosing the past for the sake of the past. What is forgotten in this is that the past has not always been good and that the continuation of the past only makes sense under two conditions:

1. that the past is indeed able to enrich the quality of the present day, and
2. that the past should be renovated in a contemporary form.

In the first case it should be stipulated that the hardships and shortcomings in all sorts of domains which clearly lie hidden in the past should not be renovated but only those values which are appropriate to the present.

In the second case it is wrong to reintegrate sterile,

topically alienated models which simply must result in soulless socially alienated reconstructions.

Taking the past for the sake of the present appears to us a better basis in which the accent is clearly placed on the contemporary experience of cultural values.

This comes down to a search for the value of the past. Questions about the past, what social value the cultural phenomena of the past have had, what elements in the past have been less propitious, what is worthwhile taking from the past to restore quality to the present day, and what consequently comes into consideration for suitability for the present day, i.e. can be integrated in a contemporary form into society, and how the past can be used creatively without being completely destroyed, are questions which pose themselves in the new vision of museum operations.

From these few points of view it follows that museums in general, and open-air museums in particular, are themselves instruments of educational policy which can contribute constructively to the building up of society, through the development of educational programmes and renovation processes in situ in the framework of a general well-being policy.

The possibilities for the conservation of the architectural heritage which the open-air museums can offer from this point of view are multiple.

Firstly it will become clear that in situ conservation is in fact an *action* which contributes to the creation of a living environment worthy of mankind, and that the care of monuments is the translation of specific principles and methods into reality. On the other hand there is a compelling necessity for training and education, a need which is felt equally well by the people giving the orders and by those carrying them out. The broadening of the objectives and the operations of an open-air museum can lead to forms of cooperation in the field of scientific research, documentation, conservation and management, and especially in the field of cultural transfer. Scientific research which in principle has the broad working area of society was, in the open-air museums, always particularly directed towards the dwelling, and the documentation which is associated with this research forms an important fund of information. This is as valid with respect to settlements as it is to the dwelling itself, its structure, its building materials, the historical technology of the building, the furnishings, the workmanship, the environment, etc. From the formal aspects of this research in which the past, the historical social evaluation and the evaluation in suitable contemporary perspective are under discussion, direct content related starting points become perceptible.

New projects appear all the time in the field of conservation and management. It goes without saying that the conservation of the cultural heritage requires the setting up of a satisfactory technological apparatus and a management plan for the situation of the cultural

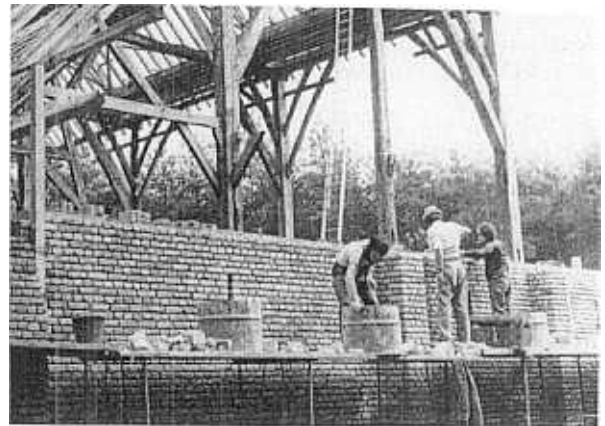


Fig. 20. Training course for masons 1978. Open Air Museum Bokrijk.

objects, in this case the buildings. Such a network whereby open-air museums can be a part of a greater supervision system from within their specialized working cell, is an urgent necessity for those countries in which the services responsible for the conservation of the heritage are under-developed.

The principal opportunities for cooperation, however, lie within the field of cultural transfer. Where the continuing care of the living environment is an in situ action, the work of the museum is essentially educational, guiding and informative. From the points of view summarized above the more active role which museums have to play in connection with the cultural transfer and the new operational forms which they need to fulfill this new task appear plainly. The new operational forms, information, guidance, presentation, education, training and socialization or renovation are necessary instruments for the development of a consciousness and a sensitivity with regard to the architectural heritage. It goes without saying, moreover, that this transfer is conceived as a coordination of means with a working area within and outside the boundaries of the "museum building" which in fact is nothing more than an operational basis, in which the projects are being coordinated. The actual field of action is in situ, or to put it another way, the operation of a museum has no spatial boundaries.

Cooperation between open-air museums and the department of monument conservation runs aground in many cases through the old-fashioned character of the open-air museums, which makes the misunderstandings comprehensible, or through the offence taken by the department of monument conservation with regard to transporting buildings into a museum situation, a thesis which rejects all museum work or collection projects and advocates the reintegration of all cultural goods in an in situ social context. It goes without

saying, moreover that in situ conservation in a renovation situation has priority. This thesis does not, however, necessarily maintain that it would be unjustified to start from a few characteristic examples of the architectural heritage which have been brought into the museum, which form part of a general education plan, set up a cultural image and exploit it as a museum of these historical aspects which in a consistent monument policy must be maintained. It can even be suggested that such an initiative is a necessity on purely educational grounds.

It is, however, established that problems still abound in connection with the relation between those involved in the care of monuments and open-air museums. The insufficiency of forethought and joint planning is the cause of both socially useful initiatives, which in essence should be complementary to each other, still continuing to work separately.

M. LAENEN

Director

Open-Air Museum Bokrijk

Belgium.

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RESUME

Lors du renouveau qu'a connu la protection du patrimoine architectural après l'année des Monuments et Sites, le sens des Musées de Plein Air a été remis en question. La nouvelle signification sociale qui fut donnée aux soins apportés au patrimoine architectural historique transforme aux yeux de beaucoup les musées de plein air en des institutions superflues. Les points de vue que l'on rencontre dans les milieux s'occupant des monuments concernant le fonctionnement des musées de plein air se basent encore toujours sur les objectifs et méthodes anciennement appliqués et qui sont à présent dépassés. L'histoire du développement des musées de plein air a montré qu'il ont pris naissance dans l'esprit du romantisme et que leurs objectifs ont surtout été influencés par la science du folklore qui se développait à cette époque et qui s'efforçait de montrer l'identité propre des communautés populaires. Les premiers musées de plein air naquirent de l'idée que ce caractère propre pouvait être démontré en sauvant, transmettant et réaménageant des maisons et des bâtiments industriels. Ils étaient en outre principalement des opérations de sauvetage pour des objets culturels matériels et des bâtiments qui étaient condamnés à disparaître par le développement de la vie sociale. Il s'ajoute à cela que dans quelques musées on avait nettement tendance à poursuivre les valeurs culturelles propres présentées et à les intégrer à la vie sociale. Il fallait plutôt adapter les objectifs et méthodes de travail anciens aux nouvelles exigences qui étaient posées aux musées d'un point de vue muséologique, social et de traditions populaires.

En muséologie, on rencontre une nouvelle tendance qui met nettement plus l'accent sur la transmission de la culture. Les vieilles conceptions du musée en tant qu'institut de recherche scientifique, de conservation d'objets culturels où la présentation n'est qu'accessoire, sont à présent corrigées. Les musées deviennent en premier lieu des institutions où se transmet la culture et, à côté du travail de musée plus dirigé vers l'objet (recherche scientifique, constitution de collections, conservation), une programmation d'éducation active se développe, qui, à l'aide de toutes les techniques disponibles, fait connaître à un public aussi large que possible l'image culturelle réalisée dans le musée. Le musée joue alors un rôle important car il devient un instrument d'éducation dans le cadre d'une politique de bien-être culturel. Dans les musées, on peut en effet expliquer des valeurs culturelles qui peuvent contribuer au développement spirituel des hommes, en dehors de la prospérité matérielle. Cette conception fait naître un certain nombre de nouvelles méthodes de travail qui doivent prouver le rôle de moyen de communication des musées. Le folklore aussi, la

science pratiquée dans beaucoup de musées de plein air, a fortement évolué depuis la deuxième guerre mondiale et a orienté le domaine de l'identité propre des communautés populaires vers la vie sociale en développement constant. L'attention va à présent surtout aux processus de développement qui se produisent dans la vie sociale.

Les anciennes méthodes de travail des musées en plein air qui consistaient à donner une idée de caractères populaires en transmettant et réaménageant des maisons n'apportent pas plus que des reconstructions statiques de vieux intérieurs. Des aspects tels que le développement de la vie sociale, le développement des formes et des structures, et surtout l'explication sociale des formes culturelles ne peuvent se transmettre que par une forme de présentation complémentaire, plus analytique. Ceci ne signifie pas non plus que l'ancienne façon de présenter les musées de plein air doit être abandonnée. Le réaménagement fonctionnel de maisons avec leurs objets et leurs instruments conserve sa valeur, qui est principalement expérimentale et didactique. Il offre pour ainsi dire une synthèse de moments du passé. Faire précéder la visite au musée d'une introduction analysant la matière permet, grâce à ces éclaircissements, de rendre la visite efficace.

Un dernier aspect de la vie sociale a ouvert de nouvelles perspectives aux musées de plein air. Le développement de la vie sociale, avec l'augmentation de la prospérité matérielle, a fait disparaître un certain nombre d'éléments culturels qui étaient très précieux dans la société. Dans les tentatives de construire une société qui vise plutôt le bien-être que la prospérité des hommes, le passé est une source d'inspiration importante. Dans ce sens, la protection du patrimoine architectural est une des tentatives de rénover le passé pour le présent. Il faut repérer les valeurs culturelles du passé, les évaluer socialement, et, si elles sont à même de contribuer à nouveau à la qualité du présent, les rénover sous une forme contemporaine. Dans ce processus d'intégration, les musées jouent un rôle essentiellement didactique et ils constituent un besoin essentiel.

Par rapport à la protection du patrimoine architectural, la valeur des musées de plein air se situe surtout dans le domaine instructif et éducatif. Dans le monde des musées de plein air, l'habitation et son environnement sont toujours restés centraux. Les musées de plein air sont par conséquent, pour ce qui concerne l'attention à apporter au patrimoine architectural, le chaînon éducatif, là où la restauration en est la mise en pratique.

Fig. 1. - Plan général du Musée de plein air à Bokrijk (Belgique).

Fig. 2. - Façade en bois d'une maison du XV^e siècle provenant d'Anvers, Musée de plein air, Bokrijk.

Fig. 3. - Vue générale de la première section de la partie urbaine, Musée de plein air, Bokrijk.

Fig. 4. - Photogrammétrie d'une galerie (XVII^e siècle) et d'une façade d'un arrière-corps d'une maison de la partie urbaine du musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 5. - Etable de Oostcappel (fin XVIII^e siècle), Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 6. - Relevé d'une façade d'une étable à Oostcappel, fin du XVIII^e siècle, avant le démontage (Musée de plein air à Bokrijk).

Fig. 7. - Plan de reconstruction de l'étable d'Oost Cappel (Musée de plein air à Bokrijk).

Fig. 8. - Maison d'habitation d'une ferme d'Abele (1771), Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 9. - Relevé d'une façade d'une ferme d'Abele (1771) avant le démontage (Musée de plein air à Bokrijk).

Fig. 10. - Plan de reconstruction de la façade de la ferme à Abele (Musée de plein air à Bokrijk).

Fig. 11. - Eglise d'Erpekom (XII^e siècle), Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 12. - Vue générale de la partie rurale, section campinoise, Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 13. - Maison d'habitation d'une ferme de Hoogstade (fin XVIII^e siècle), Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 14. - Cours de restauration de façades en colombage, 1980, Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 15. - Cours de restauration de mobilier, 1981, Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 16. - Cours de technologie: la charpente. Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 17. - Projet éducatif pour enfants: faire des paniers. Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 18. - Projet éducatif: faire des cordes. Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 19. - L'art de couvrir les toits de chaume, une technique conservée au musée. Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

Fig. 20. - Cours de technologie: la maçonnerie, 1978. Musée de plein air à Bokrijk.

RESUMEN

El sentido de los museos al aire libre fue cuestionado una vez más cuando, con posterioridad al año de los monumentos, se dio un nuevo impulso a la conservación del patrimonio arquitectónico en su lugar original. El cuidadoso tratamiento que se le dispensó al patrimonio arquitectónico cobró una nueva significación social, de modo que muchas personas llegaron a considerar a los museos al aire libre como instituciones superfluas. En los círculos de conservación de monumentos, los puntos de vista con respecto al funcionamiento de los museos al aire libre siguen basándose en los antiguos objetivos y métodos de trabajo que fueron aplicados antaño por dichos museos pero que el tiempo ha rebasado en la actualidad. La historia de la evolución de los museos al aire libre ha demostrado que éstos se originaron en el espíritu del romanticismo y que sus metas se definieron ante todo por la etnología en desarrollo, la cual aspiraba a demostrar la identidad propia de los pueblos. Los primeros museos al aire libre fueron realizados de acuerdo con la idea que esta identidad propia podía evidenciarse por medio del resguardo, la reubicación y la reorganización de viviendas y establecimientos industriales. Por otra parte, funcionaban en ese momento como operaciones de rescate para objetos de cultura material y para edificios, los cuales estaban condenados a la desaparición por la evolución de la sociedad. A esto se añade el hecho que algunos museos mani-

festaron claramente su deseo de perpetuar los propios valores culturales expuestos y de integrarlos en la sociedad. Sin embargo, los museos tuvieron que adaptar sus antiguos objetivos y sus métodos de trabajo a las nuevas exigencias, formuladas por una nueva concepción museológica, etnológica y social.

En el campo de la museología, existe una nueva tendencia que acentúa claramente la transferencia cultural. Hoy día han sido corregidas las viejas hipótesis según las cuales los museos serían instituciones para la investigación científica y la conservación de objetos culturales, y donde la exposición sólo tendría un papel secundario. De este modo los museos se convierten, en primer lugar, en instituciones para la transferencia de cultura: a la par del trabajo dirigido más específicamente hacia los objetos (la investigación científica, la formación de colecciones y la conservación), se desarrolla un programa educacional activo, cuya finalidad es dar a conocer a un público tan amplio como posible la imagen cultural reflejada por el museo, utilizando para ello todas las técnicas disponibles. Vale decir que el papel de un museo cobra importancia en la medida en que se convierte en un instrumento educativo en el marco de una política de bienestar cultural. De esta forma los museos resaltan los valores culturales que efectivamente coadyuvaban en la evolución espiritual de aquellas personas

que se hallan excluidas del bienestar material. Esta hipótesis da origen a nuevos métodos de trabajo que tienen la misión de llevar a cabo el papel comunicativo de los museos. También la etnología, la ciencia que se cultiva en muchos museos al aire libre, ha evolucionado enormemente desde la segunda guerra mundial y ha dirigido su campo de acción desde la propia identidad de grupos culturales hacia la sociedad en desarrollo. Hoy día, la atención se vuelca sobre todo en los procesos de evolución que se presentan en la sociedad.

Los antiguos métodos de trabajo de los museos al aire libre consistían en la utilización de la reubicación y la reorganización de viviendas con el fin de dar una idea de las características populares; estos métodos no tienen mayor alcance que el de efectuar reconstrucciones estáticas de antiguos interiores. Es necesario una forma de presentación adicional y más analítica a fin de lograr la transferencia de una serie de elementos tales como el desarrollo de la sociedad, de las formas y estructuras y sobre todo el significado social de las formas culturales. Sin embargo esto no significa que la antigua manera de presentación de museos al aire libre deba ser eliminada. La reorganización funcional de las viviendas con sus objetos e instrumentos de trabajo sigue manteniendo su valor mayormente experimental y didáctico. Es como si exhibiera una síntesis de diferentes momentos del pasado. De todas formas,

una visita a un museo se hace eficiente en la medida que este precedida por un análisis introductorio.

Una característica reciente de la sociedad abrió nuevas perspectivas para los museos al aire libre: la pérdida de ciertos elementos culturales de gran valor social a causa de un mayor bienestar material. El pasado es una gran fuente de inspiración para los intentos de realizar una sociedad que persiga más el bienestar que la prosperidad material. En este sentido, la conservación de los monumentos se puede considerar como uno de los intentos para renovar el pasado en función del presente. Por lo tanto, se hace necesario buscar los valores culturales pasados, desarrollarlos socialmente y modernizarlos en la medida en que estos puedan aportar elementos positivos al presente. En el marco de tal proceso de integración, el papel de los museos es esencialmente didáctico, y los museos se hacen absolutamente necesarios.

Con respecto a la conservación de monumentos, el valor de los museos al aire libre reside sobre todo en el nivel instructivo y educativo. La vivienda y su entorno continúan siendo siempre la parte central en el mundo de los museos al aire libre. En consecuencia, cuando se trata de la conservación del patrimonio arquitectónico, los museos al aire libre conforman la línea educativa mientras que la conservación de monumentos constituye el cambio hacia la práctica.

Fig. 1. - Plano General del Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk (Belgica).

Fig. 2. - Fachada de madera de una casa del siglo XV de Amberes. Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 3. - Vista general de la primera sección de la parte urbana. Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 4. - Fotogrametría de una galería del siglo XVII y de una fachada de las edificaciones posteriores de una casa en la parte urbana del Museo al aire libre en Bokrijk.

Fig. 5. - Establo de Oostcappel, fines del siglo XVIII. Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 6. - Plano de la fachada de un establo en Oostcappel, fines del siglo XVIII, antes de su desmantelamiento (Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk).

Fig. 7. - Plano de reconstrucción del establo de Oostcappel (Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk).

Fig. 8. - Vivienda de una granja de Abele (1771). Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 9. - Plano de una fachada de una granja de Abele (1771) antes de su desmantelamiento (Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk).

Fig. 10. - Plano de reconstrucción de la fachada de la granja en Abele (Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk).

Fig. 11. - Iglesia de Erpekom (siglo XII). Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 12. - Vista general del parque rural. Sección campesina. Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 13. - Vivienda de una granja de Hoogstade (fines del siglo XVIII). Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 14. - Cursos de formación de restauración de muros (1980). Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 15. - Curso para la restauración de mobiliario (1981). Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 16. - Curso para técnicas de carpintería (1980). Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 17. - Proyecto educativo para niños: fabricación de cestería (1979). Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 18. - Proyecto educativo: fabricación de cuerdas (1980). Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 19. - El arte de cubrir los techos de paja, una técnica que sólo se conserva en el museo al aire libre. Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.

Fig. 20. - Curso de tecnología: la albañilería (1978). Museo al aire libre de Bokrijk.