

18. Contested Cultural Heritage: Cultural Praxis, Knowledge Infrastructures, and Persistent Inequalities (Workshop)

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In a world characterized by deepening inequalities and an ongoing homogenization of lifestyles, we are witnessing important losses of cultural diversity, including plural knowledge forms and practices. At the same time, intensified spatial mobility and growing interculturality reinforce desires for belonging, identity and representation. Moreover, digital transformation is profoundly modifying our lives, presenting new opportunities, but also new challenges for cultural diversity. Therefore, the question of how to preserve cultural diversity and make its multifaceted expressions more visible and accessible has gained broader societal relevance. All these developments reveal the heuristic limitations of traditional notions of cultural heritage, established within the context of nation-states, legitimized by certain types of knowledge, and organized by the logic of central infrastructures of knowledge. Cultural objects and descriptions of cultural practices have been disconnected from their places of origin and relocated in museums, libraries and archives. They were transformed into cultural heritage and are managed by classificatory and legal frameworks, developed in “central” countries. Local communities are generally excluded from these processes and their cultural practices and knowledges are invisibilized.

The workshop seeks to contribute to a broader, more differentiated and inclusive conceptualization of cultural heritage and knowledge infrastructures, which includes local knowledge practices and knowledge infrastructures. We will explore three interrelated thematic axes: (a) cultural heritage and inequalities (long-term asymmetries and more recent digital inequalities); (b) cultural heritage as cultural praxis; and (c) cultural heritage and digital transformation. Hereby, we want to focus on social phenomena such as transnational migration, indigenous languages, music recordings or food practices which challenge traditional notions of cultural heritage.

The teaching of Maya language as a revitalization process. From local practices in Mérida to institutionalized practices in France

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The acknowledgment of accelerated languages' loss in the XXth Century precipitated the recognition of Amerindian languages as cultural heritage. In Mexico, the government reacted by recognizing Amerindian languages as national

languages and the rights of their speakers. Here, I want to analyze one particular practice around the use of Maya, the second most-spoken Amerindian language in Mexico: its teaching as a second language in the context of public higher education. Mexican public universities started only recently to integrate the teaching of Amerindian languages in their programs, in contrast to France or the USA, where Maya classes were already offered since the 1960s. In this presentation, I compare, how Maya is used in two different pedagogical contexts: the Maya classes provided by different public institutions in Merida, Mexico, and the Maya classes offered by the *Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales* in Paris, the French institution dedicated to the study of non-European languages.

I will depart from the idea that cultural heritage is a socio-cultural practice, so its definition responds to the use we make of it in different contexts. In this sense, I want to understand how the language is defined in each of the cases.

Infrastructures of knowledge and indigenous communities' archives. The reconnection of Fuegopatagonia and Pampa collections through co-produced strategies in the context of digital transformation

Máximo Farro, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, Argentina

This presentation discusses the opportunities and challenges opened up by indigenous communities' demands to mainstream heritage institutions for access to collections in the current context of digital transformation. These claims to central infrastructures of knowledge (i.e. museums, archives and libraries) based on unequal access to technologies, digital objects and collections, challenge established conceptualizations of cultural heritage, traditional management patterns and the politics of access, ownership and restitution. We take as a case the Museo de La Plata (Argentina) collections of photographs, manuscripts, vocabularies, wax cylinders and ethnographic objects from Fuegopatagonia and Pampa indigenous peoples, developed by Robert Lehmann-Nitsche, a German anthropologist in charge of the museum's anthropology section between 1897 and 1930. These collections are nowadays shared between *Ibero Amerikanisches Institut* and *Ethnologisches Museum* (Berlin).

We will reflect on i) the implications of digital transformation for reappropriation, resignification and the reconnection of collections with self-managed, community archives crafted by Mapuche, Tehuelche, Selk'nam, Yagán and Kawésqar peoples, as a tool for collective identity and cultural revitalization; and ii) the opportunities to develop co-produced strategies that broaden infrastructures of knowledge's established patterns of classification and collection management, reducing inequalities by integrating diverse cultural perspectives and practices in more symmetrical and sustainable ways.

Digital mediation and inequality in the making of cultural heritage. The case of the Danza de los Diablicos (Lambayeque, Peru)

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The cultural policies promoted by the Peruvian government in accordance with the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage have revitalized traditional music, dance, festivals and, crafts in Peru, giving rise to new forms of cultural heritage making. These include the preparation of the dossiers to request the declaration of repertoires and local cultural knowledge as national heritage, as well as documentation, preservation, teaching, dissemination and promotion tasks. In addition to performing as artists, heritage bearers are challenged to master new skills required for archival research, documentation of their presentations, production of digital content and dissemination through social networks.

I propose to answer the following questions based on the case study of the *Danza de los Diablicos* from the districts of Túcume and Mochumí in the Peruvian northern coast: (i) which narratives of heritage emerge and are disputed when dance and music becomes digital content? and what new forms of production and appropriation of value are brought about by the digital mediation of heritage?; (ii) which relations are established between the performers (dancers and musicians) and the creators and managers of digital heritage contents (researchers, cultural promoters and entrepreneurs)? and what inequalities and opportunities do they entail for the different actors involved?

Latin American Migrant Food Practices as Cultural Heritage? Decolonizing Knowledge Infrastructures in the Context of Digital Transformation

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Stephanie Schütze, Freie Universität Berlin

The presentation discusses how food practices of Latin American migrants have become specific objects of knowledge that encapsulate particular evidence of cultural diversity. The research project studies expressions of food practices as cultural heritage and analyses why they cannot be adequately captured if perceived as only materialized, time-fixed and spatially-static. By taking a praxis-oriented, transformative approach we seek to contribute to a broader and more differentiated perspective on cultural heritage. Related to this, infrastructures of knowledge have to go beyond their conventional focus on the documentation, preservation and transmission of cultural content in a hierarchical, unidimensional mode.

The project will study how materials on certain food practices of Latin American migrations are being gathered, classified, preserved, presented and circulated. We will proceed by analyzing trajectories of selected products and (digital) collections and the ways these collections are managed by infrastructures of knowledge, collaborating closely with migrant organizations, groups and networks.

Through the study of Latin American migrant food practices the project aims to decolonize the notion of cultural heritage by exploring the inequalities between established, stable but excluding knowledge infrastructures (collection institutions as museums and libraries) and small, more provisional and private knowledge infrastructures (collections of migrant organizations as in social media).