Re/Commoning Cultural Heritage

Places, territories, sites, artifacts, practices and knowledge that constitute cultural heritage are common goods and are vital to people's understanding of their past, present and future. However, uncommoning of such commons has been omnipresent throughout history in Latin America. Through colonialist and/or capitalist practices of dispossession, looting and illegitimate appropriation but also through neglect and forgetting, many indigenous societies and local groups don't have access to their heritage. The exclusion of indigenous people from their sacred sites, the presence of illegitimately acquired artifacts in European museums and the misappropriation of autochthonous design in the fashion industry are drastic examples of such processes. Today, various stakeholders are increasingly organizing initiatives to (re)common culturally significant valuables, whether for specific groups or humanity in general. Community-based tourism for the autonomous management of heritage sites, demands for the restitution of cultural artifacts by indigenous communities and decolonizing efforts with museums are prominent examples. Such struggles for (re)commoning heritage are informed by diverse and often contrasting notions of "commons", as well as by different approaches and strategies that often have to be negotiated – even within the same project.

This edition of boasblog puts a focus on these processes and invites blogposts that discuss the political dimensions of cultural heritage in Latin America.

Key themes include:

Conceptions of heritage as common good: Contributions may engage with the question of what different conceptions of heritage as "common" exist in terms of ownership (to whom does it belong?) and access (to whom should access be guaranteed?). We also welcome contributions that deal with critical and controversial aspects of (re)commoning cultural heritage e.g. in the context of

nationalism, tourism or digitalization.

Visions of (re)commoning heritage: Contributions may discuss various approaches to sharing, revitalizing or reusing cultural heritage as well as strategies to open and expand access to cultural heritage – whether already in place or currently in development. Examples include hybrid modes of access to translocated pieces of material culture, the reinterpretation of places, memories, or things through artistic interventions or their revitalization through ritual use.

Practice of (re)commoning heritage: Contributions may address practical experience of (re)commoning heritage, which often involve negotiations or clashes about different ideas, approaches and strategies. We especially welcome first-hand accounts from museum professionals as well as from non-museum experts such as local or religious communities, artists, heritage activists etc.

Contributions can be presented as texts but also as audiovisual contents. Written contributions should have a length of 1500-3000 words accompanied by a picture as teaser (please refer to the stylesheet). Please send your entries via email to Hoffmann.Bea@gmx.de, simon.hirzel@fu-berlin.de and eriko.yamasaki@uni-marburg.de.

We are looking forward to your visions and stories of (re)commoning cultural heritage in Latin America!

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