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INTERAMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE WORKING GROUP MEETING

UNICAMP, 11-12 August 2015.

I. Background and justification

The idea of creating an institutional mechanism to strengthen intellectual exchanges and cooperation in the area of cultural heritage in the Americas and the Caribbean is something I have cultivated over the course of my career in cultural heritage management and research. It therefore contains the idiosyncrasies of my own trajectory. Putting this idea into practice, though, requires its institutional embedding in the university and in academic research associations, whose mission normally includes promoting networks of intellectual collaboration. From the moment it was adopted by UNICAMP's Anthropology Department and the Brazilian Anthropological Association (ABA),¹ my intention became transformed into a project and a fact that extends beyond my own professional sphere. This change entails the need to readapt it to the objectives and dynamics of the supporting institutions. This aim in mind, I suggested that ABA and UNICAMP's Department of Anthropology should organize the present work session.

The main objective of this meeting is, therefore, to explore the prospects and challenges involved in creating institutional mechanisms that can strengthen intellectual exchange and cooperation in the areas of cultural heritage studies and advocacy in the Americas and the Caribbean. The aim is also to establish parameters and create mechanisms that help ensure the development of these links within academia, open to the participation of non-governmental organizations, for reasons I shall explain.²

I take 'cultural heritage' to be a social construct that emerges through complex negotiations in the public sphere between social agents, state institutions, private investors and a wide range of mediators, including academic researchers, independent consultants or professionals working for public or private institutions. These negotiations are concerned with the 'heritage value' attributed by governmental institutions and social agents to natural assets, sites and traditional artifacts or practices, as well as to some aspects of language, such as linguistic diversity and oral culture.

¹ This initiative was conceived during the 29th Brazilian Anthropology Meeting (Natal, August 2014) and formally approved by ABA's Board of Directors on the 4th of September. It was subsequently backed by the American Anthropological Association. At UNICAMP, the Department of Anthropology agreed to back the idea and provide institutional support on the 17th of the same month. Since then it has gradually been able to count on the support of associations now taking part in this meeting.

² I thank the suggestions made by my colleagues Artionka Capiberibe, José Maurício Arruti and Antonio Guerreiro from the Department of Anthropology at UNICAMP, looking to clarify the argument developed in the following paragraphs.

One of the main objectives of my own academic work has been to understand such negotiations and, consequently, the social processes enrooted in the formation of cultural heritage, both from an institutional viewpoint (such as the mutations in preservation as a state policy and its political and social effects) and from the perspective of society. Such issues have been studied by several researchers in Brazil³ and elsewhere, contributing to the formation of what is sometimes referred to in academic and institutional debates as an *anthropological turn* in the heritage field.

From this perspective it becomes important to focus not only on the effects of the conservation of tangible goods on the populations of protected sites, or the consequences of safeguarding intangible heritage on the ways of life and social organization of their holders and practitioners. In both cases, the practices related to conservation (of tangible cultural goods) or to safeguarding (of intangible heritage) can be interpreted as outside interventions with potentially desirable or undesirable effects on the affected social environments. At the same time, it is important to understand the processes through which heritage policies are appropriated by social agents and reinterpreted by them in terms of their own lifeways, mechanisms by which they participate in the construction/reconfiguration/consolidation of senses and sentiments of belonging.

This shift from a top-down approach to heritage to an understanding of the negotiations over heritage as two-way processes opens the way to understanding the meanings of preservation and/or safeguarding beyond the processes of class domination and the construction of elite cultures or hegemonies with which they were for a long time linked. By exploring the topic from the viewpoint of social agents themselves, the researcher's attention is inevitably drawn to the construction of senses of community and citizenship within the public sphere. Furthermore, these fields of study and professional practices become enriched by the inclusion of society's initiatives towards the protection, continuity, development and promotion of their 'heritage' through non-governmental channels. Rephrasing these ideas more succinctly, I would say that I have been trying to understand heritage as a reality that is simultaneously socially produced and a producer of socialities.

The focus on *subjects* proposes an understanding of cultural heritage that is broader than the mainstream approach in the literature. It also stimulates academic and management activities to surpass the limits set by the established typologies that are constructed by the identification of artistic or ethnic, tangible or intangible, historical or archaeological, natural or cultural attributes in protected objects or practices. Such distinctions are the outcome of relatively impermeable disciplinary boundaries, and seem to be of questionable utility in this context. The search for a more holistic and flexible understanding of heritage realities, which takes into account their embedding in social environments and specific territories, stimulates – and in my view justifies – the intensification of the dialogue and cooperation between anthropologists, archaeologists, linguists and historians (to mention areas of knowledge traditionally closer to anthropology), as well as architects, urban planners and other specialists working in the area. This closer cooperation not only becomes necessary in academia, but also between researchers and civil society organizations – as proposed in the forum due to take place

³ For a Brazilian example see Antonio Arantes and Antonio Motta (eds.), 2013, "Heritage and Museums, a thematic dossier." *VIBRANT. Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*. <http://www.vibrant.org.br/issues/v10n1>

after this work session⁴ – which undoubtedly helps strengthen both, intellectually and politically.

In terms of the region covered by this workgroup,⁵ I think that, beyond the obvious historical and geopolitical reasons, it reflects processes that have been increasing in recent years. While the different colonial systems, national regulations and multilateral agreements have divided the Americas and the Caribbean islands into politically and culturally distinct countries, there is also a growing perception of the fragility and porosity of these international borders. These frontiers very often cross territories occupied by particular peoples for countless generations, interrupting traditional routes of political, cultural and economic exchange. On the other hand, though, the globalized conditions of the present not only nurture the formation of senses of place but also increase transnational movements of populations and access to information and communication technologies. These tendencies not only intensify connectivity but also, above all, strengthen political relationships and alliances between peoples who live in territories that today belong to different countries, within this vast and diverse region of the planet. These realities offer new contexts for the understanding of old questions in the field of cultural heritage studies (like the relations between historic and cultural preservation, nation building and nationalism, for example). Furthermore, they enable the emergence of new themes, along with new methodological, practical and ethical challenges.

These are just some of the ideas that led me to propose the present meeting, which unlike other worthy initiatives,⁶ aims to lay the foundations for coordinating a network of researchers, institutionally supported by the region's academic societies.

II. Participants

Representatives from academic societies and UNICAMP's faculty members. The meeting will be open to observers.

⁴ Forum: "Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage: a joint responsibility of the state and civil society. Intercultural, interdisciplinary and inter-institutional dialogues." Permanent UNICAMP forums: Public polices and citizenship, 13th August 2015.

⁵ A first attempt at regional articulation adopting a similar scope was undertaken at my initiative during the 9th Session of the IGC: the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, Paris, 25th November 2014), as part of the activities of non-governmental organizations accredited to provide advisory services to the IGC. Researchers and government officials from the following countries and institutions took part: Belize, *National Institute of Culture and History*; Brazil, *ArteSol – Artesanato Solidário* and *CTI – Centro de Trabalho Indigenista*; France, *French Society for Ethnomusicology*; Guadelupe, *Centre Régional des Musiques et Danses Traditionnelles*; Jamaica, *African-Caribbean Institute of Jamaica*; Mexico, *La Enciclopedia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial*; Philippines, *IOV - International Organization of Folk Art*; the Netherlands, *VIE Dutch Center for ICH*, and Syria. In addition, participants from the following international organizations were present: *Traditions pour Demain*, *FIAT-IFTA – World Organization of Funeral Operatives* and *ICOMOS/Intangible Cultural Heritage Commission* (Mexico), and from UNESCO Category 2 Centers *CRESPIAL – Centro Regional para la Salvaguardia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial de America Latina* (Peru) and *ICHCAP - International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Republic of Korea).

⁶ *Researchers Forum for the Implementation of UNESCO's 2003 Convention*, Maison des Cultures du Monde and International Research Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region, 2012 and 2013; *Inaugural Conference of the Association for Critical Heritage Studies*, University of Gothenburg, Sweden, 2012; *Research Planning Meeting on Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Centro Regional de Investigaciones Multidisciplinarias of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2013.

AAA – American Anthropological Association. Terry Majewski. AAA Representative and Coordinator of the Cultural Heritage Task Force.

ABA – Brazilian Anthropology Association. Antonio Carlos de Souza Lima, President.

ABA - Heritage and Museums Committee. Renata Gonçalves e Izabela Tamasso, Coordinators.

ALA – Latin American Anthropology Association. Cristina Oehmichen, President.

CAS-SCA - Canadian Anthropological Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie. Michel Bouchard, President.

CRIM/UNAM - Regional Center of Interdisciplinary Research/ National Autonomous University of Mexico. Lourdes Arizpe, Professor of Anthropology and Chair.

SAA - Society for American Archaeology. Jeff Altschul, Past-president.

SAB - Brazilian Archaeology Society. Marcia Bezerra, President.

UNICAMP – Campinas State University

IFCH – Institute of Philosophy and Human Sciences

Anthropology Department.

Antonio A. Arantes (organizer of the meeting)

Artionka Capiberibe. CPEI – Indigenous Ethnology Research Center.

Bela Feldman-Bianco. CEMI – Center of International Migration Studies.

Omar Ribeiro Thomaz. Coordinator, PPGAS – Graduate Program in Social Anthropology and Director, CEMI – Centre of International Migration Studies.

History Department.

Silvana Rubino

Cristina Meneguello

Aline Carvalho

CLE – Logic, Epistemology and History of Science Center. Claudia Wanderley

III. Agenda

August 11, 2015.

8h30: Opening of the meeting: welcome, introductions.

8h45: Nomination of the drafting committee members.

9h00 – 13h00: Current situation of cultural heritage studies in the Americas and the Caribbean: overview. (*Presentations based on the situation of each country or region, followed by debates.*)

09h00 - 10h00: AAA and SAA (presentation: 40min; debates: 20min)

10h10 - 10h40: CAS-SCA (presentation: 20min; debates: 10min)

10h40 - 11h00: Coffee break

11h00 - 12h00: ALA and CRIM-UNAM (presentation: 40min; debates: 20min)

12h10 - 13h10: ABA and SBA (presentation: 40min; debates: 20min)

13h10 – 14h30: lunch

14h30 – 19h00: Challenges to the development of academic research and professional work in the cultural heritage area in the Americas and the Caribbean. (*Presentations by guest speakers, followed by debates.*)

14h30 – 16h00: ABA, ALA, CRIM/UNAM (panel: 60min; debates: 30min)

16h10 – 17h10: CAS-SCA, AAA (panel: 40min; debates: 20min)

17h10 – 17h30: Coffee break

17h30 – 18h30: SAA, SBA (panel: 40min; debates: 20min)

August 12, 08h30 – 13h30.

Coffee and refreshments available during the meeting.

Outline for an international cooperation instrument. (*Panel with rapporteurs chaired by the meeting's organizer*)

- a. The nature of this document.
- b. Justifications, objectives, scope of themes and region covered.
- c. Participation mechanisms: participants (academic researchers, social organizations and so on), organization (adoption of the forum, network or other modality), operation (role of UNICAMP as the host institution, contribution of associations and other parties).
- d. Recommendations of various kinds, taking into account political, ethical and intellectual aspects of professional work, among other issues.

Approval of the final document's structure and main topics.

Close of the meeting.

IV. Consultation documents

Altschul, Jeffrey, Ibrahima Thiaw, Gerald Wait, and Michael Heilen. *A slave that would be king: oral tradition and archaeology of the recent past in a portion of the Upper Senegal River Basin*. (in print)

Arantes, Antonio, and Antonio Motta (eds.) Heritage and Museums, a thematic dossier. *VIBRANT. Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*. Available at: <http://www.vibrant.org.br/issues/v10n1>, 2013.

Arizpe, Lourdes, and Cristina Amescua, eds. *Anthropological Perspectives on Intangible Cultural Heritage*. New York, New York: Springer, 2013.

Maison des Cultures du Monde; International Research Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage (IRCI). *The first ICH-Researchers forum. The implementation of UNESCO's 2003 Convention. Final report*. 3 June 2012. Paris, France. Available at http://www.irci.jp/assets/files/2012_ICH_Forum.pdf

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