National Museums in Luxembourg

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Summary

In 1913, English travel writer Georges Renwick, described Luxembourg as "a curious experiment in nation-making", (quoted by Pit, 2010: 1). Indeed, politically and geographically it is an exceptional nation-state: the only remaining sovereign Grand Duchy in Europe, it is also one of its smallest members, with a population of half a million inhabitants making the country, as a whole, less populous than most European capital cities. This small country is host to three languages, French, German and Luxembourgish (officially recognized as a distinct language, not just a German dialect, from 1919 onwards), making it an area of great linguistic cultural diversity. In terms of nation-building it has been influenced both by the French and by the German nation-building process and nationalist thinking. The comparably small size of Luxembourg allows for a relatively easy and precise study of the processes that established this 'imagined community', to employ the famous term used by Benedict Anderson. Its desire to identify and yet differentiate itself from the larger countries that surround it has lead Luxembourg to develop a strong sense of European identity as a means of establishing itself as an international player and partner; a strategy that can be observed in the creation of some its most recent national museums.

An excellent recent study, entitled *Inventing Luxembourg: Representations of the Past, Space and Language from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, published in 2010 describes and analyses the historical master narrative of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg by looking successively at the discourses relating to its history, territory and language. However, we might add that it pays little attention to projects related to its national museums. It does however, very usefully describe the major traits of national historiography – an analysis that we have relied upon and which has proved extremely fruitful and concordant in our consideration of the country's museums. The authors state in the introduction that: "this book sets out to examine whether the more recent supranational narrative meshes with the classical national master narrative or whether it represents a paradigm shift. Has an exclusive narrative been replaced by an inclusive one? Has the ethnocentric viewpoint given way to a Eurocentric outlook? What elements of (dis)continuity are there between the traditional and the new strands of the master narratives? Both seem to rely on two concepts: particularism and *Mischkultur* (mixed culture)" (Pit, 2010: 9). This report will consider to what extent we can ask ourselves these same questions in relation to the development of Luxembourg's national museums and their narratives.

Luxembourg, as an independent sovereign state, free of any foreign occupation since 1867, began establishing national collections at a relatively late stage in comparison to other countries. It did however, immediately appear as a priority to the Grand Duchy, with a decree that established the administrative basis for such an institution in 1968 to create the Grand-Ducal Institute. The two main collections of History and Art and of Natural History, though occupying a modest display area in the *Athénée* from the 1850s onwards, only became independent

institutions in the 1920s and opened their doors to the public shortly before the Second World War.

In 1988, the state museums and archives were officially given the title 'national', reflecting along with the 1984 Language Law and the construction of the *National Monument of Remembrance* in 1985, an "upsurge of interest in representations of the past (both memory and history)", (Pit, 2010: 8). In terms of cultural policy for national museums, a major turning point was Luxembourg's role as European Capital of Culture in 1995, an event that crystallised national interest and implication in cultural affairs, allowing the state to measure its "tardiness in matters of cultural infrastructure" (Consulate general of Luxembourg in Shanghai, 2011, online). The city has since invested in major cultural projects including a Philharmonic Hall, National Audiovisual Centre, a National Centre for Literature, but also a new home for its already existing national museums, a new municipal museum dedicated to the city's history and two new national museums: the Grand Duke Jean Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of the Fortress – all of which we will consider as case studies further on. The last two examples will show how the notions of *Particularism* and *Mischkultur* (mixed culture) have found an expression in this new master narrative reflecting an old image of the city symbolized and envisioned as a fortress, "seen as both oppressive and protective" (Pit, 2010: 4). The fortress represents Luxembourg but also the influence of all the foreign powers who ruled the country as successive occupants, from "Vauban to Wenceslas" (Consulate general of Luxembourg in Shanghai, 2011, online). In the last decade, this image of the country has been materialised through the installation of two museums, one resolutely modern and international, the other clearly national and local.

Summary table, Luxembourg

Name	Inaugurated	Initiated	Actors	Ownership	Type	Values	Temporal reach	Style Location
National Museum of Natural History *Musée national de l'histoire naturelle*	1854	1850	Scholarly societies	Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research	Palaeontology, Geology, Ecology	Development of humanity.	Geological time to present day	Historical monument, Saint-Jean Hospice, Luxembourg.
National Museum of History and Art *Musée national d'histoire et d'art Luxembourg*	1922	End of 18th c.	Scholarly societies	Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research	Pre-history Proto-history, Archaeology, Fine Arts, Decorative Arts, Ethnography and Arms	Gallo-Roman collections, paintings, Northern European and Flemish schools, European modern art. Period rooms of Luxembourg everyday life.	10 000 BC to 19th c.	Traditional townhouse, modernist extension, Luxembourg.
National Mining Museum of Luxembourg	1973	Missing	Associative	Central government	Mining History, Economy	Visit of underground mine. Technology of mining.	19-20th c.	Rumelange, d'anciennes mines, Luxembourg.
National Museum of Military History	1984	1982	Diekirch Historical Society, Army	Central government	Military History	Battle of the Bulge, WWII and everyday life of the soldiers.	20th c.	Diekirch, Northeastern Luxembourg.

Luxembourg City History Museum	1996	Missing	Local, scholarly societies	Municipality of Luxembourg	Urban and Architectural History	History of the town and capital of Luxembourg.	11th to 19th c.	Classical town house. Luxembourg.
Grand duc Jean Museum of Modern Art	2006	1997	Ministry of Culture	Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research	Contemporary Art	Contemporary art – international and national. Mainly temporary exhibits.	20th and 21st c.	Contemporary purposely built, on the former fortress walls, Luxembourg.
Museum of the Fortress *Musée Trois Eechelen*	Under construction	2004	Ministry of Culture	Ministry of Culture Higher Education and Research	Architectural History	National history of the fortress and city of Luxembourg.	10th to 19th c.	Former city fortress, Luxembourg.

Introduction

Traditionally, the origins of Luxembourg's recorded history go back to 963 when Siegfried or *Sigefroid*, the count of Ardennes acquired the domain of *Lucilinburhuc*, constructing a fortified castle that would give its name to the city and then to the country as a whole. The country, the nation, is named after the city itself, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and is a small and highly centralized state. The creation of the Museum of the Fortress also known as the *Musée Trois Eechelen*, soon to be opened to the public, in a sense embodies this foundational moment by reinforcing the place of the fortress in the history of Luxembourg. The reference to medieval times gains prestige from the fact that four of Luxembourg's counts, and later dukes (from 1354 onwards) held the title of Holy Roman Emperor. 1443 marked the beginning of a period, referred to in the national historiography as that of the 'foreign dominations'. For centuries, the heritage of the title of the Grand Duchy became a subject of dispute between Burgundian, Spanish, French and Austrian claimants. In 1795, the Revolutionary Wars made the Duchy part of the French Republic and then the Napoleonic Empire. It regained territorial independence politically as a province of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815. Control over the Duchy became an issue of contention when the United Kingdom of the Netherlands was dissolved in 1830, to form Belgium and the Netherlands. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg became an independent state in 1839 when an agreement was struck with Belgium gaining part of its predominantly francophone western territory with the east remaining under control of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This was considered to be the third of three important territorial amputations: the first was a southern area conceded to Louis XIV in 1659, the second, in 1815, was a concession of an eastern portion to Prussia. Though not yet a sovereign state, the duchy reached its current size in 1839, a size that was a quarter of its 'original' territory. It was henceforth independent politically but a personal union tied it to the King of the Netherlands who was, until 1890, also the Grand Duke of Luxembourg. When the centenary of the independence of Luxembourg was celebrated in 1939, this last amputation was given a positive appreciation by one of the country's historians for whom the event "gave Luxembourg an ethnic unity which it had previously lacked" (Pit, 2010: 6). Yet, Luxembourg remained a country at the crossroads of different cultures, a factor that it used to characterize itself, and to explain elements of disunity such as its linguistic diversity. Pit points to the historiographical concept of *Mischkultur*, based on the linguistic history of the country. The duchy indeed had been originally made up of French and German speaking territories. In 1684 however, Louis XIV established French as the official language, and it remained the dominant language even with the return of Habsburg rule only fourteen years later. After 1839, an effort was made to recreate linguistic unity by imposing German as the official language in accordance with country's new borders. The attempt failed but the period was marked by the emergence, around 1840, of a "national" Luxembourgish literature (Pit, 2010: 12).

As a small territorial unity, the country's history has also laid great emphasis on the ties that related it to larger political entities. As already mentioned, the most important of these historically was of course the Holy Roman Empire. After 1839, it joined the German Confederation, an economic union of German speaking countries as well as the *Zollverein*. Economic ties were forged with Belgium after WWI, preparing the foundation of Benelux in 1958.

Luxembourg was of course also a founding member of the European Economic Community in 1957, and some of the first and most important negotiations concerning the creation of Europe took place on its territory. Its capital is home to some of Europe's most important institutions such as the European Court of Justice etc. and the small town of Schengen has come to symbolize the opening of Europe's borders by giving its name to the famous agreement. Its national memorial sites are thus often very much related to the direct expression of a European past, and figures of European history such as Robert Schuman have come to be considered as nationally significant for the people of Luxembourg (Margue, 2009: 17). Since 2000, Luxembourg is also at the heart of the so-called Greater Region: a term used to describe a vast area that includes all the lands historically part of the Duchy and beyond, including the area of Saarland, Lorraine, Rhineland-Palatinate, Wallonia and the French and German speaking community of Belgium. It covers a surface of 65 401 km^2 and includes a population of 11,2 million inhabitants. It is considered as the space of confluence of Germanic and Roman culture. Luxembourg's place at the centre of this region was reinforced by its role as European Capital of Culture for the second time in 2007, a role that it shared with the Greater Region. This grouping is considered a zone of experimentation for cross-boarder and inter-regional co-operation, which may in the future serve as a model for the rest of Europe. Let us now consider the impact of the relatively late development of a coherent national cultural policy on the evolution of national museums.

National museums and cultural policy in Luxembourg

The case study, detailed below, of the National Museum of History and Art and the National Museum of Natural History shows that Luxembourg developed two typologically traditional national museums. One might however, underline the importance of personal initiative related to both of these undertakings, which seem to have thrived despite the state rather than because of it. One of the difficulties related to providing an appreciation of the history of cultural policy in relation to museums is the significant absence of sources, which actually betrays a relative absence of any considerable approach to cultural affairs before 1995. Such standard sources for cultural policy in Europe as *Compendium* (http://www.culturalpolicies.net) do not provide a report on Luxembourg, nor does NEMO (Network of European Museum Organization, http://www.ne-mo.org/). In the very short report provided by EGMUS (European Group of Museum Statistics, http://www.egmus.eu/), the authors underline the fact that, before 1995, "cultural statistics were not taken seriously and generally considered as a non-relevant field to explore." The report notes that there is no nationally recognized definition for a museum and very little specific legislation. Indeed, no basic requirements were defined for the title of national museum – given to the main museums of Luxembourg but also to such small associative entities as the National Museum of Mining in Rumelage.

The considerable effort made in the 1990s to develop national museums may be traced back to the renewal of interest for themes related to national identity in the 1980s and the elaboration of a certain number of projects. As already stated the title of 'national' was officially bestowed on two museums for the first time in 1988. This general evolution to reconsider the notion of nation and national in Luxembourg has been described as a reaction "to the social and economic crisis which had been affecting the country since the mid-1970's but also an attempt to renew social bonds that seemed threatened by the changes in moral standards, ways of life and political

models" (Pit, 2010: 8). The crisis of the mining industry and the important role that it had played in the establishment of the countries prosperity from 1842 onwards, when its presence was discovered, led a private association to create a specific museum to its exploitation, that was named as national in 1988.

The celebration of the 150th anniversary of independence in 1989 marked another milestone in terms of cultural policy. In historiographical terms, the nation state was clearly depicted as the product of the development of a coherent national identity consecutive to the declaration of independence. It was, at the same time, characterized by the notion of its singularity as a space of cultural confluence, between France and Germany, thus placing the origins of the country at once inside and beyond the strict limits of its territorial borders.

"The festivities related to the celebration of Luxembourg, European capital of culture further consecrated the idea. The initial slogan of 'a year of culture for everyone', was significantly replaced by 'the year of all cultures', underlining the appropriation of a multicultural discourse that was designed to accentuate the cultural richness of Luxembourg and to accentuate the notion of national performance in a European context" (Bergami, 2009: 215)[1]. The development of a wide range of cultural projects in the town of Luxembourg, notably on the Kirchberg, with the conservation and development of the historic site of the fortress of Luxembourg was mirrored by a series of academic studies, addressing for the first times the question of national memory and historiography. A major project undertaken by the University of Luxembourg entitled *History, Memory and Identities* was funded by a National Research Council Grant as part of the *Living in Luxembourg tomorrow* (Pit, 2010: 15) program and the already mentioned book, *Inventing Luxembourg*, was one of the fruits of this project. As the following case studies will show, there is a relationship between the political development of cultural policy in terms of national museums and the development of a clearer awareness of a specific image of national history and its characteristics in terms of the past and in terms of how the country seeks to position itself in an international context. The first national museums in Luxembourg appear as relatively traditional and ideologically unspecific museum creations – reproducing a typology common to most other countries without seeking to underline any national originality or particularity. The more recent projects for the *Grand Duke Jean Museum of Contemporary Art* and the *Musée 3 Eechelen* however, clearly appear as self-conscious expressions of a particular message as conveyed through the nature of the institution, its architecture and its displays.

Case studies in chronological order

National Museum of History and Art and the National Museum of Natural History

These two museums, today considered as separate, are the oldest of Luxembourg's national museums. They provide Luxembourg with a classical national museum typology covering the principal traditional fields of material culture. The first project for the museum goes back to the end of the eighteenth century, when, as part of French territory (1795-1815), a plan was made for a 'provincial' museum – such as were opening elsewhere across France, in such major cities as Toulouse, Lyon, Grenoble but also in other conquered territories, such as Brussels. It was projected as the "*Musée du Département des Forêts*" to contain the works of art confiscated from the churches and abbeys of the region. A certain number of objects, some of which may be seen

today in the national history collections, were set aside at this time by the municipality, however the project for a museum in the town of Luxembourg did not immediately come to fruition. The current historical museum is mainly the product of the efforts of the *Society for the research on and conservation of the historical monuments of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg* founded in 1845 (only 6 years after Luxembourg was declared an independent state) and renamed quite simple the *Archaeological Society,* gradually constituting a representative collection of national antiquities, at first conserved with the collections of natural history in the *Athénée.* However, the founding moment of the museum is sometimes symbolically considered to be the donation of a collection of roman coins made to the *Athénée* in 1839, the year of its independence. The *Athénée* was the former Jesuit College, transformed into a secular college in 1773 when Joseph II of Austria suppressed the order; it became the *Athénée royale* in 1817, acting as a kind of high school and university and today it is home to the National Library.

The natural history collections were founded in 1850 by the *Society of Natural Sciences*, the state also provided rooms for its pieces to be exhibited in the *Athénée.* The collections of natural history opened their doors to the public in 1854 as a kind of small cabinet of natural history. Administratively, it was related to the collections of History and Art from 1868 onwards, when a royal decree founded the Grand-Ducal Institut that was to promote the construction of an independent museum for Luxembourg, an undertaking that took fifty years to be completed. The purpose-designed and established national museum opened its doors shortly before the Second World War in the Collart-de-Scherff house in the heart of the city centre beside the fish market place, historically an important space of popular sociability.

However, in the face of growing collections, a law was passed in 1988 creating two administratively separate museums. The collections remained geographically juxtaposed up until 1996, when the natural history section moved into a new building, where it now also houses a large research institute and educative centre. It was only at this time the 'national' epithet was added to the official title for both institutions.

The collections of the National History and Art Museum are principally archaeological and historical, divided up into the following categories: prehistory, proto-history, Gallo-Roman, Middle Ages, coin cabinet, decorative arts, folk and traditional arts as well as a section dedicated to arms and the theme of the fortress. The museum's perspective was, from the beginning, mainly historical and some of its directors greatly contributed through their written work to the historiography of Luxembourg, most notably Joseph Meyers (1900-1964) who produced a fundamental study on the history of the city and who began his work at the national museum alongside his teaching career as a historian at the University of Leiden. He organised the first section on history, archaeology and art in the museum when it moved to the Collart-de-Scherff house. In 1939, he produced a kind of reference manual of the history of Luxembourg which was introduced into schools and remained part of the curriculum until 1972 – it structured the 'master-narrative' of the history of Luxembourg that we briefly outlined in the introduction. In this narrative, the Middle Ages appeared as a period of autonomy and wellbeing destroyed by the advent of 'foreign' domination in the fifteenth century that was to henceforth involve Luxembourg in most major European conflicts (Pit, 2010: 74). Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any study relating the displays set up in the museum to the national history being

told in this manual, but we may assume them to be strongly concordant as they were 'authored' by the same person.

The Fine arts section remains relatively secondary and its pieces are partly used as illustrations for the mainly historical narrative, rather than as part of a purely art historical organisation (http://www.mnha.public.lu/collections/beaux-arts/index.html, accessed on February 3, 2011). The museum's website does however, underline the importance of Luxembourgish artists in the collection, carefully specifying how these are defined by the museum: included are, artists of Luxembourgish nationality, or born or married to members of a Luxembourgish family, or who resided in the country for the greater part of their lifetime. The new extension of the museum's buildings, inaugurated in 2002, allowed it to deploy an evocative thematic organisation behind a monolithic modernist façade. The visitor begins in the underground galleries with prehistory, working his way up chronologically to the Fine arts, a section situated in the uppermost galleries, establishing a sense of historical ascension.

National Museum of Military History, Diekirch

Situated in the old brewery of the town of Diekirch in northeastern Luxembourg, the National Military Museum of Diekirch, founded in 1983, is the only case study of a national museum retained here that is not situated in the capital. Founded by a group of local military enthusiasts and collectors of material from the war, it rapidly garnered direct support from the national army. Its self-proclaimed intention is to present a balanced and impartial view of the ordinary soldier's experience of the Battle of the Bulge, whether they were German, American or French and also to provide the point of view of the civilian victims. The main showpiece of the exhibit is a diorama style presentation of the crossing of the Sauer River by a unit of the United States Infantry Division in January 1945.

The desire to create a neutral approach here is all the more remarkable as the German neighbour as a potential invader has had very bad press, "The 'Prussian (Preiss) – both the soldier stationed in the federal fortress of Luxembourg (until its dismantlement in 1867) and the customs officer stationed at the Moselle checkpoint to the Kingdom of Prussia until 1918 – was constructed as 'the other' a figure of hatred and ridicule. (...) During World War II, when Luxembourg was occupied by Nazi Germany, the stereotype of the 'Prussian' had its heyday and acquired a multi-layered character that still has resonance today, having become a common figure of speech for many people" (Pit, 2010: 11). Relationship with the German neighbour "National victimisation and the image of Germans as 'the other' grew stronger after the Second World War.

The intention of the museums has appeared as the desire to combat this sense of the enemy neighbour as it seeks to fulfil a commemorative aim by organising memorial events so that " almost 60 years after those tragic events, the museum often becomes a platform and gathering place for returning veterans from two former opposing sides, as well as their descendants, to "re-digest" history and to meet as friends. Along that same line, the museum fulfills an important mission in fostering mutual bonds of friendship between Germany, the United States, and Luxembourg by jointly-remembering! " (http://www.mnhm.lu/pageshtml/curatorsmessage.php, accessed online, 9 February, 2011).

The lifelike large-scale nature of these exhibits makes it particularly impressive: "carefully rebuilt on the base of numerous personal oral history reports from American and German

veterans and Luxembourg eyewitnesses, provides a detailed and balanced view of the tragic events of December 44 - January 45. Moreover these dioramas enable the visitor to reflect on a given situation and identify himself with it. The message that is encompassed in our impartial and objective dioramas is that there was equal human suffering on the American, German and civilian side of that decisive major military conflict in the 'Ardennes'. "
(http://www.mnhm.lu/pageshtml/curatorsmessage.php, accessed online, 9 February, 2011).

In parallel to this, the museum also provides a section showing the evolution of the army of Luxembourg itself. This organisation is in itself unusual, as here the representation of the national army appears as secondary to the representation of a battle fought mainly by soldiers from foreign armies. This situation is echoed in the current project of the fortress museum – as it will also show Luxembourg as the plane of action for conflicts led by foreign powers.

Grand Duke Jean, Museum of Modern Art (MUDAM)

After the great success of the cultural events organized for the 1995 "Year of the Capital of culture in Luxembourg", the government decided to invest massively in new projects. One of the most important of these was the creation of a new museum for contemporary artistic creation. The architect Ieoh Ming Pei was immediately the obvious choice for the Luxembourgish government, he was at the height of his renown in the field of museum construction having just finished two of the most important museum projects undertaken by Luxembourg's neighbours, France and Germany, with the Louvre and the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. As the architect of two museums, both equally symbolic of French and German national culture, both transformations, based on already existing buildings, he was an obvious choice for the site of Fort Thüngen. As was already the case with the Louvre, Pei could "not resist these 17ᵗʰ century fortifications which survived the dismantling of the fortress in 1867". Pei described his project: "The most important aspect that seduced me was the changing play between past and present, past and future. At the Fort Thüngen, with the *Trois Glands*, the past is there and I admire the work of Vauban, who built the foundations. What interests me is how to harmonize the past and the present so that they mutually reinforce each other." He wanted to "make the old stones speak, to bring them to life. The only way to bring stones to life is by taking human beings to them". (http://www.mudam.lu/en/le-musee/le-batiment/lhistorique/, accessed February 13ᵗʰ, 2011). By inviting Pei as the architect of a new national museum, Luxembourg wanted to capture something of the same effect that he had in France and Germany, asking him similarly to work with the walls of the fortification (as had been the case with the Louvre). Pei actually dismantled the walls and rebuilt them in a reinforced way so that they would appear identical to the old walls. A highly symbolic undertaking as the former stones thus became the foundation "for the new building which follows the triangular design of Fort Thüngen from which it rises" (Consulate general of Luxembourg in Shanghai, 2011, online).

According to the museum's official website, Pei not only used the stones of the fortress to reconstruct the foundation of the museum, but its structure was very much the architectural inspiration and metaphor behind the building – which is punctuated throughout with formalist references to the fortress type architecture and its strong and imposing geometrical forms are in continuity with the fortress. A feasible solution, as the galleries receive overhead lighting, invisible from the outside, allowing for high closed exterior walls. The entrance to the museum is reached

by one of two bridges that cross the now dried out moat: one façade is turned to the new town and the European quarter, the other towards the quarters of Pfaffenthal and Clausen. Reflecting in a sense Pit's observation of "The image of Luxembourg as a bridge between Germany and France (that) remains in usage and has been fully integrated into the discourse of Luxembourg's role in the EU" (Pit, 2010: 13).

The Grand hall, "space of light", is the heart of the museum and is strongly reminiscent of Pei's work in the Louvre for the Pyramide entrance, indeed the reference to the Louvre is inevitable, as Pei's work there has become eminently characteristic of the museum's architecture. Both the architect and the architecture position Luxembourg's bid for a cosmopolitan museum of contemporary art on very solid and traditional foundations. The building's function is resolutely dedicated to contemporary art in an international perspective. In 2010, international artists made the collection of 400 artworks for three quarters (http://www.mudam.lu/en/le-musee/la-collection/, accessed 14 February 2011). Yet again, the museum was named after S.A.R. the Grand Duke Jean who reigned from 1964 to 2000, a choice that again ties the site back to tradition and to aristocratic origins of the state.

The museum as a whole, through its site, its conception, its references and its functions appears as an effort to combine a traditional notion of the nation with a newer master-narrative of a cosmopolitan international culture that is resolutely turned to the future of Luxembourg and of Europe.

Musée 3 Eechelen, 'fortress, history and identity'[2]

Administratively, the new *Musée 3 Eechelen* is an extension of the National History and Art Museum, but its importance and specificity for a new discourse related to national identity makes it necessary to present this project separately.

Up until 1867, Luxembourg had held the title of the 'Gibraltar of the North' and Fort Thüngen, represents this heritage and is currently being transformed into Luxembourg's newest national museum. Situated on the Northeast side of the town of Luxembourg, along the so-called Vauban circuit of fortifications, it is at a crossroads between the old and the new town (Kirchberg). The Grand Duke Jean Museum of Modern Art, designed by Pei is already situated on the same site and visible from the three fortified towers of the new museum, also known as the Three Acorns (there are also three golden acorns that hang over the entrance to the building). The fortress was constructed in 1732 by Baron Von Thüngen, the Austrian commander of the fort, but it was based on plans laid out previously by Vauban, who had constructed the exterior part of the fortress. In this sense, its architecture is a reference again to Germanic and French occupation.

The fortress was closed in 1867, thanks to the treaty of London signed in 1867, which finally consolidated Luxembourg's independence from Prussia, after a period of conflict between French and Prussian forces. As expressed in Pit's description of the master narrative "Having once more gained its independence, Luxembourg stood fast despite attempts by various nations to annex its territory." (Pit, 2010: 7). Finally, Luxembourg was at peace, "the fortress of the capital was dismantled and the last of the Prussian garrison left the country."

The desire to rehabilitate the area would appear to be the direct expression of a return to the traditional origins of the country's history as observed by historians in recent years, in opposition

and as a way of balancing Europeanising and globalizing tendencies (Margue, 2009: 17)[3]. "The Fortress is the symbol of centuries of history of the City, the country and indeed of Europe. Located on the site of the *Dräi Eechelen* (Three Acorns) in the city of Luxembourg, the Museum of the Fortress will be a symbolic link between the new quarter of the Kirchberg and the old part of the city of Luxembourg" (Consulate general of Luxembourg in Shanghai, 2011, online). This return to historical origins is marketed as a national reference brought into relation with a more cosmopolitan perspective, related to the notion of *Mischkultur*. Although, the museum is not yet open to the public, it has published a lavish volume on the fort's history. Interestingly it is bilingual, but not in the ordinary sense. The chapters dedicated to the fort's occupation by the French are written in French, whilst those considering Austrian and Prussian occupation are written in German. This reflects, with the architectural history of the fortress itself, the desire to underline the notion of Luxembourg as a *Mischkultur*, a cultural notion that very much founds its national identity (Pit, 2010: 12).

However, historiographically the fortress project relates mainly to "*Particularism* as the teleological belief that Luxembourg followed a *Sonderweg* or a specific path in the early modern period which rendered it distinct from the other parts of the Netherlands and explaining why it became a nation-state in its own right. It is conceded that every province of the Spanish – later Austrian – Netherlands was particular, but it is nevertheless held that Luxembourg was more particular than others. This uniqueness comes from the fact that it survived four centuries of 'foreign dominations' forming the basis of a proto-national consciousness." (Pit, 2010: 11). The fortress expresses the notion of defence against foreign powers and occupation – as a recurrent national experience. Luxembourg's ability to remain free, to have come out independent is key to the notion of particularism. For Pit, particularism is related to the idea of the organic nature of the long enduring 'monarchical loyalty' that makes Luxembourg the last remaining sovereign Duchy, a loyalty that is expressed by the notion of roots (Pit, 2010: 11). This notion of roots is translated in the metaphor of the oak and the acorn. The Fort Thüngen is set in a park of oak trees; the three remaining towers of the fortress have come to be known as the three *eechelen* or acorns. The oak and the acorn are related to a strong aristocratic symbol in Luxembourg; the *Order of the Oak Crown*, a chivalric order created in 1841 by the Grand Duke William II, just after Luxembourg became independent.

The project undertaken in 2004, as the museum of contemporary art discussed above was nearing completion, was intended for opening in 2007 (Luxembourg's second term as European Capital of Culture). Interestingly, the work was delayed for reasons given as follows by Secretary of State for Culture, Octavie Modert: "The concept elaborated by the first group of experts is oriented in a manner that does not correspond with what was initially agreed upon. Indeed, the experts elaborated their conception around the idea of military history, ballistics and fortifications, completely neglecting the social aspect and the concept of identity. After several failed attempts on behalf of the ministry to change this, it has been decided that we need to begin again with a new group of experts" (Modert, 2007, online)[4].

The website of the museum that is still not yet completely open to the public, presents the current concept of the museum: "The vocation of Fort Thüngen is to go beyond the strict context of a "museum". The aim is not simply to present a clearly defined group of collected objects but to provide the visitor with the most complete ensemble of information about the

Fortress of Luxembourg, in the context of a general explanation of military architecture. This will allow it to demonstrate the specificity and the determining role of the fortress of Luxembourg for the history of the city as well as in the territorial formation of the country and the identity of its inhabitants" (http://www.in-visible.lu/fort/ Museum website, accessed online, 5 February, 2011)[5].

As currently conceived, the museum seeks first of all to explain the presence of the fortress, of Fort Thungen. It is occupied with the narrative related to the site itself. Secondly, it wants to provide a reflexion on the impact of the site on Luxembourg's social and economic history, how it shaped the lives of its inhabitants and, thirdly, it goes beyond the site itself to consider the development of the Luxembourgish society from the nineteenth century to the present day. It also intends to provide a reflexive perspective on representations of the past of Luxembourg (Modert, 2007, online).

Notes

[1]   « Les festivités pour Luxembourg Capitale européenne de la culture en 1995 consacrent cette greffe. Le remplacement du slogan prévu initialement d'une année de la culture pour tous » par celui d'une 'année de toutes les cultures' souligne la réappropriation d'un discours multiculturel dans le sens d'une accentuation de la richesse culturelle luxembourgeoise et prend alors une dimension qui vise à accentuer une performance nationale dans le cadre européen. »

[2]   Modert, 2007, online: « retraçant le lien entre la forteresse, l'histoire nationale et l'identité nationale."

[3]   "Par ailleurs, l'européanisation ou la globalisation ne provoquent pas seulement des glissements de mémoire, mais aussi des raidissements: d'où, pour l'anecdote, la curieuse proposition récente d'un retour aux symboles anciens et dynastiques du duché de Luxembourg, initiative politique"

[4]   « Le concept élaboré par un premier groupe d'experts s'est orienté dans une direction qui ne correspondait pas à ce que nous avions convenu. En effet, ces experts avaient bâti leur concept essentiellement autour de l'histoire militaire, la balistique et les fortifications, en ignorant totalement le volet social et les aspects de l'identité. Après plusieurs tentatives de la part du ministère pour réorienter le travail de ce groupe, nous avons dû nous séparer de ces experts »

[5]   "La vocation du Fort Thüngen dépasse largement celle du cadre strict d'un Musée. Il ne s'agit en effet pas de présenter un ensemble d'objets d'une collection bien définie mais de livrer au visiteur un éventail d'informations aussi complet que possible sur la forteresse de Luxembourg tout en expliquant l'architecture militaire en générale. Ceci permettra de montrer la singluarité, la spécificité et le rôle déterminant de la forteresse de Luxembourg tant dans l'histoire de la ville que dans la formation territoriale du pays et de l'identité de ses habitants."

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