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**Anthropological assemblages:
producing culture as a surface of government**

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Abstract

This paper draws on assemblage theory to examine how museum collections of anthropological materials produce cultures in ways that constitute distinctive 'working surfaces' on the social through which governmental programmes can be developed and applied to specific populations. The argument is developed in relation to the development of the Musée de l'Homme and of the Museé des Arts et Traditions Populaires. These are examined to identify the ways in which their exhibition and laboratory functions served to provide new templates for projects of colonial governance and, within France, for programmes of regional administration. The argument is historically contextualised by considering the place of both museums in relation to the longer history of anthropological collections in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century France, and how, in part, they were formed through processes of disassembling and reassembling their constituent elements.

Anthropological assemblages: producing culture as a surface of government

Introduction

I begin by recounting the role played by the Society of Mutual Autopsy in the development of a distinctive anthropological assemblage in the Société d'anthropologie de Paris in the 1880s and 1890s. My purpose in doing so is to highlight the role played by this assemblage in the development of a new governmental rationality which, drawing on post-Darwinian conceptions of biopower, laid open the social to governmental intervention in the form of a congregation of racially differentiated bodies. This will set a historical and theoretical scene for what will be the more sustained focus of my attention: the role, in the 1930s, of the Musée de l'Homme and of the Museé des Arts et Traditions Populaires as anthropological assemblages that gathered and laid out the social as a set of differentiated cultures. My concern will be with the ways in which these operated to fashion new 'working surfaces' on the social in the sense of refashioning the conceptual templates for, respectively, programmes of colonial and regional administration.[1]

But, first, the Society of Mutual Autposy (SMA). This was established in 1876 as a part of the Société d'anthropologie de Paris which, under Paul Broca, had become the main organisational base of French anthropology at a time when it remained largely outside the universities and institutions of state.[2] The members of the SMA contracted, on their death, to dedicate their bodies to science sure in the knowledge that the autopsy on their remains would be performed by one of their fellow members in the Laboratory of Anthropology at the Société d'anthropologie. In her compelling account of the SMA, Jennifer Hecht (2003) identifies its members as militant materialists. Recruited mainly from the ranks of practicing anthropologists and related disciplines (linguistics, archaeology, and the nascent discipline of demography), and deeply influenced by Darwinian conceptions of the directionless mechanisms of evolution, they were resolutely anti-clerical, playing the role of a scientific *avant-garde* in challenging the authority of the Catholic Church in what proved to be a critical period in the laicisation of the French polity leading, in 1905, to the formal separation of Church and State. In dedicating their bodies to science these *savants* contradicted the Catholic ban on the destruction of one's body as a sinful act, while simultaneously enacting and embodying a posthumous commitment to progress as a new form of secular faith. In doing so, they aspired, even after death, to continue to play a leading role in the future advance of the species through the conceit that their bodies - and especially their brains – provided better summaries of the inheritance that had been accumulated by mankind than the alternative supply of indigent bodies provided by charity hospitals and the like.[3] In this way, it was argued, they would help science to identify those anatomical traits that needed to be cultivated in the interests of continuing species and social advancement.

The SMA also embodied, beneath its militant materialism and anti-clericalism, a compensation for the loss of a sense of religious transcendence. The commitment of one's body – or, more accurately, of its scientifically valuable parts – to the cause of an unendingly better life for humanity served as a substitute for the Christian conception of the journey of the anatomically severed soul into the afterlife. The consequence was that the SMA itself developed a complex set of rituals - its own liturgy of death – that was enacted in relation to the anatomical remains, human and animal, that were collected in the Société's Laboratory of Anthropology and its Museum of Anthropology. The walls of the Laboratory were lined with thousands of human and anthropoid skulls, and there were boxes of skulls and skeletons, and of miscellaneous bones, donated by anthropologists from their overseas excursions. The adjacent Museum had over four thousand skulls of different races, forty human skeletons, the dug-up skulls provided by the new science of pre-historic archaeology, and the skeletons and

skulls of anthropoids and other large animals. Alongside these were the usual collections of anatomical monsters, oddities, wonders, freaks and abnormalities acquired from earlier collections or sent to the Société from other parts of France or the world. And alongside all of these were the skulls, brains, and other body parts of the lay and scientific members of the SMA, with, toward the end of the SMA's life, the establishment of a separate 'museum within a museum' consisting of several vitrines dedicated to the SMA set aside in a space of their own. These included, in a somewhat gristly post-mortem form of the public intellectual, the display of the brains of the SMA's leading savants – Louis-Adolphe Bertillon, for example – in jars labelled 'Intellectuals'.

It was – to come to my point – into this environment that France's leading *fin-de siècle* anthropologists went to do their work: not into 'the field' or into the bustling streets of modern Paris, but into an institutionally fabricated environment. And that work mainly consisted in an endless labour of observation and measurement in validating anatomically grounded racial hierarchies that transformed the bodies and body parts that had been brought together in the Laboratory and Museum from 'objects of awe to objects of knowledge' (Hecht, 2003: 84). By using anthropometric techniques of measurement to identify a range of cephalic types: in these ways Paul Broca, Jacques Bertillon and their contemporaries sought to free man from the grip of faith by removing his remains from 'the altar (or the imagined "black mass")' and placing them instead 'labelled in the medical museum and textbook' (Hecht, 2003: 84). In doing so they also sought to lay out the social in radically new, resolutely materialist terms as a series of body types existing in a secular developmental time and, as such, subject to management and rearrangement through scientific forms of intervention aimed at modifying the relationships between them (see also Dias, 2004).

Cultural and anthropological assemblages

So much for the SMA. Let me come now, by way of this example, to the notion of assemblage and how I shall interpret the notion of 'cultural assemblage' and construe its relations to the social. I shall not attempt here to recount the history of the concept of assemblage.[4] Rather, my purpose is to identify some of the attributes of the concept as it has been elaborated in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, to outlne its connections to the Foucauldian concept of *dispositif*, and to review its subsequent elaborations in actor-network-theory and in the social philosophy of Manuel DeLanda.

The first attribute of assemblages I want to highlight concerns the relations of exteriority between the elements that are brought together in an assemblage. When Deleuze asks 'What is an assemblage?' he answers that it is 'a multiplicity which is made up of heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them', stressing that its 'only unity is that of a co-functioning …… It is never filiations which are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind' (Deleuze and Parnet, 2002: 69). DeLanda, in glossing this and related passages, distinguishes the assemblage from sociological and philosophical concepts of totality in which a totality is figured as a seamless whole composed of constituent parts whose relations to that whole are ones of interiority, bound to it through necessary and organic relations such that the whole would not have its particular form of wholeness without those particular parts, just as those parts cannot be detached from that whole. By contrast, 'a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different' (DeLanda, 2006: 10). The whole that is thus produced is the result of contingent mechanisms of connection which bring together varied elements that are not bound together through a lineage of shared descent, or through any intrinsic connection to the other elements with which they are co-assembled, or through any relationship of immanent interiority to the whole in which they are provisionally assembled.

The second attribute I take from Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of the relationships between an assemblage as, on the one hand, 'a *machinic assemblage* of bodies, of actions and passions, an intermingling of bodies reacting to one another', and, on the other, 'a *collective assemblage of enunciation*, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations attributed to bodies' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 88). And it concerns the fact that this distinction is not translatable into a distinction between two different levels or orders – between the order of things and the order of words. An assemblage of enunciation, they remark earlier:

> … does not speak 'of' things; it speaks *on the same level as* states of things and states of content. …. We are never presented with an interlinkage of order-words and a causality of contents each in its own right; nor do we see one represent the other, with the second serving as its referent. On the contrary, the independence of the two lines is distributive, such that a segment of one always forms a relay with a segment of the other, slips into, introduces itself into the other. We constantly pass from order-words to the "silent order" of things, as Foucault puts it, and vice versa. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 87)

Here, then, is the philosophical formulation that underlies and underwrites the subsequent development of actor-network-theory in its commitment to a 'semiotic materiality' that seeks to follow how human and non-human actants, things and signs, things as signs, signs as things, are brought together in networks of varying lengths and duration.

This leads me to the third attribute I want to discuss: that assemblages always have the form of what DeLanda calls 'individual singularities' – that is, of 'a unique, singular, historically contingent, individual' (DeLanda, 2006: 40) – that operate at different spatial and temporal scales (firms, cities, nations, for example). The capacity of assemblages to affect other assemblages operating at either the same or at different scales is an effect of the structure of the space of possibilities produced by that assemblage – a structure that exists only in virtual form, as a diagram, except when those possibilities are exercised. As such, changes to assemblages can be the results of two kinds of processes: changes brought about as the unintended consequences of interactions between assemblages; and changes resulting from deliberate planning (albeit that the changes concerned might not conform to those envisaged by the planners). Clearly, these two processes shade over into one another rather then being hermetically separate. They are most distinct, however, at the level of the temporalities they involve: the first kind 'involves slow cumulative processes of the products of repeated interactions' (DeLanda, 2006: 41); the second involves the mobilisation of resources on the part of a range of calculative agents that may include individuals but is not reducible to them.

It is in the light of this last point that I want to connect the concept of assemblage to the concerns of governmentality theory via Foucault's commentary on La Perrière's contention that government is concerned with 'the right disposition of things arranged to as to lead to a suitable end'. Asking what La Perrière means by things, Foucault says that he has in mind not an opposition between men and things but 'a complex of men and things':

> The things government must be concerned about, La Perrière says, are men in their relationships, bonds, and complex involvements with things like wealth, resources, means of subsistence, and, of course, the territory with its borders, qualities, climate, dryness, fertility, and so on. 'Things' are men in their relationships with things like customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking. Finally, they are men in their relationships with things, like accidents, misfortunes, famine, epidemics, and death. (Foucault, 2007: 96)

The challenge this presents, in terms of producing a working interface between the concerns and procedures of assemblage theory and those of governmentality theory, is one of identifying the respects in which the organisation of the relationships between texts, persons,

and things in assemblages of different scales and durations is connected to the laying out of the social associated with different governmental orderings of the relations between –after Perrière - 'men and things'.

So much for assemblages in general. What, then, are cultural assemblages? The first thing to be clear about is that they are not assemblages made up of special types of elements whose 'culturalness ' vouchsafes them their cultural status. They are no more made up of a special kind of cultural stuff than, as Latour argues, social assemblages are made up of a special kind of social stuff (Latour, 2005). The elements that are to be found in the one (objects, texts, bodies, skulls, archives, instruments, paintings) can just as well occur in the other. They are to be distinguished, then, not ontologically but, again to borrow from Latour, as specific forms of public organisation of the elements they assemble (Latour, 2004: 53). They differ in where they stand in relation to one another as the result of historical processes which, at the same time that the social was differentiated from the economy, separated out culture from the social in the form of the varied assemblages that were produced by the ordering, classifying, collecting, exhibition, and performance practices of those experts and authorities associated with the modern cultural disciplines: art history, aesthetics, musicology, folk studies, ethnography, ethnology, history, etc.[5] The place of 'anthropological assemblages' among these cultural assemblages is not a constant one. Its internal figurations differ according to how the relations between different regions of expertise (ethnology, ethnography) and their orderings of the relations between things and people are resolved. Its external figurations within the network of cultural assemblages depends on the relations that its orderings establish with the forms of ordering and assembly associated with other forms of cultural expertise – aesthetic, for example – with, often, the same objects, texts, bodies, etc., crossing over between them.[6]

With these perspectives in mind, I want now to look at the development of the Musée de l'Homme and of the Museé des Arts et Traditions Populaires as sites of new anthropological assemblages and at the role these played in organising cultures – as differentiated ways of life – as new 'working surfaces' on the social in both France's colonies and its regions.

Assembling colonies and provinces

The Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires (ATP) and the Musée de l'Homme (MH) were formally established as differentiated museums in 1937 and 1938 respectively – the former under the directorship of Georges Henri Rivière and the latter under Paul Rivet's directorship. They had, however, emerged from earlier overlapping histories, most immediately in the programme of reforms that both Rivet and Rivière had developed at the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro (MET) since Rivet's appointment, in 1928, as its director, and Rivière's subsequent appointment as his assistant with primary responsibility for developing the museum's curatorial vision. Their histories also remained closely connected. Both were initially located in the palais de Chaillot that took the place of the Trocadéro when the latter was razed in preparation for the Exposition universelle that was held in Paris in 1937, and they remained so until 1969 when the ATP moved to its own premises in the bois de Boulogne. The ATP is now closed: it shut its doors in September 2006, with its connected 'laboratory', the Centre d'ethnologie francaise, following suit a few months later, its place ceded to the forthcoming Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée. The MH is also now a shadow of its former self. Stripped of its ethnographic collections which have been relocated across the river in the Musée de quai Branly where, in being brought together with objects from other collections, they now form part of an assemblage whose organising principles are primarily aesthetic, its focus is limited to prehistory and the physical aspects of human diversity.

Both institutions, then, have operated as provisional sites of assemblage, bringing together varied objects, practices and persons which, to recall DeLanda's remarks on the relations of exteriority that govern the organisation of assemblages, had first to be unplugged from earlier anthropological assemblages just as they have now been unplugged from these two museums and plugged into new cultural assemblages. What issues, then, are brought into view by looking at the development and operations of these two institutions through the lens of assemblage theory? I shall focus on three. The first concerns the distinctive configurations of the relations between the heterogeneous elements the two museums assembled. The second concerns the relationships between, on the one hand, planned changes in the elements that they bring together and, on the other hand, changes resulting from the interactions between assemblages that are parts of longer-term histories. The third concerns the operation of the two museums in the context of two different sets of territorialising practices: those centred on the relations between France and its colonies in the case of the MH and those operating to produce a distinctive regionalisation of the social within France in the case of the ATP. I shall be mainly concerned with these processes as they relate to the formative period of the two museums' development: that is, on the processes through which they were both incubated within the MET and, on emerging from this earlier anthropological assemblage, were more-or-less simultaneously differentiated from one other. This is partly because the dynamics that shaped the formation of the two museums were, very shortly after they were formally established, significantly skewed by the Nazi occupation of France. I shall, however, in the case of the ATP, be concerned with the directions its work took under the Vichy government.

Ethnological/ethnographic hybridity

I begin, as the best way of connecting my discussion back to Paul Broca and the collections of the Societe d'anthropologie de Paris, with the changing relations between ethnography and ethnology in early-twentieth-century France.[7] The latter, represented initially by the Société ethnologique (established in 1839) and later by Paul Broca and the Société d'anthropologie de Paris (established in 1859), was the dominant tendency throughout the nineteenth century. Committed to the 'scientific' study of human races and, as we have seen, militantly materialist, it was conducted largely outside the university and was sustained chiefly through networks of societies and associations, most of them acquiring state recognition. While a rival Société d'ethnographie de Paris was also established in 1859, and also received state recognition, its opposition to the biological reductionism of ethnology was largely ineffective, partly because its credentials were largely spiritualist rather than resting on a conception of ethnography as a distinct fieldwork discipline. The MET, whose establishment had been prompted by the Exposition universelle held in Paris in 1878, provided a notional base for ethnography and was committed to a project of salvage ethnography that would document primitive cultures before they disappeared. It was, however, largely ineffective: it was shackled by a budget that made it impossible for it to conduct any fieldwork or to arrange any training in the discipline (Dias, 1991). However, the tide began to run in the other direction in the early twentieth century. This partly reflected the influence of Durkheim's sociology which was translated by Marcel Mauss and Alfred von Gennep into the concerns of a reformed Société d'anthropologie that was open to ethnography as well as to ethnology; and it partly reflected the influence of a number of new journals (the *Revue des études ethnographiques et sociologiques*, edited by van Gennep) and societies (the Institut ethnographique international de Paris (1910), the Institut francaise d'anthropologie [1911], a resurrected Société d'ethnographie [1913, the earlier one had closed in 1903], and the Société des amis du musée d'ethnographie du Trocadero).

These, then, are the changing institutional and intellectual coordinates which brought fieldwork into the centre of debates in the social and human sciences in France, and which, in the 1920s, made the MET a focal point for those debates. However, this did not entirely displace the position of ethnology, or physical anthropology, which, although no longer resting on the same anthropometric base that Broca had placed it on, remained central to the

practices of the MET throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, Rivet's own training and practice was as an ethnologist and, under his direction, the MET and, later, the MH continued the tradition of Broca's Anthropological Laboratory in collecting and exhibiting a range of anatomical parts. In 1939, in the central and organising gallery of the MH, the Anthropological Gallery, one thus 'discovered the origins of humanity and the distinctive morphological, physiological and anatomical traits of modern humans and then proceeded to a display of the principal races through skeletons and skulls' (Conklin, 2003: 14). These concerns were carried over into a series of territorially defined galleries (the Black African Hall, the White African Gallery, the European Gallery, the Asia Hall, the Arctic and the Americas, and Oceania) via the display of racially differentiated skulls and skeletons alongside ethnographic collections. I shall say more about the nature of these collections shortly. For now, though, my main point concerns the respects in which, in the 1930s, both the MET and MH constituted 'hybrid assemblages' in bringing together materials that belonged to two different but overlapping disciplinary and institutional formations. This was, indeed, central to Rivet's conception of the MH which he envisaged as an assemblage of all of the materials that had previously been assembled together in collections during the earlier phases of both ethnology and ethnography. It should aim to 'assemble together for a common task all the organisations, all the libraries, all the dispersed collections, which concern the races and human civilisations' (Rivet, 1934: 1 [my translation]). He was just as concerned that it should aim to be an assemblage of different types of collection including a bibliotheque, a phototeque, and a phonoteque alongside its material culture collections.[8] This was central to its purpose of presenting both the unity of man – a unity underlying differentiated types – and the plurality of cultures and civilisations.

Colony-museum-laboratory

The ethnographic mission of both the MET and the MH was defined in relation to a new conception of the role of anthropology in the relationships between metropolitan powers and their colonies. In this conception, whose most influential theorist was Maurice Delafosse, colonial governance was to proceed through a knowledge of the specific individuality of each colonial society (and of specific groups within those societies) seen as constituting a specific cultural patrimony of a value equal to that of others.[9] Rather than, as earlier evolutionary schools of anthropology had proposed, envisaging colonial societies as representing primitive levels of development that were to be eventually displaced as such societies were adjusted to the universal values of the West, cultures were to be viewed and valued as different. The premium that this placed on the acquisition of a detailed knowledge of 'the other' – dispersed now into regionally differentiated cultures rather than spread out temporally as stages along a continuum of evolutionary time (although without entirely shedding these associations) - led to a realignment of the relations between the museums, as centres of collection, and colonies, as sites of collection. This realignment was principally brought about by the role that was accorded fieldwork of regulating and managing the flow of expertise and instruments of collection from museum to colony and of texts, objects and bodies back from colony to museum. This was partly a matter of the grouping of anthropological interests arrayed around the MET and the MH playing 'catch up' with the fieldwork phase of anthropology that had been in process in Anglophone anthropology since the 1890s.[10] In the earlier phase of 'armchair anthropology' objects were gathered in colonial sites of collection by a range of amateur or mercenary agents who, acting on instructions sent by the leading anthropological *savants* of London or Paris, despatched the materials they gathered to those cities for interpretation by those *savants*, and for collection and presentation in metropolitan museums. The 1898 expedition to the Torres Strait Islands mounted by the University of Cambridge and led by Alfred Cort Haddon initiated what was shortly to become the dominant model of the relations between museums and anthropological collecting: that of the curator/director who also operated as his own fieldworker, usually as the leader of a team that aimed for extended periods of immersion in the culture under investigation (Herle and Rouse, 1998; Morphy, 1996; Dias, 2004; Nakata, 2007). This was accompanied by a shift away from a concern with

the collection of bodies and objects that had been the primary orientation of nineteenth-century evolutionary anthropology: from, as W.H.R. Rivers, a member of the Haddon expedition, put it, the 'measurement of heads and the collection of curious or beautiful objects for museums' (cit Henare, 2005: 218) - to the collection of textual traces of the culture under investigation through photography, film and sound recording.[11]

In sharp contrast to its earlier history, the MET, in collaboration with the French ministries responsible for the administration of colonial affairs, organised a large number of fieldwork expeditions in the 1930s, the most influential being the 1931-1933 Dakar-Djibouti expedition. However, these differed from the English model represented by Haddon and, later, by Malinowski in the respect that the role of the director/curator was not to conduct the fieldwork but to orchestrate it by coordinating a new set of arrangements between varied agents. As Benoit L'Estoile usefully summarises it, the French model developed in this period aimed not to overcome the division between theoretician and field worker by combining these in the same person, but to improve the efficiency of the division of labour between these two roles, taking the nineteenth-century model on beyond the artisan stage in which each *savant* had dealt with his own personal network of colonial correspondents to a more scientific and institutionalised division of labour (L'Estoile, 2007: 103-16). When Rivet visited sites of collection, he did so not as an active or leading member of expeditions but as an intellectual-administrator whose aim was to develop an infrastructure – by assisting the development of museums in Dakar and Hanoi, for example – that would produce a more efficient division of labour between museum and colony by establishing the MET as the coordinating centre of an institutional network of museums operating in different sites of collection (L'Etoile, 2007: 118-30). The relations between Rivet and Mauss are also important here in shaping a conception of the MET as the headquarters from which expeditions would receive their instructions on what to collect – instructions, in the case of the Dakar-Djibouti expedition, that Mauss himself prepared. These instructions focused on the need to collect, whether in object form or via recording devices, everyday and typical things and practices rather than the beautiful or curious. The return of materials and records collected in this way from varied sites of collection – the Dakar-Djibouti expedition returned 3500 objects, 6000 photographs, 200 sound recordings, and 1500 fiches d'observation to the MET (Gorgus, 2003: 61-7) – would result in an accumulating, but differentiated, archive of man available for scientific analysis in a laboratory setting separated from the exhibition galleries. Unlike the earlier phase of armchair anthropology, however, this work was to be undertaken not by the individual *savant* but by a corps of experts in a specially segregated scientific setting.

Facing two ways

Both the MH and the ATP were innovative, at least in relation to their French precursors, in marking a clear distinction between the organisation of their collections for research purposes and for public exhibition.[12] In the case of the MH this involved a distinction between the Institute d'ethnologie, the library and the *salles de travail* of different departments where selected collections were available to be worked with – all of these upstairs – and the exhibition galleries on the ground floor. Through the research collections and the varied contexts that were supplied for working on these – by students, academic and museum ethnographers/ethnologists, and, equally important, by the staffs of French ministries with colonial responsibilities, and by colonial administrators and military personnel – the MH, like the MET before it, faced outwards, toward the colonies, as a resource for their governance in accordance with the new humanist receptivity to difference, that is, to the plural sources of human value, and the (in theory) equivalence of all cultures and civilisations. While partly fuelled by the changing relations between a sociologically-informed conception of ethnography and ethnology that I have already noted, this new orientation also reflected the changed set of geo-political coordinates in which French colonialism was located after World War I. In dividing Germany's colonies between Britain and France, the League of Nations designated these as Mandate territories, specifying that they were to be governed in ways that

would lead to a degree of self-rule, economic growth and enhanced welfare for their populations. This, plus the strong condemnation of colonialism by the Communist International, created a climate in which the scientific validation of the value of difference by a new humanist anthropology served as a means for perpetuating colonial relations and practices while simultaneously providing a counter to anti-colonial critiques (Siebeud, 2007: 105-8).

Another set of international initiatives generated in the aftermath of the 1914-1918 war influenced how the three institutions – the MET, the MH, and the ATP – viewed the role of their exhibition galleries in facing inwards, toward the French population. The *Office internationale des musées* was set up in Paris in 1926 under the auspices of the Society of Nations' *Commission internationale de cooperation intellectuelle* to play a worldwide role in coordinating the relations between museums of art, ethnography and archaeology so as to transform them – on an American model – into instruments of popular and democratic education (Gorgus, 2003: 72-82). In Rivet's case, this, allied with his strong commitment to the Popular Front, resulted in a conception of the MH as an instrument for re-shaping French colonial subjects by detaching them from evolutionary and hierarchical conceptions of difference and installing them in the space of a new humanistic universalism in which a common biological and anatomical substratum was overlaid by differentiated racial types and cultures (these latter in an uneasy relationship to one another).

The ways in which texts and artefacts were assembled in new exhibition formats was a significant aspect of these processes. Rivière's role was crucial here in drawing together a number of contemporary exhibition practices – particularly those of the Scandinavian open-air museums, the development of the museum as an instrument of revolutionary instruction in communist Russia, and American conceptions of museums as agents of popular democracy, and his own earlier involvement with surrealism (Gorgus, 2003: 21-31, 83-98) – to develop principles of display designed to give a clear, accessible, and holistic picture of the interaction between the elements making up the whole way of life of different territorially defined cultures. Exhibitions in the MET had mainly been organised in accordance with decorative principles: as trophy collections in which the other was depicted as a colonial possession, simultaneously exotic and primitive. Metal rather wooden vitrines for greater transparency; the organisation of clear lines of sight for all objects; the provision of documentary and photographic information to relate objects to their regional milieu; the installation of vitrines in a modernist architectural space: in these ways, the MH aimed to embody the principles of a 'muséographie claire' that would not aestheticise the ethnographic object but confer on it a legitimacy deriving from its qualities as an ordinary and typical index of a culture (Gorgus, 2003: 56-60).

In his discussion of the relations between the object culture and the literary culture of late-nineteenth-century America, Bill Brown argues that the key shift in the former was "bound up with (or bound by) a regionalist temper that precipitated a significant shift in anthropology: away from the diachronic, evolutionist narration of technology that considers "the whole human race in space and time as a single group," [Mason] and towards the synchronic description of cultures that are symbolically and physically self-contained' (Brown, 2003: 85-6). This 'regionalisation of anthropology', as Brown calls it, was closely tied up with the development of the fieldwork phase in American anthropology, particularly as represented by Boas whose focus on the specificity of territorially defined cultures played a key role in fashioning these as 'working surfaces' for the action of government in the context of the new forms of Indian administration that developed in the aftermath of the Indian Wars (Hinsely, 1981). Boas's life groups played a similar role in the development of post-evolutionary museum practices. The process through which the MET was translated into the MH pointed in the same direction, albeit in the context of external rather than internal colonial relations, and with the same consequence of so assembling cultures as to lay out the surface of the

social for new kinds of governmental action. I look now, but more briefly, at the ATP to see how these processes connected with new ways of 'regionalising the social' within France.

Assembling the popular/regionalising the social

There is, I have suggested, little to distinguish the ATP and the MH except for the different forms of territorialisation they both effected and formed a part of. Their establishment as separate institutions, but cheek-by-jowl in the palais de Chaillot, was the result of parallel discussions and processes of reform within the MET; both Rivet and Rivière were closely involved in the development of the two institutions; Rivière was primarily responsible for the curatorial vision and practices of both of them; and, like the MH, the ATP instituted a distinction between its scientific role, performed in a sequestered laboratory, and its public exhibition functions. Moreover, their interactions in these processes, were parts of a longer history in which the relations between French ethnography 'at home' and 'overseas', and between both of these and ethnology, were played out in a close relationship to the MET. From its initial establishment under the directorship of Ernest-Théodore Hamy the MET had projected, as a parallel to its colonial galleries, a collection of traditional forms of French popular culture centred on the Auverge and the Bretagne (areas rich in 'survivals', in the estimation of folklorists) and this resulted, in 1884, in the opening of the salle de France in the MET. A little later, in 1889, Armand Landrin urged the need for a museum of French provincial life that would serve as a resource for artists but also as an instrument of democratic governance in differentiating ways of life within the nation in terms of their relations to different regional habitats. Little headway was made with this suggestion until the 1930s when, in the context of the discussions of the reform of the MET, the developments that witnessed the ascendancy of ethnography over ethnology, also saw a closer merging of the relations between the two traditions of ethnography in the fusion, in 1932, of the Société du folklore and the Société d'ethnographie into the Société du folklore francaise et du folklore colonial. The basis for this fusion was the familiar one that the study of national popular traditions and of primitive cultures occupied similar places conceptually as vestigial formations, but ones which it was nonetheless important to distinguish in terms of their territorial provenance (Gorgus, 2003: 68-72).

Rivière's sense of the respects in which these two functions were related but different, and thus ultimately likely to benefit from different institutional arrangements, is evident from his contribution to a 1931 review of the remit of the MET:

> With a larger programme than a museum of art, more concerned with comparison than an archaeological museum, the museum of ethnography is essentially the conservatory of material civilisation considered in its totality: basic techniques and industries, arms and instruments, hunting, fishing, food, clothing, jewellery, ceremonial attributes, ritual objects, magic, laws, games, artistic productions, etc …

> In fact, it wisely limits itself to collecting the material of living primitive peoples or those who have become extinct in previous centuries, and also, among more evolved peoples, the objects and techniques of the popular arts. It leaves to museums of art and archaeology and to museums of techniques like the Conservatory of Arts and Crafts the care of dividing up the more advanced civilisations into more clearly differentiated activities. By contrast, it approximates much more closely to museums of prehistory: those which are concerned with primitives of the past and their similarity to the primitives of yesterday and today. (Rivière, 1931, my translation)

Amira Henare's comments on the relations between Haddon's role in the Torres Strait expedition and, on returning to Britain, his travels through Scotland taking anthropometric measurements, collecting children's toys and games, and projecting an ethnographic survey of

Britain, throw some light on these complex relations of similarity and difference. While, for Haddon, Scottish Highlanders and Maoris occupied roughly the same stage of development, the subsequent development of folklore studies in Britain increasingly differentiated the two in depicting national popular traditions as embodying a regenerative spirit of the land that might be invoked as an antidote to the degenerative effects of urbanism. This is not to suggest that the ATP's orientation to popular traditions was cast in this mould; the point is rather that it instituted a difference between colonial and provincial cultures by placing the latter in a different relationship to the dynamics of social development. However much the MH tilted the balance away from evolutionary conceptions toward a conception of diverse regionally-based cultures to be assessed as of an equal value in an abstract humanist calculus, the tutelage of colonial cultures to French culture and the state in the dynamics of economic, social and political development was never seriously in question. By contrast, in the late 1920s and 1930s, earlier folklorists conceptions of French popular traditions had been significantly (but not entirely) displaced by Popular Front conceptions of the popular as an important source of modernisation. The establishment of the ATP thus occurs at the same time as a series of events that brought 'the popular' into stronger governmental focus: the establishment, in 1937 of a department of popular arts and traditions in the ministry of education and culture, and the establishment in 1938 of a commission of popular arts and traditions. The primary theme of the French displays in the 1937 Exposition universelle in Paris was that of a regionalism that took its lead from popular regional arts and traditions – but a regionalism in which the centre took from, as well as directing, the independent energy and vitality of different regional popular cultures. In the exhibits he arranged for this exposition, Rivière – a member of the Commission du régionalisme – sought to effect a rapprochement between province and capital, country and city, by depicting regional cultures as actively engaged in modernisation.

It was this aspect of the ATP that accounts for its prominence in the wartime occupation of France in providing an interface between the regionalist ideology of the Vichy regime in its attempts to organise a new sense of French nationalism as an ensemble of regional cultures and the pressing need facing the occupying German forces for a more detailed knowledge of French regional cultures, need for a positive valuation of peasant and artisan traditions, as a means of securing an adequate food supply. It was this that provided the impetus for the ATP's role in an unparalleled process of gathering through which student volunteers – trained in methods modelled on those proposed by Mauss for the collection of typical rather than curious items from colonial contexts – were to collect evidence of rural ways of life (artefactual, photographic and sound recordings, etc) through an extensive series of coordinated inquiries whose materials where to be brought together in the laboratory of the ATP for scientific analysis (Gorgus, 2003: 118-43). The role of this work in the production of differentiated regional cultures as an interface between government and the social continued into the immediate post-war period as key component in reconstructive programmes of modernisation.

Some conclusions

For those who know the literature relating to the MH and the ATP, there is nothing new in the suggestion that their histories are bound up with the development of distinctive forms of French colonial and regional government.[13] My argument rather concerns the manner in which such connections should be construed. I shall therefore conclude by reflecting on the value of translating these histories into the conceptual framework of assemblage theory. I shall make three points.

The first concerns the difference between the account I have offered of the role played by these institutions in the organisation of territorially differentiated cultures as 'working surfaces' on the social and an account which might interpret these as cultural constructs. This

would, as DeLanda puts the point, be to allow certain elements (representational or linguistic ones) a priority over the other elements that these institutions assemble or into which, alongside other elements, they were themselves assembled as parts of intellectual/associational/governmental relations and practices (DeLanda, 2006: 44-5). No such privileging of culture is proposed here where the accent falls rather on culture as a distinctive set of resources for acting on the social that is produced by historically particular processes of assembling heterogeneous elements into specific kinds of sequestered environments.

Second, and as a consequence, the organisation of culture as a template for government emerges as a mutable effect of the changing organisation of such assemblages and of the ways in which they are themselves brought together within, and put to work as parts of, broader sets of assemblages. This means that the effects of such processes of disassembling and reassembling – and the spaces of and for action these open up – cannot be reduced to the intentions or deeds of a series of authorial subjects (Rivet and Rivière, for example). Without in any way denying the significance of such agents, these have to be understood in the context of the distinctive forms of agency that objects and presentations acquire from the manner in which they are assembled with one another.

Third, by way of recalling the Foucauldian aspect of my argument while, at the same time, giving it a Latourian twist, I want to recall Latour's account of the role of Pasteur's laboratory in enabling him to produce a new set of relations between human and non-human actors – between the new corps of socio-medical workers that coalesced around the microbes produced in his laboratory and the new technologies of intervention into the social these made possible (Latour, 1988). For it is, I want to suggest, in this way that we should view the relations between the forms of expertise, things, texts and presentations that are assembled together in museums and the new technologies of intervention into the social that these make possible.

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[1] For fuller discussions of the ways in which museums contribute to the organisation of such 'working surfaces' on the social, see Bennett (2007, 2007a).

[2] This was, however, a period in which the influence of anthropology – understood as the physical anthropology represented by Broca's Société and the related Ecole d'Anthropologie – was on the increase, with quasi-state forms of recognition coming in the form its role in the 1889 Paris Exhibition and with instruction in the discipline being provided by the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle (see Sherman, 2004: 675, and Sibeud, 2007:99).

[3] This conceit clearly reflected the continuing influence of the Lamarckian conception that acquired characteristics could be transmitted across generations through the mechanism of inheritance. This continued to inform French biological thinking long-after Darwin's belated influence on the natural sciences in France even though (albeit not with ambiguity) the logic of Darwin's categories afforded it little space. See Rabinow (1989: 127-129).

[4] See, however, Marcus and Saka (2006) for some useful bearing on this topic.

[5] I draw here on arguments that I have developed in more detail elsewhere: see Bennett, 2007, and 2007a.

[6] Clifford's (1988: 215-51) discussion of the mobility of objects across the boundaries that constitute the Western art-culture system offers ample testimony to the endemic mutability of object inscriptions in this regard.

[7] I draw, in the following discussion, mainly on Sherman (2004) and Siebaud (2007).

[8] See 'Notes relating to the activite of the Museum of Ethnography in the French colonial domain', AMH, 2 AM 1 G3b: *Musée d'Ethnographie: notes et raports, activité* (1934).

[9]   This aspect of the politico-discursive environment in which the idea of the MH was conceived and developed is most fully, and most tellingly, discussed in L'Etoile (2007).

[10]   The process of reviewing the MET that was initiated in 1928 and eventually culminated in the establishment of the MH made constant reference to the need to modernise French museum practices so that, by borrowing from British, American, Scandinavian and Russian models, they might better equip France to plays its role as a major colonial power.

[11]   The shift away from objects associated with the fieldwork phase of anthropology constituted a key point of relay toward the later emphasis on language that characterised structuralist and post-structuralist anthropology.   Claude Levi-Strauss's establishment in 1966 of the Laboratorie d'anthropologie sociale played a key role here in retaining the concept of a laboratory but, in a conception of anthropology as a science based on the model of language, one no longer attached to any museum.   The more recent 'material turn' in anthropology has resulted in a renewed interest in museum/object relations: see Edwards, Gosden and Phillips (2006)

[12]   This distinction has a longer history in relation to museums of natural history; I have discussed its origins and development in Bennett (2004).

[13]   The work of Dominique Poulot, in particular, identifies the significance of the ATP in relation to the role of ecomuseums in the development of later French projects of regional governmentality (Poulot, 1994, 2005, 174-84).

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