

AWAD Conference – GAA, Amsterdam, 29th November 2006

MINUTES

Workshop Research and Intangible Culture

Moderator: Alex van Stipriaan / Secretary: Mariana Françoço

Session 1 (group 3) – 10.03

10.22 – discussion 1

Banck – mutual versus common: the first is more polite, second is common sense...what is mutual, for example, in the mythology of Dutch Brazil, in the idea that Nassau is a hero as opposed to the Portuguese colonizers.

Menke – about the three concepts mutual, shared and common. You can share the artifact (statue) but the ideas and values linked to that will always differ. And that leads to culture (a group, its collective desires).

Gilmore – How to keep a mutual culture heritage alive in the case of the relations between the former Netherlands Antillean islands. There are not necessarily the same on the different islands. How to form a platform or project for that?

Ruiz – There is a mutual heritage because 450 years ago all the islands were occupied by the Dutch. Experiences may differ, but the ancestry/heritage is the same. How you feel about it or how you experience it is different and that is good. In the Caribbean we are very close but still very much apart.

?? (sitting between Victoria and Janny Venema) – Dutch stick to research on former Dutch parts of the Caribbean, and same with the English and Spanish etc. An inversion of that could lead to interesting results. Language is a challenge. Language is one of the most important aspects of intangible cultural heritage.

Gilmore – Importance of past to societies changes over time.

Venema – What identity has been given to people in different time, it changes over time (agrees with Gilmore).

Ter Welle – What kind of responsibility are we willing to take in each country for a particular mutual heritage item (fortress etc).

Ivor – Different responses and expectations towards the same item (monument) by different groups. How do different groups react to mutual heritage items?

Hulsman – These concepts are not useful. There is no such thing as mutual or even heritage. Shared means inequality (misunderstanding).

Doortmont – Ghana and the Caribbean are good examples of two completely different cases of mutual heritage. Starting point is mutuality, but how to define it?

Ter Welle – Lets decide on one term to use: mutual, common or shared? Majority decided on *share*.

10.59 – discussion 2 (statements) – didn't really take place.

Intangible heritage cannot be separated from material culture. As a researcher you must take both into account.

Can you say that people own intangible heritage? People are already using that term.

Everyone agrees on “the researches must give something back to the people”. Even materially: books etc. But it is difficult to get people to understand the process of research and its outcomes. You must create your partner, your creative local collaborator – that is the responsibility of the international researcher, to diminish the big level gap between the researchers and the local people. Spread the word. Use local people who have lots of knowledge to spread more information and increase interest. You must have a counterpart and, as researcher, you must help create this counterpart. Give it back to the community. That seems to be everyone's aim.

11.34 – Short summary:

Values and experiences will always differ from one community to another in what concerns shared heritage.

Voted and agreed to use the word shared.

Need platforms and the taking research results and raw material back to the community.

Session 2 (group 2) – 11.48

11.50 – Recommendations from session 1 (from the group):

Need to connect to each other. It is important not to see a one-sided relationship between each country and the Dutch, but see the interconnections between everyone.

Language barriers – need to use new technologies and resources to improve accessibility to material.

Make a statement.

Recommendations from session 1 (from the mediator):

International and local platforms (like the networks) and between academia and societies, that is, you must have counterparts. Different values relating to shared heritage. Results of research should be taken back to the community.

11. 58 – Discussion of the statements that were not discussed last session discussion on challenges and pitfalls in their own fields and/or countries.

Monteiro – suggest discussing social and ethical responsibility of research, especially in what concerns oral history, music etc. How to place oral forms in writing?

Janga – where does methodology come in? Especially in research based on oral traditions.

Scriwantek – Accessibility of the research. It must come back to the public, that is, there should be means to do so.

Galindo – we must guarantee patterns: accessibility, connectivity, interoperability. Internet is a good tool for that. Uniform description and forms for objects, materials and intangible culture. Make sure we are all working in one direction.

Gehring – Example of fraud in trying to prove indigenous identities.

Also in Brazil and Suriname, so it happens about everywhere.

Vis – How to digest information to the public? Connection between researchers and artistic world. Ministry of education could set up an award for music, poems, plays, paintings etc that discuss cultural heritage issues.

Janga – in the Netherland Antilles there is a lack of researchers and research. So all that is done must have a follow-up, must have a practical reason. There are priorities: what kind of research is needed? Developing lands have different matters to deal with.

Monteiro – intangible culture research also deals with material sources, archival sources etc. The point is: what is our aim with intangible cultural heritage research? There is a question of preservation. Maybe the proposition should be that we make known this variety, diverse manifestations of culture, and we should not interfere.

Da Silva – Intangible culture is an important part of material culture.

Janga – *Giving back* should be seen broader – the whole world should benefit from it.

Hernandez – We talk about new technologies, but old technologies are disappearing and the research results that were registered that way are endangered.

Oostindie – The latter is a matter of money and priorities.

Galindo – example of microfilms in Pernambuco that were brought from Holland in the 50s and 60s and that now are almost unusable.

Scriwantek – Before doing research we must have a list of priorities, and that list must include intangible culture.

13.35 – Discussion on challenges and pitfalls in their own fields and/or countries. Maybe problems in combining public and private.

Hagan – In Ghana, there is lack of expertise and money. Most projects are handled by the government and therefore are not as effective as they would be if handled by the private sector. Even tourism sector is highly dependent on government funds. About the Joseph project.

Gehring – Tells everyone about how he started working with New Netherlands issues, in a translation project in Albany. His biggest problem was, and is, that once he became successful in raising money from non-government sources, the state stopped financing him. So they spend 40% of the time raising money for the project.

Hefting – Pitfall in Brazil when doing the Atlas of Dutch Brazil project. He speaks to several people but sometimes they do not like each other and therefore break the connection with the researcher. Another pitfall in Brazil is the fact that few people there speak English and many are either illiterate or have no access to information. So maybe using a lingua franca like English is not enough and one must come up multi-lingual materials.

Scriwantek – In the National Archives in Curaçao (Netherlands Antilles) research is done commercially too, that is, a third party pays to have specific researches done and the NA in turn uses the money to finance their own projects. These private tasks are done by NA employees in their spare time and they get 40% of the price of the task as payment. The rest of the money goes to NA.

Hagan – The government must take the lead in initiatives.

? (sitting next to Alex)– That was the true in Suriname in the past but now it is necessary to relay on private initiatives. Nobody comes when there is no immediate danger.

Hernandez – We use the example of Suriname in Aruba. Government must take responsibility (?).

Scriwantek – Bring the archives to the attention of society. Archives everywhere are now foundations or have a friends-of-the-archive foundation, which is able to buy items in auction for example.

Gehring – These foundations are sometimes used for money laundry but they are the solution for archives to move money around and get around obstacles made by state's rules on spending money.

Monteiro – Same thing happens in Brazilian archives: “friends of” associations.

Janga – lack of people to do the work.

Monteiro – Dividing the world into public and private spheres is problematic. We must think about partnerships. Example: NGOs, third sector organizations that help to bridge the

gap between government and private institutions and individuals. We maybe also want to think about directing the results of the researches not only towards the academic public but also to a broader public like schools etc.

14.21 – What to bring to the next session?

Have an equal balanced relationship and always see both sides (so not in a post-colonial kind of approach). Have an attitude of working together and respect what is going on in the other countries and their different methods.

Try to find the right people for partnerships.

Suggestion (Hefting): have another meeting like this five years from now. Keep in contact and try to support one another in the future (bridge to the next session).

14.28 – Short Summary

Continue the discussion on authenticity.

Accessibility was a major issue in the discussion – accessibility to the people, to the resources, the sources, the languages, the information (platforms).

Giving back: what is giving back? What and in what form and to whom? Can it be endangering?

List of priorities.

One must be very much aware of the partnerships they make but partnerships are essential in all cases.

Successes and pitfalls: find creative ways to combine public and private. For example through friends of associations.

Dos [and Don'ts]: make partnerships, link initiatives, equal balance between people involved.

Session 3 (group 1) – 14.48

14.50 – Recommendations from the second session (from the moderator):

Discussion about claims of authenticity, that may sometimes be frauds.

Accessibility of sources, resources, information, language. Solution would be to form platforms to exchange information etc.

Link private and public sector, link projects, link people.

Always try to find counterparts within your research areas, always try to find partnerships but be careful in doing so.

Use danger – people tend to pay more attention to things endangered.

Always be in equal footing with the people you partner with.

Be aware of continuity – try not to let projects die out.

Recommendations from the second session (group):

They split up in two groups and therefore have two reports. Both discussed material heritage.

Organize an Atlantic community through AWAD to communicate about all questions that there may arise.

Standardization. If we are working in common projects we must find standard patterns to be able to work together.

15.00 – Discussion continues from last session on accessibility. Suggestions on possible accessibility tools.

Ashton – Archives, Museums, Research, Universities etc have very different research tools and languages so one must be able to operate in all those fields.

Kortlang – People who come from different countries to do research in the Netherlands must master a number of different techniques to be able to conduct their projects: Dutch language, ancient Dutch language, ancient Dutch handwriting, plus all the archival and librarian tools.

Suzanne – AWAD website could have a “how-to” link with information on how to practically deal with researching in specific libraries, archives etc.

Kortlang – The AWAD website could indeed provide more research guides. Also information on what has already been done or what is being done at present time.

den Heijer – This website should include things like keywords, places where certain documents are kept etc.

Mariana – Example of own research and time spent to figure out how archives and libraries work in the Netherlands.

Ashton – AWAD could have a glossary of terms in its website. Also a dos and don'ts list, a list of possible cooperators, standardization of terms so that people from different countries can understand each other's works (like measuring system etc).

Alex van Stipriaan – Don't wait for AWAD to do things. Do it yourselves if and when possible. Also AWAD needs information from you.

15.18 – Everyone tells in a round what to do (and not to do) when conducting research in their countries.

Suzanna – In Saba the community is quite used to having researchers come to their island. On the other hand, they have become skeptical of the researchers. Contact the government and make sure everybody knows you are coming.

Egger – In Suriname language can be a problem; practical health issues like dengue and malaria

Baku – In Ghana start connections and making a safe and trustworthy network before going there, so once you arrive you know where to go and what to do. Foreign researchers can easily be exploited by locals who want to take advantage of them.

Rose – In Guyana, get in touch in advance: you will learn how to get visa, best hospitals, pharmacies, supermarkets, working hours, cost of photocopy, ideas on archives and research possibilities, contacts with professors and other researchers.

Blijden – You can't do the research yourself so you must go and ask for it and someone will copy the material for you.

den Heijer – In the Netherlands one must first contact a colleague in the country. Find out how archives are organized in the Netherlands.

Alofs – In Aruba there is a Unesco Report on museums, collections, archives etc. One should start by reading this.

Puntoni – In Brazil, contact IPHAN when doing research on intangible culture. A general advice would be to contact the university and remember that the country is very big so conditions differ from one place to the other – choose the place your research would mostly profit from. There is a national database on researchers and that is a good place to start – search works, professors, researchers etc. It is the “plataforma lattes” (one can find it either through www.google.com.br or in a link in the website www.cnpq.br).

Ashton – In the US, exploit personal connections and the internet.

Palacios – For Venezuelan intangible heritage, read the report on archival sources Verslag Nationaal Archief (September 2001).

Kortlang – In the Netherlands, do not come in the winter: too cold and many holidays!

15.36 – Division in two groups. Each one must come up with a project.

16.30 – Two groups explain their projects

Group 2:

Migrations of peoples, ideas and goods.

Focus: sugar.

Amsterdam, El Mina, Recife, Nassau, Paramaribo, New York.

Traveling exhibition.

Financing: governments, sugar industries, Unesco, EU.

Group 1:

Interactions between Indigenous Peoples and the Dutch

Recife, El Mina,

Traveling Exhibition

16.41 - Conclusion:

Tomorrow we should present both projects as complementary.

Presenters: Suzanne and Ashton for group 1, J. Egger for group 2.