

Transnational Island Museologies



Materials for discussion

Edited by
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ICOFOM Materials for Discussion

Transnational island museologies

ICOFOM MATERIALS FOR DISCUSSION

This publication brings together papers submitted for the 47th symposium organised by ICOFOM under the theme Transnational Island Museologies, to be held at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, 5-7 June, 2024.

The Materials for Discussion collection brings together, in an inclusive spirit, contributions selected for the symposium in the form of short articles, to prepare the ICOFOM Symposium. This publication has been made available before the symposium, in a very short time frame. In spite of the care given to the publication, some mistakes may remain.

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Introduction:

Transnational island museologies

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While islands are conventionally associated with romantic ideas of local distinctiveness and isolation, many small islands share the growing problems of coastal erosion through rising sea levels and storm intensification, as well as economic recession, depopulation and unsustainable tourism development. The Transnational Island Museologies conference being held at the University of St Andrews in Scotland 5th to 7th June 2024 takes its cue from the theme of the research project Shared Island Stories between Scotland and the Caribbean: Past, Present, Future, and the Call for Papers for which grew out of a strategic meeting with our project research team and advisors that took place on the Isle of Arran in March 2023. The conference and this issue of Materials for Discussion have since grown into a generative collaboration between the project and the International Council of Museums museology group committee – ICOFOM – working together to deepen the discussion on ways to unearth hidden stories and entangled spaces in emerging transnational island museologies.

Shared Island Stories between Scotland and the Caribbean: Past, Present, Future investigates relationships between the archipelagos of Scotland and the Caribbean. Drawing on history, heritage studies, sustainable development, art history and memory studies, the project asks:

- Which collections from the islands tell unfinished stories of empire?
- What is the role of heritage communities in sustainable development?
- How can island community museums partner with NGOs, policy and local organisations and businesses for climate action?
- How can health and well-being be understood in relation to community heritage, traditional ecological knowledge and island life?
- What does this new knowledge bring to debates on climate justice, especially as they relate to the role of youth?

In this way, the Transnational Island Museologies conference is seeking to reflect on the role of museum practice and theory with regard to some of the most pressing ecological issues of our times by sharing knowledge from around the globe on the realities that affect remote, island and coastal communities.

This volume is organised around two main axes:

(Part 1) Indigenous and traditional knowledge, environment and intergenerational transmission;

(Part 2) Hidden stories, entangled spaces: thinking through transnational coastal and island museologies.

Internationally, there is growing recognition of the wisdom of Indigenous and native knowledge in relation to climate resilience and the preservation of human and biodiversity. However, while Indigenous biocultural diversity is increasingly valued, it is also being eroded at alarming rates. The essays in Part 1 are dedicated to building knowledge around relationships between traditional ecological knowledge and museology, recognising the value of museums and heritage sites in remote, island and coastal communities as the loci of research and encounters for understanding adaptation to climate change through time.

Through them, we seek to better understand ways in which such traditional knowledge is influencing academia and public policies from a global perspective. At the same time, intergenerational transfer of traditional knowledge helps to safeguard identities and memories at risk of being lost, and museum and heritage sites can be focal points for this work by offering opportunities for people from different generations to engage with their heritage, thus strengthening their sense of identity and place. In seeking to move towards an ecological museology in times of climate emergency, we consider the research questions:

- What is the role of community heritage in achieving local sustainability?
- How can global well-being be understood in relation to community heritage?
- How can rural, island and coastal community museums partner with NGOs, policymakers and local organisations and businesses for climate action?
- What can Indigenous heritage and traditional knowledge in rural, coastal and island areas teach us about resilience in the face of climate change, biodiversity loss and coastal erosion?
- In what ways can museums and heritage sites work with local biodiversity, language and the unique nature of places towards local resilience?
- What are the challenges and opportunities in engaging with the sustainability debates from an environmental humanities perspective, notably oceanic theories?
- What does intergenerational transmission of Indigenous and traditional knowledge bring to debates on climate justice, especially as they relate to the role of young people?
- How can the elderly be best valued as a resource for preserving memories of environmental and cultural change? How might their memories be used?

Bringing together the disciplines of history, art history, museum and heritage studies, memory studies and sustainable development, we seek to make sense of land ownership, extraction and innovative community-based governance on archipelagos that are intertwined through oceanic travel and troubled shared histories.

Part 2 seeks to acknowledge the power differentials between different islands, such as Scotland and the Caribbean, which were subject to rapid ecological change through colonialism or clearances. For this theme, we have welcomed new scholarship that pushes the boundaries of museology through cross-disciplinary approaches, including by re-reading Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery*, and by asking:

- How can island collections tell lesser-known transnational stories, nuancing the formation of such complex relationships?
- How can we contest histories through relevant archives, such as revealing hidden histories through stories of everyday life?
- What agencies are entangled with mobility and displacement, for example sharing knowledge transnationally, using exchange as a form of resilience?
- In what ways can island life and creativity probe how the margin can act as a space of creativity and resilience, and how has this been done in the past (including by eco-feminist approaches relating to care and healing practices)?

This volume opens with articles that stress the urgency of sustainable museum practice and offer guidance through case studies based on various national and institutional contexts. Holly Bynoe presents *Sanctuary After a Storm*, a collaborative, psychosocial healing initiative organised by the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas in Nassau, New Providence, to address some of the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Dorian (2019). In her article, Heloisa Helena F.G. da Costa analyses the preservation of Indigenous and African peoples' traditions in the Ilha dos Frades in the Bay of All Saints, and the islands of Grande and Porto do Campo in the Bay of Camamu, Brazil. Ana Katurić concentrates on the Croatian Coral Centre Zlarin's efforts to protect the island's fragile marine ecosystem and the endangered red coral. Patricia Lopez-Sanchez Cervantes reflects on her role as Director of Museum Na Bolom, in Chiapas, Mexico. She discusses the museum's endeavour to preserve the natural heritage of the highlands and the Lacandon Jungle, particularly through growing trees in local school nurseries. This paper highlights the importance of adopting a circular knowledge model in museum practice. Alexandra Bounia considers three small museums in Lesbos, Greece, as she investigates their micro-museological practices and the essential part these play in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and the cultural sustainability of the islands' communities. Leilani Wong's case study of the ecomuseum Te Fare Natura in the Moorea volcanic island of French Polynesia explores the museum's bottom-up, place-based approach, its support for the recovery, preservation and transmission of the community's traditional environmental knowledge and culture and the participation of young locals as guides.

Issues of tangible and intangible heritage preservation are central to several contributions. Carolina Guerrero Reyes and Jairzinho Panqueba Cifuentes examine the current practice of the ancient Mesoamerican rubber ball game and its significance to the players' sense of cultural identity. Fiona Mackenzie's article offers insight into folklorists John Lorne Campbell and Margaret Fay Shaw's lifework dedication to preserving Gaelic song and story. Mackenzie considers issues of access to their private sound archive, owned by the National Trust for Scotland and the legacy of Diuram, a transatlantic Gaelic lullaby. The following article by Laura Felicitas Sabel Coba, Peter Rawitscher and the Organización Gonawindúa Tayrona del Pueblo Kággaba delves into the material cultural heritage of the Tairona's descendants in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia and its dispersion across European and North American museums. Their study concentrates on the significant epistemological consequences of the objects' translocation and argues for a museum shift towards planetary protection. Javier Pereda, Alexander Sanchez Diaz and Patricia Murrieta Flores's article presents their efforts to improve Nahua codices digital accessibility and decolonise

computational processes. They elaborate on their research project's development of various tools and the challenges of integrating complex cultural knowledge with computational workflows.

Another group of articles addresses climate change from various perspectives. Cinzia Calzolari considers the threat it poses to historical buildings in New Caledonia. Jamie Allan Brown's contribution presents collaborative research initiatives that respond to youth-led movements' demands for museums to address the existential threat of climate change. He discusses the Shared Island Stories project's transnational youth exchange, ICOFOM's youth workshop series and the co-development of a youth-focused toolkit, all of which empower young people to become changemakers for cultural protection in the face of the climate crisis. Althea Davies, Nina Laurie, and Tania Mendo's research focuses on communities on the north coast of Peru and their perception of El Niño Southern Oscillation as an opportunity to make use of the water available for their farming and fishing (in contrast to dominant disaster narratives). Their article presents their project's use of intergenerational storytelling and a student-led school museum to foster communities' awareness of their climate resilience heritage and disaster preparedness. Plant blindness is Hannah Reid Ford's central concern as a significant challenge to sustainable development in the Cayman Islands. As an antidote, her article underlines the need to increase plant awareness by reactivating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). The final article in this section, by Sharon Pisani and Alan Miller, explores the use of digital cultural landscapes to preserve and promote Mediterranean heritage. Pisani and Miller advocate a collaborative approach and propose digital exhibition design components, such as the recreation of the landscape, digitised artefacts and oral traditions and recorded traditional practices.

The second part of this volume begins with several contributions that consider contemporary art interventions in museum spaces. Karen Jacobs examines the display of artwork by Teresa Regina and Yuki Kihara in Oceanic regional museums holding historical collections. She argues that the artists' perspectives have extended the scope of their host institutions to address climate injustice. Calling for a reappraisal of the periphery as a productive space, William Helfrecht's article explores the cultural significance of maps for Caymanian artists dealing with issues of identity. Clémence Foisy-Marquis analyses the curation of *Like ships in the night* by Caroline Monnet, a filmmaker and artist of Anishabe and French ancestry from the island of Montreal, Canada, presenting the installation's journey through several European and North American institutions and looking into decolonial curatorial strategies that encourage encounters between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. The following essay by Clémentine Debrosse concentrates on recent exhibitions of the work of George Nuku, an artist of Māori and Scottish-German ancestry, at the Musée Hébreu de Saint Clément in Rochefort, France, and the Weltmuseum Wien in Vienna. Debrosse discusses Nuku's reworking of a series of taonga ('ancestral treasures') and illustrations from nineteenth-century expeditions and his critical retelling of entangled Māori and European (hi)stories. The contribution by Amanda Guzmán investigates how archipelagic thinking may inform collection-based work in Puerto Rican museums. Drawing from Pablo Delano's site-specific installation series, *The Museum of the Old Colony*, Guzmán proposes a reparative framing of museum spaces. Another perspective on Puerto Rican museum practice is offered by Alejandra Núñez Piñero, who examines the relationship between public awareness of Aboriginal heritage and the institutions' display of human remains.

Some participants have chosen to scrutinise collecting practices. Sarah Longair examines colonial collecting from western Indian Ocean Islands under British imperial control. By presenting two key examples – Maldivian woven mats and water carriers from the Seychelles – she elucidates the intersections between Indian Ocean insularity, connectivity, and colonial knowledge production. Briony Widdis and Emma Reisz focus on the contested legacies of empire in private and public collections across Ireland and Northern Ireland. Their study sheds light on how these legacies reflect the island’s divisions but also surface other unexpected and shared narratives. Marion Bertin and Marianne Tissandier’s object of study is an inventory of Kanak heritage from New Caledonia dispersed in museums around the world. This article presents the inventory (IPKD) as a case study to address the issue of transnational entanglement.

Another shared topic that emerged from the participants’ submissions is the concern with collective memory and difficult knowledge. Heather Cateau’s article investigates the economic interconnections between the Scottish islands and highlands and the Caribbean between the 1750s and the 1830s. By reassembling the fragments of a shared history, Cateau illuminates the changed lived reality of working and middle-income communities on both sides of the Atlantic. Henry Harding’s essay focuses on a museum on the island of Delma in the United Arab Emirates, considering communities’ selective shaping of their collective memory. While the island’s involvement in the pearling industry during the 19th century is acknowledged as significant to the coastal community’s identity, this case study explores debt patronage and slavery as forgotten or hidden stories within the museum’s narrative. Hsu Chuchun concentrates on the commemoration of White Terror in Taiwan. This paper provides insight into the landscape and environment of Lü Dao (Green Island) and explores alternatives that do not rely on monuments. The following article by Inmaculada Real López addresses the preservation of intangible heritage related to severe human rights violations. Her study draws attention to the limitations of the #MemoriasSituadas project proposed by the CIPDH-UNESCO to visualise how different communities deal with their traumatic pasts. Real López examines the remembrance of slavery in different museum contexts on the island of Curaçao, a small island territory of the Netherlands. Similar concerns arise in the essay by Gönül Bozoğlu, focused on the memory and heritage of Greek communities of the Turkish Island of Gökçeada. She examines the heritage and memory practices amidst the negotiation of tense geopolitical relations, a history of displacement and suppression, and the contested conditions of return. Lisa Williams examines Scottish galleries changing approach to issues of race, class and violence, and grapples with museums’ ill-defined concepts of ‘political’, ‘free speech’ and ‘anti-racism’. She discusses recent examples, including Alberta Whittle’s large-scale solo exhibition *Creating Dangerously* at the National Galleries (2023) and its policy of care, extended to the artist, museum staff and audiences. Branko Šuštar then investigates museum narratives that transcend national and linguistic boundaries in the coastal towns of northern Istria, Slovenia, some of which deal with politically sensitive histories.

Several authors investigate current ecological challenges. Indrani Battacharya offers insight into the Sundarbans, a coastal delta in West Bengal, India. Her article presents an overview of the mangrove forest’s rich biodiversity (best known as the home of the royal Bengal tiger), the area’s cultural heritage, and the impact of climate change. Sakshi Jain focuses on museum practice in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal. Jain’s article presents the Zonal Anthropological Museum as a case study devoted to the local tribal communities, colonial history, and cultural interaction.

The following case study by Ayesha Keshani presents the Sarawak Museum in Malaysian Borneo. Keshani considers archipelagic museology to discuss the museum's historical engagement with turtles during a transitional period that marked the beginning of vast deforestation. This second part of the Materials concludes with the essay by Ary Sulistyono, M. Ismail Fahreza, Teuku M. Rizki R., Nofa Farida Lestari and Sriwulantuty Rizkiningsih. Their research highlights the need to sustainably preserve archaeological remains in Onrust and its surrounding islands in Jakarta Bay, Indonesia, as they are facing natural abrasion due to rising sea levels. The authors propose adopting an ecomuseum approach to respond to these current challenges, which will form the basis of a discussion in-conference led by Peter Davis.

This year (2024) marks the 80th anniversary of Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery*. On this occasion, Heather Cateau has invited Lorna Steele Mc Ginn, Stephen Mullen, Diana Paton and Henderson Carter to respond to the book and consider, in particular, the perspectives from which history has been written, preserved and presented. The think pieces compiled here provide a preliminary framework for a more extensive discussion on current issues of historical representation and heritage preservation.

In this transnational volume, the authors share their unique insights into some of the most pressing issues in museology today. Not all participants at our upcoming conference, including some keynote and invited speakers, have contributed to this publication, but the Materials for Discussion is meant to foster in-depth and inspiring conversations between participants who will be meeting at St Andrews. We hope these thought-provoking articles will also reach a wider audience of museum professionals dealing with shared concerns, especially those working in island contexts.

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Part I:
**Indigenous and traditional knowledge,
environment, and intergenerational transmission**

Sanctuary After the Storm: A toolkit of repair work for Caribbean museums

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Community offerings and gatherings can break the spell of coloniality, the daze of cognitive dissonance, alienation, and ‘the cult of the individual’ that have endured and haunted the psychospiritual grounding of people across the Caribbean since the dawn of the transatlantic slave trade. In what follows, I foreground my experience as Chief Curator and ideator for Sanctuary After the Storm, a collaborative psychosocial healing initiative piloted by the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB) in Nassau, New Providence, during the aftermath of catastrophic Category 5 Hurricane Dorian in 2019. My contention in this process has been that Caribbean cultural institutions are tasked with listening deeply to their tangible and intangible environments to come to terms with the shifting needs of the human and more-than-human worlds in which they coexist. As stewards of heritage, culture, and memory, can these institutions afford to look away from aspects of care, healing and rematriation that are essential components in the wake of the “permacrisis” (Turnbull, 2022)?

In shallow seas

During the last decade, there have been powerful upwellings of psychosocial, creative, and activist practices that are highlighting the need for urgent strategies across the Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean region as the public grapples with the gargantuan task of reparative justice and decolonisation while sitting on the frontlines of climate injustice (Ferguson, 2019). Moving beyond what now seems like the social media trend of armchair activism, aspects of anti-colonialism and decolonisation are much like faith—without work and action, dead. If these neologisms are to function in a living and tangible way to mitigate and provide remediation possibilities for human and more-than-human worlds residing in low-lying archipelagic and very vulnerable island territories, then, indeed, collective action in all its iterations and wholeness must also upwell itself.¹

From the late 19th century until today, The Bahamas continues to be a testing ground for advancing the perimeters of the tourism product (Moore, 2019). Neo-colonial approaches and strategies within the financial, investment and tourism sectors have become unsustainable with the exploitation and extraction of environmental resources and human capital, causing nationwide ecosystem precarity. The Bahamas also continues to contend with the enduring vestiges of colonial machinery, and nowhere is this felt more than within the collective national psyche. Francophone philosophers Glissant and Fanon argue that the essence of colonisation disconnects people from their innate sense of self, from goodness, and from self-determination (Glissant, 1997; Fanon, 1952). This thinking

¹ Upwelling refers to cold water moving from depths to the surface area of a body of water. Within alternative healing practices upwelling is a mindful approach which raises aspects of energy leading to a swelling up life force. In many traditions it is a mirrored practice to heal alienation and trauma.

reinforces the original wound of separateness, legitimising post-enlightenment values valorising the cult of the individual over the holding space of community.

The psychospiritual traumas of colonialism continue to be enduring, reproducing scaffolds of hyper-individualism and widespread (dis)ease (Nicolas & Wheatley, 2013). The challenge of decolonising the mind and arbitrating for aspects of care in institutions – when neoliberal environments negate efforts such as introspecting, reflecting, healing, and connecting – remains the crucial work at hand. Creating safe and brave spaces to explore elements of trust, mutuality, and care is the pioneering work ahead for Caribbean museums if they are to remain change-making, adaptable, and ready to convene with the work of justice.

Sanctuary After the Storm

The NAGB was founded in 2003, and during its adolescent years faced many growing pains in its effort to designate itself as a safe and brave space to Bahamians living in its vicinity across the urban areas of downtown New Providence. Located on the border of the ‘nation’s navel’, the communities of Bain and Grants Town—historically significant political and revolutionary communities—double as two of the most underserved urban areas and remain challenged as social precarities continue to impact livelihoods. The surrounding communities saw the colonial architecture of Villa Doyle, felt its contested history, and had living memories of it being private property, many concluding that the space was not made for them. This feeling of marginality and diminution felt by the communities was acute due to long-standing colonial lines and classism, further impacted by gentrification and the overwhelming scar of tourism on the nation’s capital (Mayntz, 2024).²

On September 1, 2019, Hurricane Dorian neared the Abacos and stalled over Grand Bahama for an unprecedented 72 hours with whopping 185 mph winds. The slow-moving catastrophic system brought devastating sea surges up to 20 feet sweeping over swathes of cays, islets, and communities, exacerbated by the “king tide” (Avila et al., 2020, p 6). We watched persistent storm surge rip away homes, store fronts, vehicles, and cays as the live stories of climbing through attics and breaking down doors flooded in from artists across the Abacos. Together and almost immediately, the staff of the NAGB cast a vote to care for their communities. Leaning into the cautionary tales of disaster capitalism, we devised a care campaign addressing mental health, wellness, and psychological dissociation across our shared island spaces.

Sanctuary After the Storm was a co-creative civic and healing psychosocial initiative developed to support New Providence-based communities and those affected in Grand Bahama and the Abacos, creating access to alternative modes of healing through art therapy; individual, family, and community therapy sessions; public fora; wellness and meditation workshops; along with more esoteric energy work brought forward by diasporic-based practitioners.³ The initiative highlighted

² Nassau, New Providence is one of the most popular cruise ports in the Caribbean with over four million passengers visiting in 2023, breaking the previous record set in 2019.

³ The Bahamas’ coloniality is rooted in Christianity, with its social welfare modelled after a faith system which can be viewed as re-traumatising and marginalising. This project was ground-breaking because it provided expansive emotional and spiritual support and was not based solely on the church’s power, which is rare, especially after a crisis.

the critical engagements that region-based institutions and Caribbean island nations struggle with while illuminating the need for care, love-centred modalities, intimacy and social mediation. In collaboration with Bahamian, regional and global communities of carers and healers, the institution was able to fund, produce, coordinate and co-facilitate a constellation of offerings to those impacted, bringing a sense of belonging and normalcy, relief, and respite.

Seven social workers and mental health professionals were invited to lead the collaborative effort and facilitated with staff open forums to chart both urgent and short-term programs for the aftermath of recovery. Crisis management was offered to first responders with an emphasis on the Bahamas Defence Force; open therapy blocks for individuals and families were offered on site, at shelters and facilitated across the affected territories of Grand Bahama and the Abacos; and several open mics and drumming nights were held for the displaced Haitian and Haitian-Bahamian youth from Abacos. The institution collaborated with artists, poets and griots, therapists, chefs, tour companies, the University of The Bahamas, and The Goodness Tour—a global collective of activists, muralists, artists, songwriters, and musicians—to amplify hopeful images and social programming across broken buildings and sites of unprocessed loss.⁴

These were coupled with free Wellness Sunday sessions, with mindfulness meditation and yoga along with programming specifically geared towards younger children. We worked with long-time Grand Bahama resident and Scottish art therapist Susan Moir McKay, and with the University of The Bahamas to devise a plan of care and recuperation for youth called ‘Create Space.’ The most surprising collaboration came in the form of Healing Hands Bahamas, a trio headed by Bahamian poet and shamanic practitioner Helen Klonaris. Exhibition galleries were transformed into healing rooms to facilitate the laying on of hands, and over two weeks the team trained on-the-ground practitioners who had previous energy medicine skills to retool and accompany them to work across shelters. Their work culminated in a public lecture, compassionate listening circle, and a community workshop entitled Imagining Refuge and Resiliency, where the displaced, their families, and others in need were able to be with their communities and express their feelings in a place of safety.

The NAGB’s visitorship comprised of 70-80% foreign visitors, with local numbers growing sluggishly but steadily, welcoming six to nine thousand people annually. Sanctuary After the Storm programming ran for four months and impacted the lives of over 2000 Bahamians and Haitians, 90% of whom had never entered the institution’s campus prior to these offerings.

Conclusion: The repair work

What new knowledge did Sanctuary After the Storm deliver to the institution for it to review its inner workings and ways of being? Firstly, be in context with your care: develop practical and theoretical engagements that rekindle old knowledge and skills to help communities reimagine their places, bodies, and minds as ‘climate change prepared.’ A part of, rather than apart from. Second, honour interconnectedness: recognizing the interrelation of the human and more-than-human

⁴ The NAGB to date has been challenged with maintaining its archive of works and programming thus impacting the museum’s ability to tell its story and community impacts in an impartial and chronological manner. A partial archive for Sanctuary After The Storm can be found here: <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/sanctuaryafterthestorm/>

world will revitalise learning systems. Think about the ecosystem of relationality and the space of the museum like the deep floor of the ocean, where there are thousands of not-yet-discovered species with elevated consciousness that we can build mutuality with. Nurture the unity in the submarine (Brathwaite, 1975).

Thirdly, rest: think about the institution like fallow land – know when it is rewilding, when new species and ideas are emerging, what is of benefit or of threat. Without time to observe what is present you might be ploughing over fertile seeds of deeper care and decolonisation. Fourth, breed polycultures: work to heal the severed relationships with disparate local communities, collectives, and agents of care. Sit with the discomfort and trouble of unknowing and being challenged. Finally, nourish and welcome the death cycle: take on the role of stewards within an ecosystem, to be composters nurturing generational cycles of livingness, ideation, and play.

Inviting communities to participate, build, and take ownership in non-transactional, mutual, and experimental ways ensured that the public's needs were heard, actioned on, and integrated. This was essential to the widespread success of the venture, where the institution took the risk of paving the way for strategies of decolonisation like care, embodiment, and justice to move without entrapment, dramatically shifting its relationship to the urgent realities and sombre deficits made visible by the climate emergency—perhaps even cunningly revealing the hubris of being unsinkable on a hill surrounded by shallow seas.

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Indigenous and African Traditions on Islands in the Sea of Bahia / Brazil

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The state of Bahia, in the Northeast region of Brazil, is privileged to have two large bays, each with numerous islands. The Bay of All Saints / Kirimurê, the second largest bay in the world, has 56 islands. In the Bay of Camamu, the third largest bay in Brazil and the second largest in the state, there are 63 islands. This research identifies two spatial situations, with similar characteristics in terms of geographical, demographic, historical, and cultural aspects. I refer to the Ilha dos Frades in the Bay of All Saints and to the islands of Grande and Porto do Campo, in the Bay of Camamu, for preserving cultural traditions of Indigenous and African peoples. These islands, populated since the 16th century by Indigenous nations and since the 17th century by African populations, are trying to work with colonial inheritances and their hidden stories and memories, which are gradually being recovered through diversified educational and cultural activities. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis seeking to understand what kind of museological theory and practice could contribute to bringing citizens and their worlds closer together through the process of safeguarding cultural and environmental heritage.

The Bay of Camamu and its islands

The municipality of Camamu is located 335 km from Salvador and is part of the homonymous bay. Among the islands that make up the municipality, Ilha Grande is the largest and most populated in the region; it is about 4 km² and has 1500 inhabitants. The older people are considered guardians of local memory. Between memories and forgetfulness, the residents tell stories of the past in intergenerational dialogs.

Gomes (2006) explains that the region was inhabited by Indigenous people of the Tupinambá nation and the Macamamus. The Portuguese, around 1556, when deciding to occupy Brazilian lands, tried to “colonize and civilize” these Indigenous people and had the support of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), having been these large owners of sugar mills in the region. The 17th century marked the beginning of the slave trade and the formation of “quilombos”, settlements formed by Afro-Brazilians escaping slavery. The region produced coffee, flour, wood, rice, and cocoa. Between 1624 and 1630 the region was heavily invaded by Dutch pirates. The landowners ordered the Indigenous and enslaved black people to block the channels of access to the port with large stones, which prevented, and still prevents to this day, the passage of large boats at low tide.

In studies by Santos (2012), it is understood that many other Indigenous nations were involved by the Jesuits in the colonization process of the Camamu Bay region; in addition to the Tupiniquins and Tupinambás, there were also the Kariris, Paiaiás, and Aimorés. These Indigenous peoples left a legacy of cultural traditions and a history of struggles for resistance and the right to territory, as can

be seen through various memorialist reports still practiced in conversation circles today. The cultural traditions and habits of Indigenous and African ancestors are preserved through conversation circles and celebrations on historical and religious dates; oral history is presented as the methodological reference for the preservation of intangible and environmental heritage, through dialogic practices between generations. Gomes (2008) writes:

In Porto do Campo, a range of attitudes and values is observed that, through processes of resignification, endure over time and were transmitted orally by their ancestors and span generations; they are appropriated by children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren in a continuous process. Among the residents, “bater o dendê”, for instance, means to harvest the dendê and to prepare the oil. When referring to this activity and many others, they usually emphasize that “my father taught me ... my father learned from my grandfather.

Oral transmission is one of the characteristics that becomes essential in the construction of the history of Porto do Campo itself since knowledge and wisdom are constructed beyond writing. Observed in the islands of the Bay of Camamu is a constant informality in the relations of coexistence. Many lands do not have fences; the boundaries are established from references to trees or natural stones along the way. The trees are common heritage so they cannot be cut down or misused. Everyone feels as if they are guardians of this common heritage. The criteria for forming identity extend through concepts of territory and kinship (descending kindred) that induce a sense of belonging to the places through affective memories.

The construction of houses is made in processes that are not aggressive to the environment: masonry of ceramic bricks in the central or higher parts of the islands and, closer to the sea, houses of mud-and-timber (taipa), using clay and wood taken from the site itself.

The income of most of the population is obtained through fishing, gathering shellfish, and the manual collection and preparation of palm oil in the backyard of the house.

There are no public policies in the areas of health and education that reach all the islands. Schools and health posts are still very precarious. For instance, on Ilha Grande a mining company, Baroid Pigmina, was installed, which operated for 50 years in an open pit extracting barite. When it ceased operations, it reforested all the mined spaces with native fauna specimens. The existence of the company meant support and physical improvements to the lives of the islanders; since 1974 they have had treated water, energy, masonry construction systems, a school in a renovated building, a small social club, secure landing, permanent medical service for first aid, and a telephone system, all within the partnership established between the company and local inhabitants, whether employees or not. Yet in Porto do Campo, the daily life of the islanders remains very similar to that of colonial times; there are claims to the municipal mayor's office in Camamu to obtain improvements in support for health, maritime transportation, garbage collection, and the school sector.

However, the attachment to traditions is much stronger in Porto do Campo than on Ilha Grande; the knowledge and skill of craftsmanship is highly valued, such as traditional fishing with traps built by the fishermen; observing and using the tide times, Indigenous and African culinary traditions; the local nomenclature for fauna, flora, and human activities that includes numerous words from

these traditions; the century-old construction of boats at the Cajaíba shipyard in neighboring Porto do Campo. There, the tradition of Naval Masters is a local pride, and the masters are very careful with the use of tools made by themselves or inherited from ancestors. They use the abacus for all calculations. It is a place of great historical, cultural, and technological interest.

What, then, to say about the relationship between universities, scientific knowledge, museology, and heritage preservation in the region of Camamu Bay? Even though there are two federal universities with museology courses (undergraduate and postgraduate), there is currently no involvement with the region, no small museum or cultural center. There are only some lectures on heritage education in Camamu by museologists interested in producing educational actions in regions where intangible heritage has been observed.

Among the most recognised museological postulates, it seems fitting in the islands of Camamu Bay to support an ecological museology originating from the processes of ecomuseums as discussed by Brulon (2015), and Economusée (2017). The islands could unite – within a public policy for health, education, and culture – around the idea of a territory museum, where the collection is the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and the natural landscape is still preserved; the public is the insular community but also involves those who come temporarily for work, tourism, or family visits. The universities could think about the opportunity to create an integrated project, inter/transdisciplinary, which would collaborate with the creation and/or recovery of spaces for collective use made in harmony with each territory. Camamu Bay is one of the most special and beautiful spaces on the planet and it could become a balanced model of social, environmental, and urban requalification, with the innovations being made in proportion to each environment, in permanent dialogue with the existing communities. An ecomuseum concept, in turn, could highlight the knowledge and skills of the ancient technologies still practiced at the Cajaíba shipyard, where the great preciousness is the rich knowledge of manual work and the humanization of production relationships between clients and Naval Masters; these relationships maintain a culture, historicity, and humanity interacting over the centuries.

The Bay of All Saints, or Kirimurê, and its islands

In Salvador, there is the Baia Viva Foundation (FBV), which is “a private law entity, non-profit, created in 1999 by Bahian entrepreneurs aiming to recover, value one of the largest and most representative postcards of the history of Bahia and Brazil – the Bay of All Saints” (Baia Viva). They seek to carry out concrete actions with their own resources for the revitalization of socio-environmental relations and act directly on the Islands of Bom Jesus dos Passos and dos Frades. The main objectives are: to contribute to the urban, social, and environmental requalification of the islands in the region, viewing tourism as the engine for the economic development of much of the communities; to carry out environmental protection of the Bay of All Saints, through care for its islands, by running programs and projects in the area of environmental sanitation (water supply, sewage system, stormwater drainage, and urban cleaning), and by fostering research on the fauna and flora of the region, as well as investigating and denouncing aggressions to the environment. Thus, they partner with public or private entities to create Conservation Units in the islands. On the FBV website, it can be read: “The preservation of the bay, its islands and its surroundings is, without a doubt, the main value of the Baia Viva Foundation. The requalification implemented keeps alive the

history and culture of the region, respecting the limits between maintaining the ecological-cultural heritage of the bay and the need for actions that add value and functionality to it.” Ilha dos Frades has an area of 13,736,739 m²; half of that is preserved and cannot be occupied. The FBV carries out actions to receive visitors for cultural and nautical sports tourism and offers infrastructure for the resident population. It has acted prominently on the sewage and environmental care project and received the Blue Bay seal. It reforested about 150,000 characteristic forest seedlings, in addition to 100,000 coconut seedlings. Most investments made focus on better serving ecological tourism and climate sustainability. By employing new construction technologies and offering training and jobs to the local workforce, FBV has created opportunities for the installation of guesthouses and restaurants, built a secure mooring, restored small churches erected during the colonial period, and they are currently developing a project for the creation of a historical-cultural memorial. In this case, museology presents itself with temporary exhibitions on the history of FBV and themes of local history and culture, but it is not about a community with a sense of belonging to the region. The theoretical and practical model is close to appreciation museology as it occurs in the relationship between museums and audiences around the world.

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Croatian Coral Centre Zlarin: Building the future on the knowledge of the past

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Zlarin, a scenic island on the Croatian coast, is where Croatian Coral Centre Zlarin emerges as a point where heritage, art, science, and environmental advocacy meet. Transcending the conventional approach to the interpretive center, CCCZ is conceptualized as a tool for shifting environmental perspectives. Merging the island's unique atmosphere and rich heritage with art and design, it creates space for connection and exchange between diverse groups and communities, local and international, presenting topics of nature conservation, traditional knowledge, sustainable practices, and current ecological issues in a setting that encourages re-imagining the future. To address the urgency of environmental protection, particularly focusing on fragile marine ecosystems, CCCZ adopted the endangered red coral – the cultural emblem of Zlarin – as its main motif.

Along with approximately 40 other islands and islets, Zlarin is a part of the Šibenik Archipelago, an area of roughly eight square kilometers with 18 km of coastline. Zlarin has been populated since prehistoric times (Dean, 2004). It is located along a historic sailing route connecting the ancient ports of the Adriatic with the wider Mediterranean region. The island benefited from the protective geographical barriers against the hazards of the open sea and the area's many natural landmarks that eased orientation, particularly during eras when sailors relied heavily on oral tradition, cognitive mapping, and other makeshift methods for navigation. Beneficial maritime conditions predisposed strong dependence on the sea, rearing generations of skilled sailors, with the island's port serving as a gateway for the arrival of goods and novelties but also a point of many departures (Dean, 2004).

Knowledge of the sea

Since ancient times, people have been fascinated by coral; its elusive nature only heightened its value, driving coral harvesters to develop meticulous techniques of extraction. The relationship between the harvesters and the sea was a precarious one, as deep sea water was the source of both life and death. This relationship of respect towards the sea has largely been lost due to rapid technological developments of the last few decades and is now being replaced by the illusion of humanity's omnipotent power over nature.

The history of coral harvesting on Zlarin (and beyond) was marked by regulations, boundaries, and market controls, causing frequent clashes between the local harvesters and the ruling Venetian bureaucracy. After the decline of Venice and the easing of restrictions, two local families of coral harvesters, Beban and Makale, took the reins and expanded the harvesting territory to the entire Adriatic (Dean, 2004). An extraction tool, the *inženj*, was a heavy contraption consisting of two wooden pieces arranged in a configuration resembling St Andrew's cross. For the tool to sink more easily, a stone weighing approximately 50 kg was hung at its central point, and large collection

nets (*borsuni*) were attached at the ends of four arms spanning four to five meters. Coordinating the harvesting process with this tool required teamwork and the guidance of an experienced leader; the entire crew collaborated to drag the tool, dredging the seabed to break off coral branches and ensnare them in the nets. This technique was detrimental for both harvesters and marine ecosystems: it was extremely physically demanding, causing exhaustion and frequent muscle tear injuries (PM Rec Sardinia, 2012), and it was damaging to coral habitats. Additionally, its efficiency was limited, as many broken-off corals remained in the sea with only a fraction of the catch making it to the surface. While the use of the *inženj* was arduous and often unproductive, with days and seasons passing before the crew made a significant catch, it persisted until modern diving equipment rendered it obsolete. Zlarinians focused their efforts on exploring coral-rich sites within their archipelago, but their quests often led them to the waters of today's Montenegro and beyond, towards Greece (Dean, 2004). Extensive sailing journeys demanded profound knowledge of weather patterns and adept use of winds to maximize sailing speed. The nautical skills of the Zlarinians also led many of them across the globe to South America and Punta Arena, at the southernmost point, where they sailed for many generations (Dean, 2004).

Harvesters exchanged insights on their locations and discussed techniques for discovering new ones, as once-exploited areas were barren for a long time due to the slow regeneration process of corals. Gathering this knowledge was an intergenerational effort, continually refined and passed down from father to son. Spirit of community and collaboration between the islanders surpassed even the most stubborn disagreements – as the use of *inženj* was scaring away flocks of fish, the relationship between fishermen and harvesters was often fraught with tension, but they would still inform each other of the presence of catch. To memorize the locations, harvesters relied on natural landmarks, known as *sinjali* (signs), such as mountains, rocks, or other distinctive features that eased orientation in the vast sea horizon. Felicije Vukov, a renowned coral harvester from Zlarin, meticulously documented coral-rich sites in the Adriatic Sea in his notebook. He cherished it until his passing, after which it was entrusted to a local professional diver who subsequently donated it to the Centre where it is now displayed.

Knowledge of the land

Unlike the monocultural focus on tourism that dominates economies of coasts and islands today, pragmatic and savvy islanders of the past utilized sometimes scarce natural resources thoughtfully, ensuring sustainability by diversifying sources of sustenance. Zlarin's land fed its people as much as the sea did – soil was fertile, and during prosperous times cultivated areas covered more than 50% of the island surface (Bezić & Rihtman-Auguštin, 1982). However, economic activities were regulated by the dominant rulership of the time, which dictated terms of transport and sales as well as preferences in cultivation of certain crops over others. Such agricultural land management, focused on monocultures was among the major causes of economic misfortunes; when once fruitful vineyards, set on previously cleared olive plantations, were devastated by phylloxera, it led to a deep crisis that triggered a wave of overseas migration. Local women and families were used to their men's daily absence at sea; colorful, elaborate customs, superstitions and rituals surrounding their departure and arrival back home are among the central parts of the island's colorful intangible heritage (Bezić & Rihtman-Auguštin, 1982). However, long-term migration abroad wrecked local

families, causing much emotional turmoil. The island's social and demographic profile never fully recovered from these events, and population numbers have since dwindled due to the gradual exodus of the island's youth in search of prosperity (Kalogjera, 1997). The reality of life on the island was often far from idyllic, but social ties were strong; islanders relied on interconnectedness for support and help. While men ventured out to sea, women remained on the land, sustaining entire homesteads independently. A separate section exhibited in the Centre sheds light on the daily routines of Zlarin's women, primary handlers of domestic affairs and guardians of knowledge and traditions. It showcases their rituals through rare, archival materials donated by locals, forming a unique display of the island's material and intangible heritage of tools, traditional costumes, archival footage, and poignant written materials revealing snippets of lives they led on the dry soil of the island. Bread was baked in shared ovens, managed by *pećarice* (bakers), while women spent time in lively conversation, preparing small treats for their children on an open fire while waiting for the bread to be done. As for other food, they relied on abundant options of wild plants growing in meadows, cliffs, and alongside fields to incorporate into daily meals; a favorite choice was a mixture of leafy greens known as *diblje zelje* or *mišancija*. It constituted a dietary staple across generations until the proliferation of pine trees, another iconic feature of Dalmatia, led to the destruction of some of these wild plants. Pine afforestation, a practice dating back to the era of Austria-Hungary, displaced original plant species, the diminished availability of which disrupted the intergenerational transfer of knowledge and the tradition of gathering and utilizing wild plants. To revive this gastronomic heritage, under the auspices of the Punta Arta Association, Marina Viculin has spearheaded a project aimed at promoting the consumption of edible wild plants, generating overwhelming interest among the community. Viculin assembled a multidisciplinary team of scientists who, in collaboration with the islanders, faithfully reconstructed forgotten dishes from recipes that had fallen out of use for decades (Viculin et al., 2022). The project resulted in a cookbook and botanist catalog now available at the Coral Centre's library.

Water sources on the island were scarce; to source it each household had a rainwater collection system leading to a minor well (Bezić & Rihtman-Auguštin, 1982). A large old communal well of fresh water, jointly built by locals, still stands in front of the church; a belief that it springs up from directly beneath the main altar underscores the vital significance which this precious substance had for life on the island. To revalue and preserve the traditional building techniques and revalue sustainable practices of the past, the local initiative *Tatavaka* (Tatavaka.hrl, 2024) frequently organizes joint activities aimed at revitalizing the island's natural resources with emphasis on the management of water resources and restoration of dry-stone walls.

Building the future

While Zlarin is one of the Adriatic islands with the oldest population demographics (Dean, 2004), the remaining Zlarinians consistently show progressive ecological stances and implement tangible protection measures, in accordance with the island's environmentally conscious traditions. In the latter half of the 20th century, Zlarin witnessed the emergence of green initiatives, propelled by the endeavors of Davor Cukrov, who served as a long-standing inspector for the Croatian Ministry of Environmental Protection. In collaboration with his Austrian colleagues, Cukrov conducted research focused on the Adriatic seabed, thus giving rise to the idea of establishing a marine biology and ecology research and educational center on his native island. Strides towards realizing this

vision were revived in the 1990s with the inception of the Green Island Zlarin project, aimed at repurposing disused military facilities into a comprehensive research hub featuring laboratories and other amenities. Despite the dedication of those involved, the initiative ultimately floundered. Decades later, residents are initiating various social activities and educational programs aimed at raising ecological awareness and the importance of sustainable practices, addressing both the local community and visitors. Measurable actions are being taken to reduce and minimize the use of plastic with the hope of ultimately becoming a fully plastic-free island. Through dedicated efforts since 2021, Zlarin is actively pursuing the “Sustainable Islands” label, recognizing positive local dynamics and sustainable practices as a part of a program by SMILO (Small Islands Organisation). Further, Zlarin is one of seven car-free islands in Croatia. The only motor vehicles allowed on the island are small electric cars; this positively impacts not only air quality and noise pollution but also pedestrian safety.

Zlarin prides itself on its history of experimentation in merging art and science. An artist residency project, organized by Punta Arta, has been dedicated to deepening the interplay between contemporary art and Zlarin’s insular community. The majority of projects produced within the program are either crafted on the island itself or draw inspiration from time spent in its unique environment. Exhibitions are held in public spaces, fostering direct engagement with the audience and often involving residents in the creative process.

Growing on strong foundations, CCCZ elevates the island’s abundant natural and cultural heritage and community efforts to an institutional level, providing the necessary infrastructure to facilitate and expand positive action across the island and beyond. It wishes to re-imagine the cooperation of the past in a modern context, focusing on ecology, culture, and the preservation of nature and heritage as building blocks for sustainable futures. Respectful ways of adapting to and living with nature inherited from past generations could become an impetus for new ideas and be further deepened through various programs, inviting artists, scientists, and researchers to visit the island and co-create with the environment and the local community. Through strategic planning, island communities stand to gain from environmental conservation efforts spanning global, national, and local scales. CCCZ boldly imagines the possibility of creating a real-life Arcadia, envisioning the island as a model of a self-sustainable and inclusive society that values nature, fosters inter-generational connections, and preserves its heritage while remaining economically sovereign and resilient. Linked to the world through the sea that surrounds it, this small island in the Adriatic strives to transcend local boundaries, be a source of experimentation and inspiration, and take part in discovering new modes of action on a global scale.

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Reimagining museums as bridges for intergenerational environmental knowledge and current challenges: A case study of Na Bolom

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The Bloms and the House of the Jaguar

In 1951, the Swiss photographer and activist Trudi Duby Blom and Danish archaeologist Frans Blom opened a research centre in their home in San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas in the south of Mexico. The Bloms gathered objects, images, sounds and information about the Mayan ethnic groups from the area. To show the collection, they opened a museum as part of a project that would become a hub of information and an exchange between scholars and Indigenous communities. As an archaeologist and explorer, Frans was interested in the ancient Maya and Trudi in living Mayas and their environment. Their experience of over 50 years working in Chiapas provides a source of information to confront climate change challenges in an interdisciplinary, intercultural way with a circular knowledge methodology.

Trudi visited Chiapas for the first time in the 1940s and stopped only a few months before her death in 1993. In 1974 in San Cristobal de Las Casas, Trudi gave a lecture at a symposium on ecology. In it, she highlighted different actions of both government and Indigenous communities that inhabited the jungle to explain how the environment was being destroyed. Her vision was of someone with a great knowledge of the area and a love of nature. The Mexican government considered the jungle the future breadbasket of Mexico, so it developed colonisation projects in the area, inviting different ethnic groups to settle down and start agricultural and livestock farming activities. Exploitation of the territory was carried out by archaeology, gum extraction, precious woods exploitation and the land itself for grazing. The Indigenous people in Chiapas have a slash-and-burn system, meaning that they cut and burn before planting. In the modern era this, together with the quality of the soil in the jungle, has led to erosion, leaving sterile soils that Trudi saw on her first trip in 1943. Trudi denounced everyone involved with this ecological destruction:

Indians, ranchers, farmers, cattle ranchers, corn farmers, brutes and intelligent, illiterate, and educated; some for lack of education, out of hunger, because they have no other choice; others because they don't care, out of rapacity; and all of them destroy the future of their children. Hunger, ignorance, laziness and rapacity turn the marvelous Lacandon jungle into smoke, ashes and rocky ground. (Duby Blom, 1974)¹

¹ Translation from Spanish by the author.

Trudi's experience instructs us on the importance of an integral, interdisciplinary knowledge of sitting down with different actors and understanding the need to put the environment as the central axis with human beings as part of that ecosystem within it.

In Na Bolom, Trudi started a program to organize activities toward the protection of the environment. The Climate Change Program aimed to plant trees in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, always with an educational component. For Trudi, it was essential to teach how to "grow forests". To show her point, she planted a forest of around 2000 square metres in Na Bolom's grounds with different varieties of wood trees and fruit trees.

In the 1980s, an educational nursery was created within the Na Bolom premises where children from different schools learned about the germination process, care and planting of forest trees. The program continued after Trudi's death, marked by the interests and knowledge of whoever was in charge. Foresters and specialized personnel oversaw the project. The trees that were produced served the community's needs. Na Bolom received requests and delivered trees and sometimes organized reforestations in which Na Bolom's staff helped with planting. The Association covered its impact fees for the annual reports, giving numbers of trees delivered and communities served. Reports were quantitative, not qualitative, so it was easy to fill in numbers. In time, how many of those trees survived and achieved a certain height became a number that had to be recorded, bringing other approaches and forcing a deeper evaluation of results the reforestation projects had. The challenge was to ensure that trees were planted in areas with suitable conditions and that communities would take care of them. At this stage, it was possible to observe that when trees were planted in public areas they were often destroyed or stolen by communities themselves to be sold. Communities did not want forests, as it is harder to cut them to sell the land or to use it for cattle. Because of a lack of water and conditions to continue, the nursery in Na Bolom closed.

On top of other challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the changing realities of Indigenous communities, underlining stereotypes about self-sufficiency and bringing to light the drastic shifts in traditional practices. Faced with this reality, acting as managers and intermediaries between government and communities was not enough. Budget cuts resulted in the closure of public tree nurseries. Could NGO's, museums and stakeholders get involved and teach communities and give back knowledge? It is pertinent to wonder what knowing means in museums (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). What counts as knowledge? Would it be enough to make a difference in a climate change context to return traditional knowledge, assuming museums keep a complete knowledge?

Teaching children how to grow forests

Na Bolom is a civil association with a social purpose, focused on preserving the cultural and natural heritage of the highlands and the Lacandon jungle in Chiapas. Lacandons are the main community of impact of the association and actions carried out with them must be measurable following requirements that the Mexican government imposes to regulate civil society organizations (Salazar Sánchez & López García, 2015). As Na Bolom director, I understood our projects and actions had to be oriented to fulfil Na Bolom's mission and have an impact. My biggest challenge was the Climate Change Program. We did not have the money to hire an expert, and I did not have the knowledge to run the program.

Together with an intern, convinced that we could learn from our experience and mistakes, using Trudi's archive as source of information, we began an analysis of previous projects. We conducted interviews with other civil society organizations with expertise in climate change to identify issues and challenges identifying what we needed to consider when designing a successful, useful project.

We continued to receive requests from communities in the highlands asking for trees. They wanted trees to solve problems such as lack of water, shade, wood, fruit, or to have something to sell. We decided that communities should produce their own trees. With this project in mind, we identified three major problems: lack of human resources, high costs to build the nurseries and buy seeds and lack of interest from the communities to take care of the trees.

Teaching children how to grow forests in Chiapas is a project aimed to supply trees for reforestation to restore the ecosystems in Chiapas. Trees are produced in schools, and students oversee gathering seeds and taking care of the plants. All the production stays in the communities, and families involved decide where to plant the trees. Seeds are gathered from native trees in the region, making sure that only native plants are being used and reducing costs. Education is the focus, as children learn the process from the beginning and take care of the trees. Nurseries are built with recycled materials, allowing significantly lower costs as the only thing that needs to be bought is the shade screen.

This project is not based on giving knowledge back to the communities, but on using the existing knowledge of communities to understand their relationship with the forests and the wood. When working in collaboration with communities and recognizing the value of their knowledge and practices, they are empowered and gain confidence to take ownership of the project. Without community engagement, projects are at risk of failing in their goals. Understanding and accepting that communities in Chiapas use wood for construction, fuel, handicrafts, natural dyes and shade for other crops helps us consider their needs and how they live. We cannot ask them to stop using wood or burning the ground before planting as it is a major practice in their culture, so we need to explore other ways that will not change who they are and consider their needs. The museum collections and actions were key to understanding how we could address the problems in a unique way, remembering earlier mistakes. Being in constant communication with the communities was a major asset. Since the beginning of the project, interns and staff members involved were from Indigenous communities. The insight, information and points of views they provided were clues to the development and success of the project.

Teaching children how to grow forests in Chiapas started with a tree nursery for 100,000 trees that served as a laboratory for testing the project in Na Bolom. We started producing trees to meet annual requests, then members of the community would visit and we would show them the nursery and explain the project. After a visit from our team to the community to supervise the first reforestation, we would ask if they were interested in having their own nursery with Na Bolom's help and training. We signed an agreement with school directors to take the project to their grounds. Today, eight schools in the Lacandon jungle are producing trees to reforest their areas, along with four in the highlands of Chiapas, including two in San Cristobal. Students participating in the project learn the importance of taking care of the trees, how they grow, how they reproduce, how we can restore the environment and how to recover local knowledge from their own families.

In conclusion, museums cannot give up on climate change programs. We need to participate as a facilitator/mediator, a trigger for discussion and exchange. We should continue documenting the process and safeguarding information for future generations. Remember: “Dialogue cannot exist without humility. The naming of the world, through which people constantly re-create that world, cannot be an act of arrogance” (Freire, 2000, pp. 63). If we do not want museums to be information banks, we need to sit down with other stakeholders in a circular education process, exchanging information and experiences and learning from mistakes.

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Intercultural memories and construction of historical sense amongst current practitioners of the ancient Mesoamerican rubber ball game

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The ancient game with a rubber ball constitutes an essential topic in the historiographic and archaeological collections of Mesoamerica, a region between the south of the United States and Panama. Due to its relevance in understanding the past of the people descended from the Olmec mother culture, the game has been the subject of specialized research (Stern, 1996). The studies highlight the ancient game as a heritage reference for modern national identities through publications, scientific events and museum curators. However, the current practice of the game, which brings together participants and initiatives in several countries, transcends the academic lack of transformations related to multiculturalism and interculturality.

The game is preserved in its mallet, hip and forearm modalities, which share as their main element the rubber ball made with latex from two rubber tree species: *Hevea brasiliensis* and *Castilla elástica*. The balls can be molded, inflated or cured through artisanal processes for the natural coagulation of the latex; their cooking and mixing processes with other plant materials mean that the elastic properties of the primordial sap are preserved.

Within the playing field, called *tlachco*, *tlachtli* or *taste* in the Náhuatl language, *pokyak* in Yucatec Maya and *jom* in Kaqchikel Maya, two teams alternate hitting the ball, with the aim to advance on opposite terrain, forcing the opposing team to retreat. To maintain the game's own 'botivoleo' (the action of hitting the ball while propelling it in the air after it has bounced on the ground) the participants propel the ball with permitted body parts, or with a mallet, depending on the modality. Stripes or points are obtained when a team manages to get the ball to the opposite end line. Hitting times or contact points not allowed on the ball subtract points from the offending team.

The hip modality presents more diffusion in four variants: *Ulama* in northern Mesoamerica and *Pok-ta-pok*, *Chajchaay* or *Tz'anem P'itz* in Mayan lands. Its practitioners hold a solid ball weighing between three and four kilograms in successive contacts with the iliac crest and/or the gluteus. The Mayan variants have one or two hoops suspended at an average height of three meters above the *jom* or *pokyak*. In the forearm or *Chaj* mode, the rubber ball is lighter and has an inflatable chamber, allowing its practitioners to push with their forearms, thighs and hips, seeking to cross the ball through a marker ring arranged on a side wall of the *jom*.

The contemporary practice of the game emerged towards the end of the 20th century, through initiatives managed in Guatemala and Mexico. Subsequently, new projects were added in Mesoamerican countries, until its current expansion beyond that region (Panqueba & Carreón, 2023). In 2018, the Central American Higher University Council (CSUCA) incorporated *Chaaaj* as an exhibition sport in student events. The initiatives expanded, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, through workshops, conferences and virtual tournaments, inspiring the emergence of children's and women's groups.

By 2023, the registration of teams in hip modality covered the Mexican states of Sinaloa, Querétaro, Jalisco, Michoacán, Tabasco, Chiapas, Yucatán and Quintana Roo, in addition to other groups in Mexico City and in countries such as Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, United States and Panama. These initiatives have consolidated at least two communities: The Mexican Federation of Cadera Ulama (FEMUC), formed in 2018 with its main headquarters in Sinaloa, and the Central American and Caribbean Association of the Ancestral Sport of Mayan Pelota (ACCDAPM), formed in 2015 with its main headquarters in Yucatán.

The ancestral game as an object of study and exhibition

Five hundred years ago, when Europeans invaded the territories known since then as America, they observed the different modalities of playing ball with great interest (Carreón, 2015). Europeans were astonished by the skills performed by the practitioners, as was evidenced in letters, chronicles and diaries dating from the first half of the 16th century. To describe such abilities, the chroniclers adjusted body gestures that they knew. From that moment, American games were related to Europeans', as if the former were a derivation of the latter (Carreón & Panqueba, 2018). The *Ullamalitzli* deserved greater references, given the unique way of contacting with the hip a solid rubber ball, the material of which was unknown to Western peoples. The elasticity of the solid ball, made with vegetable inputs, contrasted with the cloth balls and inflated bladders common in European games.

The practice of ball games in 'the new world' was prohibited at the end of the 16th century, when it was described by Europeans as a form of resistance by native peoples to their evangelization. However, during the second half of the 17th century and throughout the 18th century, chroniclers and clerics recorded games in northwest Mexico, which were later observed by other travelers during the 19th century. At the dawn of the 20th century, Kelly (1943), whose reports became essential background for his current study, described its continuity in northern Mesoamerica. During the 1968 Mexico Olympics, a group of *ulama* players was summoned to the capital to perform exhibitions. From the 1970s, northern Mexico was the scene of studies of its constancy (Leyenaar & Peñalosa, 1980). A documentary of the northern game by Roberto Rochín was broadcast during the 1986 FIFA World Soccer Championship held in Mexico, in association with a museum exhibition in the capital city, where a group of players exhibited the game with a solid ball.

During the 1990s, scholarly interest was tempered with demonstrations by players at university conferences and museum exhibitions in Mexico (Uriarte, 1992; Turok, 2000), Vienna, Leiden and Lausanne (Scarborough & Wilcox, 1991). Meanwhile, the Xcaret theme park in the Riviera

Maya was the scene of artistic shows about the Mayan ball game, to the delight of national and international tourism. In the cultural events for the 2006 FIFA World Cup tournament, a group of Mexican artists presented *Pok-ta-pok* shows in Germany. During the 2014 Tocati Festival of traditional games in Verona, eight Mayan players from the Yucatán Peninsula performed exhibitions related to the game.

While the game served as a pre-Hispanic evocation within the tourism industry, other initiatives collected elements on its performance, intertwined with the circulation of ancient cosmogonies, in areas with ethnic visibility and its spirituality (Panqueba & Carreon, 2022). Mayan communities, led by teachers and local authorities, reexamined ball games from educational, sports and cultural approaches. The spread of the game has generated the need to make solid balls without necessarily following any traditional method. Its manufacturers experiment with different diffusion processes and mixtures of latex with other vegetable materials, seeking to obtain an appropriate ball for playing days. Between 2019 and 2021, the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) developed a chemical analysis of balls found in the archaeological context, contrasting them with those used for modern-day games (Pérez et al., 2024). The research study identified new possibilities for the production of solid rubber balls, combining old materials and methods with present-day techniques.

Survival paradoxes of the Mesoamerican game

The ancient game that was considered lost a long time ago, and that survived poorly understood as a mere scenic spectacle, is now practiced within modern spheres as a sport, tourist attraction, artistic, cultural and educational practice. During the course of the 21st century, the practice of ball games has been promoted through its re-signification within ethnic movements and its appropriation in different populations. Among youth, the game is associated with the seeking of their identity and the revitalization of regional traditions. These initiatives are based on the intergenerational transmission of ancestral knowledge, and they also draw on historiographical and scientific reports. This convergence includes eventual participation of players in public exhibitions of the game during the implementation of academic programs, along with museum exhibitions.

Although the continuity of the game is undeniable, it is also described in the field of science as an anachronistic phenomenon, detached from the transformations that have contributed to its safeguarding and expansion. Its permanency is accepted as a representation of national, traditional and/or autochthonous folklore without room for incorporation into areas of sport, education and recreational amusement. The trace of findings that turn up in the studies show enormous redundancies in past interpretations (Zarebski, 2016; Uriarte, 2015), which prioritize the presence of elements from the pre-Hispanic world, related exclusively to the ancient elites. On the other hand, its lack of representation in the historiography of sport is due to deliberate contrasts with sports of modernity, “in terms of ... specialization, rationalization, quantification, standardization, secularization, bureaucratization and [the] search for records” (Esparza, 2017, p. 143).

The current practice of the rubber ball game does not only manifest itself as a vehicle for the retention and circulation of certain iconographic motifs that are recognized in pre-Hispanic art.

Its contemporary validity also transcends this past as a dynamic experience of ideas and concepts that are embraced and updated in various cultural contexts, showing their articulation with new narratives loaded with multiple meanings. In this sense, the ball game, its body practice, ritual spaces, music, clothing to protect the body, complementary outfits, equipment and rituality in the 21st century opens spaces for reflection between models and copies, prototypes and types. Therefore, it is necessary to perceive this reality *in situ*, trying to distance ourselves from antiquity as a measure that establishes interpretations based on the mere re-creation of the pre-Hispanic past.

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From Lochboisdale, South Uist, to Boisdale, Cape Breton

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“Thig crìoch air an t-saoghal, ach mairidh gaol is ceòl”.
“The end of the world will come, but love and music will endure”.

-Traditional Scottish Gaelic proverb

The Campbells of Canna

Folklorist John Lorne Campbell’s arrival in the Outer Hebrides on 4 August 1933 (Cheape, 1996) marked the beginning of what we now know to have been an extraordinary life’s work of recovery and transmission of the Gaelic song, literary and linguistic record.

He began to explore this unusual world of the Hebrides, which was then, in his own words, “like the old Highlands of the early 19th century” (Cheape, 1996), and he continued on to become a pioneer of the modern collection and preservation of Gaelic song and story.

His background was not, however, in folklore but that of the son of the “landed gentry” of Argyll in Scotland. His family owned a large estate near Campbeltown, and he was educated in the ‘public school’ system, then he studied agricultural economics at Oxford. It was there that he developed his interest in matters of Celtic culture. His interest in the Gaelic language was inspired by hearing his father’s tenants speaking the language on the estate. He was later offered the opportunity by his father to “either learn Gaelic or learn to play the pipes” (Perman, 2013). Luckily for the world of Hebridean Island culture and language, he opted to learn the language.

After graduating in 1932, he went to live on the island of Barra in an effort to learn the language to complete fluency amongst native speakers. He met his future wife Margaret Fay Shaw of Pittsburgh, USA, in 1934. She was at that time living in North Glendale on the island of South Uist, herself collecting songs and stories and taking images of the surrounding communities. She had first come to Scotland in 1920 as a teenager to attend school in Helensburgh, sent by her family as a way of “sorting this wayward teenager”¹ out.

The Campbells married in 1935 and lived on the island of Barra for three years before buying the small farm island of Canna in 1938 (Shaw, 1993). The Campbells farmed Canna as a traditional

Hebridean, Gaelic speaking community whilst continuing their folkloring career.

¹ Born into a wealthy Pittsburgh steel making family, she was orphaned at a young age and brought up by her older sisters and aunts. She was not interested in anything at school apart from music, and so it was decided in 1920 to send her to Scotland to ‘sort her out’. This was a pivotal time in her life. She first heard Gaelic being sung by Victorian song collector Marjory Kennedy Fraser at a school recital in Helensburgh.

The private sound archive collections of John and Margaret, housed today in Canna House and owned by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), represent a unique testament to the vigour and foresight of pre-eminent 20th century Gaelic scholarship. The Campbells left the island and its collections to the NTS as they had no children to take ownership of it.

Their recordings captured vital elements of traditional Gaelic culture, then still alive in Uist, Barra and Nova Scotia. Canna House now houses 1192 recordings (around 430 hours of material) made in the field between 1933 and 1969. Complementing the recordings is a collection of some 9000 black and white and colour images and early colour film, taken by Shaw, depicting all aspects of 20th century Hebridean life. Shaw also left her original transcriptions of the songs she heard around her in the small glen of South Uist where she lived for six years before marrying Campbell. Her diaries also provide unique and personal descriptions for us, of the people around her who entrusted their heritage to her, as well as the animals who lived alongside the humans on the croft.² Campbell also left an extensive collection of both folkloric diaries and diaries of his day-to-day work as a farm manager – Canna is a farm in its entirety. This was all conducted through multiple decades. Together these collections form a unique and priceless tapestry of a Hebridean lifestyle which has now disappeared.

The archives in Canna House have been largely inaccessible since Campbell's death in 1996 and Shaw's death in 2004. Has this affected the general awareness of the potential and content of the collections? What is the future of the archives? How is it impacted upon by being located in such a remote, rural location? It is three hours by ferry from the mainland, with extremely limited visitor accommodation and facilities on-island. To what extent is it the responsibility of the owner to create the conditions necessary to ensure open research access in accordance with the benefactor's wishes, even if the owner is not an academic institution?

After Shaw's death, the archives were curated by a lifelong friend of the Campbells, archivist Magda Sagarzazu of the Basque Country. On her retirement, I was appointed as archivist in 2015 and lived and worked on Canna, population 16, until late 2023, when family circumstances forced me to leave the island. I continue my research work on the collections (as "Canna Heritage – Dualchas Chanaigh") and am currently writing the biography of Margaret Fay Shaw.

As a Gaelic Arts practitioner myself, I am privileged to be able to use these archives in my performing work, and as part of my performance research, I research the songs collected by Campbell and Shaw.

“Diuram” – a transatlantic Gaelic lullaby

This presentation takes a closer look at just one of the songs collected by Margaret and John, both in South Uist and Nova Scotia, in 1933 and 1937 respectively (Shaw & Campbell, 1952). This song, called *Diuram*, literally travelled from Lochboisdale in the island of South Uist to Boisdale, Cape Breton. The presentation will include live sung versions of the song. How did this happen, and did it change as it crossed the ocean? What is the legacy of the song in a transatlantic context? How important is it to hear the live version of a song as opposed to a recorded version – what is the importance of learning from ‘the source’?

The Highland Clearances had a major impact on the movement of a culture from the Western Isles to North America, particularly to Nova Scotia. This greatly increased after the 1812 war between the UK and the US – the American route was effectively closed to emigrants, so they went to Canada instead. In Cape Breton, settlers from Barra concentrated around the Barra Strait in the Bras d’Or, while South Uist people went mainly to Grand Mira and the Boisdale and East Bay areas. North Uist settlers went to Catalone, Gabarus and Mira, while Harris folk went to Grand River, Framboise and St Anns.

There are many different versions of the songs recorded over the years, both by the Campbells and other collectors. However, few have travelled so far and retained their lyrical and melodic integrity as the lullaby *Diuram*. It’s interesting to see how a song can change as it crosses the years and the ocean, carrying traditions with it from one people to another yet remaining recognisably the same.

Shaw collected the song in 1933 from Peigi Nill (Mrs John Currie) in North Glendale, South Lochboisdale (Shaw, 1955). The presentation will discuss the setting of the song and its linguistic characteristics. Campbell collected *Diuram* in Antigonish County, Nova Scotia, on 20 October 1937, from the well-known singer and piper Angus ‘Ridge’ Macdonald. Comparisons between the two versions will be examined and recordings of both versions will be played. What impact if any, did the differing social environments have on the two versions of the song?

Shaw took images of the contributors in Nova Scotia who gave them their songs – does an image of the person giving the song increase our appreciation or understanding of a sound recording? These are folk songs – does this mean their social and cultural significance is lessened by being part of a folk or tribal origin?

We can learn a lot from examining the ways people preserved our heritage and culture. Separated by oceans with no social media to rely on, the songs still retain the story, the meaning and the personality of the people who made them in the first place.

The Campbells’ legacy in Canna House, including this lullaby, is testament to the respect and vision they possessed for their own adopted heritage and culture. What do we learn from their legacy today? Should we be ‘conserving’ it or ‘developing it’?

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What could museums learn from the ancestral knowledge of the peoples from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta?

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Currently, the majority of the material cultural heritage of the descendants of the Tairona culture – Kággaba, Arhuaco, Wiwa, Kankuamo – of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (SNSM) in Colombia is dispersed across museums in Europe, as well as North and South America. According to their ancestral knowledge and complex understanding of the world, this cultural heritage is of immense importance to the Tairona’s descendants as it contributes to planetary equilibrium. What kind of relationship do the Tairona’s descendants have with Earth? Which significance does the material cultural heritage hold and what are the consequences of its translocation? How could a shift in perspective enable transformation within museums and foster collective action toward planetary protection?

The ancestral knowledge system

The Kággaba consider themselves Earth’s guardians and cultural descendants of the Tairona (Balzar, 2023). Their ancestral territory comprises part of the Caribbean Sea and the entire coastal mountain range of the SNSM up to an altitude of almost 6000m above sea level. It is denoted by the *Línea Negra*, an invisible line, which is demarcated by – and connects – the *Ezuamas* (sacred sites). The *Línea Negra* is a connection to the *Ley de Sé* (law of origin) which governs humans’ relationship to nature and universe, thus ensuring sustainability of interactions within the territory and between the immaterial and material worlds. The Colombian State most recently recognized the *Línea Negra* as the ancestral territory of the four Indigenous peoples by Decree 1500 in August 2018, mapping it out as a protected territory (República de Colombia, 2018). The SNSM has its own living structure and consists of different zones and sites with different characteristics, functions, and qualities. The equilibrium within the SNSM is shaped by an interconnectivity between all existing elements (water, people, thoughts, plants, mountains, lagoons, animals, stars, stones, sacred objects, sacred sites) and is maintained by the work of the *Mamos* (the highest authorities), which hold the knowledge about such complex relationships with the territory and with everything that exists. It is precisely

this ancestral system of knowledge – which is passed on (orally) over generations and was inscribed in 2022 on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity – that is seen as pivotal in safeguarding the ecosystem, preserving cultural identity, and determining these societies’ resilience:

The Ancestral System of Knowledge is transmitted ... through cultural practice, community activities, the use of the indigenous language and the implementation of the sacred mandates. The transmission process includes the understanding of physical and spiritual relationships with Mother Nature and sacred sites. (UNESCO, 2022)

With the advanced colonization and occupation of Santa Marta as the first colonial base in 1525, the Indigenous societies in the region were forced to retreat from the coastal regions to the highlands in order to ensure their survival (Oyuela Caycedo, 1987). Over the next five centuries, the subsequent exploration of the Sierra Nevada, excavation and plundering of sacred sites, extraction of natural resources, processes of Colombian armed violence, and massive tourism have dramatically altered the landscape and negatively impacted the ancestral logics of indigenous interaction with the territory, thus continuing to threaten not only the ecological equilibrium of the region but also the Indigenous societies’ existence. Nowadays, the four Indigenous peoples aim to safeguard their cultural identity and ancestral knowledge, as well as recover their ancestral territory and material cultural heritage in order to restore the equilibrium (Reyes Gavilán, 2017). In this sense, they share a message with us, the non-Indigenous people:

There is a collective interaction of forces which are kept in balance; when one force dominates another, chaos happens. The younger brothers have lost their memory; hence, they are compelled to invent laws and continually create new ones, one contradicts the other, one is deemed more important than the other, they are never equal. ... This has nothing to do with communal remembering or collective action, as we see in nature. Memory is not meant to be written somewhere; it is lived every day. If memory is not lived out, it is lost. It was not made to be preserved but to be lived and shared. (Mamo Ramón Gil Barros, Wiwa, as cited in Bucholz, 2019, p. 299¹).

The material cultural heritage and its translocation

The sacred objects have a mission, a function, a connectivity; they are meant to connect; these sacred objects connect the spiritual and the material, in the spiritual world with the earth, with the air, with everything, with the firmaments. (José de los Santos Sauna, Kággaba, qtd. in Reyes Gavilán, 2019, p. 399²)

The sacred objects not only embody knowledge, have a function, and serve as a link between material and immaterial dimensions, they are also tools for maintaining equilibrium. Especially objects made of gold and stone have a direct relationship to the spiritual origin of every existing being: for instance, the *Macaw* (gold object) is related to the spiritual origins of birds and the *Kalkakwitzhi* (brown crystal bead) is for maintaining the health of trees. Each entity has its place

1 Translation by the author.

2 Translation by the author.

of origin; at this *Ezuama* (sacred site), sacred objects, which embody and contain information and the essence of these things, are found. Thus, these sacred objects enable the Indigenous people to do ‘spiritual payments’, as a form of reciprocity with the mother earth. Mamo José Alimaku (Kággaba) describes the cultural heritage’s translocation, currently situated in museums worldwide, as follows:

In every house, there was gold, and it hung from the trees. It was alive; it was a payment to the earth. The younger brothers took it away because they did not understand. Now the gold is dead and lies useless in your museums. It has no purpose anymore.³ (Buchholz, 2019, p. 22)

Starting from the late 1700s, travelers and other researchers such as botanists, zoologists, and geographers like Lucas Fernández de Piedrahita (1688), Joaquín Acosta (1848) and Joseph de Brettes (1898) began to explore the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. By the 1920s, researchers like John Alden Mason (1922), Ernesto Restrepo Tirado (1929), Gregory Mason (1936), Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff (1951-53), and Juan Friede (1951-60) initiated archaeological investigations into Tairona sites such as Pueblito, Parque Nacional Natural Tairona, Nahuangue, and Ciudad Perdida (Bischof, 1983). What many of these researchers apparently did not notice was that these Tairona (gold and stone) objects were – during the precolonial past and up to now – at the heart of Indigenous practices of management of the equilibrium. These objects are now decontextualized in museums where they can no longer perform their role in caring for the world.

By the 1970s, these sites had been systematically plundered by archaeologists and traders through scientific or illegal excavations (Balzar, 2023). Despite existing regulations, particularly with the UNESCO Convention of 1970 aimed at restricting the illegal export of cultural goods, the plundering of sacred sites and the trade of antiquities remain prevalent even today. For the peoples of the SNSM, the translocation of material cultural heritage has caused immense harm, resulting not only in the living knowledge’s destruction but also significantly weakening the societies of the SNSM and territory, as well as their connection to it.

The cultural heritage in museums

Collecting, preserving, exhibiting, researching, and interpreting are considered the museums’ core functions, according to the updated definition provided by the International Council of Museums (ICOM, 2022). Moreover, museums hold a large quantity of cultural artifacts originating from formerly colonized countries, which grants them not only access to cultural knowledge but also provides them with significant economic resources. These collections’ value (and its generation) is propelled by processes such as acquisition, exhibition, and research, whereby “a specific ‘we’ benefits from the fact that Europe and the USA possess the majority of – as well as the most significant – cultural heritage, to which they refer in the rhetoric of ‘treasure’” (Leeb, 2017, p. 109, translation by the author). To preserve it and ensure its ‘original’ authenticity and longevity, specific measures are taken to mitigate chemical aging or degradation by insects, mold, and other microorganisms. Furthermore, what tends to be overshadowed is the fact that direct exposure to the ‘treasure’ carries health risks because of the toxic substances used, thus demanding interaction

³ Translation by the author.

only under specific safety measures. Moreover, some cultural heritage has been stored in museums depots' crates for centuries, forgotten and sometimes in a poor condition due to inadequate storage. This has not only caused the objects to lose their vitality on a physical level but has also weakened their being because they are no longer understood as objects connected to practices of caring for the environment in their territories of origin. Nonetheless, many museums struggle with the idea of emptying their 'treasure troves', which they have accumulated over centuries, even though such acquisitions' legitimacy, rooted in colonial and imperial achievements or dogmas, is nowadays being challenged. In the context of exhibitions, cultural artifacts are often transformed into objects of observation and presented as 'art', thereby receiving a form of valorization while simultaneously being reduced to aesthetics. As historical documents of their time, the objects appear to be disconnected from space and time and deny their "contemporaneity", thus creating a temporal gap between past and present (Leeb, 2013, p. 41). As the objects' lifespan is shifted into the past, their efficacy appears to be mummified, rendering them lifeless.

With this considered, it can be asserted that museums, with their purpose of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting cultural heritage, are situated within a specific modern framework. This encompasses a focus on ownership and possession, individualism, the dualistic separation of spheres (subject-object/culture-nature/material-immaterial) as well as a linear perception of time. The Western epistemological framework's dominance and universalization have led to the displacement of alternative forms of knowledge systems and ways of living. What, perhaps, we are missing is the relationship between people, objects, care and the environment that these objects, locked away in museums, embody.

Perspective for museums

The constitution of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, as perceived by the peoples of the SNSM, promotes an understanding of all existing elements' interconnectedness, their functionalities, and the exchange processes which contribute to the establishment of a planetary (im)balance. This ancestral knowledge should provide new insights for museums, such as the potential for relationality. In this sense, the objects appear lost, being behind glass in the exhibition context or forgotten in museum storage. In fact, they need to be returned to the people responsible for their proper management, the Indigenous peoples of the SNSM. They are not for contemplation or accumulation. It is this discomfort which opens space for possibilities of individual entanglement with the objects, their history, and the present (Leeb, 2017), as well as for questioning the presence of objects' legitimacy in the museum context and their absence from their places of origin, taking active steps in the transformation of those upside-down relationships. The inherent challenge and opportunity in the exchange between Indigenous societies and museums lies in the acknowledgment of alternative epistemological systems, such as the ancestral system of knowledge of the peoples of the SNSM, and thus in the reconfiguration of modern modes of thought. This presents an opportunity for museums to reassess their political, cultural, and ethical principles regarding cultural heritage and their societal role, fostering transcultural perspectives and cultivating alternative practices and common objectives.

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Sustaining heritage in the island of Lesvos (Greece): Community museums and their impact

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Novelist and museum founder Orhan Pamuk, in his “Modern Manifesto for Museums”, published and enacted in his Museum of Innocence in Istanbul (2012), proposes moving away from the model of the encyclopaedic art museum (e.g., Louvre, MET, the British Museum) and instead focusing on museums that are smaller, centred on individuals and their stories, and “support people in turning their own small homes and stories into ‘exhibition’ spaces” (2012, p. 8). This seems to be exactly what has been happening for years now on the island of Lesvos (Greece) but also in other parts of the country. These small museums are created by individuals and/or small groups of people who share a similar belief in the need to preserve their personal and community memories and share them with others, “displaying the depths of our humanity” (Pamuk, 2012, p. 1).

In this short paper, I would like to focus on three such examples of community institutions in Lesvos: the Resin Museum of Ambeliko, a small local community initiative focusing on the traditional techniques of resin collection and the relation of the village people to the forest next to their village; the Folklore Museum of Skala Sykamnias, an initiative of the local women to preserve the memories of their community; and the Museum of Refugee Memory in Skala Loutron, a small institution aiming to commemorate one of the most traumatic moments in the island’s history, the forced exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey in 1922. I would like to use these cases to argue that these institutions – small-scale, personalized and grassroots – are very important agents of transmission of intergenerational knowledge, memories and beliefs, which are all essential for the survival and continuance of the communities, their cultural practices and values. It is exactly these practices and values that played, and continue to play, a vital role in shaping sustainable practices for generations. Therefore, studying these small museums, their micro-museologies, allows us to reconsider issues of cultural sustainability and the museologies of the future.

The island and its museums

Lesvos is an island characterized by rich biodiversity, unique natural landscapes, and diverse cultural heritage. Furthermore, it has a long history of movements of populations, as it is located on the north-east part of the Aegean Sea, at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, and has been at the forefront of major historical events that have affected the synthesis of the local population, as well as their understanding of identity and community. Primary among these events was the 1922 exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. Recent research conducted at the University of the Aegean (whose headquarters are located on Lesvos) (Despotelli, 2020) recorded 61 museums and collections open to the public – a record number considering the size of the island (c. 1700 km² / 84,000 population). Out of those museums and collections, more than 35 are established by individuals and/or small groups of people (usually consisting of local teachers and members of

the clergy but also housewives and fishermen) who feel that they want to save the memory of their village and/or a specific historical event. The other museums and collections have been established by the State, by entities such as local authorities, by companies or by the Church. Although a more detailed categorization and study of these museums and collections is required, their number alone makes it clear how important the local people consider them to be. Each of these institutions serve as an important catalyst for the creation and dissemination of knowledge, values and memories while fostering the island's cultural and natural resilience.

Therefore, the community museums of the island serve as platforms for preserving and sharing traditional knowledge related to the land but also the stories of its people. It is usually elder members of the community who have created these museums as efforts to preserve the memory of their past, the values of "their people", and to transfer these to younger generations.

We are now going to turn to each of these institutions and try to elaborate on their stories and ideas to discern some of their main museological principles.

The Resin Museum in Ambeliko

The museum was established in 1994 and, as we write these lines, it is going through re-display. It consists of three sections, each one in a respective room inside the auxiliary building next to the village church: folklore collection, religious collection and resin collection. The collections were assembled by the local priest, Stratis Kakabouras, who is still the soul of the effort. He started collecting as he was studying the village archives in the 1990s, and he realized that the resin collection was what "made their village different than the others" (Interview with author, February 2024). Most of the objects were collected from members of his family, who were involved in the resin collection as workers and supported his vision. As Kakabouras said, "We took the pinecone [the resin comes from pine trees] and we made it the founding stone of our village and its emblem and on that we built the cultural history of our land" (Interview with the author, February 2024). The aim of the museum is to present the history of the community and, thus, share it with visitors. Furthermore, it aims to promote the study of the collection and underline the importance of resin as part of the revival of the local co-op, an effort that began in 2009 that the village hopes will bring prosperity and will make younger people decide to stay instead of leaving for the big cities.

There seems to be a close connection here between the past and the present: the museum does not just aim to encourage memory building but to become a starting point for developing anew the relationship between the village people and the forest next to it. This is a decision based on a combination of finance, identity and memory reasons that somehow seem to be blended when talking to Kakabouras.

The Museum of Refugee Memory in Skala Loutron

In 2003, the Museum of Refugee Memory was established in another village of Lesvos. It was the initiative of a local cultural group called "The Dolphin", created in 1990 mostly by local fishermen and members of their families who are descendants of the Greek Asia Minor refugees who settled

in the area after the 1922 exchange of populations. The museum is just one of the activities of this group and forms part of their wish, as Stratos Valachis put it, to “retrace their roots and to encourage/empower Asia Minor memories and identity” (Interview with the author, 2018a). It is housed in the old, now disused, school of the village. The Skala (meaning port in the local dialect) on which the museum is now located was the uninhabited piece of land that provided the inhabitants of the small village of Loutra up the hill with access to the sea until 1931; it was only then that 25 two-room houses were built to provide shelter for 25 families that had arrived in Lesvos as refugees in 1922. These refugees were mainly from the ancient town of Phokaia on the coast across the sea and were displaced because of what in Greek history books is usually called the “Asia Minor catastrophe”—the expulsion of the Greek orthodox population who lived in Asia Minor by Neo-Turks and the subsequent exchange of populations in 1923 because of the Lausanne Treaty between Greece and Turkey. The refugee identity is still very strong, even though there is hardly anyone who experienced the events still alive.

Visiting the museum is usually a very emotional experience for both visitors and guides. The tour is usually given by one of the members of the founding team and it is based on the account of personal memories and emotions. It is not uncommon for visitors to remember their own family histories and for emotional exchanges to take place between the guide/s and the visitor. In this case, it is the special identity of the people of the village and the protection of precious memories that are fading as generations pass that is at the core of the effort of the museum. Not surprisingly, the aim of all people involved is to retain the interest of younger generations. For that purpose, they organize events every summer, they publish memoirs, and they involve the younger generation, giving them tasks to perform such as documenting the collections or using their skills to enhance the “home-made” exhibition. It was one of my students who took me to the museum the very first time.

The Folklore Museum of Skala Sykamnias

Situated in the main village (and not on the respective Skala) amidst an increasing number of deserted and ruined houses, this local museum, housed in the basement of the old village school, appears to engage in a very traditional idea of the folklore museum. Its displays represent the idea of local traditions embodied in folkloric material culture, such as traditional costumes, rugs, domestic linen and cooking utensils. It was established in 2002 by the local Association of Women to “save the traditions and the memory of our village”, according to the president of the association and active soul of the museum to this day, Marianthi Tsakou (Interview with the author, 2018a). The women themselves – mostly homemakers – began to collect all the objects in 2000. The collection consists of objects that were either donated to the museum by their owners – persuaded by the women – or were “rescued” by the women as their owners either had passed away and their descendants had no interest in them, or they had simply abandoned these “old things” in their now empty homes (Interview with the author, 2018a). As Marianthi claims, expressing a relationship of love and care for these traces of the past: “We took them, we, the women of the Association, we washed them, we ironed them and we put them here, we rescued and protected them” (Interview with the author, 2018b).

The objects in this museum come with a range of personal stories and family connections. Their provenance and the relationship to the donors and the families of the village are meticulously recorded by the women of the Association in their hand-written book; they also have many stories to tell when asked about them. The table that was made by the father of one of the museum organisers but was donated by the family who had bought it from him serves as a reminder of both families. The table becomes the starting point of a story about the young man who came from Asia Minor in 1922 and had to stay away from his family in a boarding school in the capital of the island, “because the family was too poor to support all their four children” (Interview with the author, 2018b). Similarly, the old wedding gown, now in one of the few cases of the museum, consists of two parts, each donated by a different family, that happily co-exist to exemplify the now lost traditions of the village, a common past, even if not a single wedding. The presentation of the collection is organized in a scenography conceived by the women themselves – there is a living room, a kitchen, a laundry, a textile room with looms, a schoolroom and the bedroom/office of Stratis Myrivilis, the famous Greek writer who came from the village. The women also serve as the keepers of the museum, in more than one meaning of the word. As they take visitors around, they eagerly share with them their stories, memories and feelings of nostalgia for a lost, idyllic past. They talk about gender roles, the structure of society, traditions that have been lost and others that are still alive, tools and techniques; they occasionally offer the local name of an object, and they consistently refer to the donor/s, the creator/s or the user/s of artifacts. Their stories are nostalgic but also selective: they avoid anything controversial. If visitors enquire after specific objects that have difficult connections to people or events (such as the “trauma” of refugees) there is usually a brief reference to that, and very quickly the discussion returns to the “ideal past” the museum serves as a commemoration for. This is the place where a close-knit, family-centred past is to be remembered.

Island museologies and sustainability

The three museums briefly presented above share some common elements: they are all created through the initiative of one individual and the support of a few others who realised this person’s vision. They all focus in what they consider their characteristic element that sets them apart from the “others” – in the case of Ambeliko, their co-existence with the forest and their ability to live through this relationship; in the case of Skala Loutron, their identity as refugees who have suffered when they left their “homeland” to create a new one in Lesvos; in the case of Sykamnia, their small personal and family stories culminating in the “big” story of the famous author, the offspring of the village.

As Stylianos-Lambert et al. (2014) have discussed, museums are important pillars of sustainability, as they support heritage preservation, cultural skills and knowledge, memory and identity, cultural diversity, and promotion of intercultural and intergenerational dialogue. Soini and Birkeland (2014) argued that cultural sustainability is a transdisciplinary, evolving term and can be organized around seven storylines: heritage, cultural vitality, economic viability, diversity, locality, eco-cultural resilience and eco-cultural civilization. The emphasis on promoting and preserving cultural capital for future generations is a basic parameter, along with preserving social, economic and environmental sustainability. Museums that collect, preserve and present tangible and intangible heritage of local people and communities, individuals and families, and pass on knowledge and

skills to future generations, are essential instruments of cultural sustainability. And this is exactly what these local island museums are doing in Lesbos.

What is special about these museums is their relationship with the people; their individual character which remains individual even though their contents might look very similar; a value-led approach; and intergenerational learning and sharing that often goes beyond the immediate community – as for instance in the case of the Museum of Refugee Memory.

I believe that these institutions provide micro-histories and micro-museologies that are essential for the preservation of humanity (Pamuk 2012) and deserve to be explored further.

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Ecomuseum Te Fare Natura: Rebuilding Indigenous futures

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The island of Moorea in French Polynesia (FP) is home to the ecomuseum *Te Fare Natura*, ‘the house of nature’ in the Tahitian language. *Te Fare Natura* approaches the museum as a social action project in service to the Indigenous community, empowering marginalised youth, building local capacity, and fostering cultural and climate resilience in a post/colonial context.

This case study demonstrates the importance of having a community-first approach based in local strengths and needs to foster cultural and climate resilience through education. In the colonial context, education was a means of oppression and assimilation of Indigenous communities, alienating them from their own heritage. How then can the museum uplift traditional knowledge of the environment and restore intergenerational transmission within Indigenous communities? Learning is not neutral; it is vital to build spaces of encounter and local capacity to emancipate learning from this legacy. *Te Fare Natura* acts as a bridge between Indigenous and Western spaces by giving marginalised youth the tools to engage with their own community, reclaiming the knowledge and pride needed to protect their island homes.

The concept of the ecomuseum originated in France in the 1970s in a “shift from the ‘museum of objects’ to the ‘museum of ideas’” (Davis, 2011). One simple definition is “a community-based heritage project that supports sustainable development”. Unlike the cultural museum or the science museum, either of which may also be an ethnographic museum filled with exotic spoils from distant colonies, it is created not by top-down experts but bottom-up by locals who seek to convey meanings and values about their place, their identities, and their memories. It distinguishes itself by its spatiotemporal position: it is place-based, representing the distinctly local heritage and environment; and it is present-focused, answering current community needs and challenges. It relies less on collections and more on a holistic and collaborative approach, recognising the importance of inclusivity, the intangible, and sustainability.

These principles of place, identity and community, sustainability and society, appear as alternatives in the current move to decolonise museums and improve Indigenous representation, especially for insular communities whose small territories lend themselves to place-based approaches and who present unique environmental and historical challenges. The ecomuseum *Te Fare Natura* embodies these principles in a variety of ways.

The ecomuseum is in French Polynesia (FP), the heart of the Polynesian Triangle and a French colony that evolved into a now semi-autonomous Overseas Collectivity of France. From the Polynesian side came a common ancestry, culture, and languages spread across a vast area of the Pacific Ocean. FP’s five archipelagos developed distinct yet related cultures, a complex caste society, and skilled practices such as tattooing, Environmental Resource Management (ERM), and navigation. From

the French side came Christian missionisation and annexation as a French protectorate in 1842; under colonial rule a great deal of Polynesian knowledge and heritages were lost. While ethnically majority-Indigenous, France's policy of assimilation devastated FP's traditional ways of life and broke the oral tradition and intergenerational transmission of culture; until as late as the 1980s children like my father were banned from speaking their native language in school and physically punished and humiliated (Yan & Saura, 2015).

Given this unique status as both part of France and apart from France, it is particularly complex to discuss de/post/colonialism and indigeneity in FP. Identity comes first from the family and the valley, then the island, then the archipelago, and lastly (or maybe not at all) from the distant nation-state as French citizens. The *mā'ohi* (Indigenous) people suffer socioeconomic disparities, and unequal access to formal Western education is used to justify their exclusion from spaces of power such as politics, academia, and environmental management. Today's inhabitants struggle to reconcile this legacy with the Indigenous revival movement begun in the 1970s and finally bearing fruit this past decade.

The idea for a new space for local learning on Moorea was first conceived in 2012 by the director of the Centre for Island Research and Environmental Observatory (CRIOBE) who wanted to share the scientific knowledge they gathered with residents. By 2017, the territorial government had pushed the idea of a museum which would also benefit tourism. However, they turned not towards a museum professional but towards Olivier Pôté, who had previously developed two organisations dedicated to helping small business owners and cultural associations in French Polynesia (personal communication, February 15, 2024). With a background in agronomics and a career in social work, he envisioned the ecomuseum as a social action and would develop and direct the new institution for its first five years.

From the start, *Te Fare Natura* was designed based on a simple methodology: what is the problem/need affecting this local place? And how can the ecomuseum help address it in context?

The place of the ecomuseum is the volcanic island of Moorea, sister island to the capital of Tahiti, ringed by reef and lagoon; its main industries are tourism and small-scale agriculture. It is in the district of Papetoai right next to the CRIOBE research centre, in the green valley and bay of Opunohu, ancestral heart of the island which bears testimony to the ancestors through its many *marae* (lithic temples).

The problem it faces is that the local youth have no prospects. As in the rest of FP, the children of Papetoai experience high rates of school dropout. Issues such as geographic barriers such as transportation to the capital island for high school and university are compounded by structural and cultural barriers, such as a sense of inferiority for Indigenous children in the French educational model and a limited job market based on the obtaining of diplomas. The need is to give these youths work opportunities and to help them regain their dignity and self-confidence.

So, the question became: how can the ecomuseum teach science, culture, and environmental sustainability in a way that helps the local disenfranchised youth?

Inaugurated in 2020, *Te Fare Natura* is a non-profit managed by the higher learning institution *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, and it reflects the desire to promote Polynesian culture alongside sustainable development. Its mission statement is “to understand, preserve, and transmit” knowledge of the Polynesian ecosystems of land and sea, which is crucial in the face of the climate crisis, with Pacific Islands on the front lines of biodiversity loss and sustainability challenges. To fulfil its mission, it would represent the distinctly local resources: the fauna and flora of the volcanic island and the lagoon, and the Indigenous community and their cultural knowledge that are an integral part of this place.



Figure 1. The ecomuseum *Te Fare Natura* in the valley and bay of Opunohu, Moorea. © Olivier Pôté, 2023.

First, we see its exterior architecture, inspired by the traditional *fare va'a* (canoe house) with its high-peaked roof, the traveller's palm and the seashell. It is surrounded by a botanical garden showcasing endemic flora and connected by a canal to the seawater of the bay some hundred meters distant: a deliberate fusion of land and sea reflecting the holistic Polynesian understanding of the environment. Thanks to its bioclimatic design and solar panels, it does not require air-conditioning and is energy self-sufficient.

Within is an open space allowing the visitor to flow freely between thematic areas: aquariums showcasing the four main marine ecosystems that cycle fish through catch-and-release; interactive videos showing the formation of volcanic islands; dioramas of endemic birds threatened by the invasive rat; a section on crafts ancient and new. with pearl farming, another major FP industry. Finally, there is an immersive 3D room where the visitor can digitally swim alongside whales and sharks. On one side the building opens onto a large, covered deck and communal space with a view of the valley .

Since the ecomuseum did not rely on objects, it did not struggle with financing acquisitions or creating displays that failed to represent or interpret complexity. The staff and local community built the content based on the Polynesian principle that culture and nature are one and the same, blending myth and data. They also adhered to the principle that traditional science is equal to modern/Western science: ancient Polynesians closely observed their environment, and through an empirical approach knew how to practice ERM strategies like the *rāhui* (restricted use of an area); to navigate the Pacific using sky, wind, and wave compasses; and that Moorea's Mount Rotui had

slipped northward in the geologic past from the edge of the caldera, attributed in legend to thieves from the neighbouring island of Raiatea attempting to steal the mountain.

But neither did the ecomuseum depend on displays and written information: instead, staff hired local youth as museum guides, both giving them the chance to develop their knowledge, know-how, and know-how-to-be and, through them, reviving the oral tradition at the core of Polynesian knowledge transmission. While the usual museum guide is there to serve visitors, here the museum serves the Indigenous guide.

Te Fare Natura sees an average of 35,000 visitors per year. In the three years since opening, it has trained 350-400 youths from various rehabilitation programs, with priority given to those living closest geographically, and it works closely with local associations and schools in a ripple effect. These young guides are able to practice their professional skills, receive positive feedback, and improve their self-esteem and learn and pass on their own culture. This last plays an important role in reclaiming pride in their Indigenous heritage and challenging Western academic gatekeeping, but it also allows visitors and tourists to engage more authentically with the unique identity and ecology of Moorea. Here there is little question of musealisation or commercialising culture (Brown, 2017) thanks to the non-profit, social service focus. There is also little conflict of elitist hierarchy (Kaine, 2021), as the staff are locals in service to their own community.

Fostering climate resilience goes hand in hand with cultural resilience: In order to care for their place, a community must care for themselves. The traumatic loss of identity goes deep. Our Polynesian ancestors were experts in what we now call sustainable living: They understood the relationships between land and sea, of humans as part of a natural whole. Transmitting these values to current generations is vital. In a context where formal education was weaponised for assimilation, it is equally important that this exchange be in a format accessible and meaningful to the local population, from a source not imposed from without. It means building local capacity to weather the climate crisis, bridging the gaps left by colonial destruction, restoring connection to ancestral knowledge and sacred land and waters.

Te Fare Natura shows us how a museum can uplift Indigenous people and their knowledge; rehabilitating youth both professionally and culturally is a first step towards decolonising the mind. What better way to achieve this than by empowering them to take ownership of their place and their identity.

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Unlocking Nahua cosmovision through machine learning

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The tradition of writing in Mesoamerica was by painting. While most pre-Hispanic codices were destroyed during the Conquest, the tradition continued with colonial codices created by the tlacuiloque, where indigenous and Spanish techniques entangled while Indigenous scholars resisted, contested, and fought to maintain their own traditions. The shift from pre-Hispanic to colonial codices marked significant changes in aesthetics and purposes. Pre-Hispanic codices combined painting, oral, and performative traditions that served as mnemonic devices and held religious significance, connecting the diverse Indigenous knowledges and cosmovision. It is estimated that around 20 pre-Hispanic codices survive, and the tradition of writing by painting was substantially transformed while preserving their legal relevance. Nonetheless, the legacy continues with over 500 colonial codices documented (Valle, 1999), and more being discovered by the communities that created and sheltered them. Codices chronicle the cosmovision, history, and mythologies of Mexican people and many still constitute ‘live documents’, influencing modern social practices (Jiménez Padilla & Villela Flores, 1999).

Unlocking the colonial archive

Codices contain deep semantic richness with iconography and text. Traditionally, studying them required producing interpretations from analysing these documents, once scattered worldwide due to historical shifts, which was expensive and labour-intensive. Digital archives, supported by various institutions such as the National Institute of Anthropology and History of Mexico, the LLILAS Benson Latin American Collection, and projects such as Tlachia and Amoxcalli, among others, have eased access to this information by digitalising vast amounts of its content. Yet challenges persist, notably technological limitations of Western tools and barriers hindering Indigenous semantic understanding. We aim to dismantle these obstacles, enhancing access to knowledge within codices and maps and advancing the decolonisation of archives and computational techniques.

Our research group developed a Natural Language Processing (NLP) system for identifying and extracting large amounts of information from historical texts, creating a classification system, ontology, and Machine Learning (ML) model for automatic marking of historical information (Murrieta-Flores et al., 2022). This innovation streamlined the annotation of colonial Mexico’s data, including the 12 volumes of the 16th-century Geographic Reports of New Spain, and identified 15,000 placenames from 16th-century Mexico (Murrieta-Flores et al., 2022). Our work led to the Digging into Early Colonial Mexico Geographical Gazetteer, a digital resource pioneering the study of this period (Favila-Vázquez et al., 2023).

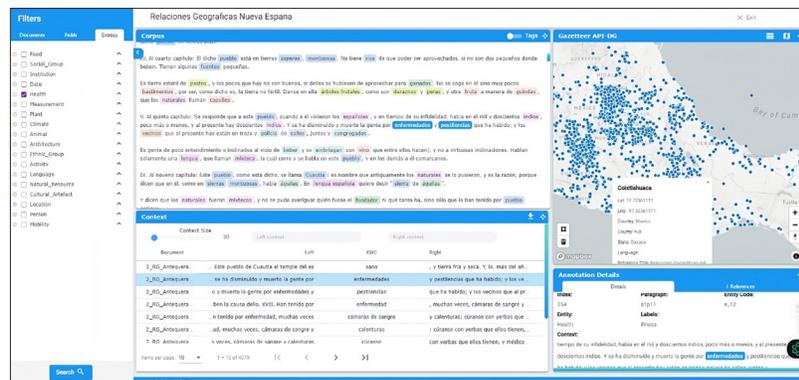


Figure 1. GTA Software. Query of all terms related to the entity of “health” in the corpus of the Relaciones del Arzobispado de México.

We built the Geographical Text Analysis (GTA) software, combining Corpus Linguistics, AI, and Geographic Information Science, to analyse information in large historical collections. The software allows the linguistic exploration of topics that might be of interest to the researcher and the identification of geographies related to these (see Figure 1).

We’re now expanding our approach to include Mexican pictographic sources, using ML and NLP to make Indigenous visual languages more accessible. Our new approach, Visual Natural Language Processing (VNLP), combined with a domain ontology, enhances the machine and human interpretation of iconographic content, facilitating a deeper semantic understanding of the visual systems involved.

We’re now expanding our approach to include Mexican pictographic sources, using ML

Visual NLP for Mexican codices

Decoding visual narratives unfolds across three layers: the pre-iconographical description, which involves identifying basic visual elements; the iconographical analysis, interpreting these elements as narratives and allegories; and the iconological interpretation, which unravels the symbolic and cultural significance (Panofsky, 1939). While ML through Computer Vision (CV) excels in the first two layers, it faces challenges with the complexity of the symbolic layer. Visual Natural Language Processing (VNLP) can help overcome this limitation, unlocking the layers of complex symbolism and unveiling the rich cosmovision within the multimodal complexity of the codices.

Specialised *tlacuiloque* in Mesoamerica crafted codices that showcased diverse contextual information through unique representational structures. The *Codice Xolotl* and the *Tira de Tepechpan*, both historical codices, showcase this variety; the former emphasises spatial historical narratives while the latter focuses on chronological sequences (Thouvenot, 2018). In religious context, the *Codice Fejervay-Mayer* uses figurative and pictographic writing to depict the natural and divine forces of human activities, in contrast to the *Codice Borbonico*, which merges European imagery with Nahuatl writings (Thouvenot, 2018). This differentiation in specialisation has significantly influenced the

representation of information, as exemplified by the *Codice Borbonico*'s integration of European and Nahua elements, facilitating pre-iconographic analysis through ML technologies. The challenge, however, lies in equipping ML technologies with the system of knowledge and understanding of figurative writing and reading sequencing of codices to fully grasp their depth.

To comprehend pictographic content, both machines and humans need to understand the underlying cosmovision and meaning. Mesoamerican iconography forms part of a sophisticated language system, embodying semiotic, cultural, and visual elements. For instance, the deity *Chalchiuhtlicue* is characterised by her connections to water and social rituals such as *temazcal* (steam bath) and childbirth ceremonies. This is represented through facial paint, nose ornaments, headdress and decorations, among others (Dehouve, 2020). Lopez Austin (2010) and others have shown how design elements convey complex concepts and extend to place and personal names (Kuehne Heyder, 1998; Valle, 1998). For example, the anthroponym *Xochicozcatl* is shown in the Cuauhtinchan map through a composition of “*xochitl*=flower” and “*cozcatl*=necklace”, and the toponym *Texcallan*, or place of many cliffs, denoted by the depiction of a toponym (a mountain) and a cliff (see Figure 2).

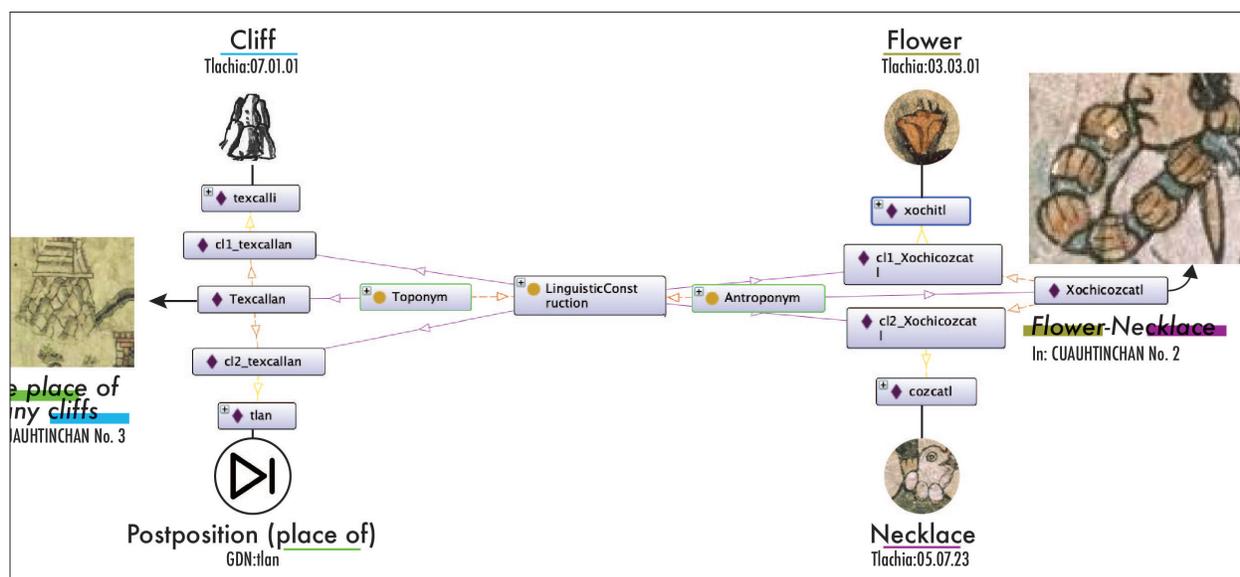


Figure 2. Ontologic representation of the linguistic construction of the toponym *Texcallan* (left) and the anthroponym *Xochicozcatl* (right).

Furthermore, understanding these documents requires grasping their internal logic, contextualising iconography within the context of the entire narrative. For example, the *Mapa Quinatzin*, shown in Figure 3, features a three-layered narrative: The outer layer lists places (toponyms) subject to taxation, the middle layer depicts the government palace, and the innermost layer outlines the *Nezahualcoyotl* council (Mohar Betancourt, 1999). Analysing codices through VNLP requires engaging with the iconographic description as well as the layout and positioning of the glyphs.

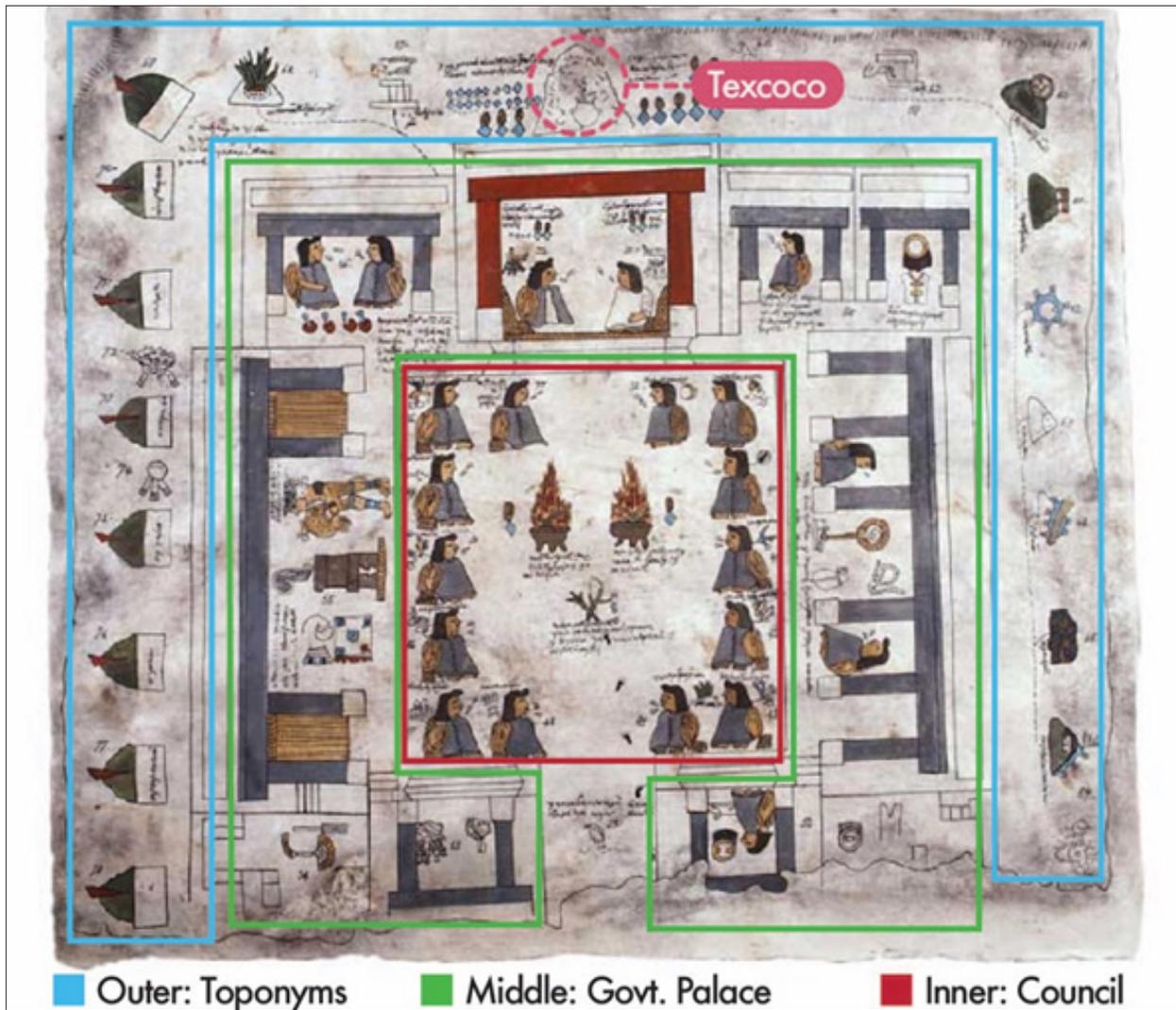


Figure 3. How to read the Mapa Quinatzin (CC0) adapted from Mohar Betancourt (1999), (Wikimedia, 2024)

We are creating a glyph taxonomy for AI use, focusing on a unified framework for organising and connecting Linked Data. This will facilitate access to the nuanced contexts of historical documents, as the absence of consistent metadata significantly hinders human and machine understanding, and the variability in image description practices aggravates the risk of misinterpreting critical data. The flexibility of Indigenous languages, such as Nahuatl, coupled with the multiplicity of interpretations a single image or codex can evoke, calls for a socio-technical solution that accommodates diverse insights, including those shaped by the Indigenous cultural and linguistic cosmivision, and the translation process of both Indigenous and Europeans. Our strategy is grounded in the Semantic Web principle of “Anyone can say Anything about Any topic” (AAA) (Allemang & Hendler, 2011), striving to merge diverse ontological representations through a combination of automated identification and manual collaborative refinement (Zhitomirsky-Geffet & Shalom Erez, 2014). This approach is further enriched by our inter-annotator agreement approach (Liceras-Garrido et al., 2019), inviting contributions from various perspectives and backgrounds to enrich our ontology.

This data is produced as Open Annotate Data to support the diverse interpretations and reuse of information aligned to our domain ontology. Our domain ontology for Nahuatl descriptions has been based on *Tlachia's* Codex Dictionary (Tlachia, 2012), the *Gran Diccionario Náhuatl* (GDN, 2012), and Joaquin Galarza's work on the *Mapa de Cuauhtinchan III* (Galarza & Yoneda, 1982). This effort aims to enhance searchability and analysis through knowledge graphs, standardised image descriptions, and improved access to iconographic knowledge, helping reduce and avoid misinterpretation.

Conclusion

Developing a domain ontology is opening new ways to explore and record information about the cosmovision and languages in codices through ML technologies. We are also connecting this to standard ontologies such as CIDOC-CRM and Europeana Data Model (Candela et al., 2023). Integrating cultural understandings and information of Indigenous cosmovision into VNLPs is crucial, as this requires considering how to integrate complex cultural knowledge with computational workflows. For this, we are creating a Web AI Lab to implement these pipelines, featuring ML-supported VNL and a Text Annotation tool for historical documents.

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The cultural heritage of New Caledonia: Climate change and sustainability challenges in the safeguarding and valorisation of historical buildings

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In New Caledonia the *Case Kanak* is the historical building most often considered as typical, but the *Maison Coloniale Calédonienne* – Caledonian Colonial House – is also a landmark of its landscape, and today it is threatened by various factors such as modernisation and the loss of specialised artisans able to reproduce their elaborated engraved motifs.

Intertwined with the personal life stories of people who have become part of the history of these islands, these monuments have survived through centuries, carrying variations that on an architectural level allow us to evaluate different sensibilities towards such heritage, but also the availability of natural sources and expertise needed in their building and restoration processes.

As considered in Boulay et al. (1990), the Case Kanak, especially the Grande Case, which was a symbol of local authority, were devastated and burnt down during the repression years and would disappear until the 19th century; it was only in 1975 that these reappeared as a renowned symbol for Kanak people. A reflection of the ancient hierarchies for the Kanak in the past, the definitions used for their architectural elements are also found in clan names, underlying relations of conflict and competition: mythical recountings tell of these whilst describing the importance of building the tallest structures as a metaphor of higher power for the respective *chefferies* (chiefs of different clans), or referring to the chronological order of construction and elements of the same roofs, as a way to define the most ancient and powerful clans, the differences among them, and their differences from one *aire coutumière* (cultural area) to another (Boulay et al., 1990). The *flèches faitières* are an example of this, as their figurative themes refer to different territories and *coutumes* – the ancient rules for rituals that instructed how important events or moment of the clan life had to be celebrated, and that today continue to have relevance during festivities, seasonal celebrations, and revivals.

While modernisation, particularly in architecture, is beneficial for cities as the new materials provide better ways to protect from extreme weather conditions and reduce pollutants and impacts on the environment, there is a potential for loss in historical areas that are of heritage value. Historical sites are fundamental for supporting communities and their sense of belonging, enhancing a place identity whilst improving their chances in the global competition for touristic spots and global markets (Boussaa, 2018). Despite the increased interest and sensibility from both residents and experts on the matter of effectively integrating the historical and cultural aspects of cities as ancient

buildings and their distinctive qualities (Wen et al., 2023), traditional practices today are almost completely abandoned.

Between past and present

When, between 1991 and 1993, Renzo Piano started working on the Tjibaou Cultural Centre, his idea was to valorise what was symbolic of the Case Kanak, from both an architectural and cultural perspective. His design presents a concept that's a turning point for the valorisation of the Caledonian Cultural Heritage: Kanak culture doesn't belong only to the past, but rather is a founding element of New Caledonia heritage for the future. Such a concept came from the exchanges that Piano was able to have with Alban Bensa and Marie-Claude Tjibaou (Piano, 2008), the wife of Jean-Marie Tjibaou, a Kanak leader who was assassinated in 1989 for his engagement towards a peaceful resolution of conflicts between the supporters of New Caledonian independence from France and loyalists to the French Government. This centre provides then a new space for reconciliation and recognition, not only with the final buildings that are a glorious homage to Kanak architecture and art, but also through a different dialogue and engagement with Kanak artisans' expertise.

As knowledge passed on through oral recounts instruct on the processes for building the cases, their variety and features reflect the differences that exist among the Kanak clans. The *flèches faitières* on top of the Grande Case are an example of this: their figurative themes refer to different territories and traditions.



Figure 1: Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Renzo Piano (photo by the author, 2022).

One last point interesting to consider for the Case Kanak is how it tells of a deep relation with the local environment, with numerous metaphors among humans, chiefs and trees. The centre column for example, is generally explained as being a tree that has arrived from the massive forests in accordance with coded trajectories that have a social meaning, and this is understood to reflect the role of the chief that, without the support of its perches, will fall.

In 1898 one of the most iconic colonial houses of New Caledonia, the *Maison Célières*, was built in what is still today known locally as one of the most beautiful neighbourhoods of Noumea, Faubourg-Blanchot. Colourful details, elaborated decorations engraved on wooden elements of façades and porticos, chromatic contrasts that emerge from the lush tropical gardens: this is the kind of landscape that these historical buildings have produced in the last centuries. The lively colonial houses with their colours and symmetries are nestled in a series of contrasts of colour and irregular vegetal elements, surrounding the streets, and are visible from shady and bright corners alike. These all tell stories of different people and different struggles, but also of common needs for a safe shelter to call home. The neighbourhood

of Faubourg-Blanchot is characterised by the presence of 80 colonial style villas, but only five of these have been listed and are hence suitable for receiving funded interventions for restoration and valorisation. These houses not only have shaped what is today part of the historical centre of the city, they still provide a space to reflect on the lifestyle and customs of the past, what has made New Caledonia the multicultural country that it is today, and how challenges faced by the migrants who arrived on these lands a century ago can teach us something for the future. This portion of the city shows features and architectural elements in buildings that once were exclusively in colonial style but today merge together with modern taste, with the availability of new materials and the owners' interest in practicality.

Safeguarding: challenges and bureaucracy

Environmental depletion and landscape decay are both linked to uncontrolled growth of cities, already a threat for fragile cultural and ecological heritage everywhere in the world (Vaz et al., 2012). In the way the Caledonian Colonial Houses have been adapted, restored or at times completely replaced by contemporary buildings, we ultimately find local responses to problems posed by increasingly extreme weather conditions, but this also tells us about the way cultural heritage experts are allowed to address such problems as structural damages, at times irreversible. One serious problem is posed by termites, and some ancient historical buildings like the *Maison Célières* have gone through a pull and replace remodelling because of this.

While on an international level new laws and trainings for cultural heritage professionals are being conceived to tackle the increasingly jeopardised fragile archaeological landscape, not all governments are yet aware of this problem, nor have they developed procedures and programmes able to prevent and intervene in time. According to the indications provided by the government of France,

Any intervention in heritage entails risks for its understanding, preservation and transmission ... to preserve them in order to pass them on to future generations [;] intervening in a cultural property is therefore a decisive choice. In France, interventions are subject to scientific and technical control by government departments in all areas covered by the heritage code (Ministère de la Culture, 2024)

The Government of New Caledonia, which is a French Overseas Territory, has produced a series of indications where interventions of this kind are detailed, particularly for the evaluation of cultural and artistic value and type of support and funding available. Buildings whose conservation is of public interest from the point of view of prehistory, history, architecture or art are classified as historic monuments in whole or in part. Although these categories are quite strict, buildings or parts of buildings which present sufficient historical or artistic interest may be included in the supplementary inventory of historic monuments (Province Sud, 2023).

Although the relevance of these buildings is acknowledged, various associations that are active in passing on to new generations and at the same time valorising and safeguarding this kind of cultural heritage, like *Témoigne d'un Passé*, still point out problems related to the procedures required for this, which have been evaluated as too complex and long.

Furthermore, as underlined in the report written for the European Commission by 50 experts from 28 European countries: “Cultural heritage is under threat from climate change at an unprecedented speed and scale” (European Commission, Strengthening cultural heritage, 2024), but neither the Government of New Caledonia nor the Ministry for Culture of France define how climate change related damages could urge institutions to provide more immediate support.

Conclusions

The European Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is an EU policymaking process used by Member States to cooperate at a European level in fields such as education, employment and culture. This voluntary group, of which France is member, has underlined how, in times of climate change, it’s important to identify differences and gaps related to cultural heritage safeguarding practices. Aimed at spreading and sharing best practices, OMC encourages implementation through experience in territories that fall completely or partially under the responsibility of EU laws, and it underlines how the safeguarding of cultural heritage represents a way to transform economic models that could become greener and produce sustainable and climate-resilient societies. Such transformation is linked to the possibilities for increasing awareness in communities where scientific specialists, like archaeologists, are engaged in safeguard practices. As stated in the EC report:

Improving heritage resilience to climate change involves a strategic shift towards investment in new forms of development. For example, instead of demolishing old buildings of cultural value, authors of the report call for them to be maintained, repaired, reused and retrofitted, which is more climate friendly. (European Commission, Strengthening cultural heritage, 2024)

As restoration can be a sustainable solution and impact positively the relevance of ancient buildings and neighbourhoods for tourism, it is important to improve the way this can be authorised. This is particularly true since, as the EC report clarifies: “At a national level, different ministries are responsible for cultural heritage policies and climate change policies. This makes it difficult to implement common and suitable strategies [in] order to highlight that cultural heritage needs to be considered in the fight against climate change” ((European Commission, Strengthening cultural heritage, 2024).

For their particular political condition, French Overseas territories like New Caledonia face more difficulties related to how the State (Government of France), and Europe with it, could support strategies and programmes of conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage whilst respecting the authority of local institutions.

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Tides of transformation: How young changemakers are redefining the role of museums and heritage organisations to address the climate emergency

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The time for action is now. As the climate emergency intensifies, young people around the world are rising up, demanding urgent change. This unprecedented mobilisation of youth-led movements has become a powerful tidal wave, pressuring governments and society to address the existential threat of climate change. Yet the young voices of those on the frontlines – such as Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Barbados, the Cayman Islands and in the Pacific Island Region, as well as coastal and island communities such as the Outer Hebrides in Scotland – are disproportionately impacted by the effects of the planet’s ongoing climate crisis and all too often underrepresented (Cunningham, 2019; Kelman, 2014, 2018). Furthermore, museum and heritage policies that tend to emphasise youth engagement and outreach in cultural activity fail to encourage young people to participate, and, therefore, they often remain excluded (Madgin et al., 2016).

As custodians of our cultural heritage and catalysts for social change, museums occupy a critical juncture in this pivotal moment of global challenges. It is time for these revered institutions to heed the next generation’s clarion call, harness the energy and vision of young changemakers and position themselves as champions of sustainability and resilience. Hilda Flavia Nakabuye, a youth and environmental activist and founder of Fridays for Future (FFF) Uganda, made the call to action during her standing ovation keynote speech at the International Council of Museums (ICOM)’s 26th General Conference in Prague, Czechia, stating that museums have the power to take action to stop climate change and encourage people to take care of the environment and youth should be included in ICOM processes to shape the future. (IcomOfficiel, 2022)

Nakabuye stressed the need for youth to be more involved in museums to directly foster climate justice and to have a role in the governance of ICOM and museums in general to further sustainability and resilience (Hardaker, 2022).

We safeguard our shared future by forging deep connections between youth, museums and the climate emergency. The 47th International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM) Annual Assembly and *Transnational Island Museologies* International Conference, 5-7 June 2024, comes at a vital moment for youth movements such as Fridays for Future, as the realities of the shared global challenges get ever greater. It will provide a platform for youth voices to be heard. Presently, Fridays for Future has reported that the youth movement has involved more than 14 million people in its campaign, taking to streets across 7,500 cities in what is considered to be the single most significant youth-climate movement in history (FFF, 2024; Kowalkowska, 2022). The actual number of

participants is likely even higher. Nakabuye will present a keynote at the conference and co-facilitate a youth workshop in collaboration with museum experts, young people and knowledge holders. Her call to action for museum professionals has been heard by conference co-hosts the University of St Andrews and ICOFOM via collaborative research initiatives.

Shared Island Stories



Figure 1. Young people participating in the first transnational youth exchange visit to Barbados. Photo © University of St Andrews, 2023

The European Research Council (ERC)-selected/UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)-funded Shared Island Stories between Scotland and the Caribbean: Past, Present, Future research project has placed young people at the forefront of its research into the future relationship between Scotland and the Caribbean. Primarily through a transformative transnational youth exchange between Barbados and the island communities of the Outer Hebrides, the project seeks to answer what the intergenerational transmission of Indigenous and traditional knowledge brings to debates on climate justice, especially as they relate to the role of young people. How can this intergenerational transmission from the elderly to the young be best valued as a resource for preserving memories of environmental and cultural conditions?

The *Future* aspect of the project has facilitated youth-based workshops in collaboration with the Barbados Museum & Historical Society, Barbados Community College and the community-led West Harris Trust on the Isle of Harris, Scotland, featuring numerous invited speakers and knowledge holders. Young people explore the role of community heritage in sustainability, co-author a youth-focused cultural heritage resource toolkit and participate in two physical in-person exchanges reflecting on the shared stories between Barbados and Scotland while holding debates and discussions to seek solutions to the shared challenges of the present day and future.

Through a critical pedagogy approach, the anticipated outcomes include enhancing the participating young people's social, digital, and oral history skills. The project aims to empower these young changemakers to become active contributors to solutions and adaptations within their local communities. This approach aligns with respective national education strategies in Barbados and Scotland and builds on the evidence of the importance of these skills for youth empowerment

and community engagement (Shor, 2012). Crucially, the importance of engaging young people in critical analysis of social, political and environmental issues will foster them to become “youth ambassadors” for cultural heritage and climate change in their respective schools, community groups, countries and internationally through the conference (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2001). Bem Wallace, a young participant from Barbados, shares his experience:

We’ve investigated the shared problems of both nations that are of increasing concern to the youth today, such as coastal erosion through rising sea levels; storm intensification due to climate change; economic difficulties, depopulation and inappropriate tourism development. (Wallace, 2024, p. 1)

The outcomes of the youth in-person visits and participation within the transnational youth exchange program will inform the co-development of a youth-focused toolkit. This resource, created by young people for young people, aims to catalyse robust debate and discussions among coastal and island-based youth. The ultimate goal is to empower other young people to take tangible action within their respective communities, addressing shared climate-related challenges. The youth-focused toolkit aspires to inspire and mobilise other young people to become changemakers in addressing the pressing climate emergency challenges facing their locales.

Young people shaping the future of museology through the lens of the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The ICOFOM-led global youth workshop series, a special project funded by ICOM’s Strategic Allocation Review Committee (SAREC), has embraced Nakabuye’s call to action for museum professionals to seek positive collective climate action between young people and museum decision-makers (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017; Nairn, 2019). ICOFOM is facilitating a platform for young people and those working with them to debate the role that museums can play in addressing climate change and achieving the United Nations Agenda 2030, particularly in underrepresented countries and communities that are not on track to fulfil the promises that were agreed upon in the Paris Agreement (UNEP, 2024).



Figure 2. Map of ICOFOM-led youth workshops as of March 2024, © ICOFOM

The project applies the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while acknowledging the presence of alternative contexts for sustainable development, conducting a series of co-facilitated workshops between ICOFOM and the local collaborative partners:

- Aotearoa New Zealand - *Te Herenga Waka* Victoria University of Wellington;
- Barbados – Barbados Museum & Historical Society;
- Brazil – ICOM-LAC;
- Cayman Islands – National Gallery of the Cayman Islands;
- Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad & Tobago (virtual) – University of the West Indies (UWI) and the University of St Andrews;
- Malaysia - ICOFOM-ASPAC, ICOM Malaysia and the Department of Museums Malaysia;
- New Caledonia - University of New Caledonia and the Association des Musées et Établissements Patrimoniaux de Nouvelle-Calédonie;
- Qatar – Qatar Museums; and
- Scotland, UK – University of St Andrews and ICOM-UK.

ICOFOM believes that the museum’s social impact can be more greatly achieved by positioning the museum as a place for the active participation of young people at the centre of climate action debates and discussions (ICOFOM, 2023). It empowers participants to examine, exhibit and promote the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge from community elders and knowledge holders across museum communities and climate action contexts. This approach is particularly important in decolonising euro-centric understandings of museums and promoting polyvocal perspectives that amplify the diverse narratives and experiences of underrepresented and marginalised communities (Onciul, 2015; Onciul et al., 2017).

The upcoming conference will host the Scottish workshop as part of its proceedings, and will welcome, in addition to Nakabuye, Peter Davis, author of *Ecomuseums: A Sense of Place*; Kaye Hall, education and outreach officer at the Barbados Museum & Historical Society; and Lucy Neville, climate officer at Museums Galleries Scotland. This diverse line-up of speakers and experts will explore the critical intersections between museums, island communities and the climate emergency, offering valuable insights and perspectives to youth participants.

The workshop series overall seeks to produce a youth-led climate-focused recommendation for the ICOM 27th General Conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in 2025.

Through initiatives like ICOFOM’s youth workshop series and the Shared Island Stories between Scotland and the Caribbean: Past, Present, Future project’s transnational youth exchange, young people are empowered to become active young changemakers inspired by Hilda Flavia Nakabuye to work for cultural heritage protection within the climate emergency.

As the tides of transformation rise, museums must rise to meet the challenges facing our young people. The *Transnational Island Museologies* International Conference and 47th ICOFOM Annual Assembly provide a vital platform for these critical dialogues and collaborative initiatives to unfold,

empowering young voices to shape the future of museology in the historical setting of Scotland's first university.

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Our present is their past: Intergenerational heritage and adaptation to climate extremes on the coast of Northern Peru

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This paper draws on prize-winning collaborative research aimed at recovering intergenerational knowledge about how to manage the El Niño phenomenon in arid desert environments.¹ Since 2019, researchers from the University of St Andrews and the Peruvian NGO PRISMA have been working in northern Peru with the Sechura School Board and desert-located schools to understand how livelihoods are managed when flooding occurs periodically because of the El Niño phenomenon (Laurie et al., 2023). Currently, El Niño events occur approximately every four to seven years starting around Christmas time², and they last for several months. Each event has a significant impact in the northern coastal area of Peru because during El Niño years heavy rainfall inundates the dry coast from the direction of the Pacific Ocean. This is a reverse to the usual pattern of precipitation as normally the coastal plain is in the rain shadow of the Andes. The El Niño phenomenon is the main driver of the world's weather systems and climate change is making its effects more intense and frequent. It is therefore an important agenda to understand where it is having the most impact and to identify any contexts in which it can bring associated livelihoods benefits (Seiner, 2001), since most existing literature focuses on disaster narratives arising from adverse El Niño impacts on infrastructure, health and economy (French et al., 2020; Yglesias-González et al., 2023).

El Niño: a phenomenon of opportunity

Archaeological and environmental evidence indicates that desert communities in the north of Peru have adjusted their production systems to cope with periodic El Niño rains since pre-Colombian times. These include the development of canal systems designed to use both scarce rainfall in normal times and extreme rainfall during El Niño events to irrigate crops, along with short-term occupation to make use of fishing resources created by El Niño flooding (Caramanica et al., 2020; Goepfert et al., 2020). Focusing on living memory in the contemporary period, our research indicates how,

1 AHRC 2019–2022 ‘Fishing and farming in the desert’? A platform for understanding El Niño food system opportunities in the context of climate change in Sechura, Peru’ - AH/ T004444/1AH.

2021-2022: El Niño a phenomenon with opportunities: learning history and valuing community assets for an empowering digital curriculum in northern Peru AH/V012215/1.

2 El Niño refers to celebrations of the birth of Jesus around this time and the phenomenon was first named in this way by Peruvian fishers in the 18th century.

in contrast to dominant disaster narratives about the negative impacts of El Niño in the driest and most economically marginalised parts of the Sechura desert, El Niño is often seen as an opportunity. Working with intergenerational oral histories generated through a student-led story telling project (Bell et al., 2023) we have documented how fishing and farming communities in the desert capitalise on temporary increases in water availability during El Niño events. The students produced videos, stories, artwork and music to illustrate the benefits to farming and fishing that El Niño rains can bring and developed these into their own community museum, Sala FENCO,³ in Daniel Alcides Carrión school, in Mala Vida, Cristo Nos Valga, Sechura (Figures 1-2). Their work, much of which was carried out under lockdown during COVID-19 via online classes, was aligned with specific competencies in the Peruvian curriculum. It provides an example of an innovative initiative that aligned with the Ministry of Education’s emergency programme, “I work at home”, and was awarded a series of high-level Education and Innovation national prizes by the Ministry of Education (Laurie et al., 2023). A bilingual teaching resource for secondary teachers in the UK, hosted by the Royal Geographical Society, was also produced using the material generated by students (Healy et al., 2023)⁴.



Figure 1. Opening ceremony for the school museum, Sala FENCO, in May 2022. Photo © FENCO 2 project team, 2022.

3 FENCO: a contraction of the Spanish project title, fenómeno con oportunidades, that is, a phenomenon with opportunities.

4 <https://www.rgs.org/schools/teaching-resources/el-nino-phenomenon-of-opportunities/>



Figure 2. Sala FENCO display panels: each has a QR code with associated explanatory video material produced by the students, May 2022. © FENCO 2 project team 2022

From storytelling to museums as productive spaces for resilience planning and knowledge exchange

In 2023, the interdisciplinary collaborations between St Andrews' Schools of Geography & Sustainable Development and Art History that had underpinned the community museums aspect of the outreach work with Daniel Alcides Carrión was extended into a new project, Making museums productive spaces for climate adaptation. This project brought together expertise in Peru

and Costa Rica on climate change and cultural heritage. The main objective was to enhance the ability of the community, museums, schools and local stakeholders to manage the effects of El Niño flooding by developing the capacity of museums to act as spaces that could enable climate action and network regional heritage actors to support local development.

The work developed several strands of engagement. First, interactive training and capacity-building workshops were held with schools and the municipality, focused on the potential of museums as learning spaces and on evaluating risks to cultural heritage. Risk management workshops were led by Samuel Franco (Director of Casa K'ojom, a Guatemala-based organisation specialising in preservation of cultural heritage) and involved regional municipal government representatives, the regional ministry for culture, the local education authority (UGEL), education and health NGO PRISMA, teachers and pupils from a local school, and local tourism and culture representatives. These focused on “first aid for cultural heritage” and “risk management for cultural heritage conservation and sustainable tourism”. Second, visits were organised to Chusis, a municipal government-run archaeological site in Sechura, which has a small visitor centre/museum displaying finds from previous excavations and also a sediment profile which may hold evidence of past El Niño flood events. This sediment section is located near to a cemetery that had previously been excavated, revealing a number of tombs with bodies and associated artefacts. Student curators from the Daniel Alcides Carrión Sala FENCO museum visited Chusis for the first time to understand how their contemporary experience relates to the longer timeframe of the artefacts on display in the museum. Third, an exploratory visit by a palaeoecologist on the research team (Davies) sought to assess whether sediments in the eroding soil profile are suitable for environmental analysis, which could allow climate responses in the archaeological past to be connected with current climate adaptation issues (Figure 3). Finally, as part of the field-based component of the risk management workshops, led by Samuel Franco, participants from the heritage sector generated the first cultural heritage risk evaluation for the archaeological site of Chusis.



Figure 3. The arid-adapted vegetation on and around Chusis archaeological site has developed within a mix of erosional and depositional features, which demonstrate the closer intercalation of livelihoods and flood risk and the potential for palaeoenvironmental analysis to reconstruct flood history. Photo © A.L. Davies, 2023.

Reflection: Student curators and the importance of museums as productive spaces

The emphasis that this collaborative work on El Niño as a phenomenon of opportunity placed on resilience and participation has allowed us to explore real-world issues at the intersection of society and environment, geography and sustainability. The socio-economically marginal communities involved in this work struggle to leverage wider recognition of climate threats to cultural heritage, which are secondary to infrastructure issues – the main concern nationally and politically at a regional level when intense El Niño inundations occur. This emphasis on built infrastructure can downplay the importance of cultural heritage and social capital which provide the knowledge and relationships which support the adaptive practices that are key to resilience. By supporting networking between disaster response experts, heritage personnel and communities (via highly engaged school teachers and pupils), this work demonstrates the potential of museums to act as a focal point for learning and knowledge exchange. The museum visit provides an inspiring space for children, sparking questions on past health and experience of living with climate variability, which have informed our ongoing interactions with the school and future collaborative research plans.

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Rising rooted: Exploring opportunities for reactivating traditional environmental knowledge to increase plant awareness

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Just north of where the Caribbean Sea reaches its deepest point lies a trio of low, lonely islands. Initially dubbed ‘Las Tortugas’, the tiny archipelago was settled by a diverse mix of slaves, sailors, soldiers, planters and privateers (Sainsbury, 1889), eventually becoming known as the Cayman Islands. Despite totalling less than 300 square kilometres, the Cayman Islands is the third most biodiverse United Kingdom Overseas Territory (UKOT) (Churchyard et al., 2016). This remarkable biodiversity is complemented by a unique repository of Caymanian traditional environmental knowledge (TEK), which was essential to human survival on the islands well into the 20th century. In the space of approximately 60 years, however, the Cayman Islands has experienced a rapid and significant socioeconomic, geopolitical and technological transformation. The country’s population has grown by approximately 739% since the 1960s (ESO, 2022), and residents now rely almost exclusively on imported food, fuel and goods (ESO, 2023). Around the world, similar processes have contributed to an increasing separation between people and the natural world, interrupting the culturally based processes that produce and sustain TEK (Aswani et al., 2018). Concurrently, there has been a global increase in “plant blindness” (Wandersee & Schussler, 1999) – the inability to notice, understand and appreciate the plants in one’s own environment (Wandersee & Schussler, 2001). It is not possible to facilitate sustainable development, conserve biological diversity or build resiliency to climate change without increasing awareness, understanding and appreciation of plants (Sanders, 2019). The question is: Does TEK have a role to play in efforts to increase plant awareness?

TEK comprises the knowledge, beliefs, traditions, practices, institutions and worldviews developed and sustained through repeated anthropocentric encounters with the natural environment by a specific people in a specific place (see Gomez-Baggethun et al., 2013; Kimmerer, 2002). Distanced from the mainland and overlooked by the motherland, early Caymanians had to rely on a bioculturally specific repository of environmental knowledge for their survival. They roofed their houses with Silver Thatch (*Coccothrinax proctorii*), framed their walls with sturdy Ironwood (*Chionanthus caymanensis*) and cured their ills with plants like Headache Bush (*Capparis cynophallophora*) and Worry Vine (*Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*). Once viewed as little more than a folkloric vestige of bygone eras (Gomez-Baggethun et al., 2013), TEK is increasingly understood in terms that reject binary “original plenitude and subsequent loss” understandings of cultural knowledge (Rigney, 2005) and is recognised as dynamic, adaptive, communal, experiential and anti-essentialist. Both distinct from and complementary to scientific ways of knowing nature, TEK is steadily acknowledged across a variety of fields, disciplines and sectors for its potential to offer “not only important biological insights but a cultural framework for environmental problem solving that incorporates human values” (Kimmerer, 2002). Nevertheless, the loss and degradation of biological diversity

is interconnected with and correlates to the loss and degradation of cultural diversity (Aswani et al., 2018). This is particularly true in the case of plants, which, for a variety of reasons, tend to be overlooked and underappreciated by humans across a multitude of sectors.

Though rooted in human physiology (Achurra, 2022; Balas & Momsen, 2014), there is growing consensus within the literature that the tendency to overlook plants is neither innate nor inevitable and that cultural factors play a decisive role in whether persons are aware of plants (Balding & Williams, 2016; Stagg & Dillon, 2022). While several studies have suggested focusing on useful and/or culturally significant plants as a method for increasing plant awareness, the relationship between a person's traditional knowledge and how they perceive, understand and value plants has not been explored.

For much of their history, circumstance necessitated that Caymanians be aware of the plants around them and knowledgeable about their unique attributes and uses. As this direct reliance on the natural world has lessened, the relationship Caymanians have with the living environment of their islands has changed. As one elderly Caymanian put it:

They [previous generations] were blessed with wisdom. I don't think we come up to it today. And why we don't come up to it, is because we don't have to. We don't have to. ... We lived from the ocean, and the land. That's how we survived. That's how we came to where we is. (Ebanks, 1990)

I hypothesise that Caymanians who possess traditional knowledge about plants will have greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of plants, and, further, that interventions designed to increase TEK will result in increased plant awareness in participants.

The real-world consequences of plant awareness disparity are serious and pervasive. To quote Howard Thomas, Helen Ougham and Dawn Sanders: "Sustainability in an era of plant blindness is unsustainable" (2020, p. 50). The "inability to visually and conceptually distinguish and interpret a botanical world that has been stripped of meaning" (Lewis-Jones, 2016, p. 1) is a serious impediment to sustainable development, climate resiliency and biodiversity conservation. Indeed, though they contribute the least to the ongoing crises of biodiversity loss, climate change and pollution, small islands like the Caymans are both disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of global environmental change (Robinson, 2020) and hold "a disproportionately large amount of the world's threatened biodiversity" (Churchyard et al., 2016, p. 1678). The Cayman Islands' remarkable repository of biodiversity is imperilled, not just by environmental crises playing out on the global scale but also by local tensions that pit socioeconomic development against sustainable practices (see *Cayman News Service*, 2024). At the global and local scale, unsustainable practices and the related loss of biocultural diversity have foundations in the growing human-nature disconnect and the resulting increase in plant blindness. Efforts to facilitate sustainable development, to build resiliency to climate change and to sustain biocultural diversity require the development of interventions that increase plant awareness while restoring connections between humans and the more-than-human world.

For much of their history, Caymanians relied on their culturally specific TEK to make a home where no other humans had dared to put down roots. Within the space of 60 years, the Cayman Islands has transformed from the “islands time forgot” (Maloney, 1950) to a luxury tourism destination and offshore financial centre. While most current-day Caymanians no longer have to rely on their natural environment to meet their basic, daily needs, the continued importance of plants to human survival has not lessened. Against the backdrop of a complex and interconnected nexus of geopolitical uncertainty, socioeconomic inequality, environmental degradation and climate change, plants continue to be powerful allies for the wellbeing of people everywhere (Kumar et al., 2021). Efforts to increase sustainable development, climate resiliency and biological diversity can only be successful if they are matched by efforts that aim to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of plants through the conscious cultivation of biocultural connection. As both content and process, the active revitalisation of TEK offers the opportunity to “come up to” those old wisdoms once again. By embodying the centralism of nature within human perception, TEK offers a unique pathway for cultivating connections between people and nature to revitalise biocultural diversity, in particular through increasing awareness, understanding and appreciation of plants.

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Preserving Mediterranean Heritage in a Changing Climate through Digital Cultural Landscapes

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Mediterranean islands face continuing transformation aggravated by the effects of climate change, such as sea-level rise and extreme weather events. These impact the tangible and intangible heritage of island communities and their wellbeing. This article demonstrates how digital cultural landscapes (DCL) can be used in virtual reality to preserve heritage, inform people of endangered heritage, and record local knowledge. An exhibit design of the elements that make up DCL is provided as well as a discussion of DCL use. A tool such as DCL can be used to foster a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between culture and environment, ensuring the continuity of Mediterranean heritage in the face of evolving climatic conditions.

Mediterranean heritage and climate change

The Mediterranean region, known for its historical significance, has a unique blend of socioeconomic and cultural influences from the 23 European, Middle Eastern, and African states that enclose it. The sea and its 46,000 km coastline are an important factor for its communities. Developments in the region present a growing number of challenges, jeopardising its heritage and the cultural identity of its people.

The Middle Eastern and African population is rapidly growing and related urbanisation results in growing demand for water, energy, and food. Carbon dioxide emissions are expected to increase by 45% across the region by 2040 (Lange, 2020). Apart from the impacts arising from over-development, the Mediterranean is a “climate change hotspot” due to increased temperature and decreased precipitation (Giorgi, 2006). The growing population and drier conditions are leading to over-exploitation of existing water reservoirs and aquifers.

The region is anticipating a rising mean temperature of 2°C to 7°C by the century’s end (European Environment Agency, 2023), with water availability reduced by 2-15% for a 2°C warming (Lange, 2020). Climate change results in increasingly extreme events, such as heatwaves (Christidis et al., 2023), droughts, and extreme precipitation and flooding (Lange, 2020), exacerbated by non-climatic factors like urbanisation and poor water management systems. Flash floods and droughts are the most dangerous meteorological hazard with an increasing number of mortalities (Diakakis et al., 2023). Rising Mediterranean Sea levels considerably affect the island and coastline communities, while higher water temperatures increase sea acidification, leading to faster deterioration of underwater heritage (Perez-Alvaro, 2016).

Climate change impacts society and its heritage. Impacts range from damage to buildings and monuments to biodiversity loss and changing practices.

The Mediterranean identity is shaped by multiple languages and cultures, with 13 official languages and numerous regional or minority languages and dialects. Languages like Maltese, Sardinian, and Corsican are already at risk, aggravated by increased migration forcing regional languages to be replaced by more universal ones. Consequently, vulnerable cultures and identities disappear while others are homogenised (Kounani et al., 2021). This means that beyond physical heritage damage, intangible heritage is also at risk, from lost languages to forgotten practices.

Response to the climate crisis

The museum's role suggests that it has increasingly become "a means for raising awareness of political-social realities and as a potential container to awaken creativity to action" (Rojas, 2020)¹. Museums are using exhibitions and programmes to raise awareness of issues like climate change with the goal to inspire behavioural change and encourage people to create their own agency by reflecting on their position.

Cultural institutions are committing to becoming carbon neutral, safeguarding and preserving heritage from damage, and innovative communication strategies. The museum's role has broadened to include monitoring the environment, mitigation, adaptation, and communication. The Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) has created a Climate Actions Map², in which institutions can submit their actions to inspire other organisations. Some examples from the Mediterranean include organisations creating their own action plan and sustainable agendas (Ju Museum & Gallery, Montenegro), culture and biodiversity events (Herakleidon Museum, Greece), and the Altri Tempi postcards from the past and present exhibition (Bora Museum, Italy).

Innovative digital strategies

The museum's social role can be investigated through its policies as well as through the messages expressed in its exhibitions (Pastore, 2020). It's a role that's changing due to the digital revolution, with technology that is more capable and accessible. Digital tools can be leveraged by museums to create engaging digital experiences that prompt visitors to action. Digital strategies can be used to both collect knowledge about climate change and to inspire action through enhanced personalised learning.

We propose that heritage organisations could achieve this through digital cultural landscapes (DCL), creating a digital presence of a natural landscape and its cultural heritage, integrating both tangible and intangible heritage. We propose that such a holistic representation can be enriched using powerful gaming engines that allow for increased interactions. DCL would benefit the Mediterranean by creating holistic digital representations of islands and coastline areas and capturing their heritage.

1 Translated by the author.

2 This can be accessed online through <http://bit.ly/NemoClimateActionMap>

Digital Cultural Landscapes exhibition design

DCL have the potential to collect and preserve local knowledge. Our previous work has included creating DCL for the North Uist community (Pisani et al., 2023), creating virtual walks around several historical sites, presenting information in Gaelic and English, digitising artefacts, and recording Gaelic music. Other work from the research group involved showing a climate future for North Uist where flooding and a rising sea level could be experienced. Based off this work, we propose a digital exhibition design that incorporates the elements discussed below.

Landscape recreation: Real-world geographical information system (GIS) data is imported into a game engine, like Unreal Engine. This forms the basis on which the rest of the cultural landscape is built. With today's technology, it is possible to create representations of entire islands and coastal areas.

Digitised artefacts: The landscape is then populated with 3D digitised objects and heritage sites reconstructions. At this stage, a decision can be made to recreate the cultural landscape as it is now or as it looked during a specific period or in the future. The North Uist cultural landscape included both past and future versions of the landscape. This allows the user to perceive the landscape through time, creating new understanding.

Digitised oral traditions: In addition to physical objects, the scene can include music and narratives. Media can be recorded in the native language with subtitles overlaid. Using characters in a virtual scene enables one to include storytelling features. This is done through non-player characters (NPCs) interacting with each other or interacting with the user. In this way, myths and oral cultural histories are passed down to new generations.

Traditional practices: Other cultural practices, like craft, can be recorded and presented as videos in the landscape or as characters enacting different scenes. Including these intangible heritage elements adds additional layers to the digitised landscape. They are valuable to users who might not be able to experience these aspects at the location.

This exhibition type ensures that multiple heritage features are represented and creates a strong foundation through which the museum's role of monitoring, mitigating, adapting to, and communicating climate change is facilitated as detailed in the following two sections.

Virtual reality and experiential learning

Virtual reality use is possible when building exhibits in Unreal. Through VR, the DCL can be explored with full immersion. This creates a more engaging experience, which strengthens active learning through experience (Fromm et al., 2021).

Applying this model to Mediterranean island communities will enhance heritage identification, fostering understanding of the consequences of heritage loss. Heritage knowledge serves as a powerful tool for promoting sustainability by visualising societal intricacies and how these are affected by an unsustainable future.

Co-creation, exchange, and sustainable heritage policies

Another DCL opportunity lies in their use as vehicles for co-creation and exchange. Apart from displaying heritage content, DCL can be used to gather more information through interactions between the user and the exhibit. In a climate scenario, users can contribute their own climate actions. This adds a layer of personalisation and agency to the exhibit, influencing how the landscape appears for future users. This is a form of resilience by a society, which, through the museum exhibit, can be prompted to mitigate and adapt to issues affecting it as well.

The DCL can further be extended by making it available in different formats. In the North Uist application, websites and touch displays were created using 360° exports. Alternatively, the DCL can be compressed into a portable VR headset application. This is ideal for outreach activities. In Malta, a similar approach involves VR headsets showing 360° footage of underwater heritage sites (Gambin et al., 2021). However, this can be improved by placing these underwater scenes within the larger heritage context of the islands.

Holistic DCL are more than a form of exhibition but take a collaborative approach to heritage preservation and communication. The many ways through which they can be experienced by multiple stakeholders, not just end-users, shows there are possibilities for their use in creating sustainable heritage policies.

Conclusion

At this stage, this framework is planned to be built and tested for the Mediterranean island of Malta, but it is a strategy that is applicable to other regions. This article has highlighted the importance of using DCL and VR to safeguard Mediterranean heritage in an era of rapid environmental change. By embracing a holistic approach to heritage preservation and communication, heritage organisations empower diverse stakeholders to actively participate in conserving and promoting cultural identity. Through immersive experiences and interactive storytelling, DCL offer a dynamic platform for heritage engagement, transcending traditional boundaries and inspiring innovative sustainable heritage policies. Ultimately, this article presents a framework for building future applications in the Mediterranean and beyond.

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Part II:
Hidden stories, entangled spaces:
Thinking through transnational coastal
and island museologies

Ocean as pathway: From museum collections to contemporary creations

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On Sunday 15 August 1875, the Tongan chief Enele Ma'afu'ou'itoga (Ma'afu) presented a *bayaloyalo*, a composite trolling fishing lure made of whale bone, turtle and pearl shell, to the recently appointed British Governor of Fiji, Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon.¹ It has been recorded that Ma'afu presented this object with the words, “You have got the land. I bring you the water, as land without water is useless. Here it is with all the fish and living creatures in it” (Roth & Hooper, 1990, p. 120). While this story can be found in the archives of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge, where the *bayaloyalo* is currently housed, it is not shared on the museum's online database. Many of the rich stories associated with objects are simplified or lost when objects are translated into a museum database where objects need to correspond to fixed categories (Jacobs, 2019; Turner 2021).

The *bayaloyalo* is not merely a ‘fishhook’, the term under which it is registered in the museum database. It is an object that represents a story of imperialism, strategy and Indigenous agency. The Tongan chief Ma'afu had established a base in eastern Fiji where he was perceived as a threat by the Fijian chief Cakobau, who was aiming to consolidate his power over the whole Fijian archipelago. The *bayaloyalo* was therefore a significant and strategic gift to Governor Gordon, and this not only from a political perspective. Through this gift, Ma'afu also demonstrated the significance of the Pacific Ocean. Indeed, Oceanic cosmologies establish how landscape and seascape are inseparable in the region (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2018).

In the 1990s, Tongan scholar Epele Hau'ofa put forward a vision for Oceania in response to colonialism and developmentalism and the subsequent tendency to divide the region into clearly delineated and separate areas (Hau'ofa 1994, 1998). Rather than an array of small, isolated entities, Hau'ofa proposed to consider Oceania as an assemblage of islands connected by the ocean; an ocean that acts as a linking pathway rather than a separating boundary; a pathway that some of their ancestors had crossed using impressive navigational skills. This discourse continues to resonate and inspire scholars, curators, artists and practitioners in the region and beyond. Yet it does not come without debate, as the term Oceania is a European-bestowed term. Therefore, the concept *Moana Oceania*, *moana* meaning ‘ocean’ in some Pacific languages, is proposed by Chitham, Māhina-Tuai and Skinner (2019, p. 16) to be “meaningful to island nations that do not have the word *moana* in their languages” yet arguing for privileging *moana* epistemologies and thus Indigenous perspectives. What links these debates is the emphasis on a desire to be recognised in global relations and the use of the ocean as a powerful metaphor for connection.

¹ The deed of Cession was signed on 10 October 1874 by Cakobau, Ma'afu and others, introducing 96 years of British rule.

How can this *moana* approach find its way into the museum? So far, Hau‘ofa’s vision has inspired permanent regional displays in a range of museums.² These regional displays emphasise the region’s strength and mobility, which counteracts earlier views of Oceania collections as resulting from salvage ethnography (Clifford, 1989). However, a *moana* approach can go further and help decolonise museums that care for collections from Oceania. Behind the drive to decolonise the museum is not only an openness to restitution of colonial collections to Indigenous communities but also a critical reading of colonial histories and legacies that allows for a multiplicity of voices to be heard. Reviewing collections with community members, contemporary artists and other stakeholders shows that these collections are the result of multifarious interactions. A *moana* approach emphasises the connection between different stakeholders, emphasises Oceania’s place in a global world and views Oceania as a region that is not isolated but globally connected.

Today, the relationship with the Pacific Ocean is even more challenging due to the threats resulting from climate change. Oceania is threatened by rising sea levels, global warming and extreme weather phenomena, pollution, coastal erosion and species extinction. A range of contemporary artists from the region are now showing how climate change has caused the Pacific Ocean to become a dark and threatening metaphor as well as an empowering one. The artists that are discussed in this paper consider climate change as a colonial act and the ocean as an entangled space. By displaying their work in museums that hold historical collections from Oceania, they show that the museums can play an important role in portraying colonial legacies that go beyond their collections. Museums can make an impact in voicing climate injustice (Newell et al., 2017).

Teresa Regina Vaka‘uta’s *Promises* (2022) is a digital artwork that shows a young male standing in a flooded landscape with unfulfilled promises floating by while the sun is setting. Not only does the work represent the impact of rising sea levels but it also references the national flag of Fiji, which shows a defaced cyan ensign, used by territories formerly associated with the United Kingdom, with the shield from the national coat of arms. The country’s coat of arms depicted on the Fijian flag is referenced in Vaka‘uta’s artwork, which aims to demonstrate how the ideals that the flag represent are being challenged today. The lion, which proudly tops the original coat of arms, is now merely a skeleton, the banana bunch damaged, the coconut palm uprooted, and the doves of peace are flying away. The young male in the centre of the artwork is standing in a rising and flooding ocean while holding pieces of red thread. The latter references the use of red in the British flag shown in the corner of the Fiji flag and the coat of arms – now reduced to remnants of red thread.

The artwork was submitted to an exhibition competition organised in collaboration with the Fiji Museum in the framework of the research project *Urban Pathways: Fiji. Youth. Arts. Culture.*, funded by the British Academy’s Youth Futures programme. Supported under the UK Government’s Global Challenges Research Fund, the British Academy’s Youth Futures programme sought youth-led perspectives on the UN’s 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (The British Academy, 2020). The *Urban Pathways* project aimed to bring youth communities into Fiji’s cultural heritage settings and museums and help them consider these environments as potential employment opportunities

² To name but two of many: Hau‘ofa’s vision inspired Pacific Hall at the Bishop Museum, Honolulu, Hawai‘i (opened in 2013), and the Oceania display in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter, UK (opened in 2014).

(Jacobs, 2022).³ During the project, youth expressed concerns about climate, the COVID-19 and economic crises, as well as the need to acknowledge heritage and cultural identity and hope for the future. Teresa Regina Vaka‘uta’s *Promises* highlights the fact that youth face problems that do not guarantee a bright future, but the young man is not drowning. Standing upright in the water, he conveys the message that youth are resilient.

Yuki Kihara’s サモアのうた (*Samoatou no uta* in Japanese, meaning ‘A Song from Sāmoa’, 2019-23) was a five-year project referring to her Sāmoan and Japanese heritage. While the artwork’s title has been adapted from a popular Japanese song, the idea for the work itself was instigated in 2015 when Kihara came across a kimono of her late Japanese grandmother. The kimono’s colour reminded Kihara of *siapo*, Sāmoan barkcloth made of *Broussonetia papyrifera* (paper mulberry). For each of the five phases that the artwork consists of, five kimonos were made of *siapo*.⁴ Overall, the work deals with the impact of climate change, economic development and globalisation, resource extraction, foreign aid and diplomacy (Kihara, 2023).

Phase One of Kihara’s サモアのうた is currently on display in the exhibition *Rising Tide: Art and Environment in Oceania at National Museums Scotland* (12 August 2023 – 14 April 2024). In Phase one, *Vasa (Ocean)* (2019), Kihara depicted the ocean as a connective body between the distinct cultures of Sāmoa and Japan. The impact of climate disaster on sea creatures and corals is observed by a flock of *Tūlī*, Pacific Golden Plover (a bird that migrates across Japan and the Pacific Ocean). Japanese artist Hokusai’s known woodblock of *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* (1831) is referenced to represent tsunamis that severely impacted both Sāmoa and Japan (Kihara, 2023, p. 189). The ocean connects in many ways. Similarly, the plastic bag and Coke can that float along the waves could have been discarded anywhere. What is thrown away eventually washes up on shore somewhere else. As such, Kihara makes the invisible impact of people’s actions visible and emphasises an ocean of connection. Climate change is a global problem.

Indeed, while drawing on Japan and Sāmoa, Kihara’s challenging of climate disaster goes beyond those regions. Likewise, Vaka‘uta visualises climate disaster yet demonstrates the resilient relationship with the ocean, which is being challenged at a global level. Their work contradicts popular representations of the region as paradise by showing the region as a space impacted by extreme weather events that result from global warming that is mostly caused by nations beyond their region. Vaka‘uta references ideals on the Fijian flag that acknowledge Fiji’s colonial connection with the United Kingdom and the fact that these promises remain unfulfilled due to global threats. The stories in the work surpass borders and acknowledge power imbalance. Returning to the *bayaloyalō* that opened this paper, its presence in the Cambridge museum equally demonstrates how the ocean is a transnational space surpassing the borders between the UK, Tonga and Fiji.

³ The project partners were: Sainsbury Research Unit, University of East Anglia (UK); Fiji Museum; The Pacific Community (Fiji); University of South Pacific (Fiji) and VOU Dance Fiji. PI Jacobs, Co-I Frances Koya Vaka‘uta.

⁴ These phases are entitled: Phase 1 “Vasa (Ocean)” (2019); Phase 2 “Fanua (Land)” (2020), Phase 3 “Moana (Pacific)” (2023), Phase 4 “Taiheiyō (Pacific)” (2023), Phase 5 “Tūlī’s Flight” (2023).

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Insular aesthetics and the shifting contours of contemporary Caymanian art

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Within the contested history of European exploration and conquest in the Caribbean, the Cayman Islands typically appear as little more than a footnote in the official accounts that document this early period of colonisation.¹ Heralding the first sighting of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman in 1503, Ferdinand Columbus notes, for instance, a fleeting encounter with two low-lying islands, detailing the striking abundance of sea turtles in his recorded observations (Craton, 2003). Although admittedly problematic in its propagation of a mythical origin story, the Columbus discovery narrative holds significance in speaking to Cayman's profound isolation through the course of its early existence, and more symbolically to the Islands' longstanding marginalisation within the wider trajectory of the Caribbean's social, economic, and political development.

This slight of history is undoubtedly a reflection of Cayman's geography – three small islands in the western Caribbean, whose relatively inconsequential value within the strategic stakes of European imperialism is visually encapsulated within the cartographic representations of the region produced from the beginning of the 16th century onwards.² Relegated to the proverbial margins through the subsequent period of their initial settlement, the Islands' formerly peripheral status as a subsistence-based society is echoed into the present through the recurrence of certain cultural signifiers that have since come to entrench themselves within the national psyche (Bodden, 2007). Whilst such popular conceptions of Caymanian identity – referencing Islanders' oft proclaimed qualities of resourcefulness and self-reliance – speak to the hardships endured through successive generations, they have also infiltrated a pervasive cultural mythology that surfaces repeatedly within the work of Cayman's contemporary artists.

Acknowledging the cultural affinities shared by many island communities across the Caribbean, this paper seeks to identify a unique set of values within the determining stakes of Caymanian aesthetics, proposing the concept of the “insular” – in the sense of a territory or body definitively bounded by water – as a means of understanding the underlying thematic concerns of Caymanian visual culture. Examining the work of artists who share similar aesthetic preoccupations, the intention is then to articulate the characteristics of this particular cultural sensibility, which is rooted in the Islands' maritime heritage and symbiotic relationship with the sea. Addressing Cayman's liminal position within the expansive terrain of Caribbean culture, this paper lastly calls for the reappraisal of the periphery as an inherently productive space that Caymanian artists have strategically and successfully sought to occupy.

1 These include the Treaty of Madrid (1670), which acknowledged British sovereignty of Jamaica and by implicit extension the Cayman Islands.

2 Notable examples include the Cantino Planisphere of 1502, Juan Vespucci's map of 1526, and Pierre Desceliers's inverted map of the Americas of 1550, all of which feature the Cayman Islands to varying degrees of accuracy

Historically, western conceptions of the Caribbean have invoked the dialectic of centre and periphery to differentiate the Caribbean archipelago from the West in distinctly oppositional terms. Situating the Caribbean within what Stuart Hall has described as the “rim of the metropolitan world” (Hall, 1990, p. 228), this strategic Othering has also perpetuated romanticised notions of the region that are fundamental to its exoticized appeal within the western imaginary. In turn, the persistence of such problematic attitudes has largely been responsible for the longstanding subordination of Caribbean artists within the canonical narratives of western art history. More recently, Caribbean art has begun to receive greater institutional visibility, initiating a critical shift that is reflected through a spate of exhibitions dedicated to artists of the Caribbean and its diasporas. These include solo shows for artists such as Frank Bowling (Tate Britain, 2019) and Ebony Patterson (Perez Art Museum, 2019), as well as numerous group exhibitions addressing the Caribbean’s profound artistic legacy, among them *Fragments of Epic Memory* (Art Gallery of Ontario, 2022); *Forecast Form: Art in the Caribbean Diaspora* (Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2023), and *Entangled Pasts, 1768-Now: Art, Colonialism and Change* (Royal Academy, 2024). In different ways, these exhibitions can each be seen to offer a corrective measure of restitution for the longstanding neglect of Caribbean art’s globally significant cultural contributions.

Amidst this increased validation of Caribbean artists, Caymanian art continues to occupy a somewhat nebulous position within the complex negotiations of Caribbean cultural politics. In part, the historical Othering of Caribbean artists is further complicated when it comes to the multiracial composition of Caymanian society, which superficially appears harder to assign to binary categories. The art historian Veerle Poupeye has drawn attention to this categorical ambiguity in relation to the noted Caymanian artist Bendel Hydes (b. 1952), whose mixed racial heritage and lengthy career within the metropolitan confines of the New York art world make him “difficult to situate vis à vis the art and history of the Caribbean” (Poupeye, 2019, p. 37). Speaking to the futility of attempting to pigeonhole artists into racial, ethnic, and cultural categories, Poupeye suggests that it is precisely these tensions – “of belonging and not belonging; of being of a place, and of being removed from it” (Poupeye, 2019, p. 38)—that are a defining element of global Caribbean culture, and which paradoxically place Hydes squarely within that very conversation.

Taking a broader view of the Caribbean cultural landscape, such considerations do, however, suggest that Cayman’s differing social and racial demographics necessitate a more nuanced application of the overarching definitions that inform much of the post-colonial discourse. Whilst often overstated in populist narratives, the socio-economic conditions that characterised Caymanian society well into the twentieth century reflect a different – albeit parallel – set of circumstances to that which existed concurrently in the industrially scaled plantation economies of Jamaica, Barbados, and other neighbouring Caribbean islands (Craton, 2003).³ Caymanian historian Roy Bodden, for example, introduces the term “pigmentocracy” (Bodden, 2007, p. 48) to describe a society defined less by the binary opposition of black and white and instead by a highly stratified racial hierarchy that historically underpinned Caymanian society, and which arguably still plays a role in contemporary social dynamics (Bodden, 2007). Setting such specific observations aside, the insights of post-colonial theory offer a productive framework through which to grasp these realities. Among

³ The prevalence of slavery within Caymanian society is well documented in the census of 1802, which records a population of 933, of which 545 were enslaved, rising to 985 enslaved people on the eve of Emancipation in 1834

several varying theorisations, Stuart Hall's is perhaps the most amenable to the Caymanian context, outlining the shape-shifting parameters of Caribbean identity in terms of "a production which is never complete" and "always in process ... "transcending place, time, history, and culture" (Hall, 1990, p. 222). Significantly, Hall's notion is rooted in a universalising definition predicated on the common experience of diaspora, which according to Hall reflects the essence of "Caribbean-ness and the black experience" (Hall, 1990, p. 223).

Derek Walcott expresses a similar emphasis on the diaspora's fundamental place within the history of Caribbean peoples when speaking metaphorically of the Antillean archipelago as "a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent" (Walcott, 1993, p. 4). Yet arguably more telling is the author's reference to a plurality of overlapping identities in his musings on Caribbean culture (Walcott, 1993). Cayman's distinct racial and social composition might therefore be said to align more closely with the transnational model of cultural fusion inherent in Paul Gilroy's concept of the "Black Atlantic" (1993), or for that matter Édouard Glissant's notion of "creolisation" (1997). In light of the Islands' ambivalent relationship to their colonial status, it is also instructive to mobilise the prevailing idea of "cultural hybridity" (Bhabha, 1994) as a further frame of reference, given that it introduces an implicit tension between Cayman's connection to its African roots and its struggle to define itself. According to Caymanian scholar Christopher Williams, such an effort is made harder still by the subjective criteria for determining who exactly can lay claim to being Caymanian, given the elusiveness of "Caymanian-ness" (2019, p. 2) as an essentialist term that evades a commonly understood definition.

The purpose of this extended discussion is to emphasise the significance of these concerns within the work of contemporary Caymanian artists, for whom identity formation and the articulation of cultural bodies of knowledge is critical to the scope of their respective projects. In the case of Nasaria Suckoo Chollette (b. 1968)'s *Things We Brought with Us Beyond the Door of No Return* (2022), the artist adopts a visually emotive approach to the traumatic narrative of the Middle Passage, assertively reinstating the suppressed memory of Cayman's entanglement with slavery into the conversation around Caymanians' collective sense of identity. Davin Ebanks's (b. 1975) *Passages Triptych* (2021) similarly explores formal and symbolic binaries in relation to the transatlantic slave trade. Presenting a trio of wall-mounted glass sculptures – whose profiles resemble the inverted silhouettes of wooden slave ships – the artist offers a haunting meditation on colour and its myriad allusions: the black of African bodies forcibly pressed together, the brilliance and terror of the sea's endless blue, and the white of cotton fields in which those same bodies were historically forced to toil.

Clearly apparent in these works is the particular sociological and metaphorical significance of the sea within Caymanian cultural expression. Foregrounded in the work of Bendel Hydes, these artists eloquently speak to an expressly maritime way of life—one of itinerancy and isolation, yet also of exquisite moments of aesthetic revelation. Echoing the experience of his seafaring forefathers, Hydes's career has been defined in terms of a "poetics of exile" (Helfrecht, 2019, p. 29), tying the artist's personal story to that of the wider Caribbean diaspora. In this sense, Hydes's experience calls to mind figures such as Frank Bowling, whose map paintings of 1966-71 are one of the most obvious manifestations of a similarly rendered aesthetics of exile (Martin, 2019).

Just as Bowling employs the silhouetted profile of the African and South American continents as a recurring motif in his work, the cultural significance of maps appears as a foundational element within the visual articulation of Caymanian identity — a subject explored at length in the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands’ exhibition *81 Degrees West: Cartographic Explorations in Contemporary Caymanian Art* (2023). Focusing on artists who utilise the iconography of maps and their material traces, the exhibition included several works by Bendel Hydes that incorporate collaged map fragments and abstract constellations of geographical waypoints. While less literal in its references to maritime navigation, Hydes’s *Tortuga* (2008) further exemplifies the artist’s autobiographical investigations of this wider cultural history. Part of a series of paintings entitled *Circumnavigating the Globe*, each canvas represents one of the twelve 30-degree segments of longitude, with *Tortuga* depicting the artist’s homeland in a riotous wash of abstraction.

Extending beyond the culturally specific parameters of the Cayman Islands, the symbolic resonance of cartography speaks to a prevailing set of concerns within the Caribbean and indeed globally. Exploring themes that have come to shape our present reality, successive editions of the Cayman Islands Biennial (2021, 2023) have revealed the extent to which these intersecting concerns are intrinsically inscribed within the contemporary artistic discourse. Spanning questions of cultural memory, as well as the political uncertainties and environmental pressures that are threatening to subsume traditional ways of life, the issues that are addressed here are those that are defining critical debates for island communities across the globe. Existing in this state of perpetual flux, the insular aesthetics that delineate much of the scope of Caymanian visual culture accordingly resemble less a specific set of artistic values and rather a particular mode of being in the world – one in which island life increasingly mirrors the ever-shifting, geo-political realities of the globalised present.

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Le mouvement des vagues: Du potentiel de curation décoloniale avec le format de l'installation

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Comment communiquer entre deux nations?

*Ships that pass in the night, and speak each other in passing,
Only a signal shown and a distant voice in the darkness;
So on the ocean of life we pass and speak one another,
Only a look and a voice, then darkness again and a silence¹*

Caroline Monnet a pris la mer en 2012. Embarquée sur un cargo au port d'Ijmuiden, près d'Amsterdam, elle filme avec une caméra Mini DV son voyage de 22 jours jusqu'au port de Cleveland. Elle traverse l'océan Atlantique, le fleuve Saint-Laurent et les Grands lacs à la recherche de ce qui unit les deux territoires de ces ancêtres Anishinabeg et français avec ces questions en tête: « Que se passe-t-il quand tu viens de deux territoires ? Comment est-ce qu'on peut communiquer entre deux différentes nations ? Quel est le manque de communications entre les deux ? Comment peuvent-elles se réconcilier ? » (entrevue avec l'auteure, 22 mars 2023).

De ce voyage, Monnet réalise le film *Transatlantic*. Suite à une première résidence de création au Banff Centre en 2017, et à une seconde en 2018, cette dernière sur invitation de la commissaire australienne Peta Rake, Monnet met en tension l'œuvre vidéo avec Proximal, un ensemble sculptural de cinq sphères en béton faites à la main dans les ateliers du centre. De ce mariage entre les médiums s'agence l'installation *Like Ships in the Night*, présentée à la Walter Phillips Gallery de janvier à mai 2018.



Figure 1. *Like ships in the night* © Caroline Monnet (2018), vue d'installation à la Walter Phillips Gallery, photo par Rita Taylor.

1 Wadsworth Longfellow, H., *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, 1864, Part III, The Theologian's Tale: Elizabeth Section IV.

À travers son dispositif, Monnet opère un syncrétisme. Elle puise dans la symbolique de l’océan Atlantique et du voyage transatlantique pour renvoyer à l’espace de la guerre, des échanges commerciaux, de l’esclavagisme, des migrations et de la colonisation. L’usage du symbole de la Lune dans le film et les sphères invoque l’épistémologie Anishinabeg de la création. À la fois délimitatrices et connectrices, les sphères sont disposées dans l’espace comme des frontières hybrides, telle la faille sous-marine qui fracture l’océan, tels ces réseaux de câbles électriques enfouis sur le fond marin, tels les menhirs du Néolithique qui s’érigent en Bretagne. L’espace de l’installation est quant à lui baigné par un environnement sonore composé de signaux brouillés et de code morse – langage universel permettant de communiquer à travers les distances et les cultures.

À l’instar de ce voyage transatlantique, l’installation est partie en voyage. Dans chaque contexte de présentation, l’installation revêt une signification particulière. Ma démarche de recherche a été de retracer ce parcours et les couches de sens qui s’entremêlent, c’est-à-dire leur interconnexion selon le principe autochtone de « All my relations » (Duhamel, 2021). La commissaire France Trépanier, d’ascendance kanien’kéha:ka et française, affirme que c’est le « mode relationnel » (Larivée et Eshraghi, 2020, p. 26) de compréhension et d’interaction avec le monde qui permet d’établir des liens profonds avec la nature et avec nous-mêmes afin de d’approfondir son engagement. De plus, dans les cultures autochtones, « l’art est un processus continu, qui vit et qui respire. Ce n’est pas un processus statique, mort ou relégué au passé. En ce sens, rien ne < meurt >. Rien n’est jamais éliminé parce que toute chose a un esprit » (Trépanier et Creighton-Kelly, 2011, p. 25). C’est cet esprit de forces vivantes, liées et unies entre elles, qui est parcouru à travers le parcours de l’installation.

Après l’exposition à Banff, *Like ships in the night* a été présentée à la Biennale d’arts numériques de Montréal à l’été 2018. Commissariée par le canadien Alain Thibaut, l’événement avait lieu à l’Arsenal, ancien site de chantier naval reconverti. La monumentalité de l’espace, ainsi que son histoire, ne faisait que multiplier la puissance de l’installation.

En 2019, les œuvres *Transatlantic* et *Proximal* ont été acquises par le Musée des beaux-arts du Canada (MBAC) avant d’être présentées dans le cadre de la grande exposition d’art indigène contemporain international, *Àbadakone / Continuous Fire / Feu Continuuel* de novembre 2019 à octobre 2020 (suite à une prolongation). Le nom de l’exposition fut proposé par le comité des aînés pour la langue de la Première Nation Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg – dont la mère de Monnet est originaire – en allusion au feu qui brûle en continu en chaque artiste. L’événement fut commissarié par les conservateurs internes Greg A. Hill (Kanyen’kehà:ka Mohawk), Christine Lalonde (Canada) et Rachelle Dickenson (Grande-Bretagne/Irlande/Red River Métis), ainsi que les commissaires indépendants Candice Hopkins (Carcross/Tagish First Nation), Ariel Smith (Nêhiyaw) et Carla Taunton (Canada). Lors de cet événement, l’installation de Monnet s’intitulait *Monuments libres d’amarres*, et était exposée aux côtés d’un autre film expérimental de l’artiste, *Mobiliser*, ainsi que des créations de 70 autres artistes de 40 nations autochtones de 16 pays différents. Cet aspect international de l’art autochtone atteste de la globalisation de l’Autochtonie et de l’intégration de cet art dans le réseau de l’art contemporain global.

En parallèle de cette présentation institutionnelle, la galerie Blouin Division, représentant l’artiste, a diffusé en 2019 *Transatlantic* dans sa galerie de New York, dans une exposition intitulée *Shallow*

Mirror High Tower. Cette présentation à New-York en même temps qu'Ottawa positionne encore davantage la dimension internationale du travail de Monnet.

Dans le courant de l'année 2021, le MBAC a diffusé *Transatlantic* et *Proximal* de Monnet (sans nom d'installation particulier), ainsi que *Mobiliser*, dans le cadre d'une grande exposition intitulée *Le nord magnétique : Imaginer le Canada en peinture 1910-1940*. Organisée dans le cadre de la présence du Canada en tant qu'invité d'honneur à la Foire du livre de Francfort, cette exposition s'est déployée au Schirn Kunsthalle, le musée d'art moderne et d'art contemporain de Francfort (Allemagne), et au Kunsthall, espace d'exposition à Rotterdam (Pays-Bas). L'exposition présentait pour la première fois en Europe 87 œuvres du Groupe des Sept et cinq films contemporains, dont ceux de Monnet. Ce dialogue entre les « chefs d'œuvre » de la peinture canadienne et des créations contemporaines autochtones mettait à l'épreuve le mythe de la terra nullius avec d'un côté les vastes représentations inhabitées du Canada par le Groupe des sept, vision romancée des Européens du Canada sauvage, et l'affirmation de la présence autochtone sur le territoire par les œuvres contemporaines.

La même année, *Transatlantic* était présenté au Broad Art Museum du Michigan State University, situé à East Lansing près de Detroit, dans la région des Grands Lacs. Commissariée par la curatrice Georgia Erger (Canada), l'exposition intitulée *Bridging Distance* mettait en dialogue le film avec de nouvelles sculptures faites en béton, formant le mot « distance » en code Morse. Malgré cette variation dans la forme, Monnet renforce son message autour des frontières coloniales, étant donné que le Michigan se situe près de la frontière du Canada, séparant le territoire ancestral de la nation Anishinabe.

De novembre 2022 à mai 2023, *Transatlantic* fut présentée au Centre International d'Art et du Paysage sur l'île de Vassivière en France, dans une exposition intitulée *Ancrer l'invisible*, commissariée par Alexandra McIntosh (Canada). Bien que les sculptures *Proximal* ne faisaient pas partie du dispositif, d'autres salles exposaient de nouvelles sculptures de l'artiste inspirées de la géométrie de l'attrape-rêve dans la culture Anishinabe, invitant les spectateurs au travail perceptif et introspectif autour des questions sur le territoire et des identités transnationales.

Ce rapide survol du parcours de l'installation démontre la richesse de liens possibles afin d'adresser et d'activer des dialogues critiques sur le colonialisme et l'occupation du territoire. Chaque présentation demande une adaptation au lieu et une transformation du dispositif par l'artiste, ainsi que d'une nouvelle interprétation appliquée à son contexte par le/la curateur.ice. Last but not least, le parcours témoigne de la vitalité de la création autochtone contemporaine au Canada et à travers le monde.

Conclusion

Avec *Like Ships in the Night* et ses variations, Monnet génère des espaces de communication fluides, en mouvement, libres. Dans plusieurs entrevues et notes d'installation, Monnet parle du symbole du navire comme un « terrain d'entente » (Middle-Ground), concept développé par l'historien Richard White (1991) à propos d'une zone de compréhension mutuelle entre les cultures. Selon White, les Premiers Peuples et les colons européens avaient élaboré un espace d'échanges pacifique malgré les fossés culturels et linguistiques lors des deux premiers siècles de contact (1650-1815). L'océan et

le navire dans Transatlantic ne sont donc pas seulement des zones chargées négativement par les tensions et les violences coloniales, en pouvant se transformer par l'espace de l'installation en zones positives d'accord et de réconciliation entre les peuples —des espaces d'espoir et de vivre-ensemble.

En conclusion, l'installation de Monnet agence un terrain d'entente entre les cultures, créant de nouvelles images et des conversations infinies pour se rencontrer et apprendre à se connaître, se réconcilier.

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Travelling (Hi)stories: George Nuku's reworking of colonial maritime illustrations

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George Nuku (1964-) is an artist of Māori descent on his mother's side and of Scottish and German descent on his father's side. After studying and starting his career in Aotearoa New Zealand, he moved to the United Kingdom in 2005 before moving to France in 2010, where he still resides today. Throughout his life, Nuku has travelled continents and oceans to present his works in museums and art galleries across the globe.

The ocean is primordial in considering both past and contemporary imaginaries around the Pacific as a region. Starting from the history of settlement of the Pacific Islands as early as 4000 years ago, seafaring and navigation have been central to peoples lives and cultures. Later, during the 18th and 19th centuries, European countries endeavoured to explore the seas and oceans they argued were 'undiscovered', with countless ships sent on circumnavigation voyages.

These ties to travelling and seafaring are inherent in the stories of encounter between the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and Europeans but also to the life of George Nuku.

In 2020, the exhibition project *George Nuku. Voyage Autour du monde, L'aventure māori de Dumont d'Urville* started at the musée Hèbre de Saint-Clément in Rochefort (France) – or rather its realisation. Indeed, the project birthed in 2015 from the relationship between museum curator Claude Stéphani and George Nuku, but more specifically from their common knowledge and appreciation for a series of *taonga*¹ and illustrations kept in Rochefort that had been made and brought back from voyages by surgeon and botanist Pierre-Adolphe Lesson (1805-1888) and his brother, zoologist René Primevère (1794-1849) who both originated from the city of Rochefort. They took part in the voyages of *La Coquille* (1822-25) and *L'Astrolabe* (1826-29), two voyages which circumnavigated the globe, spent many months in the Pacific, and stopped in Aotearoa New Zealand. Some of the visual material that was produced on board these ships during the voyages of *L'Uranie* and *La Physicienne* (1817-20) and the voyages of *L'Astrolabe* and *La Zélée* (1837-40) was gathered for the exhibition in Rochefort. The common denominator was French naval officer Jules Sébastien César Dumont d'Urville (1790-1842), who took part in all the explorations, whether as crew member or commander. Their lives aboard ships across the Pacific were told by George Nuku in the exhibition in Rochefort, which was open between 19 May and 28 August 2021.

¹ The word *taonga* refers to Māori 'ancestral treasures' (Decottignies-Renard, 2020).

Organised in two rooms, the exhibition showed a series of original drawings and prints from the various exploration voyages. Presented in a separate *cabinet d'art graphique*², they acted both as historical and iconographic inspirations to Nuku's creations that were displayed in the main room of the exhibition. Based on these illustrations, the works created by Nuku acted as a visual storytelling of the voyages, but also of Aotearoa New Zealand and Māori people at the time of colonial encounters, set, through his gaze and practice, alongside his own life journey.

Working from the original prints (engravings and lithographs) and drawings, Nuku put himself in the same role as that of Louis-Auguste De Sainson (1800-74), who was the official artist aboard the *Astrolabe*. On his return to France, De Sainson was entrusted with the curation of the voyage's atlas (Collins, 1997,). He worked closely with the lithographers in order to transform the various sketches and drawings into accurate representations for the accounts to be published and disseminated. With the help of the French reprography studio, Studio Ludo, Nuku endorsed this role, which necessitated him making decisions on how to alter the prints and drawings in his retelling of these maritime (hi)stories. Due to the regulations surrounding the conservation of prints and drawings, Nuku and Studio Ludo had to digitize all the illustrations which were to form the corpus of the exhibition. Twenty-five drawings and prints from the various voyages of Dumont d'Urville were transformed by Nuku into 26 enlarged prints showcasing different types of treatment, using both digital and tangible (painting and sculpting) techniques. Common to all of Nuku's new prints is the digital cropping of their original versions, which removes all forms of text (caption, plate number, mentions of the names of artists, printers and editors) present on both drawings and prints, allowing for these works to become Nuku's artworks. With this digital reworking, Nuku altered the original groupings of illustrations that were made on single plates for the atlas in order to remake his own, allowing for new narratives to be told.

Once de/re-grouped, some of these new prints were infused with Māori codification – visually merging the encounter of Europeans with Māori people. Using a bright blue coloured paint, Nuku adorned the background of each illustration with *kowhaiwhai* motifs³, giving both a visual and contextual background to these portraits, life scenes and artefacts by rooting them into the most iconic of Māori patterned motifs. To complete his curatorial vision, Nuku framed each print into a carved polystyrene frame painted in gold and carved with Māori motifs, directly referencing the tradition of classical European and North American paintings lavishly framed in golden wooden frames. To complete the classical look of 19th-century museums, the back wall was painted in a dark red colour and the works displayed in a salon style.

In the rest of the exhibition, the visual tale of the ocean as place of encounter between Māori and Europeans overpowered the visual reference of the classical European museum. A sculptor by training, Nuku hung a *waka* (Māori canoe) that he made from plexiglass in the gallery. Adjacent to this *waka* were two enlarged prints from the voyage of *L'Astrolabe* depicting Māori scenes of

2 A *Cabinet d'art graphique* defines both a collection of works on paper (drawings, prints) as well as the space in a museum where these collections are displayed.

3 *Kowhaiwhai* motifs is a long-lasting tradition of Māori painting. These painted motifs, which are stylized versions of plants, were first found on wooden paddles. Later on, they were transferred to architectural parts of the *whare whakairo* (Māori meeting house) and were understood to visually signify *whakapapa* (genealogy) (Neich, 1990; Neich, 2001).

navigation, whether at sea or embarking, which were digitally coloured in a blue hue by Nuku. In juxtaposing the enlarged images with the plexiglass *waka*, Nuku allowed for the visitor to have a sense of the scale of the scene depicted, but he also reinforced themes of seafaring thanks to the blue colouring. By changing the illustration's colourway from black and white to blue, I argue that Nuku somewhat altered the temporality depicted in the original image. He brought this past representation of Māori people into the present and the future, therefore bridging the divide of time and going beyond the usual linear and European conceptions to instead echo a Māori conception of time.

In an interview he gave for the exhibition in Rochefort in 2021, Nuku said:

These representations are images of my family. [...] In one respect, I literally am walking out of the lithograph. I'm coming out of the picture and I'm in a repeat performance in some ways, here in Rochefort. However, the difference is that the context has changed because this is all history, so the place where this context continues is in the museum because the original function of Rochefort doesn't exist anymore. (Ville de Rochefort, 2021)

With this statement Nuku places himself as one of the people represented in these illustrations of 19th-century exploration voyages, merging his own life story of travels with that of both 19th-century Māori people and European sailing crew members – emphasising his own *whakapapa* (genealogy). Additionally, he tells us that the only place where this retelling of (hi)stories can continue to take place is the museum institution, for the collections it holds, and with it the stories of European and Māori encounters.

Started in Rochefort, this journey of (hi)storical retelling continued at the Weltmuseum Wien in Vienna between 22 June 2022 and 31 January 2023 for the exhibition *George Nuku: Oceans. Collections. Reflections*. Alongside a new set of *taonga* from the museum's collections, Nuku reused some of the prints and illustrations he exhibited in the show in Rochefort, but this time to tell a broader narrative around Māori people and culture and the specific relationships between Aotearoa and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The palatial rooms of the Weltmuseum Wien acted as contextual backdrop, echoing both the Empire and the tradition of classical museums. In this imposing architecture, Nuku adapted the stories told in Rochefort to the local Viennese context. The six rooms of this exhibition were filled with prints, *taonga*, plastic bottle installations and polystyrene and plexiglass sculptures evoking both the maritime and Māori world, specifically referencing architectural elements. In merging the European palatial architecture with that of the *whare whaikairo* (Māori meeting house) and by pairing both visual and sculptural elements, Nuku plays with both sets of codes in order for both spaces to not only become compatible but rather akin to one another, allowing for a space in between to exist.

With each show, Nuku explored the entanglements of Māori and European (hi)stories by creating his own “museum inside a museum” (Ville de Rochefort, 2021). Himself an artist of Māori and European descent, he explored the ongoing legacies of these encounters depicted in these illustrations made during 19th-century exploration voyages to not tell a univocal narrative but rather uncover “the truths [that] exist between things” (Ville de Rochefort, 2021), therefore embracing both (hi) stories.

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Museums in Puerto Rico exhibiting human remains of their own culture: An analysis of three institutions

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Aboriginal presence in Puerto Rico is perceived differently among people: by some, as a symbol of cultural heritage and identity, by others as a subject of academic research. Having been invaded by Spain (Rodríguez, 2010) and the United States of America (Mack, 2017), Puerto Rico has seen years of conflicts that have formalized the island's identity, known as a nation shaped by three races – the Taíno, African, and Spanish (Santiago, 2009). Aboriginal history in Puerto Rico is commonly defined as the Taíno, the culture around Christopher Columbus's arrival, often negating the existence of earlier ancestors (Y. Narganes, personal communication, September 1, 2023).

Tainismo is an adjective for nobleness that references cultural codes that were shared and related among communities in the Caribbean (R. Rodríguez, personal communication, September 27, 2023). Unless specified otherwise, the Taínos will be referred to in this paper as the collective Puerto Rican ancestors. Miguel Rodríguez (2010) mentions how *Taínos* were around by 600 C.E. as inhabitants who developed their own cultures and adapted to the diverse environments of the Caribbean.

The education of Puerto Rico in the early academic levels addresses Aboriginal concepts as products of written history and investigations (R. Rodríguez, personal communication, November 3, 2023). The Department of Education of Puerto Rico (DEPR) offers resources that illustrate how knowledge of Aboriginal people is actively updated into the public education curriculum (*DE Digital Académico*, n.d.), broadening the view on *Tainismo*. This suggests that younger Puerto Ricans have a better comprehension of Aboriginal concepts, which is vital for understanding how the older public perceives and accepts the Taíno legacy, as they do not have the same information as students.

The problem of subjectivity regarding human remains in Puerto Rico

The public survey depicts the importance of heritage awareness, showing elements that could influence museum activities in relation to heritage education. Respondents received 32 questions, which included qualitative, quantitative, and open-ended, divided into two analyses of four sections. One hundred eighty-five respondents from Puerto Rico and the diaspora answered the survey in a timeline of one month.

Demonstrating people's interest in learning about heritage, respondents ranked cultural preservation as the eighth out of ten options for most eminent issues to solve in Puerto Rico. The value of supporting museums and heritage sites in relation to respondents' view on education reveals the necessity to stabilize heritage education in public knowledge. On the cognizance of two laws concerning human remains, many respondents demonstrated little to no knowledge, followed by a

mixed perception of heritage identity and ancestral knowledge. Most respondents felt the need to display human remains to connect with their past, with few debating their reburial. For museums displaying human remains, there is no quick solution that can leverage the public and academic interests.

An example of how complex the museum landscape in Puerto Rico can be illustrated by the difficulty in meeting the expectations set forth by The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) (1990). A United States federal law, NAGPRA's purpose is to provide a process for the return of Native American cultural items to lineal descendants, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations, including human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects and other items of cultural significance. The Act also requires institutions that receive federal funding to compile an inventory of all Native American cultural items in their possession and make this inventory publicly available (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 1990).

Because Puerto Rico lacks a federally recognized tribe, NAGPRA cannot be implemented on the island under federal legislation. As a U.S. Commonwealth that has been under the authority of the U.S. Congress (Mack, 2017), Puerto Rico possesses several powers of self-government, some of which may conflict with federal laws. For example, Law 112 of July 20, 1988, concentrates on archaeology and declares as public utility and heritage to the people of Puerto Rico the archaeological sites, objects, artifacts and documents. Institutions who hold archaeological artifacts must share their inventory with the overseeing council of archaeologists, serving as a source of information for government agencies and researchers (*Ley para la protección del patrimonio arqueológico terrestre de Puerto Rico, 1988*). Law 112 generalizes the governance of archaeology on the island with its own standards yet causes a legal void in the archaeology collections management in museums, leaving human remains at risk from uninformed claims through NAGPRA.

Three museums of Puerto Rico on exhibiting human remains

In Puerto Rico, there are currently three museums that exhibit human remains of Aboriginal people. The Museum and Center of Humanistic Studies Dr. Josefina Camacho de la Nuez (MCEH) currently shows one *Saladoide*¹ body in their archaeology exhibit. Miguel Rodríguez noted that the “rest of the remains from the museum were given to the Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art (MHAA) of the University of Puerto Rico long ago” (M. Rodríguez, personal communication, September 27, 2023). The MHAA currently holds seven complete human bodies, with five on display and “plenty” of other human remains (C. Santiago, personal communication, September 18, 2023). The remains exhibited include Taíno people and ancient Egyptian mummified remains. The Museum of the Indigenous Ceremonial Center of Tibes (CCIT), holds around 126 human remains that were excavated in their ceremonial grounds and surrounding areas (I. Zayas, personal communication, September 7, 2023), with one full skeleton, some articulated bones and part of a cranium on display.

Each museum has confronted an array of perspectives on the display of their remains. The CCIT stated that some professionals and cultural groups actively encourage the repatriation, through

¹ The *Saladoides*, also known as *Igneris*, must have arrived in Puerto Rico between the second and first century B.C.E. (Rodríguez, 2011).

NAGPRA, of the 126 remains. The museum was looking for opinions on the matter as “it has never happened before” and they “do not know how to further act” (I. Zayas, personal communication, September 7, 2023). When asked what they know about NAGPRA, the administrator was unaware of how its compliance works. I informed them on what the law states and why it cannot be constituted in Puerto Rico.

The MHAA’s Dr. Narganes stated that she does not believe there is a problem with the display of Taíno remains as “it helps people connect with a lost past.” When asked about the public’s reaction to the bodies she mentioned that “[the visitors] are curious. It’s natural anthropology” (Y. Narganes, personal communication, September 1, 2023). The collection manager of the MHAA declared that no claims of repatriation have been made, that all collection data related to the remains is kept at the museum and that any official return will be conducted in a way that is morally and legally compliant (C. Santiago, personal communication, September 18, 2023).

In contrast to the attitudes at the MHAA were those expressed at the MCEH. The museum’s director, Dr. Esteves-Amador, recalls that as they were re-opening their permanent archaeology hall, a visitor mentioned that the museum should not exhibit their human remains because in the U.S. human remains are not being exhibited. The director believes there are other ways to display the remains as she has seen in other museums. Although she considers that there is no reason to keep the body on display, she is uncertain about how to ethically remove it from the exhibit, recalling the complex issues, from overflowed deposits to repatriation complexities, which the MCEH and other institutions in Puerto Rico face (I. Esteves, personal communication, October 12, 2023).

Conclusion

Interviews with archaeology and museum professionals indicate there has not been a critical discussion on the storage and management of human remains in a unified matter. Most archaeologists believe human remains should be available for study while museum professionals are most concerned about satisfying their audience. Museums have an impact on the communities they serve, and the public survey demonstrates the need to promote cultural preservation in both the present and future.

In the context of the Caribbean, archaeology collections are at risk when local museum practices wish to replicate the same practices as international museums. Oftentimes the regulations are tailored with a “western perspective and often are not adapted to museums in tropical climates” (M. Bevacqua, personal communication, September 4, 2023), making museum professionals engage in practices of care and curation that are not designed by their cultural set of values. This study proves how American museum expectations, considering NAGPRA’s demands for tougher protocols, do not take Puerto Rican realities into account.

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How museums remember: Charting a Puerto Rican object history

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How might archipelagic thinking promote new forms of engagement with collection-based work, whether situated in an ethnographic or artistic context? Indeed, such thinking “functions ... to conceive human social formations and historical experiences in which irreducible differences become the norm instead of an exception that needs to be processed into synthesis, harmony, and consensus” (Stephens & Martínez-San Miguel, 2020, p. 5). A call for openness to complexity, difference, and ambiguity as a central mode of analysis in navigating museum spaces is in many ways at odds with the archetype of the museum. The history of museums has been characterized by “practices and technologies” that have shaped “how material culture has been framed, named, routinized, and valorized” (Turner, 2020, p. 193). One strength of archipelagic thinking is its use of assemblages beyond a traditional understanding of groupings of objects and the human networks that created, acquired, exchanged, displayed and interpreted them towards broader conceptions of how such sets of relationships, often articulated as “knowledges produced and contained by communities,” were displaced to support “the primacy of ... disciplines of study” entangling museums and professional practice (Stephens & Martínez-San Miguel, 2020, p. 20).

In the case of Puerto Rico, archipelagic thinking has materialized in two modes of analysis that are relevant to the arguments of this paper. First, the island has been described as belonging to what has been termed the “imperial archipelago,” which indexes both the historic context of the War of 1898 and a geographic relationship with the other island territories of Cuba, Guam, Hawai’i, and the Philippines that also faced subsequent U.S. military and political domination (Thompson, 2010). Second, Puerto Rico has been framed as being historically narrated within specific “chronotypes” of “the abyss of the slave ship,” “the plantation ... that was at once oppressively structured and yet open to the wide world,” the island or the “creating and sharing language, cuisine, and music – in short, culture” and the hurricane in its “rethinking of our historical reality with an intent to forge a more just future” (Thompson, 2020, pp. 125–127). The questions arise then as to what narratives museums have presented about Puerto Rico and what narratives museum scholars should seek in turn to collect and construct themselves.

Collecting practices: Narrating Puerto Rican object histories

Post-Hurricane María, Puerto Rico stands at a narrative crossroads with a long catalogue of past portrayals as a place of absence to be passively acted upon by outside forces and as a tropical paradise for tourist consumption. As a material storyteller situated in the respective observation and curation of ethnographic and artistic contexts, I aim to document, compare, and interpret the island’s object assemblages acquired historically by North American museums and continually appropriated today in contemporary art practice. Museum collections, as I’ve argued, tell the stories not only of a collector as the acquisition agent or of a collecting institution as the eventual site of

deposition but also that of historically contingent networks of intercultural exchanges that set the stage for lasting political and economic societal transformation (Guzmán, 2018).



Figure 1. Descendants of the Aborigines, 2023
(Photograph courtesy of Pablo Delano)

This paper will outline the opportunities and implications of positioning my collections-based research in ongoing conversation with art practice. Specifically, I will partly focus my discussion on a collaborative relationship with the Puerto Rican artist Pablo Delano and his site-specific installation series, *The Museum of the Old Colony*. The work in Figure 1 is emblematic, consisting of historical imagery, found material, and digitized replication. His objects have the interpretative capacity to recover, through our strategies of discourse and display, the legacies of silenced local actors and agency amidst a current island climate of past disrepair and continued uncertainty (2023).

The disciplinary recognition of the generative potential of object-based learning in offering sensorial educational experiences and of art to engage and mobilize museum audiences specifically in relation to reconciling difficult histories is not an isolated finding (Graff, 2020; Miller, 2021). Explicit in Delano’s artistic practice, from object acquisition to curatorial design, is an ethical rebuke of museums which aligns with a larger assertion that museums might de-emphasize objects in adopting “a sense of responsibility of being duty-bearers of the communities’ human rights present in their collections” (Cornejo González, 2019). The concept of responsibility and audience impact therein embroils museums in the antithesis of what for some might be an ideal of “a conflict-free, harmonious and stable interaction between society and museum ... to demand that museums ... make themselves vulnerable” (Thiemeyer, 2020).¹ Museum scholarship continues to consider this agentive possibility of the museum site as a locus for social change in the reimagining of the participation of its publics alongside more critical documentary accounts of institutional histories of collecting and our current moment of public protest in/of museums (Hicks, 2020; Murawski, 2021; Raicovich, 2023; Simon, 2010).

With the increased level of cultural and artistic exhibition of Puerto Rico in national and international institutions in recent years, broader critical museum dialogue is both necessary and timely in approaching questions as to how this Caribbean island might contribute a key area perspective to long established historical understandings of museums as sites of archival memory and public

1 A discourse on building collective dialogue on and shared understanding of a contemporary definition of museums culminated in the 2022 ICOM-approved consensus that occurred after three years of consultations, proposal drafts, and discussion.

representation, mediated by transnational networks of exchange.² More specifically, the context of its ongoing political status as a incorporated U.S. Commonwealth and economic management by a financial oversight board index the ways in which a discussion of Puerto Rico offers not only that of the particulars of its circumstances but also a larger museological centering of how collections may have been and are today assembled and curated by diverse stakeholders, from traditional museum actors to local contemporary artists respectively, as a result *of* and a response *to* past and present relationships defined by asymmetrical power dynamics.³ A disciplinary acknowledgement of coloniality has been evidenced by tracing the genealogy of bibliographical material and the dominance of the “metropolis” (Soares & Leshchenko, 2018).

Moreover, contemporary Puerto Rican scholarship offers possible methodological models translatable for museum practice predicated on a nuanced appreciation of complex lived realities and layered intergenerational precarity for the aim of imagining sustainable ecological futures.

This has been characterized as “a political praxis rooted in the idea of truly *living* in Puerto Rico – that is, living a life of dignity and respect that is free of degradation and violence” (LeBrón, 2021, p. 19). Such reparative framing could be extended to the continually emergent negotiations of museum spaces to re-imagine how/what they steward and remember with the stories they tell.

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² I am referring here to case studies that include but may not be limited to the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian’s 2018-2019 exhibition, *Táino: Native Heritage and Identity in the Caribbean*; the Whitney Museum’s 2022-2023 exhibition, *no existe un mundo poshuracán* (there is no post-hurricane world): *Puerto Rican Art in the Wake of Hurricane Maria*; and Pablo Delano’s exhibit, “The Museum of the Old Colony” at the 2024 Venice Biennale, *Foreigners Everywhere*. The Whitney Museum exhibition title was translated by the author.

³ The Financial Oversight and Management Board for Puerto Rico was created under the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act of 2016 and signed into law by former U.S. President Barack Obama.

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Collecting Indian Ocean islands: Material culture and the limits of colonial knowledge

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By 1900, many of the Indian Ocean's islands were directly ruled by Britain or as protectorates of the British Empire. During the late nineteenth century, significant collections of objects were made from these islands, part of the wider process of attempting to understand, control and exploit imperial territories. These collections represent rich resources for understanding Indian Ocean island cultures in the 19th century, offering insights into local cultures, island connectivity and oceanic influences. Material culture as well as specimens of botany and natural history were amassed by figures from across British colonial society, including administrators, scientists, merchants, sailors, soldiers and spouses. While acknowledging the richness of objects as an avenue through which to understanding the complex relationships present in 19th-century islands, we must also consider the history of these collections and how they were formed. Islands were appealing sites for collectors – as a limited field, they appeared to offer the possibility of comprehensive knowledge. For instance, Seychelles had been uninhabited prior to European settlement in the eighteenth century, so had unique botanical specimens which drew the attention of metropolitan scholars. This paper will explore these collections through two avenues: firstly, examples of the varied material cultures of western Indian Ocean will offer insights into insularity and maritime connection in the modern era; secondly, it will examine British collecting practice to expose the impact of insularity on imperial control and the limits of British knowledge of these island cultures. Examples will be drawn from Seychelles and the Maldives to show how these diverse island contexts and histories influenced the kinds of objects created and collected. Each archipelago will be introduced with an object and through these studies and an examination of colonial collecting practice, this paper will reveal the intersections between Indian Ocean insularity, connectivity and colonial knowledge production.

Woven mats (*thundu kumaa*) were one of the most highly prized of the Maldivian arts, created on the island of Gadhdhoo in Huvadhu atoll, in which rushes suitable for mat-making thrived. The Maldives were formed of over a thousand small islands which were part of atolls with a complex web of coral channels between them. Individual islands became specialized in producing particular items depending on the materials available. As a 17th-century European observer noted: “The craftsmen are collected in different isles – for instance, the weavers in one, the goldsmiths, the locksmiths, ... and the carpenters in others; in short, their craftsmen do not mingle together; each craft has its separate island” (Pyrard de Laval, 1887, p. 114). The need to exchange produce and manufactured goods, therefore, led to regular maritime traffic between the islands and atolls. All elements of the mats – from the dyes to the warp and weft – were made from plants that grew on the islands of Huvadhu atoll. The patterns were symmetrical and geometrical of varying complexity, conforming with Islamic tradition with the separation of ornament into distinct fields (Forbes, 2004, pp. 111–12). All stages of the manufacturing process were undertaken by women. Mariam Saeeda, a master weaver, told Andrew Forbes in the 2000s that the designs were passed down from mother to daughter (Forbes, 2004, p. 107). Such mats were regularly given as gifts by elite Maldivians to

dignitaries and had various uses for Maldivians themselves: as prayer mats, to be draped over chairs or for sleeping on the Maldivian swing-bed.

The woven mats had been admired by Europeans since before the 17th century, while H. C. P. Bell, the principal 19th-century British scholar interested in the Maldives, noted: “in the permanency of dye, these fine mats surpass anything in the same line the world over, and have justly obtained unqualified commendation” (Bell, 1883, p. 88). In the late 19th century, these mats, and the Maldives more generally, became a focus of European collecting. Before that period, the islands had been relatively isolated from European interest. Diplomatic relations existed with the government of Sri Lanka (Dutch then British), but the complex coral islandscape made navigation extremely challenging. Shipwrecks were frequent. It was while investigating a shipwreck that the aforementioned Bell, then based in Sri Lanka, made the first in-depth study of the islands, published in 1883.

The Ceylon Government was keen to showcase Maldivian material as part of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886-87, and Carl Wilhelm Rosset, a German collector, undertook a collecting expedition on their behalf. The sultan of the Maldives was suspicious of his intentions: Rosset was forbidden to leave the capital island, Malé, and, according to Rosset, the sultan could not understand the purpose of collecting objects and specimens, “and imagined this to be simply a blind to cover some political design” (Rosset, 1887, p. 165). With reports arriving from Zanzibar of German claims to that territory, Rosset assumed the sultan was cautious about the arrival of Europeans and “was determined that I should have no opportunity of hoisting a flag” (Rosset, 1887). Although Rosset was permitted to stay and collect, amassing hundreds of items, he failed to travel beyond Malé and remained disconnected on this island from the rest of the varied islands and atolls of the archipelago. The knowledge he subsequently produced was partial, fragmentary, and in some cases, inaccurate (Count Angelo de Gubernatis in Ceylon, 1888, p. 29). He made no mention, for example, of fine mat-weaving being undertaken by women. While Rosset claimed to have been the first European to have undertaken a systematic exploration of the group, he found out little more than the basic observable features of material culture. In this case, the sultan resisted the scrutiny of Europeans and limited the exercise of colonial knowledge production. These objects reflect different registers of insularity – the specificity of environment and artistic production, the connectedness of islands in maritime space which enabled such specialisation and the way in which these ‘unknown’ islands attempted to withstand the incursions of European collectors.

The Seychelles archipelago offers a contrasting example of island cultures and the impact of insularity upon material production and colonial collecting. An object which captures many elements of these islands’ histories is a water carrier, made from one lobe of a coco-de-mer with an iron spout and wooden handle attached (Horniman Museum, 6.12.65/56). The coco-de-mer was a highly valued form of coconut that was unique in having two lobes. For hundreds of years, the coco-de-mer’s origins were unknown, and the curious double coconuts were found washed up on the shores of the Maldives, India and as far as south-east Asia. Only dead nuts float, so the palm had not propagated elsewhere. The cocos-de-mer were sought after in the early modern era, and it was only in 1769 that the French ascertained that the palm – up to 100 feet high and bearing the heaviest fruit and the largest seed in the world – grew on three islands in the Seychelles archipelago – Praslin, Curieuse and l’île Ronde (Clark, 1864, p. 443).

Once Seychelles was settled in the late 18th century, the coco-de-mer palm was put to various uses by the local community, a population made up largely of enslaved Africans and French settlers. It is notable how almost every part of the palm could be used, as described by Jean-Baptiste Queau de Quincy, a French administrator in the late 18th and early 19th century. For example, the trunk could act as a water trough or palisade for houses or gardens and the foliage as thatching roofs and walls: “with a hundred leaves, a commodious dwelling may be constructed; including even the partitions of the apartments, the doors and windows. In this Isle Praslin, most of the cabins and warehouses are thus made” (de Quincy, 1803). Plates, dishes or drinking cups of the coco-de-mer were reportedly valued for their strength and durability, known as *Vaisselle de l’Isle Praslin*. The young leaves were pale yellow colour and “employed for making hats and bonnets ... scarcely any other covering for the head is worn by the inhabitants of the Seychelles.... Such is the estimation in which these nuts are held by the negroes and poor people of other islands, that the sailors always try to obtain, and make them part of the cargo of their vessels” (de Quincy, 1803). The shells could serve as water carriers. The Horniman Museum example is one of the few extant examples of such water carriers and was donated as part of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) collection to the Horniman in the 1960s. No further provenance exists in the museum, although it is possible that the object was made by students at the CMS station at Venn’s Town, a school for emancipated Africans, or collected by one of the missionaries from the local community. In either case, it is an important object, one of only two in British collections created from the coco-de-mer nut by Seychelles islanders and probably from the formerly enslaved community.

These objects are important indicators of Seychelles islanders’ interactions with their environments. What makes these items even more significant is how few objects were collected from these displaced communities of formerly enslaved Africans. The material culture of such people (who were not Indigenous) was on the whole not deemed collectable by collectors or museums.¹ As Wayne Modest has observed with reference to collecting from Caribbean communities, these island cultures were “not ancient enough yet not modern enough” for collectors (Modest, 2012, p. 85). We have few records of their material lives, despite reports which describes their creative use of materials such as the coco-de-mer. The palm was of great scientific interest as a unique species, and General Gordon (later of Khartoum) even claimed it was the proverbial forbidden fruit. In the late 19th century, there were concerns about the potential extinction of the coco-de-mer, and its local usage began to be limited by colonial authorities – highlighting the tension between local island industries and scientific priorities.

These two examples demonstrate the richness of island collections to offer insights into the complex interplay of isolation and connection which characterises island cultures. Both these objects show the reliance on the environment and the creative use of species in a limited ecology. The Maldives case study reveals how inter-island specialisation and maritime connections developed in tandem. In the Seychelles, objects made from the coco-de-mer draw attention to the entanglement of enslavement, empire, science and survival on an island. In both cases, an understanding of insularity helps us understand how collections were formed: In the Maldives, geopolitical forces limited collecting practice while in Seychelles, the legacy of enslavement led to a paucity of collecting from these

¹ The British Museum has only three objects of material culture likely to be crafted in Seychelles, compared with hundreds from the Maldives.

communities, characterised as they were by mobility and displacement. The few material survivals are, therefore, vital evidence of people who remade their lives in island environments.

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Collecting ambiguity: Material objects and the afterlives of empire on the Island of Ireland

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Exploring connections to significant objects, both within and beyond museums, offers insight, we suggest, into how empire is perceived and personalised in the unique context of Ireland, especially in Northern Ireland. We examine privately owned items and the public representation of empire in institutions like the Ulster Museum and the National Museum of Ireland. By integrating public history and anthropology, we argue that the legacies of empire in material collections across Ireland and Northern Ireland not only reflect the island's divisions but also reveal unexpected and shared narratives.

While Northern Ireland is often seen as a divided society shaped by imperial fault lines, simplistic binary identities fail to capture the complexity of Ireland's increasingly diverse societies and their relationships with the past. Northern Ireland's complex ties to British imperialism, as the part of Ireland remaining in the UK after 1922, encompass narratives of colonialism, migration, participation in empire, and resistance to imperialism. Encounters with Empire are part of daily life in Northern Ireland, mirrored by numerous memorials and statues honouring local figures' roles in imperial endeavours. For instance, the statue of Frederick Temple Blackwood, the first marquess of Dufferin and Ava, outside Belfast City Hall commemorates his tenure as Governor General of Canada and Viceroy of India. Dufferin's commissioning of Helen's Tower during the Irish Famine not only symbolises the Dufferin family's connections with empire but also embodies Ireland's literary history, with verses from renowned poets like Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning inscribed on its walls.

An exact replica of Helen's Tower stands in the French countryside opposite Thiepval Wood, where the 36th Ulster Division, composed mainly of men from Ulster who trained on Clondeboye estate, made their historic charge on 1 July 1916. This underscores Helen's Tower's iconic role in local identity, symbolising both British imperial expansion and Ulster's memories of World War I. The Dufferin memorials in and near Belfast, prominently situated in Northern Ireland's capital and visible for miles around, intertwine ideas of civic identity with sacrifice and victorious success, resonating not only in Europe but also globally. These memorials perpetuate imperialistic sentiments but are only distantly connected with the identities of many people in the region today.

Discussion of these issues on the island of Ireland risks reopening old wounds and disrupting established heritage discourse from the peace process. Flags, emblems, murals, and rituals have instrumentalised imperial and anti-imperial symbols, reflecting how historical narratives legitimise political positions within both localised and broader contexts. For Dominic Bryan, "cultural transmission, as part of group identities, takes place within a very localized and negotiated context

... but also in a much broader field whereby historical narratives are central to legitimizing political positions” (2022, p. 64).

Marches linking historical events to current identities remain common, especially around 12th July, when Orange fraternities commemorate the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. This battle, marking a turning point in James II’s efforts to regain the English and Scottish monarchy, is celebrated by the Orange Order, which rejects (Roman) Catholic members. The presence of Orange marches has been contentious throughout the Northern Ireland conflict (1968–1998), reflecting differing interpretations of identity and history. In Banbridge, for example, an annual arch goes up in July, but in 2023 it was erected early, in May, for King Charles’s coronation. This illustrates a symbolic connection between past monarchic conflicts, modern sectarianism, and current royal celebrations. Vernacular symbols also reflect these tensions. For example, some people express their affiliations with the Orange order by growing orange lilies. This is highlighted by how in Larne, Co. Antrim, a mural commemorates Northern Ireland’s centenary shows the lily, and also associated Orangeism with Scotland, England, and the wider UK.

On the other hand, Irish Republicans adopt the white lily, worn at Easter to honour those who died in the 1916 Rising. The symbol is also linked, in Ireland, to international anticolonialism and is supported by Derry City Council, as seen in a *Belfast Telegraph* article. Neil Jarman calls the murals which decorate working-class areas of Belfast “one of the most dynamic media for symbolic expression in the north of Ireland” (2005, p. 173). Republican murals in Belfast express solidarity with Palestinian freedom, highlighting perceived parallels between British colonialism in Palestine and Ireland. The movement supports various anticolonial causes, evident in murals advocating for Leonard Peltier.¹ Language rights also intersect with anti-colonial discourse, embraced by the Irish language community. For instance, Queen’s University Belfast organised a conference with Glór na Móna in 2023, exploring decolonisation’s connection to community voices, policing, and British history in Ireland.

Previous research on the symbolic value of imperial/colonial objects in Northern/Irish identities has been limited. Our research combines a cultural biography of objects approach with participant autoethnography to analyse how empire-related objects are perceived by institutions, communities, and individuals. We aim to unpack complexities and ambiguities surrounding private and public collections in Ireland and Northern Ireland associated with empire, moving beyond simplistic narratives of identity and imperial meanings. Our research also engages with the ongoing work of museum decolonisation in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, drawing insights from practices across the UK and beyond. Decolonising principles, such as valuing all forms of knowledge equally (Museums Association, 2021), guide this process, although it is particularly complex given the political resonances associated with empire and colonialism in the Irish context.

The Inclusive Global Histories exhibition at the Ulster Museum, which opened in March 2022, navigates these complexities by collaborating closely with local communities and explicitly aiming for a decolonial approach. The exhibition conveys how many objects within it lack clear

¹ Peltier, a member of the American Indian Movement, has been imprisoned in the U.S. since 1977 after a controversial trial.

provenance, reflecting historical practices of typological display and the colonial collecting of items perceived as curios. Adopting an object-biographical approach, recommended by scholars like Kopytoff (1986), is crucial to understanding how objects were removed from their places of origin and the stories they carry. This approach also highlights the dynamic interactions between objects, institutions, communities, and individuals throughout their lifecycle, revealing layers of meaning beyond museum interpretations. For example, a Solomon Islands canoe, displayed in Belfast's early museums (Widdis, 2023), now prompts reflection on the determinants of its historical and cultural significance. What museums value may differ from what originating communities and visitors value, underscoring the importance of considering diverse perspectives in museum practices.

Our project delves into how people in Northern Ireland experience objects linked to empire and colonialism, departing from the traditional museum perspective to focus on public history. Rather than considering those engaging with museum collections as passive audiences, we adopt a public history perspective which focuses equally on how, to quote David Dean, “the public engages with the past and ... how the past is represented to the public” (2018, p. 4). This perspective considers how people engage with and interpret their own histories, including within what Nancy Fraser calls counter-publics (1990, p. 61), offering insights into the use of history in Northern Ireland.

Exploring both public and non-public dimensions of history, we investigate personal, familial, and emotional connections to the past, seeking to understand whether these reflections align with or challenge traditional discourses around empire and colonialism. We wanted to identify whether non-public history space would primarily echo (or explicitly reject) the ideologies that Moody and Small argue are embedded in much British heritage around empire (2019), reflecting the traditional discourses of both the public and counter-public spheres in Northern Ireland; or whether these personal reflections would also encompass more complex and disruptive perspectives.

Since 2021, we have emphasised museum decolonisation efforts that involve originating communities and contribute to peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. Our research involved contacting 43 accredited museums to enquire about their collections related to Ireland's involvement in the British Empire, revealing significant holdings from Africa, Oceania, Asia, North America and elsewhere. Additionally, since 2021, we have pioneered participant autoethnography (Holman Jones, 2005) as a collaborative research method to examine heritage associated with Irish imperial and colonial pasts. Through one-to-one interviews with 33 adults in Northern Ireland, we explored their connections to objects from National Museums NI's World Cultures collection. Participants from diverse backgrounds shared their perspectives, enriching our understanding of how empire and colonialism are remembered and their implications for peacebuilding on the island of Ireland.

Participants in our research often gravitated towards a Buddha figure, demonstrating familiarity with Buddhist iconography. Conversely, they showed less affinity for rarer items such as a cloak that had belonged to King Kamehameha III in Hawai'i, and the *tomako* (canoe), suggesting that global importance does not always align with local connections. Transparency about the limits of knowledge and concern for the items' first owners emerged as key themes among contributors. Some found the topic of the British Empire troubling or traumatic, while others held positive feelings. Most participants easily discussed Ireland's colonial status and were interested in how the country's role in the Empire is reflected in these collections.

Since 2023, our research has expanded through a public engagement element, partnering with organisations including ArtsEkta and the Irish Museums Association. Our approach considers both socio-cultural and historical perspectives on Irish memories of colonialism and empire. In our research, we aim to collaboratively explore how people remember colonialism and empire, considering objects and visual materials that trigger memories. By prioritising community voices and acknowledging our own engagement with the subject, we seek to amplify diverse memories and expertise beyond academia.

While our research has revealed discomfort in discussing the British Empire Northern Ireland, many people possess family items linked to personal colonial experiences. Public engagement on empire can be divisive, but focusing on individual experiences promotes ethical reflection, revealing shared experiences across identities and political views, particularly regarding migration and travel narratives. In our view, academic methodologies should acknowledge historical divisions, but also work across them. We approach our research with an anti-racist lens, valuing emotions and meaningful collaborations, while recognising the importance of re-examining overlooked narratives.

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L'inventaire du patrimoine kanak dispersé : Une base de données au service d'une muséologie transnationale

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Depuis 1979, un inventaire du patrimoine kanak dispersé (IPKD) recense les objets kanak originaires de Nouvelle-Calédonie conservés dans des musées à travers le monde. L'IPKD est une base de données, progressivement accessible en ligne, qui réunit plus de 5 300 fiches d'objets dispersés dans 113 musées. Cette base de données a aussi pour but de réunir des ressources et de la documentation sur les collections kanak.

Nous proposons une communication à deux voies, depuis la Nouvelle-Calédonie et la France hexagonale pour présenter un cas d'étude de muséologie insulaire transnationale. L'une d'entre nous a participé à l'entreprise d'inventaire et assure la gestion de l'IPKD ; la seconde effectue des recherches sur l'histoire de cet inventaire (Bertin, 2020 ; Bertin et Tissandier, 2019). À travers l'exemple de l'IPKD, nous souhaitons aborder la question des espaces enchevêtrés en étudiant un exemple d'inventaire réunissant différents espaces dans le monde. Nous précisons le processus de constitution de cet inventaire et de la documentation qui l'accompagne, en proposant une réflexion sur les temporalités derrière cette mission poursuivie depuis plus de quatre décennies. Nous revenons dans un premier temps sur quelques grandes étapes de ce projet d'inventaire depuis 1979. Puis, nous présentons ce qu'est concrètement l'IPKD aujourd'hui et de quelle manière cet inventaire crée un enchevêtrement international. Enfin, nous analysons l'enchevêtrement local de l'IPKD en étudiant quelques relations nouées par le biais de cet inventaire.

L'IPKD en quelques étapes

L'initiative d'un inventaire du patrimoine kanak dispersé naît en lien avec le mouvement d'affirmation culturelle kanak dans les années 1970. Le festival Mélanésia 2000, organisé à proximité de Nouméa en 1975, en est une étape historique importante (Graille, 2016). Le comité d'orientation est dirigé par Jean-Marie Tjibaou (1936-1989), figure politique et culturelle kanak majeure. Dans la dynamique du festival, débute un travail d'inventaire des savoirs kanak sur le territoire calédonien. C'est dans ce contexte que Tjibaou charge Roger Boulay de la mission d'effectuer un inventaire des objets kanak conservés dans des musées en France hexagonale et en Europe, en vue de constituer une documentation iconographique. Ce premier travail de repérage est compilé sous la forme de fiches papier, déposées à Nouméa. Il reçoit le soutien de la Direction des musées nationaux, au ministère de la Culture, ainsi que de l'Office scientifique culturel et technique canaque [sic] créé en 1982. Après sa prise de poste à la direction du musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1985, Emmanuel Kasarhérou

poursuit ce travail, notamment dans les musées océaniques. Cette première phase d'inventaire permet l'exposition De Jade et de nacre (1990), sous le commissariat de Roger Boulay et d'Emmanuel Kasarhérou, qui marque le premier retour de certains objets kanak sur leur territoire d'origine (Boulay, 1990 et 1993 ; Kasarhérou, 2005).

En 1998, le texte de l'accord de Nouméa, signé entre l'État et des représentants politiques calédoniens, inclut un paragraphe consacré aux "objets culturels kanak". En 2002, l'accord particulier entre l'État et la Nouvelle-Calédonie sur le développement culturel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie précise deux missions : la réalisation d'un inventaire des objets kanak dispersés et la mise en dépôt de certains d'entre eux en Nouvelle-Calédonie. La réalisation de l'inventaire est rendue possible grâce à une mission dédiée au gouvernement de Nouvelle-Calédonie, entre 2011 et 2015. La mission de l'IPKD comprend une équipe permanente de plusieurs membres, ainsi que des stagiaires calédoniens, qui sillonnent l'Europe pour visiter des musées. Le choix des stagiaires parmi différents établissements calédoniens (musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie, Centre culturel Tjibaou, Province Nord) et des étudiants calédoniens en Hexagone montre l'ambition à l'échelle de la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Cette aspiration fait écho à la même époque à des velléités de recherches de musées européens sur leurs collections océaniques. Ainsi en 2008, le musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie est invité par le British Museum à travailler sur le Melanesian Art Project, ayant ainsi accès à la collection d'objets kanak (Adams, 2011).

La réalisation de l'inventaire s'étale sur une temporalité longue de plusieurs décennies. Cette durée s'explique par le nombre important d'objets kanak : d'après le bilan établi par Roger Boulay et Emmanuel Kasarhérou, 20 000 objets kanak seraient conservés dans 225 musées (2015). Parmi cette estimation, 16 000 d'entre eux ont été étudiés dans 111 musées. La répartition mondiale des collections kanak est un autre enjeu : si 118 musées conservant des objets kanak sont actuellement localisés en France hexagonale, des institutions conservant le patrimoine kanak dispersé sont situées sur quatre continents : en Europe, en Amérique du Nord, en Océanie et probablement en Asie. L'IPKD prend pour forme concrète une base de données informatique sur le logiciel de gestion des collections muséales Micromusée. En janvier 2024, la base Micromusée du musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie comprend 5 385 fiches d'objets kanak extérieurs à sa collection, situés dans 113 musées provenant de 17 pays différents. La constitution de cette base prend cependant un temps très long, qui implique repérage des objets, échanges physiques ou par mail avec les musées les conservant, puis éventuelle re-saisie des fiches-objets lorsque les systèmes informatiques ne sont pas compatibles.

Collections et savoirs transnationaux

L'IPKD est un "inventaire raisonné", "priorisant les objets les plus intéressants, en fonction de leur provenance, leur histoire, les circonstances de leur collecte, leur valeur esthétique ou leur état de conservation" (Musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie, sd). Le passage des premières fiches sous formats papier vers un format numérique s'est opéré partiellement lors de la mission entre 2011 et 2015. A ces fiches se sont ajoutées celles des objets étudiés, au fur et à mesure des missions effectuées. Chaque fiche inclut la désignation de l'objet, sa localisation muséale présente, sa région d'origine, les matériaux qui le constituent, ses dimensions, une datation, ainsi que les collecteurs ou collectionneurs lui étant liés. Un important travail sur les archives des musées visités et d'autres fonds fut mené en même temps que l'inventaire permettant, lorsque cela était possible, d'inclure sur les fiches des dates

de collectes, des périodes de fabrications ou même des témoignages des collecteurs. Un ou plusieurs photographies complètent ces données textuelles et, parfois, des dessins réalisés par Roger Boulay. Un travail de créations de fiches-objets pour celles réalisées par Roger Boulay n'ayant pas encore été reportées sur la base de données fut réalisé par Edmond Saume en 2023, au sein du musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie. Il est intervenu en parallèle du travail régulier de complément des fiches existantes. Ce récolement montre qu'une vérification des informations datant des années 1980 était indispensable avant l'indexation sur la base. Des changements de numérotation, de désignation ou de provenance furent notés ou des photographies numériques plus récentes furent trouvées. La base actuelle est ainsi la synthèse des missions successives effectuées au fur et à mesure des années.

En 2015, la base de données constituée fut transférée au musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie qui en assure depuis la gestion, en la personne de Marianne Tissandier. Depuis novembre 2022, cette base de données est progressivement en ligne pour être rendue accessible au plus grand nombre sur les cinq continents. La mise en ligne intervient musée par musée car il est nécessaire de reprendre contact avec chacun d'eux pour obtenir l'autorisation de publier les informations et les photographies dont ils sont les dépositaires. C'est éventuellement aussi le moment de vérifier les informations rassemblées, ce qui implique de nombreux échanges, à différents niveaux de hiérarchie des musées.

En complément des fiches-objets, l'IPKD rassemble des savoirs sur les collections kanak dispersées. Une rubrique en ligne est consacrée à la bibliographie et aux articles de presse traitant du patrimoine kanak dispersé. L'IPKD a vocation également à intervenir comme une ressource de référence, en particulier pour les noms des objets. Le musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie fait évoluer certaines désignations d'objets kanak depuis plusieurs années sur sa base de données, qui sert de base à celle de l'IPKD. Ainsi l'objet anciennement appelé "hache ostensor", nom donné par les Européens du fait de sa similarité avec l'ostensor catholique, est maintenant dénommé "hache ou casse-tête de cérémonie ("ostensor")". L'extension des corpus permet de créer des désignations parfois différentes pour des objets qui semblaient autrefois similaires ou d'uniformiser les désignations. Dans un temps futur, des recherches sur les noms vernaculaires des objets (débutées sur la base en ligne du musée) sont également prévues, même si elles ne sont pas simples à établir compte tenu des 28 langues parlées en Nouvelle-Calédonie, de l'absence de localisation précise lors de la collecte des objets et du fait qu'ils pouvaient souvent être échangés entre différentes régions.

Ainsi, l'IPKD témoigne d'un enchevêtrement de différents espaces sous plusieurs aspects. D'une part, cette démarche connecte la Nouvelle-Calédonie, territoire d'origine des objets kanak et lieu physique de gestion de l'IPKD, et les musées qui conservent ces objets dispersés de par le monde. L'IPKD relie virtuellement les musées conservant le patrimoine kanak dispersé et le musée de Nouvelle-Calédonie. De plus, il relie les objets eux-mêmes : la base de données permet de réunir à nouveau des fonds d'objets, acquis dans une région similaire ou par une même personnalité mais aujourd'hui dispersés. L'accès à cette base globale rend possible à l'heure actuelle des recherches sur des tissus européens présents sur des objets kanak ou sur des perles vénitiennes utilisées comme ornements additionnels. Ces recherches permettront ultérieurement de mieux dater les objets, améliorant ainsi par ricochet la compréhension globale des échanges autour de ces pièces. D'autre part, la mise en ligne progressive de la base de données étend encore davantage les espaces mobilisés par le fait des consultations numériques. Ainsi qu'il était souhaité initialement, l'IPKD demeure une façon de ramener virtuellement ces objets en Nouvelle-Calédonie, en rendant disponibles les informations à

toutes les tribus et clans locaux, même si les collectes ne sont en général pas suffisamment précises pour déterminer une tribu d'origine. Localement, c'est aussi une richesse exploitable par les sculpteurs et artistes contemporains (régulièrement demandeurs d'informations), ou encore par le département recherche et patrimoine de l'Agence de la Culture Kanak (ADCK).

Conclusion

L'inventaire des objets kanak conservés dans les musées du monde entier constitue un exploit rare, incarnant quatre décennies d'efforts dévoués. La compilation d'un tel inventaire témoigne d'un engagement à préserver, honorer et rapatrier ce patrimoine culturel. Disponible uniquement en français pour l'instant, la question de sa traduction pour les chercheurs internationaux se pose actuellement, sachant que les ressources humaines allouées à son amélioration sont limitées. Cette potentielle traduction marquerait l'ouverture d'une nouvelle étape pour l'IPKD.

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Reassembling the fragments – Scotland and the Caribbean

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Scotland and the Caribbean have been directly connected from as early as the 16th century. This connection started as a trading relationship and evolved into a complex exchange of people, ideas and cultures. Such activities connected and changed lives on both sides of the Atlantic. Historical fragments that tell the story of this rich past still exist silently among us. Place names, family stories, documents and even dimensions of our culture that we do not fully understand help to tell this powerful story. This presentation continues the process of piecing the mosaic back together using the parameters of the Shared Island Stories between Scotland and the Caribbean: Past, Present, Future project. The presentation takes a closer look at how the Scottish islands and highlands and the Caribbean became linked with special emphasis on the 1750s to the 1830s. It explores the multifaceted dimensions of the interconnectivity which evolved and the ways in which new lifestyles were shaped and new communities were forged. Most of all, it emphasises the extent and depth of the connections between these two distant and different areas in a period when communication was both difficult and dangerous. This movement between the two geographic spaces created a world which transcended geographical borders and the restrictions on growth and development that characterised the period, particularly for certain income groups.

It is hoped that as we put the pieces of the mosaic together the picture which emerges, though complex and at times troubling, can help us to better understand our societies in 2024. These connections that were initiated centuries ago played a crucial role in the formation of the basis of our modern world. The focus here is on Scottish working and middle-income groups. These were the people who were at the heart of the interconnected worlds, and those whose lives were uncovered represent the numerous lives which were transformed on both sides of the Atlantic. These stories have been hidden within the histories of the highlands and the islands and overshadowed by stories of successful planters, lords and merchants.

Reassembling the fragments

Information was recovered in plantation records, diaries, contemporary texts, official and personal letters, legal documents such as wills, merchant record books, public records and contemporary newspapers as well as colonial office correspondence. Cultural artefacts were revealed through family histories, oral histories, songs and poems. Recently compiled historical data such as the slave trade database and slave compensation records provided valuable quantitative support for conclusions. Secondary sources provided important background information and filled gaps in the narrative. This approach allowed for as many voices as possible to be heard in the assembly of the fragments that were being unearthed. The varied voices included persons on both sides of the Atlantic. However, there was deafening silence in both Scotland and the Caribbean from the large number of people who were positioned at the bottom of the social pyramids of both societies. In

the case of the Caribbean islands these were the voices of the enslaved population; in the case of Scotland these were the working classes in the islands and highlands. In the cases of both groups a concerted effort had to be made and techniques devised to hear such voices, even if it had to be through the lens and scripts of other actors. Thus, collating the fragments was not without its challenges.

Often the Caribbean and the Scottish islands and highlands could not be specifically located in sources, particularly official statistics. These areas were often subsumed within references to America or the New World and to Britain or Scotland. This was exacerbated by the fact that record keeping in the Caribbean as well as the islands and highlands was not consistent, and in some cases non-existent. Both geographical spaces were considered remote areas, and this affected approaches to record keeping. In the case of emigration statistics, which are critical in a study such as this, it soon became apparent that migrants to the Caribbean were often not regarded or classified as emigrants. They were regarded as participating in temporary spells overseas because they were essentially a group of white males without families and the intention was always to return home. The Caribbean was treated as a temporary prelude on the way to a better life.

Adding to these challenges was the fact that many of the enslaved and working classes were illiterate and left few first-hand written records. Even fewer of such sources were likely to have been preserved. However, information was pieced together from reports on their welfare; the few individuals who left a written trail; letters and diaries which often reflected much more than the writers intended; and wills or inheritances which were left by persons from all walks of life. Such sources, when deconstructed, provided much insight. Accounts of remittances received, and in one case a receipt signed with thumb print, were among the important historical artefacts unearthed. Collating such fragments helps to bring to life the narratives of the working classes.

The re-assembled fragments

Social reconstruction

The Caribbean was associated with making fortunes and large numbers of Europeans came to the region because of financial difficulties. Some were the sons of established families and educated professionals. However, there were numerous men and boys from working class backgrounds. The need to make an 'independent living' is a recurring motif among those coming to the Caribbean. Spurred on by this inspiration, they worked hard. There was an intense longing for home, and many worked with the goal of returning. They held a unique place between the white upper class and the black population. The Caribbean provided social possibilities that were not available at home. Being white created social, economic and political opportunities. It was easier to move upwards in a society where there was a deficiency of white men. They filled spaces of a much need white middle class. Further, the fact that they were resident in the Caribbean fostered special relationships with rich planters and members of the upper classes in Britain. They were also the ones who interacted closely on a day-to-day basis with the enslaved population. Relationships with women, many of whom were African and mixed, led to children and Caribbean families.

The two worlds became connected as the men moved back and forth, and family members, mixed offspring and enslaved persons crossed the Atlantic. However, it was not just the people who migrated that experienced change. Much more than sugar and rum crossed the Atlantic. Also making the journey were a variety of animals, plants, fruits, tools and implements, medicines as well as customs and practices which became part of households in Scotland and the Caribbean. A new world evolved where shared island stories were interwoven and solidified through a network which directly connected the two regions of the world.

Life was difficult. Morbidity and mortality were high in the Caribbean. Yet, a Scottish world was created in the Caribbean with strong highland links. Estates were named after areas in the Scottish Highlands. It was not unusual for friends and school mates to meet in the Caribbean. Letters gave updates on persons from communities at home and were as much communal documents as private documents. A Scottish network developed which welcomed them. Persons did not just go to the Caribbean; they went to a community. Newspapers in Scotland shared aspects of life in the Caribbean. The two communities were intertwined. There was an extension of the geographical boundaries of 'home'. The period spent in the Caribbean could be a short sojourn, years, decades and, in some cases, became permanent.

Economic reconstruction

There were two occupational trajectories for European immigrants. The planting line involved entry level positions of bookkeeper and access to an occupation hierarchy that transitioned upward to overseer and to plantation manager. The other line was the mercantile line where one started as a clerk and could advance to an accountant and a partner. There were periods of boom and decline and what was accumulated could be easily lost. However, economic benefits were experienced by many more than the relatively small group who can be said to have made a fortune. The economic impact on these less visible lives has not yet been fully appreciated. An economic base was provided for numerous families, which was considerably better than what existed before. Carpenters, butchers, tailors, clerks, indentured servants, sailors, soldiers, apprentices, the unemployed and those in legal difficulties were all willing to risk employment in the Caribbean. Despite often starting with low level positions, they were able to not only build better lives for themselves but to send money home to support families. The Caribbean became an extension of their island/highland economies. Documents are littered with evidence of small and regular remittances of between £5 and £10 sent to support families at home.

Success varied and took on multiple forms. Some became property owners either in Britain, the Caribbean or both places. The Caribbean became the centre of family undertakings and opportunities were created for sons and brothers. Family members were recruited, sponsored and assisted. Some returned to Britain, but many stayed in the Caribbean. The success stories varied in character and extent. Regardless of the extent of the success, or lack thereof, opportunities were created that were simply not even on their horizons before the Caribbean became a part of their stories. Money made in the Caribbean increased individual incomes, supported families, built institutions and establishments in the islands/highlands and changed the lives of communities, not just the persons who came to the region. A much-needed source and stream of income among the working and middle classes was created at a time when there were very few viable opportunities.

In the Caribbean, there were not only numerous job openings for British citizens, but there were also ways of earning additional income. Thus, the relatively small salaries which ranged between £50 and £200 per annum should not be viewed as indicative of the yearly income made. It should be noted, however, that for the working class even £50 was regarded as substantial. Further, incomes increased because they held multiple different positions. Many also had side businesses and sold goods from Scotland. For all, slave ownership was important. It was how they began their rise. Too poor to think of owning land, they could all aspire to owning an enslaved person, and this is how they began. They eventually acquired gangs of enslaved workers who they hired out for additional income. Many also became involved in debt collection for persons in Britain. The economic challenge was not earning income in the Caribbean, it was getting that income home and maintaining themselves on this income. Many also became so indebted in a system that essentially depended on credit that they could not return home. They could, however, maintain quite a good standard of life in the Caribbean, and many did.

However, it was not only these men and their immediate families who benefitted. Numerous other small, medium and large businesses developed from the world they created. People from all walks of life became recruiting agents who sourced workers for the Caribbean. Men from all levels in European society advanced small loans to outfit persons to go out to the Caribbean. Middle- and working-class people became small, medium and large suppliers who transported goods to and from the Caribbean. The herring industry was heavily dependent on the Caribbean trade. A rudimentary cotton industry developed in the highlands and served the needs of the Caribbean. Both were important sources of income for not only men but also women and children. Seamen and ship captains frequented the region. Ships left from the numerous official and unofficial ports in the Northwest. Boarding houses housed children from the Caribbean who were sent home for their education. Governesses were hired to supervise and tutor these children. Schools in the Scottish highlands educated children born in the Caribbean.

A new mosaic stronger than its fragments

The shared island story between Scotland and the Caribbean sprouted and fertilised a new economic world that had more opportunities for lower income groups. Thus, two extensive networks on either side of the Atlantic which connected economies and linked communities developed and bloomed. New ways of making money as well as expanded social and economic opportunities were created in both spaces. The upper classes were just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. The peak which has attracted attention and research was in reality a relatively small group who stood out at the top. Below, but not as visible, was a much larger and varied group which encompassed a growing working and middle class whose notion of the world, sources of income and lifestyle opportunities and expectations had been changed forever. A shared story in two disparate parts of the world can in fact be said to have changed the lived reality of working- and middle-class people on both sides of the Atlantic at very decisive time in history.

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Forget us our debts: Memory, forgetting and museums in a pearling community

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This paper proposes to explore how communities select and give prominence to certain aspects of collective memory and why. Additionally, it aims to investigate how, and, indeed, whether communities should be invited to re-examine elided aspects of the collective past. We will start with a brief discussion into what collective memory is and how it ties in with identity. I will then offer some background on Delma Museum and the histories it displays before going on to examine the elisions in the story and how these might have come about.

Zerubavel notes that memory is the glue that holds what he terms *mnemonic communities* together: “Rather than a mere aggregate of the personal recollections of its various members, a community’s collective memory includes only those shared by its members as a group. As such, it invokes a common past that they all seem to recall” (Zerubavel, 2003, p. 4). For Wang (2008, p. 307), collective memory is actively and continuously constructed: “Just as autobiographical memory serves a primary function of defining the individual self, collective memory sustains a community’s very identity and makes possible the continuity of its social life and cultural cohesion.”

Yet memory, and especially collective memory, is always selective, and what we choose to elide (or to forget) is just as significant as what we choose to remember. Augé remarks that, “Remembering or forgetting is doing gardener’s work, selecting, pruning. Memories are like plants: there are those that need to be quickly eliminated in order to help the others burgeon, transform, flower” (Augé, 2004, p. 11). Connerton (2008) identifies seven different types of forgetting and notes that not all of them are negative. Maroevic (1997) notes the key link between museality, objects and memory. Museums, based as they are around the selection and display of artefacts from the past, could therefore be said to be sites where the past, and thereby collective memory, is edited, pruned and exhibited, continually renewing and (re)constructing the collective identity of mnemonic communities.

Delma Museum represents an interesting study in the memory and forgetting of a pearling community. Delma is an island lying some 200 km west of Abu Dhabi City in the United Arab Emirates. Today the island is relatively forgotten, but in the recent past it was an important site in international trade networks spanning the Indian Ocean. This was due to its position as a central node in the pearling industry, which dominated the Arabian Gulf during the long 19th century. Over this period, capitalism and empire reshaped Gulf societies substantially, imposing a very specific form of debt peonage. Delma was the site of an annual fair at the end of each diving season when profits and debts were settled, with merchants and capitalists travelling from as far afield as Bombay to collect their money.

Pearl diving was a highly unpleasant and dangerous occupation (Said Zahlan, 1978, pp. 7-8). The only way to ensure a consistent workforce was by the use of bonded labour, using debt as the

instrument of control. Ship crews were, in principle, profit-sharing ventures, with each man receiving a pre-determined share of the boat's collective profit in accordance with his role aboard. However, pearling was a seasonal occupation restricted to the summer months when it was warm enough to dive. Given the absence of other employment, captains would often advance loans to their crew during the off-season to tide them over. In turn, the captains themselves were often in debt to a large merchant (often, though not always, from India), who would finance ships and acquire in return the right to buy the boat's annual catch at a discount (Akil, 2018). Discounted prices and high interest meant that only in an exceptionally good year could diving crews pay off their debts, and therefore, the chain of debt usually remained. The only way to pay off the debt was to go to sea once again the following season. Slave labour was also used on pearling boats, in varying proportions at varying times (Meraikhi, 2019).

Beit al Meraikhi, the building that now houses Delma Museum, was originally built as the business headquarters of a noted pearl merchant. The *majlis* (or 'best room') also housed the diving court, where cases relating to debt were heard. Judges were appointed by the Ruler of Abu Dhabi and were often captains or merchants. They were not salaried officials but took donations for their time. Given the class disparities and the fact that the divers were poor and largely illiterate, it was not difficult for donations to degenerate into outright bribery (Carter, 2012).

Although we cannot say for certain, due to a lack of written records, we think the first iteration of the museum started in the 1960s. The museum was then refurbished in 1993 and again in 2020, reopening in 2023. The building is arranged into two galleries (one on Diving and Pearling, the other on Delma and the Wider World) and the *majlis* (the dealing room and community hall, which also housed the court and has since been restored as a period room).

The previous museum had no curator but did enjoy collections donated from the community on topics such as ethnography, archaeology and natural history. However, everything was put on display with no discernment or logic. A big part of redeveloping the museum, therefore, was to streamline the number and type of objects on display, developing definitive themes and grouping objects to match those themes and tell those stories.

During research into the history of the island, one thing that came up very clearly is that debt was a crucial part of the pearling industry, but there was not really anything in the collections that showed why. Connerton (2008) mentions a number of reasons why communities or individuals might choose to forget, including to keep the peace or arising from a sense of shame. However, we will argue that the lack of collections gathered from the community is not so much due to oversight on the part of the community as to the physical nature of items related to pearling and also to continual reconstruction of the community's sense of self.

Firstly, debt, being immaterial, is of its nature not easily recorded in physical form. At the period in question, this was very much an oral culture, and very few commercial records have survived. The harsh climate means that paper deteriorates quickly, and there is also the fact that (on the debtor side at least!) there was every incentive not to keep records showing that one owed money. When the bottom fell out of the pearling industry in the 1930s, many of the large merchants went bankrupt, meaning that there is not always continuity between the large business houses of then

and now, and, therefore, few people who might be expected to donate such records to the museum. Moreover, in common with many rural communities, many families have left for the cities, taking any collections or artefacts of memory they might have with them.

Oral histories have been taken on the island, but it has proved impossible to obtain permission to hear them, since the conditions attached are rather restrictive. We do not know what they say, but if they do contain sensitive material, it seems more likely that the restrictions are not in place to hide the history of pearling debts but rather are due to the nature of close-knit insular communities where discretion and avoiding discomfiting one's neighbours remains important. Written histories are very clear that debt was a key feature of the pearling industry, and this still forms part of the memory of many families, not least in maritime communities. However, for the reasons above, we found no assets in the museum collection. In the end, we tackled this topic using digital media in the form of a short animated historical drama.

In addition to the difficulties of preserving physical items related to debt, we would argue that another reason for failing to keep and collect such items is not so much a strategic forgetting as a 'strategic re-forming' of identity (Connerton, 2008, pp. 62-63). The UAE is an extremely new country. Its foundation in 1971 brought together various communities that were variegated by origin, outlook and way of life. These communities and their sense of identity have been reconstituted in many ways due to the breakneck speed of economic development and social change over the past half-century. The diving trade is dead, and given the hardships and inequalities it created, is not particularly fondly remembered. Memorialising debt bondage does not fit with those new forms of identity. Indeed, other elements of the pearling era, namely the trans-Indian Ocean trade links it gave rise to, are a much better fit with the image the UAE wishes to project, and, indeed, the sense of itself that the inhabitants of its booming cosmopolitan coastal cities hold – namely, that of an open sophisticated trading nation, rather than a debt-ridden periphery.

Allow me to finish with a quote by Augé: "Tell me what you forget, and I will tell you who you are" (Augé, 2004, p. 11). Collective memory is constantly evolving according to the concerns of the generation doing the remembering. So too does the meaning imputed to museums and their objects evolve in tandem with collective identity. In this sense, the absence of debt in the Delma collections should be seen not as an attempt to suppress a dark past but rather as the expression of a different sense of self to that which prevailed prior to the musealisation of these objects. As society in the UAE and elsewhere continues to evolve, the museality, meaning and interpretation of museum collections will alter in line with that evolution.

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Vers une mémoire en perpétuelle construction : l'art et l'histoire de Terreur blanche sur Lü Dao (Taïwan)

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Dans son livre *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paul Ricoeur suggère que les souvenirs viennent à l'esprit sous forme d'images. Elles sont le signe de l'absence et de la présence dans le passé. Ainsi, la reconstitution de l'histoire revendiquant la fidélité est souvent inévitablement confrontée à des conflits (Ricoeur, 2000). Différentes positions émergent dans l'interprétation de la réalité historique et peuvent en même temps entrer en conflit les unes avec les autres. Ce phénomène est souvent illustré par des images. Avec la même image historique, il peut y avoir une divergence entre la mémoire et l'histoire, entre l'individuel et le collectif. Par conséquent, la question de savoir comment interpréter l'histoire et qui doit l'interpréter est devenue le problème le plus courant dans le processus de l'écriture historique ou de commémoration. L'interprétation de l'histoire donne souvent lieu à des conflits.

La manière dont les Taïwanais ressentent 綠島 Lü Dao (Île verte ou Green Island), une île pouvant susciter diverses interprétations historiques, diverses, est ressentie par les Taïwanais reflète également les différentes perspectives projetées sur elle. Le passé de Lü Dao est concerné par la Terreur blanche, quand pendant la guerre froide (1947-1991). Le gouvernement 國民黨 (Kuo-Min Tang, KMT, parti nationaliste) de Taïwan a décrété la loi martiale avec comme conséquence que de nombreuses victimes politiques accusées de communisme présumé ont été emprisonnées sur l'île pendant de longues durées. Ce parti, exilé suite à sa défaite lors de la révolution chinoise, a instauré un régime autoritaire, autocratique, en lutte contre le régime communiste de la Chine continentale. À la suite de cette répression, la société taïwanaise en est venue à considérer Lü Dao comme l'un des symboles de la Terreur blanche et les différentes interprétations de l'histoire de cette période ont été projetées sur le paysage de l'île. Comme l'a dit Ricoeur, cité précédemment, l'image de Lü Dao est projetée dans différentes interprétations.

Dans ce texte, j'examinerai comment l'histoire de la Terreur blanche qui s'est déroulée sur Lü Dao est retranscrite à travers les œuvres des artistes qui se trouvent sur l'île, tout en contrastant avec la manière dont leur expérience corporelle sur l'île a affecté leur interprétation de l'histoire. Avec ses multiples points de vue, l'image de Lü Dao reflète un conflit d'interprétations, une division entre l'interprétation historique de l'absence et l'expérience physique de la présence. À la lumière de ces thèmes, j'aimerais poser la question suivante : comment Lü Dao, historique ou physique, reflète-t-elle le conflit des interprétations historiques ? Et comment son environnement si particulier pourrait-il influencer la formation de la possibilité historique ?

En se concentrant sur les interprétations historiques divergentes que les saisons artistiques, consacrées aux droits de l'homme sur l'île, ont créées de Lü Dao, cette intervention examinera cette

intervention l'imagination et la réalité physique de Lü Dao reflètent la fragilité de la transmission de la mémoire. Et sur cette base nous réfléchissons sur comment les commémorations d'événements historiques peuvent être développées différemment des formes d'incarnation du passé centrées sur les monuments.

Lü Dao: une île dans les récits politiques

Lü Dao se situe à l'est de l'île principale de Taïwan, dont elle est relativement isolée. De 1951 à 1990, l'île fut le site d'emprisonnement des prisonniers politiques pendant la période de la Terreur blanche à Taïwan (Cao, 2014). En 2002, après l'allègement de la dissuasion en 1987, l'ancienne prison a été transformée en 國家人權博物館白色恐怖綠島紀念園區 [National Human Rights Museum Green Island Memorial Park] et a été ouverte au public en 2007 (Cao, 2020).

La sociologue 葉虹靈 [Yeh Hung-ling] a souligné en 2015 dans ses recherches que d'une part, les Parcs des droits de l'homme créés par le gouvernement ont préservé la mémoire traumatique de la Terreur blanche, transformant les sites de détention ou d'exécution en lieux de mémoire et influençant le développement de la mémoire historique à Taïwan ; et que d'autre part, les projets de construction d'une mémoire publique initiés par l'État sont devenus des récits qui reproduisent un point de vue officiel et qui suppriment les aspects complexes. Selon elle, la transformation des personnages historiques et des événements en projets de mémoire n'est pas inévitable et par ailleurs, le domaine institutionnel de la mémoire a souvent une influence sur la construction de la mémoire collective. Par conséquent, il est toujours nécessaire d'étudier quel type de récit historique est produit à travers les sites commémoratifs et les expositions, et comment cela peut susciter l'adhésion du public.

Cependant, en ce qui concerne la commémoration des traumatismes collectifs, celle-ci, comme le souligne Yeh Hung-ling, serait-elle finalement entravée par les institutions et incapable de trouver des voies pour y échapper ?

L'historienne de l'art 陳香君 [Chen Hsian-chun] , dans son ouvrage (2005) sur la narration traumatique de l'art contemporain à Taiwan, intitulé 紀念之外 [Au-delà de la commémoration], propose un autre point de vue en prenant appui sur la théorie du traumatisme de Freud. Elle suggère que, depuis les années 1990, les activités commémoratives liées à l'événement du 28 février à Taiwan, en tant que réponse traumatique ne concerne pas seulement l'individu mais qu'elle affecte également la tradition culturelle et l'identité collective qui sont depuis longtemps piégées dans un cycle de mémoire et d'oubli. Contrairement à l'analyse institutionnelle de Yeh Hung-ling, elle analyse, à travers le prisme des différences de genre, les œuvres d'artistes femmes présentées dans l'exposition de 1997 « 悲情昇華: 二二八紀念美展 [Sadness Transformed : 2-28 Commemorative Art Exhibition] » au 台北市立美術館 [Taipei Fine Arts Museum], échappant ainsi au récit traumatique centré sur l'État et l'élite masculine tout en permettant à l'art de construire le « transport-station of trauma [poste de transition traumatique] » tel qu'il est proposé par l'artiste Bracha Ettinger dans les années 1990. 1 Citant Bracha Ettinger, Chen Hsiang-chun suggère que les œuvres d'artistes féminines telles que 吳瑪俐 [Wu Ma-li] dans l'exposition ont fourni au public un espace pour contempler et pleurer le traumatisme du massacre du 28 février. Elle estime que ces femmes artistes ont créé un espace où le public peut pleurer ensemble le massacre du 228. (Chen, 2005)

Depuis la proposition de recherche de Chen Hsian-chun en 2005, les discussions sur ce sujet ont été arrêtées ; il n'y a pas eu de nouveaux développements jusqu'en 2018. Cette année-là, le gouvernement taiwanais a promulgué la « 促進轉型正義條例 [loi sur la promotion de la justice transitionnelle] » et la « 政治檔案條例 [loi sur les archives politiques] », a créé la Commission de promotion de la justice transitionnelle et a rendu publics les dossiers politiques. Les chercheurs et les artistes ont ainsi pu lire directement les archives politiques de la Terreur blanche et ont développé ensemble des créations. La Saison d'art des Droits de l'Homme de Lü Dao, qui a commencé en 2019 et qui a lieu chaque année, est devenu le point de convergence de ces créations. Les expositions centrées sur le festival d'art, en plus de sortir de la boîte blanche du musée, ont progressivement dévoilé des orientations différentes de celles des activités commémoratives des années 1990 et du début des années 2000.

Cependant, ce lieu de mémoire, étiqueté par le discours officiel, n'a pas fourni une base narrative solide aux artistes résidents une fois qu'ils étaient sur Lü Dao. Au contraire, ses conditions environnementales difficiles les ont affectés encore plus fortement que les documents qu'ils avaient lus avant d'embarquer sur l'île. Ceci les a empêchés d'ignorer l'écart entre le lieu et les documents historiques, et ils ont commencé à percevoir de manière nouvelle Lü Dao avec leur propre corps.

Le décalage des regards

Alors, concrètement, comment la forme de commémoration a-t-elle changé depuis 2019 à Lü Dao ?

Les œuvres de l'artiste 劉紀彤 [Lau Ki-Tong], qui est arrivée sur Lü Dao en 2019, peuvent servir d'exemple pour illustrer les changements dans les formes de commémoration sur Lü Dao. À partir de sa participation à l'édition 2021 jusqu'à sa pièce « 後來的人，寄出的風景 [Les Paysages Envoyés par Ceux Qui Viennent Après] » en 2023, elle a visité les victimes politiques et leurs familles sur l'île principale et, en raison de la pandémie, est restée sur l'île, entrant en contact avec des résidents locaux de Lü Dao comme 蔡居福 [Tsai Chiu-Fu] et 田春玉 [Tian Chun-Yu], qui ont grandi sur l'île. Au cours de sa résidence, elle a écrit trois essais non fictionnels, qui ont ensuite été étendus dans le projet de publication « 她是本島來的駐村藝術家 [Elle est une artiste en résidence originaire de l'île principale] ».

Dans « Elle est une artiste en résidence originaire de l'île principale », un travail ramené par Lau ki-tong à Taiwan, son interaction progressive avec Tian Chunyu, qui a grandi sur l'île, met en lumière davantage la signification de l'expérience corporelle rétrospective. Elle documente en vidéo le processus d'apprentissage de la natation en apnée avec Tian Chunyu, sans recourir à une enquête méthodologique, mais plutôt à une conversation sans limites entre les deux. L'artiste, originaire de l'île principale, apprend à nager en mer, à percevoir avec son propre corps, et aligne son expérience avec les récits présents dans les photographies historiques, les archives et la géographie locale dont les points de vue sur l'histoire divergent et créent une discontinuité des récits. C'est dans cette comparaison que les erreurs de perspective entre l'artiste venant de l'île principale, contemporaine de son temps et appartenant à sa génération, voire de son identité individuelle, et les expériences de vie de Tian Chunyu, ainsi que les déclarations dans les données, apparaissent, permettant ainsi l'émergence d'angles de vues multiples. Même s'ils regardent le même paysage sous le même angle, les images ont des significations différentes.

Dans les œuvres susmentionnées de Lau Ki-Tong, elle utilise son corps pour interagir avec l'environnement, créant ainsi une couture dans les photographies de paysages en tant que représentations. Lorsqu'elle est arrivée sur les lieux des photographies historiques, elle a ressenti la différence entre les photographies historiques et sa propre expérience après avoir comparé les paysages des photographies. Lau Ki-Tong tente de retourner sur les lieux de l'histoire afin de découvrir ce qu'est réellement l'histoire, mais au lieu de cela, elle voit plusieurs perspectives contradictoires sur l'histoire. Comme le dit Paul Ricoeur, en essayant de présenter fidèlement l'histoire, on est confronté à des conflits. (Ricoeur, 2000) Lü Dao a été considéré en tant que prison pendant la Terreur blanche et a reçu une signification symbolique spécifique dans la réhabilitation et la commémoration des condamnations injustifiées dans les années 2000. Lau Ki-Tong se concentre sur les expériences de vie des habitants Lü Dao au-delà des symboles, et perçoit le paysage Lü Dao avec sa propre expérience sensorielle de présence sur les lieux, de sorte que le paysage Lü Dao, qui était à l'origine dominé par les récits historiques monotones du passé, révèle une fois de plus un aspect complexe.

Conclusion

En tant que prison pour les prisonniers politiques pendant la Terreur blanche, Lü Dao a reçu une image fermée et fixe dans divers discours sur la Terreur blanche et l'identité de Taïwan. La prison comme symbole d'autorité et de la démocratie et l'identité taïwanaise est devenue synonyme Lü Dao. L'arrivée des artistes en résidence après le début de la saison ouvre des discours alternatifs possible. Leurs œuvres ne se contentent pas de transmettre la vérité historique au public, mais exposent également le conflit. Les difficultés rencontrées par les artistes à leur arrivée montrent à quel point il est difficile pour les gens de former un consensus sur l'histoire à travers une commémoration commune.

Lors de l'exposition d'art commémorative du 28 février 1997, l'historien de l'art Chen Xiang-chun a déclaré que les œuvres d'artistes tels que Wu Ma-li et d'autres avaient créé un « poste de transition traumatique » dans lequel les spectateurs et les victimes pouvaient trouver la guérison. Vingt ans plus tard, les activités commémoratives sur Lü Dao ont mis en lumière des conflits et des difficultés qui étaient restés cachés auparavant, toutefois dans les œuvres de Lau Ki-Tong, ces conflits et ces difficultés ont plutôt créé un autre type d'espace qui peut accueillir une variété de perspectives.

Alors, est-il possible de commémorer ces mémoires multiples et contradictoires ? Des artistes tels que Lau Ki-Tong suggèrent une méthode de vision et/ou mise en vue en utilisant la disparité : la rétrospection, la projection et l'alignement. Dans ce processus, les perspectives multiples ne créent pas une mémoire commune, mais plutôt une réalité où les expériences contradictoires coexistent sur Lü Dao : c'est une île qui émerge de manière fugace à travers divers mouvements de rétrospection, de projection et de conflits.

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Curazao y la esclavitud en el Caribe: Del patrimonio memorialista a la musealización de identidades modernas

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Este estudio tiene como propósito analizar la contribución que la museología ha realizado en la recuperación de la memoria y la conservación del patrimonio intangible ligado a los derechos humanos. El punto de partida es el proyecto *#MemoriasSituadas*¹ creado por el Centro Internacional para la Promoción de los Derechos Humanos y la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (CIPDH-UNESCO). Estos organismos nos permiten analizar el estado actual de los procesos de musealización y puesta en valor de los escenarios de conflicto social. Por este motivo, uno de los objetivos marcados en el citado proyecto ha sido el rescate de los bienes materiales e inmateriales de la memoria traumática desde una dimensión global y transfronteriza, visibilizada y divulgada mediante un mapa interactivo que conecta los escenarios del pasado. La línea transversal que lo estructura son las violaciones a los derechos humanos que han sufrido diferentes colectivos, grupos étnicos y personas en situación de vulnerabilidad, hasta y durante el siglo XX. En la segunda mitad de esta centuria, y pasado ya al siguiente milenio, las normativas internacionales han comenzado a recoger en su corpus legal la condena a estas actuaciones. La Resolución 1235 (XLII) del Consejo Económico y Social (1967), aprobada por el Consejo Económico y Social, hace referencia a la “cuestión de la violación de los derechos humanos y de las libertades fundamentales, incluso la política de discriminación racial y de segregación y la política de apartheid, en todos los países y en particular en los países y territorios coloniales y dependientes” (Apartado 1). Además, cabe destacar la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas del 28 de enero de 2002, en donde se mencionó la responsabilidad del Estado por hechos internacionalmente ilícitos, indicando que “Los Estados deben cooperar para poner fin, por medios lícitos, a toda violación grave” (art. 41).

El proyecto CIPDH-UNESCO se apoya en estas normativas internacionales y articula estos espacios vulnerables identificándolos como “lugares de memoria”; además, los estructura en base a una serie de temas² y los ordena en función de unas categorías-tipo: museo, inmaterial, patrimonio artístico, archivo, monumento y sitio. Por tanto, la configuración de estos “lugares de memoria”, apelando a Pierre Nora, quedan marcados en el citado mapa interactivo, que los sistematiza por acontecimientos históricos y permite realizar búsquedas cruzadas. En relación con estos últimos, nos planteamos qué

1 Memorias Situadas CIPDH - UNESCO

2 En total son cinco y los componen: esclavitud; genocidio y/o crímenes masivos; graves violaciones cometidas en el marco de persecución política; violencia contra las mujeres, diversidades sexuales y/o por razones de género; graves violaciones cometidas en el marco de conflictos armados.

representación tiene la esclavitud en este proyecto memorialista³. Si lo acotamos al territorio insular del Caribe, aparecen Cuba, Guadalupe y Curazao, lugares conectados por la musealización y la rememoración del pasado traumático en el Mar del Caribe.

De los países señalados, en esta conferencia se realizará un análisis específico de la emblemática isla de Curazao (pequeño territorio perteneciente a los Países Bajos) porque se convirtió en la puerta de entrada de los africanos en el Caribe y América, y hoy cuenta con espacios significativos que favorecen un estudio sobre la musealización de la historia de la esclavitud y su proyección a las sociedades contemporáneas.

La primera cuestión que nos planteamos es saber si el proyecto *#MemoriasSituadas* integra de forma completa los lugares del pasado traumático en el Mar del Caribe y si la memoria se rescata de forma íntegra o queda parcialmente representada. En este sentido, profundizamos a través de un estudio de caso, el de la isla de Curazao: un ejemplo de explotación y violación de los derechos humanos debido a la esclavitud, entendiendo esta como “el crimen más prolongado jamás perpetrado en la historia de la humanidad, y cuyos efectos perduran hoy en día en forma de racismo, desigualdad y explotación” (Quirk y Landers, 2015, 1).

El reconocimiento de los lugares de memoria: El caso de Curazao y su pasado traumático

Resulta relevante la labor que viene desempeñando la UNESCO en la visibilidad de los conflictos del pasado. Desde el año 2006 empezó a trabajar en este territorio del Caribe con una serie de personalidades que integraron la Oficina Regional de Cultura para América Latina y el Caribe de la UNESCO, con el propósito de crear los *Sitios de Memoria de La Ruta del Esclavo en el Caribe Latino*. La primera reunión de la comisión de expertos estuvo compuesta por representantes de República Dominicana, Jamaica, Aruba, Cuba, Haití y Curazao que trabajaron en la creación de un inventario de espacios de la memoria. En las siguientes fases de trabajo, la isla de Curazao ya no fue incluida en las comisiones⁴, quizá por eso estén escasamente visibilizados los espacios de memoria de esta isla del Caribe, mientras que el Archivo Middelburgsche Commerce Compagnie (MCC), ligado a la trata comercial y conservado y ubicado en Curazao, sí ha sido incluido en el “Registro de la Memoria del Mundo” de la UNESCO. Desde su inscripción en 2011, forma parte de la lista de patrimonio documental relacionado con la historia de la esclavitud.

3 La base de datos nos devuelve con esta categoría un resultado de 15 lugares: La Capilla de los negros (Chascomús, Argentina); el Castillo de San Severino. Museo de la Ruta del Esclavo (Cuba); la Catedral Anglicana Iglesia de Cristo-Antiguo mercado de esclavos de Zanzibar (Tanzania); el monumento Desenkadená (Curazao); el muelle de Valongo (Brasil); el Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration (Estados Unidos); el monumento Espíritu de Libertad (Bermudas); la Instalación Nkyinkyim (Ghana); Isla de Gorea (Senegal); House of Sharing y Museo de la esclavitud sexual por el ejército Japonés (Corea del Sur); la ruta del esclavo (Benín); el monumento le Morne (Mauricio); el sitio Marcador histórico en honor a Ota Benga (Estados Unidos); el Memorial ACTe (Guadalupe); el Memorial de la Abolición de la Esclavitud (Francia); y el Memorial Saartjie Baartman (Sudáfrica).

4 La celebrada en 2007 formaría la Comisión Nacional Dominicana para la UNESCO, así como los Comités Nacionales de la Ruta del Esclavo de Cuba, Haití y la República Dominicana.

En 2014 se dio a conocer el listado de sitios identificados durante el citado proyecto *La Ruta del Esclavo* (Rufins, 2014). La isla de Curazao no aparece en estos documentos y queda a un lado de las siguientes fases de trabajo que fueron recogidas en la publicación *La Ruta del Esclavo en el Río de la Plata. Aportes para el diálogo intercultural* (2011). Esta última asentó la base de un proyecto que terminó extendiéndose con un inventario que abarca otros continentes y que dio lugar a la creación de una Red Global de Sitios de Memoria, posteriormente llamada *#MemoriasSituadas*. Actualmente, en este mapa interactivo, el único espacio que figura como sitio de la memoria en la isla de Curazao es la escultura en bronce titulada “Desenkadená”. Por tanto, esta última ha recibido el reconocimiento por la UNESCO de monumento memorialista. Está situado en la ciudad de Willemstad; la escena hace referencia a tres hombres atados con unas cadenas que golpean para liberarse de ellas. Se trata de un homenaje a la rebelión de los esclavos que se produjo en 1795; así lo recuerda la placa con la inscripción “Parque de la lucha por la libertad” y el listado con los nombres de quienes fueron víctimas de la masacre y las matanzas emprendidas por el gobierno colonial. La esclavitud en Curazao no se consiguió abolir hasta 1863, abarcando casi dos siglos desde su comienzo en 1650. Este acontecimiento se rememora desde 1984 cada 17 de agosto, declarado “día de la lucha por la libertad”.

La Isla de Curazao, un museo territorio memorialista Patrimonio de la Humanidad

La isla de Curazao se incluye dentro del listado de las veintiún islas que integran el Patrimonio Mundial en el Caribe, en concreto, el centro histórico de la ciudad de Willemstad y el puerto, adscrito en 1997. La historia de esta antigua ciudad está marcada por la llegada de los holandeses que se establecieron en esta pequeña isla en 1634, desarrollando un activo puerto para su factoría comercial, en torno a la cual se levantó un entramado urbano con una planificación que recrea los esquemas europeos. La capital ha recibido este reconocimiento de la UNESCO debido a su valor arquitectónico porque reproduce en la zona histórica el estilo de los Países Bajos y también se ha reconocido el buen estado de conservación de esta colonia holandesa, cuya lectura se debería hacer conjunta con el museo comunitario *Kas di Pal'I Maishi* (tipo casa africana) reconocido por la UNESCO.

Una vez realizado el estado de la cuestión, en esta parte del estudio nos interesa analizar los diferentes escenarios del pasado que han sido musealizados para rescatar la memoria y estudiar qué discurso se ha diseñado en torno a los mismos. Al mismo tiempo proponemos analizar, dentro de esa dicotomía del sistema esclavista, qué proporción de este patrimonio visibiliza la UNESCO frente a aquel otro, menos visible, pero que realmente favorece el reconocimiento a los esclavos.

Nuestro punto de partida será el Kura Hulanda Museum levantado en el puerto de la misma ciudad. Se trata de un espacio Patrimonio de la Humanidad y al mismo tiempo memorialista porque reconstruye la antigua sede del Comercio Transatlántico de esclavos. Además, estudiaremos el Savonet Museum, que rememora una antigua plantación del siglo XIX, o el emblemático Tula Museum, símbolo de la liberación que se propone velar por el patrimonio intangible que ha identificado esta comunidad con sus ritos culturales, así como el conocimiento medicinal a través de las plantas. Asimismo, nos detendremos en el Museo de Curazao, el primero creado en la isla y

que conserva obra de artistas locales e internacionales. Esta colección es el resultado del encuentro cultural que se produjo entre África y Europa en el Caribe Americano; el arte se convierte en el soporte de la memoria para construir la modernidad a través de relatos alternativos que, desde mediados del siglo XX, representan a la sociedad actual.

Conclusión

El estudio concluye tras analizar, desde una metodología de contraposición entre vencedores y vencidos, los espacios memorialistas de la esclavitud en la Isla del Curazao. El fin es demostrar que los proyectos puestos en marcha desde la UNESCO a veces no se ajustan a la puesta en valor de este espacio insular, ya que no siempre se otorga el mismo grado de reconocimiento al legado testimonial del periodo de la esclavitud. Sin embargo, estos procesos de revisión y puesta en valor son fundamentales para el avance de las sociedades modernas.

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Memory and heritage practices of the Greeks of Gökçeada (Imbros) Island in Türkiye

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In this paper, I will focus on the memories and heritages of the Greeks of the Island of Gökçeada (in Turkish)/Ἰμβρος/Imbros (in Greek), an island off the west coast of Turkey. The Greek community in Turkey are often called *Rum* in Turkish, which comes from the word Roman. This refers to the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire. There has been a presence of Greek Orthodox communities in what is now Turkey since the Byzantine period (including before conversion to Christianity by Constantine). They are the Indigenous communities to this country. It is confusing for people as these are not Greeks in the modern nation-state sense, so we need to think back to a time before nation states, when different ethnic groups had a presence in what is now modern-day Turkey. Prior to the establishment of the Turkish Republic with its current geography in 1923, the Ottoman Empire, the conquering successor of the Byzantine Empire, had extended its borders from the Balkans to the Middle East and North Africa. With the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the gradual establishment of nation-states, there were many migrations from Ottoman territories. After the conflicts between the Ottoman and Greek Powers from 1919 to 1922 that followed the Balkan Wars and World War I, the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 was signed, officially settling the conflict and ending violent territorial disputes. Greece and the new nation-state of Turkey became the first signatories of the treaty, which stipulated one of the biggest mass forced displacements of people in the 20th century: the so-called Population Exchange, also known in Greece as the Great Catastrophe. The exchange centred on religion: about 1.5 million Greek-Orthodox people from Turkey were forcibly displaced to Greece, and about 350,000 Muslim Turks were displaced from Greece to Turkey. Thus, after over 2000 years of Greeks living in the present territory of Turkey, they were forced to abandon their homes.

However, together with the Greeks of Istanbul (*Constantinopolitans*), the Greek communities on the islands of Bozcaada (Tenedos) and Gökçeada (Imbros) in Turkey were excluded from this Population Exchange in the Treaty of Lausanne. In return, Muslim communities in Western Thrace in Greece were not included in this forced displacement. Although the islands in the Aegean were given to Greece, Turkey insisted on keeping the Islands of Bozcaada (Tenedos) and Gökçeada (Imbros) due to their proximity to Çanakkale and the Bosphorus (Dardanelles). This part of the Bosphorus is a highly important strategic gateway to the Marmara Sea, Istanbul, and the Black Sea and had been a critical theatre of war in 1915 in the fight for Gallipoli and later when Allies passed through the Dardanelles and landed in Istanbul. The two Islands had Turkish military bases and watch towers until recent years. Today, when you visit the Islands, you can see the ruins of the military towers.

Nevertheless, due to political persecutions and pressures, the population of these Greek communities in Istanbul and the islands declined dramatically. In recent research, I focused on the memories and heritages of the Greeks of Istanbul, including diaspora communities in Athens and Australia. During this, I have also met Imbrosians who expressed shared or similar experiences with the

Constantinopolitans. The Greeks who had to emigrate from the Islands and Istanbul continue to maintain their ties with these places through ongoing continuous communication with Turkey. They try to keep their languages, traditions, and cultures alive and to transfer these values to future generations. These communities' displacement and loss emphasize the importance of peace, friendship, and solidarity, and they look to the future with hope.

Like the Constantinopolitans, for the Greeks of Gökçeada/Imbros, the island is still an important site, and they faced the political pressure from the state politics especially regarding the tense relationship with Greece. The members of this community were forcibly but unofficially displaced in different ways in the 1960s, and their villages were ruined. Some left for Istanbul, some for Greece, and some as far as Australia. Diaspora groups have associations in each country. Until 1974, the population of the island was Greek and, in this year, following the crisis of the Cyprus Question, the state closed the Greek schools. The population was forced to migrate.

In recent years, some of the Greek Islanders have been returning to Gökçeada/Imbros despite the reduced population. Greek schools have reopened, the community has established an Association of Imbrosians, and some of the formerly abandoned Greek villages on the island have become popular destinations both for the domestic Turkish tourist market and for Imbrosian diaspora memory tourists, resulting in the development of hotels and restaurants. The current Greek villages of Tepeköy/Agrídia (Αγρίδια) and Zeytinli/ Ágiói Theódoroi (Άγιοι Θεόδωροι) are particularly popular tourist destinations, with restaurants and cafés. Notably, the Patriarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople is from Zeytinli/Ágiói Theódoroi.

Although my research has focused primarily on the Greeks of Istanbul, one of my participants, Stelyos Berber, led me to engage more closely with Gökçeada/Imbros. Stelyos was born in Istanbul, but his family was from this island. His family was “one of the few that didn't migrate to Greece or elsewhere”. As part of this research, I made a documentary film about the memories and heritages of the Greeks of Istanbul, *Life after Life: The Greeks of Istanbul* (2021). When I met him, Stelyos was a high-status figure within the community and the church, a senior cantor of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in Istanbul, regularly leading the singing of monodic chant of the Byzantine liturgy during services. He also established Cafe Aman Istanbul with his wife, Pelin Suer, in 2009, performing traditional music of Istanbul in Greek and Turkish. My co-director, Cem Hakverdi, filmed him in Istanbul for our documentary *Life after Life*, and during filming he returned to Gökçeada/Imbros and became a music teacher in the Greek primary and high schools there. In the film, he talks about why he went back and the importance of reviving their language and culture in the Island:

I will be here for the first time this winter. To start life here again, to hear again our mother tongue [Greek], to revive the songs, the folk songs, festivals ... that is the responsibility of our generation, I think. Because unless you do this, the values in these lands will keep being lost. Of course, we don't want this and don't believe that anyone does. (Bozoğlu, 2021)

When I visited the island, I also met older people who had left the Island for Greece when they were very young. They spoke with me in Turkish, although they told me that they had forgotten Turkish as they left a long time ago. Some told me that they found it very difficult to live on their

native island since things were very different from when they had left, and island life today was also different compared to their experiences of living in Greece. I visited the Association in the Greek village where Stelyos is from and where he lives now. They organise community gatherings and events. The Greek language and the culture of the island are being revived. However, tension is still present. In August 2023, Turkish journalist Melike Çapan curated an exhibition *We will meet again: The memory of Imbros 1964* about the experiences of Greek communities of the island, including their experience of suppression and forced displacement. Some Turkish nationalist groups on the island targeted the exhibition and, due to this pressure, the decision was made to cancel it. Çapan stated:

Unfortunately, as a result of the targeting of some groups and institutions, we decided to cancel the exhibition, which [was intended as] a step to confront the past and rebuild a common future. Our priority is that society is not harmed in any way, regardless of language, religion or identity. We express our regret. (Duvar.English)

Conversely, the head of Gökçeada City Council, Bülent Aylı, told local news media that the exhibition was targeting the Turkish state and was “enthusiastically applauded by Greek and Greek-loving writers, illustrators and intellectuals; it offends the Turkish nation living on the island.” He then argued about how the Greeks of the islands betrayed the Turkish state:

If we are going to discuss 1964 in 2023, let’s investigate the Ottoman Turks who disappeared suddenly on the island. Let’s investigate the Greek islanders who gave *de facto* support to the British in the Gallipoli wars. If we see an offensive approach against our state and nation in this exhibition, we will bring the issue to the judiciary. No one can humiliate our state and our nation, especially on our land. Our state should also review the rights it has given to the Greeks. (Duvar.English)

This is a typical Turkish nationalist discourse that has argued that the Greeks were allies with the enemy. Notably, the comment “No one can humiliate our state and our nation, especially on our land” is not mere posturing but refers to the notorious Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code that criminalises criticism of the Turkish nation. This has been used against high-profile cultural figures such as Orhan Pamuk and Elif Şafak and others of non-Turkish origin, such as Noam Chomsky, as well as political activists such as the Turkish-Armenian newspaper editor Hrant Dink (just before his assassination in 2007). So, this statement can be understood as a serious threat, especially given the following sentence – “Our state should also review the rights it has given to the Greeks”. Nevertheless, the exhibition had support from some Turkish people from the island. Eventually, the exhibition was opened in a historic Greek high school in Istanbul.

This is still ongoing research that will discuss the current heritage and memory practices of this community on the island who are negotiating between a complex past of geopolitical relations, a history of displacement and privation, and the return and reconstitution of community life. There are several key issues to explore. One of these is the generational and intergenerational dynamics of the memory of displacements that occurred decades ago but have continued to shape the communities. Those displaced because of the Cyprus Question (whether directly or indirectly) are now older, implicating anxieties about intergenerational transmission and forgetting. Another key issue is the

tension between diasporic memory tourism (that is, by diasporic Greek Imbrosians living elsewhere who are seeking to engage with ancestral villages and homes) and the questionable motivations of other tourists attracted by ruined settlements. We may also consider this in relation to theories of nostalgia in memory and heritage studies. As is well known, nostalgia means “longing for a lost home”. In one sense we can think about what happens when a group regains its lost home, and how people negotiate this circumstance. On the face of things, this might look like a rare success story for what Svetlana Boym (2001) called “restorative nostalgia”. On the other hand, the *home* of nostalgia is not simply a place but also a temporality and an assemblage of memory that cannot be regained as it was. So what, precisely (if anything), has been regained? The opposition to the exhibition discussed above also shows that the revival of historic inhabitancy of a group is not some seamless process, but one of living with animosity and undisguised hatred. Finally, we need to enquire into the island dynamics of these contests, both in geopolitical terms insofar as Turkey and Greece share and tussle over their island territories and heritages, and in cultural terms of grasping the intersection of island life, alterity, and cultural marginality and suppression.

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Taking good care: Race, class and colonial violence in Scottish galleries

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Scottish heritage operates within a complex socio-political context that has historically contributed to the alienation of Black artists and audiences. High profile cases of racist backlash show that protection of Black artists from racism is imperative. Navigating conflicting interests of stakeholders and making curatorial decisions with minimal historical knowledge has led to inaccurate and sometimes absurd reinvention of historical ‘Black’ figures, even by Black people. However, more careful dialogue with historically affected communities, the co-curation of exhibitions and support of the Scottish government are nudging the sector to become more inclusive despite the conflicting expectations for galleries and museums to be both anti-racist and politically neutral.

Although Scots were disproportionately implicated in many aspects of slavery and colonialism, there remains an aggrieved collective sense of Scots as colonised victims. The chattel enslavement of Africans in the Caribbean continues to be conflated with Scottish indentureship. Newspaper articles still lament the Darien Scheme disaster in Central America in the 1690s that included plans for trafficking of Africans and whose failure led to the 1707 Union with England (MacPherson, 2023).

However, it is important to distinguish between various forms of forced labour and exploitation but understand them as parts of a connected whole. Structures of inequality were created and intensified through processes of racialized enslavement and colonialism that were inherently tied to the dispossession and exploitation of the peasantry and working-class at home. While the violent extraction of labour and resources from the colonies created the wealth to build the infrastructure for Scotland as a whole, colonialism and continuing forms of neo-colonialism generated a boomerang effect that disenfranchised Scotland’s poorest (Koram, 2022).

Scotland has a small, scattered population of Caribbean heritage within a larger presence of continental African Scots. When the 2022 census figures are released in May 2024, the 7,000 people of African Caribbean heritage included in the 0.7% figure for all Afro-Scots cited in the 2011 census is expected to be significantly higher (Scottish Census, 2012). Even when accounting for class differentials, significant racial disparities remain across a wide range of important indicators such as health, housing and employment, as indicated by a report published in 2020 (Runnymede). Racism stubbornly remains the most prominent factor in reported instances of hate crime in Scotland and may be on the rise. Although racist abuse including physical attacks have been commonly experienced by Afro-Scots from early childhood to old age, it was generally ignored until the Black Lives Matter movement put a spotlight on anti-Black violence in 2020.

Many white Scots have neither experienced racism nor know anyone who has, which can lead to a state of denial about its existence. In 2017, Kayus Bankole, a member of Young Fathers, one of Scotland’s most internationally renowned bands, was hired by National Galleries of Scotland to

provoke audiences without any thought of duty of care. Bankole received dehumanising online abuse, including multiple death threats, that staff had not anticipated, the majority of which came from white working-class people. His critique of the celebration of elite white historical figures at the expense of the working class was rejected by those whose conceptualisation of class solidarity refuses to extend to Black people.

Detailed preparation in dialogue with any artist who may potentially experience racism for ongoing support and protection throughout their term of engagement is vital. Clear, efficient processes need to be in place to offer internal and demonstrate public support if necessary. The artist may not wish to be informed about the incidents of racism that may be directed towards them, either online or offline. To prevent Black artists being aggressively intimidated within the gallery space by racist audience members, the development of strong and enduring relationships with Black groups and community influencers helps ensure a visibly mixed audience for events that can act as a buffer against the expression of racist hostility. Security staff need to be primed to intervene swiftly as they are trained to do if a visitor damages an expensive artwork.

The ‘cultural capital’ needed to understand artistic creative responses to the legacies of colonialism, enslavement and class exploitation is often missing from those of higher socio-economic white backgrounds. These histories have been either undervalued or actively suppressed, as honesty about the actions of colonial or class violence will disrupt the reputation of their ancestors’ supposedly superior nature. If ‘hard to reach’ elite communities who currently celebrate colonial and racial dominance had more opportunities for learning, through exposure to dialogue around the ugly effects and legacies of colonial violence, would it make a difference?

Open discussions of the horrors of colonial violence or contemporary racism can be difficult to moderate sensitively. Museums and galleries still make decisions that play down the violence and dehumanisation a portrait’s sitter has inflicted or that played a role in the creation or provenance of a material object. There could be many reasons for this: a lack of knowledge, the views of important donors, protection of the families’ reputation, a focus on aesthetics divorced from history or to offer a more sanitised and pleasant visit. The result, however, is that labels by museum staff can soften or omit the violence of sitters in the art gallery or museum as they stem from an incongruous sympathy despite having an awareness of the sitters’ acts of barbarity.

Attempts to balance colonial crimes with the philanthropy and human rights extended to white European citizens misses the point that it was enslavement and colonialism that funded those philanthropic efforts for white British people who had their personhood recognised by domestic laws. However, although Scottish communities may have benefited from philanthropy, they were also disrupted and exploited by elites in an emerging capitalist system. If members from a range of historically affected communities, which includes the white working class, visit the museum with an awareness of the atrocities for which the sitter was responsible, they are likely to feel enraged at these omissions.

However, a new-found enthusiasm for truth-telling in our heritage institutions can lead to staff gratuitously indulging in details of violence when presenting to audiences. These renditions are particularly damaging if they are not followed up with strategies to settle the viscerally destabilising

effect on already marginalised listeners. Using historic racial slurs or archaic racial classifications without context disproportionately affects members of the audience with ancestors who have been exploited on this basis. For other audience members, the lack of contextualisation or deconstruction can inadvertently normalise and reify politically constructed racial categorisations.

Artistic projects developed for educating audiences have also been derailed by a lack of historical knowledge. One example is the uncritical celebration of historical figures of mixed European and African heritage; both slave ‘owners’ and those who used profits from African enslavement for their own social advancement. Even artists of African Caribbean descent, such as Ashanti Harris, have developed artworks about Guyanese women who have become theirs and Scotland’s newly celebrated historical ‘Black’ figures. A joyful identification with such historical figures, such as Dorothy Thomas, based on ‘race’ has led to omission of the horrors they themselves inflicted by becoming enslavers, such as forcing enslaved African women into prostitution for personal gain (Brough, 2023).

For instance, the celebration of Eliza Junor, a mixed heritage woman who was sent from Demerara for an education in Scotland, led to the making of the film *Eliza* with a young Scottish actor of Black Zimbabwean descent cast in the eponymous role. Eliza was the daughter of a white Scottish slave ‘owner’ and a potentially free mother of mixed heritage. The film, used as a teaching tool for primary schools, turns the reality of her life as a slave owner of light complexion into that of a victim of racism and a supporter of abolition. Publicity for the film quotes the actor’s self-identification with Eliza based on an imagined shared experience of racism and her revised story as a positive example of ‘cultural inclusivity’ in Scotland’s history (McEachern, 2020).

Another person of mixed heritage to be reinvented as part of reckoning with Scotland’s role in chattel enslavement is Jamaican Edward Stirling, who used a portion of slave compensation money from his white father to launch his lucrative career. He migrated to Australia, attempted to pass as white and profited from mining on Indigenous land. His son, Charles Edward Stirling, encouraged massacres and corpse stealing on a mass scale and developed the racist policy that led to the ‘Stolen Generations’ of Aboriginal Australians (Turnbull, 2016).

Edward the father was curiously reinvented in 2023 by a white artist in a Scottish heritage organisation with the Ghanaian name of Kofi. His imagined birth on a slave ship on the Middle Passage was acted out for visitors by a Pakistani Scottish woman in the role of his African mother. In the recited poem, the imaginary baby Kofi was wrapped in the Kente cloth of the Asante royal elite notorious for enriching themselves through the slave trade. Saidiya Hartman’s (2008) historical method of “critical fabulation” mentioned in the call out for this artistic residency was perhaps misunderstood by the staff and artist. Artistic license is a privilege of any artist, but the collection of poems was described as “brutal but necessary” to “shine a light on such a dark episode of our collective history”, as mentioned in the accompanying book of poems (Callery-Sithole, 2022).

Despite some wobbly starts, 2020 ushered in a markedly new openness by institutions to listen to the concerns of Black artists and audiences. Barbadian Scottish artist Alberta Whittle’s large-scale solo exhibition *Creating Dangerously*, that explicitly dealt with themes of racist violence, slavery and colonialism, was hosted by National Galleries of Scotland during 2023. In-depth consultation

with a paid advisory group made up of several Black artists, curators and anti-racist activists helped the gallery team to create a robust policy of care extending to the artist, staff and audiences. The statements of support by the Scottish government in 2024 for the recommendations of the Empire, Slavery and Scottish Museums (ESSM) advisory board gives an official stamp of approval for the prioritizing of explicit anti-racist action. One of the six recommendations is that anti-racism will be embedded into policy and practice in the 400 plus museums and galleries across the country (Museums Galleries Scotland, 2022). This is arguably also an implicit signal that museums are not, and should not be, neutral spaces and should take an actively political stance.

However, since 2023, arguments have been intensifying over the markedly different responses to war in Ukraine and Palestine, with cultural institutions extending solidarity to the former yet refusing to extend the same to the latter. This is backed up with statements that public institutions cannot be ‘political’ without a clear definition of how political viewpoints may affect theory, practice or policy in a gallery. Black and Palestinian liberation movements have been intimately connected since the founding and collaboration of apartheid South Africa and Israel in 1948 (Kasrils et al., 2015). With alarming curbs on human rights ushered in by the UK government, and Scotland’s draconian Hate Crime Bill, concepts of ‘political’, ‘free speech’ and ‘anti-racism’ in museums are becoming increasingly ill-defined and politically contingent in a way that may, without care and attention, ultimately render them meaningless.

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Museum reflections on three islands, where islands are rare and precious – Slovenia between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea

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The paper presents, in the example of Slovenia, two northern Mediterranean coastal cities on (former) islands, an island in the middle of a lake and urban settlements on river islands. With multi-faceted museum narratives, we follow two coastal towns in northern Istria along the east coast of the Adriatic: former islands Koper/Capodistria and Izola/Isola, then a traditional cult space on an island in the middle of the Alps (an island on Lake Bled) and urban settlements on the islands of the river Krka. We are looking for museum stories that transcend national and linguistic boundaries. The museum presentations of these islands, historically symbolically located between Venice and Vienna, also present the stories of parts of the transnational communities of empires from Roman times, the migration of nations at the fall of the Roman Empire, the feudal Middle Ages to the Republic of Venice and the Habsburg Empire and later to the modern era of (multi)national states in the 20th century.

The coastal towns that were formed on the (former) islands during the turbulent times of the decline of the ancient Roman Empire and the migration of peoples, the larger towns of the municipality of Koper and the smaller settlement of Izola, represent centuries of development.

Koper/Capodistria

The museum's stories are very diverse, as the development of the city commune was shaped until the end of the 18th century under the influence of Venice and the humanistic tradition, as well as the nearby Habsburg lands, which also included the seaport of Trieste. The Regional Museum presents the varied historical development of Koper, a settlement in the late Roman era in the turbulent period of the migration of peoples. A town commune with the traditional episcopal seat of St. Nazarius from the sixth century, under the influence of Byzantium, the Patriarch of Aquileia and the border counties from the edge of the medieval German state and, from 1145 CE, Venice, which later subordinated a large part of coastal Istria. The museum developed from the economic initiatives of the First Istrian Regional Exhibition in Koper in 1910, founded as a city museum in 1911. After 1954, the museum functioned as a district museum, later the Regional Museum of Koper, which was broader in terms of content and geography (Kočvar, 2002).

Presentations of the history of the 20th century can be particularly sensitive, as this area – inhabited by Italians, Croats and Slovenes, as well as Germans – experienced an Italian occupation at the end of 1918 after the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy. Included in the Italian state, the area of Istria, Goriška and Trieste survived fascism, Italianization and the Second World War, and with the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, the German occupation and post-war tensions. Along with

the changing border regimes, in 1954 the migration of a large part of the local Italian population from Koper, Izola and Piran followed, when these cities were included in Yugoslavia. With such a varied and problematic, even traumatic history of difficult stories, there are great museum challenges in this officially and effectively bilingual territory (Pokrajinski muzej Koper, 2024)

Izola/Isola

Isola is something special, as it retains the image of the island in its Latin name (*Insula*), also in the Italian (*Isola*) and Slovenian (*Izola*) names. In the comparison of Izola with the mighty houses of Koper, it is like a “gentle small town laid by the innocent hands of a mermaid” (Kramar, 1987, p. 237). With its rural image of a fishing village, Izola is located between real urban communes, between Koper and Piran. The island of Izola had medieval walls, and from the 14th century it was also connected to the nearby mainland by a stone bridge (Tomšič, 1998). The excellence of Izola is also due to the connection with the first geographer of Istria (Pietro Coppo, 1469/1470–1555/1556), who lived there and on the other side, on the green avenue that accompanies the arrival of Izola. The series of museum stories related to Izola is no less excellent.

In 2004, the Maritime Museum of Piran started presenting maritime history in an unusual way: in Izola in the form of a street museum, which can already be seen from the ground-floor windows during walks through the old city center. At that time, the Collection of Ship Modeling was arranged, which connects the materials of the museum and private individuals. The street museum was carried out on the initiative and in cooperation with the municipality of Izola as a revitalization project (Terčon, 2005). This tradition is continued by *Iz-solana*, House of the Sea, which represents the maritime and coastal character of the city, especially fishing and the fish processing industry (*Iz-solana*, the House of the Sea, 2024).

Salt production as a common story of coastal cities

Some museum stories can be followed in the wider area of the coastal settlements of northern Istria. The stories of the museum in Piran deal with seafaring and related education, shipbuilding, fishing and industrial fish processing, as well as the extremely important salt production (Bonin, 2016). A valuable museum presentation of one of the fundamental activities of this seaside area is the establishment of a museum of salt production in the primary environment of old salt pans. During the years of work, a group of dedicated colleagues from several institutions managed to organize three saltworks houses into a museum, which was recognized with the Europa Nostra 2003 award for exemplary and subtle revitalization of the cultural landscape (Žagar, 2005; The Museum of Salt-making, 2024). The Museum of Salt-making is not only affected by changing sea levels but also by the peculiarities of the unusual division of management between the Maritime Museum and Mobitel, the telecommunications company (Obalaplus, 2020; Sečovlje Salina Nature Park, 2024). We also have access to an impressive view of the crystallization area of the salt pans (Kpss, n.d.).

The Maritime Museum of Piran, which also extends to Izola with its activities on maritime history, is also exceptional with an international project that enables greater accessibility for the physically challenged, and here the project employs a young girl to guide the museum visitor. Such an integrated

approach to the adaptation of museum exhibitions and contents according to the principle of inclusion and overcoming obstacles enables visitors to interactively participate in viewing the museum exhibitions (Vidrih Perko et al., 2019). Modern technology allows us to view museum exhibitions with her in a special way (Through the Maritime Museum with Natalie, 2019).

Bled

The town of Bled, with Lake Bled and an islet on it and a view of Triglav and the Julian Alps, is one of the symbols of Slovenia. In 1004, the Bled area was acquired by Emperor Henry II and donated to the bishop of Brixen (today also Bressanone in South Tyrol). As early as 1011, the bishop built a castle on the rock above the lake, which today also tells museum stories (Bled Castle, Exhibition, 2024). Archaeologists are revealing even more, as research and analysis of sources convincingly show an early Slavic society and the probability of a pre-Christian sanctuary on the island (Pleterski, 2013). The poem *Baptism at Savica*, narrated by the Slovenian national poet F. Prešeren, is about this pre-Christian sanctuary and Christianization, and the poet considered Bled and the island to be the image of paradise (Blejski grad, muzej, 2024). In the 19th century, Bled also became a tourist destination, a venue for political meetings during the first Yugoslavia and, during WWII, a site also used by the German occupation authorities. This sparked testimonies on Nazi intentions to replace the popular Catholic pilgrimage church of St. Mary on the island with a neopagan cult center in Bled (Gaspari, 2008).

Islands on the river

Among the examples of settlements on rivers, as many as four stand out on the Krka River: On April 7, 1365, Rudolf IV of Habsburg founded a town named after him called Rudolfswerth in the center of the Dolenjska region on a peninsula that gives the impression of an island. Today it is *Novo mesto* (meaning New Town) with an impressive museum and important prehistoric finds from the Iron Age (The Archaeological Image, 2024). The other example is the *Otočec Castle*, the only castle situated on a river islet in Slovenia, and a tiny rural settlement in the middle of the river, *Kostanjevica na Krki*, with the successful museum story of an abandoned Cistercian monastery converted into a gallery with rich collections and open-air sculpture *symposia forma viva*. The fourth example represents the area of fields and meadows dedicated to agriculture, in the location of the former small market town Gutenwerd, which was destroyed on November 3, 1473, during the Ottoman invasion. A new exhibition in the National Museum of Slovenia presents a museum story about this settlement, which once belonged to the influential Bavarian diocese of Freising (Nekoč je bil Gutenwerd, 2024).

Other questions

This region of international contacts is presented in the museums with changing borders, military conflicts in WWI and WWII and the post-war situation. These are also the difficult stories of island cities and their region (Slika Toneta Kralja 'Rapallo', 2024; Kacin Wohinz & Troha, 2001; From Austria-Hungary to Yugoslavia, 2024). In short, we can say that museums are sensitive to difficult and disturbing topics and try to address them from multiple perspectives. This is also the case with

the project Path of Peace from the mountains in the Soča/Isonzo valley to Trieste, referring to the WWI (The Soča Region—The Walk of Peace, 2024). The contemporary problems of occasional high sea tides in autumn are not new, but in the modern era of sea level rise, they are more common. Thus, modernity opens the problems of protecting the architectural heritage and still preserved areas of the salt pans. The future of island museology and museums along the coasts and on the mainland depends on people, on us. For the precious cultural heritage that enriches us and directs us to respect diversity, we do everything we can in responsible care for a clean environment and peace in the world.

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Bio-cultural heritage of Sundarbans: A tale of transnational coastal and island museology

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The Sundarbans is a coastal delta and major climate hotspot located at the southern end of West Bengal in India. Its approximately 3400 sq. km is only 40% of the world's largest mangrove forest of 10,000 sq. km, with the rest now in Bangladesh. Sundarbans National Park, India, a World Heritage Site, is also the abode of the National Animal of India, the Royal Bengal Tiger, and thousands of other plant and animal species.

Apart from the geographical diversity, human settlement in the islands constitutes a unique culture. The present heterogeneous culture of the Sundarbans is an amalgamation of different cultural units. Several small museums are there too. The mangrove forests are enriched with sources of livelihood for coastal communities. Folk deities, rituals and performances represent this heterogeneity. Sagar, the largest island, hosts an annual event during Makar Sankranti (mid-January), to which millions of pilgrims from the hinterlands throng every year. The cultural forms of the local communities have been going through continuous changes over time, depending on myriad social factors such as high rates of poverty, illegal immigration, the prevalence of child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, fewer educational and economic opportunities, along with poaching, encroachment on forest lands for livelihood, indiscriminate fishing and climate refugees.

The islands

The Sundarbans opens up one of the most enthralling tales of the million tales. The Sundarban National Park is situated at 21° 43' – 21° 55' N latitude and between 88° 42' – 89° 04' E longitude, and the average altitude is 7.5 m above sea level. The Park is composed of 54 small islands and intersected by many tributaries of the River Ganga. Inscribed in 1987 as a World Heritage Site, it is rich in biodiversity with the Royal Bengal Tiger and thousands of other plant and animal species. Flora includes 334 plant species of 245 genera and 75 families, 165 algae and 13 orchid species. There is also a wide variety of fauna with 693 species of wildlife. This includes 49 mammals, 59 reptiles, 8 amphibians, 210 white fishes, 24 shrimps, 14 crabs and 43 molluscan species. Colourful birdlife is also found here, along with many waterfowl species. The Pod/Poundra, Namasudras and the Adivasis are considered the 'original [human] settlers' of the Sundarbans landscape in India and Bangladesh (O'Malley, 1908, p. 65; Jalais, 2010). The Sundarbans occupies a unique bioclimatic zone within a typical geographical situation in the coastal area of the Bay of Bengal. Here, ongoing ecological processes such as delta formation, colonization of the newly formed deltaic islands, monsoon rains, flooding and tidal influence have created mangrove forests.

Cultural heritage

Jatar Deul, an eleventh century Shiva temple, is located on the bank of the River Moni. Before partition, the entire area was a flourishing settlement. The vessels leaving Tamralipti (the modern-day Tamruk near Haldia port) might have used the area on the way to Java, Sumatra, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. However, the Ganga shifted its course over the years and the settlements also moved eastward. Archaeological sites and monumental remains dating back to the third-fourth century BCE are found in Tamruk, Chandraketurah, Mahishadal, Sagar Island and others.

Manasa *pala gaan* is performed across parts of West Bengal. It is based on the Manasa Mangala Kavya, an important epic poem which dates to 13 CE and is mainly based on older folk myths. Bipradas Pipilai mentioned in his “*Manasamangal Kāvya*” (or “Manasa Vijay”) that merchant ships of Chand Sadagar used to proceed to the sea from ancient Champaknagar of Kamarupa after passing through Tribeni, situated at the junction of Saptagram and the confluence of Ganges, Saraswati and Jamuna Rivers of modern-day West Bengal (Roy, 1959). In Bengal, Manasa is a popular goddess among subaltern communities. Every year, on the day of Vishwakarma Puja (September 17), many households in remote villages of the Sundarbans worship the snake goddess and perform the *pala gaan*. Snake bites are a common cause of death in Sundarban areas. Another important goddess is Bonbibi (The Forest Guardian). Bonbibi is venerated by both Hindus and Muslims. The deities and rituals in this area represent heterogeneity. Besides Bonbibi and Dakshin Rai, the deities Itu, Maakal Thakur and Gangadebi are worshipped here. Rituals and livelihood, river and forest, are interwoven in the Sundarbans, and culture is constructed from multiple interconnections among the major components; religion, ritual, narrative, occupation and nature (Biswas, 2020).

The most notable literature about the area is the *Johuranama*, written by Abdur Rahim in the late 19th century, through considerable adaptations from an epic poem from 1686 called *Raimangal* by Krishnaram Das (Jalais, 2008). The people of Sundarban worship gods and goddesses of the Sundarbans delta and serve their core purpose of preserving and protecting the entire ecosystem with their underlying belief. Bonbibi's *Johuranama*, *Raimangal* and *Manasa Mangal* also narrate the atrocious co-existence of beast-human nature (Sen & Mukherjee, 2020). When asked about the water history of the region, the narratives of the locals reflect the desire to shift the attention from terrestrial-aquatic absolutism to climatic despotism (Dasgupta, 2020).

The Sundarbans provides sustainable livelihoods for large number of people in nearby areas vicinity and also acts as a shelter belt. Storms, cyclones, tidal surges, sea water seepage and intrusion are regular phenomena in this area. Large numbers of people living in small villages here and there and working as honey gatherers, woodcutters, fisherman, leaves and grass gatherers. (UNESCO, n.d., para. 13)

Climate change and economy

The employment opportunities are quite limited. Moreover, the region faces a number of environmental hazards year-round. Severe cyclonic storms in the last fifteen years—for example, Sidr (2007), Aila (2009), Fani (2019), Bulbul (2019), Yaas (2021), Amphan (2020) and Sitrang

(2022)—continue to ravage the islands by repeated breaching of embankments, inundating vast areas, enabling salt water to enter the agricultural fields and fresh water bodies. Research reveals a vicious cycle of suffering for disadvantaged people due to the adverse climatic effects and complex man-beast relationship in this area. The rising sea level, salinization of soil and water and loss of ecological balance leads to destruction of thousands of homes, shortages of food and drinking water and inadequate wash water. The sea-level in the Sundarbans is increasing rapidly, significantly impacting income sources. With a rise in the population and fewer work opportunities, people are forced to find jobs in other regions (Ghosh, 2018). The main economy of this region depends on agriculture, fisheries, collection of honey, etc. Salinity of soil reduces its productivity, followed by a high mortality rate and diarrhoea-related mortality (Stone & Hornak, 2019).

The scenic beauty of the deltaic region attracts thousands of tourists from across the world. During the tourist season, people in the Sundarbans get additional and alternative opportunities to earn their livelihood. The residents of the Sundarbans treat the river as their protector and preserver of life (Kumar et al., 2020). The wisdom and traditional knowledge of Indigenous people and the local community should be respected, promoted and responsibly disseminated, as these are playing a crucial role in promoting tourism in the Sundarbans.

In May 2020, a devastating cyclone destroyed tiger fencing that prevents negative human-tiger conflict. The UNESCO Rapid Response Facility supported the World Wildlife Fund India to work with the West Bengal Forest Directorate to restore around 50 km of netting. Since the restoration, there have been no incidents of straying tigers. The Sundarbans region acts as a barrier which protects a populated city like Kolkata from various climate disasters. It is not only poverty or climatic disasters that cause a migration of people to Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and other urban areas but also political disturbances and miserable law and order conditions of the rural areas. Climate change has taken an enormous toll on the rainforest in recent years. Cyclones, floods, river erosion and soil salinization – the result of saltwater from the Bay of Bengal encroaching further and further into the low-lying Sundarbans – have repeatedly uprooted families and decimated the incomes of residents who have traditionally relied heavily on agriculture and fishing for their livelihoods. Multiple UN agencies such as UNICEF and the UN Development Programme have warned that climate change will increase exploitation of minors, including trafficking. This fear is already reality in the Sundarbans. *The Fuller Project* and *The Wire* have interviewed a dozen child trafficking survivors, as well as over a dozen activists, lawyers, environmental experts and government officials who describe how repeated natural disasters and environmental changes have created a highly vulnerable population that is increasingly at risk of participating in or becoming victims of trafficking (Mitra, 2022).

Colonial efforts

The region also shares a bizarre colonial remnant of human settlement in the past. It was made possible with British land reclamation policy in the late 18th and early 19th century. Sir Daniel Mackinnon Hamilton, a Scottish businessman, took lease of 10,000 acres in Gosaba from the East India Company in 1903 to start developmental works, such as a Consumers' Cooperative Society (1918), model farm (1919), a cooperative Paddy Sales Society (1923), Gosaba Central Cooperative

Bank (1924) and the Jamini Rice Mill (1927). His efforts got support from both Mahatma Gandhi and poet Rabindranath Tagore. Hamilton's bungalow is still there along with a few items related to his life and work. Every year on 25 December, people of Gosaba recall him by celebrating his birth and death anniversary. Kalipada Bhattacharya, a teacher in a Gosaba school, wrote a biography of Hamilton in 1955 entitled *Mahapran Sir Daniel Mackinnon Hamilton*. The first edition (2003) of another book, entitled *The Philosopher's Stone: Speeches & Writings of Sir Daniel Hamilton*, edited by Alapan Bandyopadhyay and Anup Matilal, highlights his efforts at social uplift in Bengal during the British rule. The second edition of this book (2024) contains essays by Stephen Gethins (former British parliamentarian and currently Professor of International Relations, University of St Andrews), and Milinda Banerjee (Lecturer in Modern History, University of St Andrews) in light of newly discovered works of Hamilton. These books have attempted to contextualise Hamilton, who is often loosely referred to as the father of cooperative societies in India.

Museological practices

Local museums mean discovering the layers of the past and the changing social, linguistic and cultural community. Here lies the crucial role in shaping sustainable practices and conserving the environment for generations to come. Intergenerational dissemination of traditional knowledge is as vital for the survival and continuity of ethos as for the communities' culture. Sundarban Anchalik Sangrahasala is a notable destination that portrays some evidence unfolding the archaeology of the region. Some local persons try to preserve the intangible heritage with their individual efforts. Ecotourism has flourished here successfully. Safeguarding intangible heritage is vital not only for local communities but can offer new perspectives for a sustainable future globally. Collaboration between the Indigenous population and cultural institutions is crucial for biodiversity, ecological equilibrium and sustainability. Recognizing Indigenous knowledge along with proper resource management are necessary for a concerted attempt to preserve the natural as well as cultural heritage.

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Indigenous wisdom and entangled histories in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands

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The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, ensconced in the Bay of Bengal of India, stand as an evocative case study resonating with the overarching themes of the Transnational Island Museologies. This archipelago, adorned with unparalleled biodiversity, is home to rich Indigenous cultures and delicate ecosystems. Among the custodians of this natural and cultural wealth are the tribal communities whose existence embodies centuries-old connections to the land, sea, and wildlife, encapsulating a reservoir of profound traditional knowledge. The islands serve as the habitat for some of the world's most endangered Indigenous tribes, including the Central African Negrito tribes such as the Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa, and Sentinelese, as well as two mongoloid tribal communities known as the Nicobarese and Shompen. These communities exhibit varying degrees of interaction with the outside world, ranging from extreme isolation to assimilation. Within the realm of Indigenous knowledge, these communities offer insights into sustainable living and ecological wisdom. However, modernisation and environmental changes pose a threat to this heritage. Collaborative efforts between museums, scholars, and local authorities have been made in order to document and preserve this knowledge, fostering intergenerational transmission.

Exploring hidden stories and entangled spaces, the islands' museums delve into narratives shaped by colonialism and cultural interactions. They challenge mainstream historical accounts, creating platforms for dialogue and understanding. By showcasing these narratives, the museums contribute to discussions on ecological challenges and cultural resilience in the face of modernisation.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands: A historical perspective

The islands possess a vibrant history tracing back to ancient eras. Rajendra I during the Chola Dynasty employed these islands as a naval stronghold for his campaign against the Sriwijaya Empire in Indonesia. Referred to as Ma-Nakkavaram by the Cholas in 1050 AD, Marco Polo later mentioned the island as 'Necuverann' during the 12th to 13th centuries (Temple, 1994). European explorers, including Portuguese, Dutch, and British sailors, explored the islands in the 16th and 17th centuries but did not establish permanent settlements due to rugged terrain and hostility from Indigenous tribes (Temple, 1994).

The British East India Company established a presence in the 18th century, eventually turning the islands into a penal colony for Indian freedom fighters and political prisoners in the 19th century. The Indigenous population suffered a drastic decline due to contact with colonisers, leading to the spread of diseases. During World War II, the islands were occupied by the Japanese, who used them as a strategic base (South Andaman District Administration, n.d.). After India gained independence in 1947, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands became part of the Indian Union, declared a union

territory in 1956. In recent years, the islands have seen development in infrastructure, tourism, and strategic importance due to their location in the Indian Ocean.

Documenting Indigenous artifacts: Past to present

Despite being known to civilisations throughout history, it was the British East India Company that formally documented the artifacts of the Indigenous communities of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, with significant contributions from colonial figures Edward Horace Man, Richard Carnac Temple, and Katherine Sara Tuson (Wintle, 2013). Man and Temple, recognised authorities on the islands' ethnography, worked together as colonial administrators, while Tuson, an anthropologist, was married to one of their colleagues, Edward Francis Tuson (Van der Beek & Vellinga, 2008; Wintle, 2013). Their collections were accessioned into museums such as the Brighton Museum, British Museum, Pitt Rivers Museum, and Horniman Museum in southern England (Wintle, 2013).

Additionally, they also donated artifacts to museums in other countries, such as the Grassi Museum of Ethnology in Leipzig, Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art in Vienna, and the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, highlighting the complex dynamics of power, representation, and cultural exchange within colonial collecting practises (Van der Beek & Vellinga, 2005). These Victorian and Edwardian museum practises, largely unchallenged, continue to obscure Indigenous knowledge and value systems. Today, records from the 19th century remain central to documenting Andamanese and Nicobarese collections, neglecting Indigenous perspectives. Therefore, there was an urgent need to restore Indigenous definitions of value and representation.

Following Indian Independence in 1947, a collaborative effort emerged among organisations, scholars, and local authorities to document and protect Indigenous wisdom in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This led to the establishment of the Andaman and Nicobar Regional Centre of the Anthropological Survey of India in 1951. With a mission to explore the islands' socio-cultural and biological dimensions, the organisation addressed contemporary issues of national importance (Andaman and Nicobar Islands Administration, n.d.). Partnerships between the organisation and Indigenous communities were made to create vibrant spaces honouring their deep connection with the natural environment.

Various museums were subsequently built on the islands, each focusing on distinct themes: Samudrika Naval Marine Museum explores the intersection of marine life and tribal culture; Zoological Survey Museum of Port Blair exhibits exotic specimens like whales, starfish, fossils, and ancient marine skeletons; and Forest Museum showcases the region's abundant forest resources, including wildlife specimens, satinwood artifacts, and timber crafts.

However, it was the Zonal Anthropological Museum in Port Blair, established in 1965, that emerged as a pivotal institution focusing on Indigenous communities. Spanning two floors, the museum featured ethnographic materials, artifacts, photographs, and handicrafts, presenting a wide array of tribes including the Sentinelese, Onge, Jarawa, Great Andamanese, Shompen, and Nicobarese, alongside settlers such as Moplah, Karen, and Ranchiwala (Sircar & Chakravarty, 2018). These displays introduced cultural relativism by offering visitors a deep understanding of the histories, economic endeavours, and social frameworks of these communities.

Case Study: Zonal Anthropological Museum

The dominance of Western museology and heritage preservation methods has led to two concerning issues for Indigenous curation: 1) the worldwide adoption of Western models, and 2) dependence on expert-driven, standardised museum training (Kreps, 2005). These trends risk undermining Indigenous curatorial practises and, ironically, the safeguarding of cultural heritage. Moreover, Müller and Pettersson (2023) argue that Indigenous tourism resources, particularly those providing interpretive experiences for tourists, are limited. Therefore, this significance is heightened in a postcolonial context, where the Zonal Anthropological Museum not only depicts Indigenous peoples but also confronts a history marked by unequal relations, exploitation, violence, and cultural suppression through co-curation with the community.

Numerous displays depict the diverse tribes of the islands, such as models of tribal huts and plantations, boats, traditional weaponry, pottery, coconut or palm tree leaves baskets, ornaments, clothing, as well as paintings and photographs. Notable artifacts, like the Jarawa chest guard and Nicobarese shamanic sculptures, offer a captivating journey into the lives of the Andaman and Nicobar tribes. Moreover, there is a library and research block within the museum holding an assortment of books, documents, and research materials pertinent to the history, culture, and anthropology of the region. Therefore, the museum has become a vibrant “contact zone” where various communities interact, rather than merely a space for displaying isolated, primitive, or disappearing cultures. It serves both educational and empowering purposes for Indigenous communities.

Research, access, and full-fledged co-curation are limited by factors such as dense forest cover, the presence of Indigenous tribes like the Jarawa and Sentinelese – who maintain a traditional lifestyle and historically exhibit hostility towards outsiders – as well as the area’s strategic significance for Indian military and naval intelligence (Reddy, 2009). Despite these challenges, Obed Heunj from West Bay Village, Katchal Island, spearheaded a co-curation project, crafting a full-scale Nicobarese hut for the museum (Wintle, 2013). This hut remains situated within the museum premises, offering visitors the opportunity to step inside and immerse themselves in the lifestyle of the community.

Despite its significant historical value and dedication to preserving indigenous cultures, the Zonal Anthropological Museum faces contemporary challenges. Its traditional static displays and outdated interpretation methods may struggle to engage modern audiences, particularly younger generations who prefer interactive experiences. In conclusion, while the Anthropological Museum plays a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, it must adapt to contemporary challenges. This includes fostering dialogue, collaborating more with Indigenous communities, innovating in exhibition design, and investing in infrastructure and accessibility to remain relevant and impactful.

Conclusion

Engagement encompasses a spectrum of relationships, from placation to perceived empowerment (Onciul, 2015). Arnstein (1969) and Galla (1997) categorise engagement based on power-sharing levels. Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation model includes non-participation, tokenism, and citizen control, indicating that increased community control enhances participation (Arnstein, 1969). Galla proposes participation, strategic partnership, and Indigenous community cultural action as

interaction levels between museums and Indigenous peoples (Galla, 1997). In the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, museums demonstrate elements of both tokenism and participation by consulting tribal communities during development, although the engagement may lack full-fledged participation and co-curation. Tribal communities were involved in offering suggestions and assistance during the museum's creation.

Exploring concealed narratives and intertwined landscapes, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands reveal a multifaceted tale shaped by cultural fusion and historical complexities. As a pivotal junction of colonialism and trade routes, this region bears enduring marks on its shores. The Zonal Anthropological Museum has curated exhibitions and programmes that delve into lesser-known stories, fostering dialogue and understanding among diverse communities and visitors. This case study not only highlights the unique cultural heritage of the islands but also underscores the pivotal role museums play in shaping a comprehensive understanding of island communities in a global context.

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Turtle politics and the Sarawak Museum

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This paper considers the potential of archipelagic museology – forms of museum-making and museum-thinking that arise in response to lived experiences across marine environments. Archipelagic thinking focuses attention on rhizomatic relationality, not only the dynamics between islands and mainlands but how beings, bodies, matter, ideas, technologies and politics have circulated through time and space (Stephens & Martínez-San Miguel, 2020). In doing so, it offers a framework to theorise and understand power, multiplicity and difference. Applying an archipelagic approach to museology, I argue, holds the potential to disrupt not only dominant narratives of a universal human experience but also dominant narratives of nature.

The Sarawak Museum, located in present-day east Malaysia on the island of Borneo, offers a space to understand these dynamics. Sarawak loops into multiple forms of exchange across the Malay Archipelago and beyond, including different kinds of colonialism, extraction and governance of its communities, lands and waters. I focus on the museum's historic engagements with turtles at a specific political juncture as Sarawak was on the cusp of transitioning from a British Crown Colony to incorporation as a state within the Federation of Malaysia in 1963, while simultaneously experiencing the start of vast deforestation that would define its ensuing decades. At this moment, turtles – archipelagic beings in many senses – became an experimental vehicle for the museum to foster relations beneath the shadow of the state.

In March 1963, southwest Sarawak experienced unprecedented flooding. With livelihoods at stake, devotees gathered at a Chinese temple in the capital to pray for relief. In response, a temple deity manifested through an old woman and – to the surprise of many – directly blamed the Sarawak Museum for the flood. Several months earlier, a fisherman had accidentally caught a live river turtle and donated it to the museum, where it had been publicly displayed in a wooden tub. According to the deity, the turtle was in fact the daughter of the Sea Dragon King, and the storm was his divine rage at her captivity. Flood waters threatened to rise further up the hill towards the museum unless the princess was released.

News spread quickly, and various attempts were made to resolve the situation. Local fishermen threatened to break into the museum to rescue the turtle, preferring “to face an irate mortal Curator than the wrath of a deity” and willing to risk jail for the cause (Ong, 1963). Eventually, a deal was struck between the Chinese association and the museum's colonial curator, Tom Harrisson: the turtle was exchanged for three jade buddhas, then taken by speedboat to a temple at a river mouth and released. The rain and floodwaters eventually began to subside (Harrisson, 1963).

The coloniality of nature – the hegemonic understanding and structural framing of “the natural world” – emanates in large part from museum galleries. The history of colonial museums and botanical gardens are deeply entwined with the mass extraction of natural resources. While the

realities of the natural sciences are inevitably more complex, the vision of a single, stable nature – binarised with culture, authorised by secular Science-with-a-capital-S and separated from its communities through well-honed techniques of museum display – has underpinned colonial, postcolonial and corporate extractivism and subsequent ecological and climate crises. It legitimises slower and more diffuse forms of violence that unfold from epistemic and ontological enclosure: of what kinds of knowledges, practices and beings are included within political processes, of whose realities count and whose are excluded.

The Sarawak Museum reopened in 1946 after its closure during the Japanese Occupation (1941-1945), with Sarawak itself now ceded to the British Crown by its previous rulers, a dynastic English family named the Brookes. As incoming curator, Harrison and his staff had inherited the collections, networks, exhibition furniture, methods of display and formal disciplines around which the museum was built. These included its celebrated natural history exhibits, largely created by taxidermists in London who had little practical experience of Sarawak itself. While the separation of nature and culture was never fully airtight, these displays of faunal specimens were broadly recognisable as belonging to a colonial naturalist tradition with its own modes of classification, value systems and ways of looking. With the museum considered the finest in Southeast Asia by the 1960s, Harrison – notoriously, though ambivalently, anticolonial – leveraged Sarawak’s *museum marginality* (Brulon Soares, 2020) as a space from which to challenge colonial museological tendencies and interpretations of Bornean lifeways, and with it, threats posed by colonial and postcolonial extraction practices.

“I imagine the museum as an archipelago”, writes Martinican thinker Édouard Glissant. “It is not a continent but an archipelago ... We must multiply the number of worlds inside the museum” (2012). He contrasts archipelagic thinking with what he described as continental thinking – that which tends towards bounded forms, demands transparency and assumes linearity and coherence. Continents “weigh us down ... Archipelagos are able to diffract, they create diversity and expansiveness, they are spaces of relation that recognize all the infinite details of the real” (2012, p. 20).

Colonial museums and their successors can be understood as largely continental, performing through their exhibitionary approaches what Glissant describes as *grasping* – “a gesture of enclosure, if not appropriation” (1997, p. 192). This serves to stifle and delimit, and in doing so, forecloses possible relations. Archipelagic museology, conversely, refuses such foreclosure, and in holding itself open recognises both the impossibility of standing outside a given situation and the possibility of being changed in relation with it.

Turtles are archipelagic in many ways, stretching associations not only across geographic waters but through the cosmological and ecological worlds of multiple communities. Turtle conservation had been central to the museum’s work since the 1930s and was approached with vigour post-occupation. The museum’s Turtle Board oversaw the monitoring of turtle populations and the turtle egg trade. Revenue from the sale of eggs as a food source was in turn used to support Malay Muslim communities for whom turtles were particularly revered animals. Egg funds were also used to support the annual *semah* ceremony, during which coastal Malay and Indigenous Salako communities would sail to the turtle islands of Talang Talang Besar, Talang Talang Kecil and Satang, to make offerings to sea spirits for prosperous fishing seasons and supplications for the health, fertility and safe return of turtles to the beaches. Conservation programs were established on these

islands, and with the help of international researchers and Sarawakian specialists, museum staff and local communities, the museum dedicated itself to the messy work of experimental conservation. This work included devising methods of hatching eggs, raising hatchlings in the curator's bathtub and developing innovations in tagging systems that remain in use internationally to this day.

While increasing turtle numbers was undeniably an end goal, what it took to get there remained open to experimentation. Whether the success of the conservation programme could be attributed to the *semah* was not a question. Instead, as with the Sea Dragon Princess, it became one more set of turtle relations for the museum to engage with.

... knowledge is not so much of place as of movement – over, under and through place. The nature of this problem is essentially mobile, dynamic, continuously changing, almost “infinite”. Today, just behind the point, is a newly tide-placed rock which only he has found, abounding with udang kara, the best sort of crayfish, always selling at well over a dollar a kati. Tomorrow, a storm has taken the rock away. Where has it gone to? Track it a few fathoms... And where are the crayfish? Or is the rock no longer their chosen shape, feed, shadow? Just how much cloud will there be tonight, as the moon comes into its first quarter? Will there be just enough darkness to set the nets and keep the fish from seeing? (Harrisson, 1970, p. 111)

Written in the decades accompanying his turtle research, Harrisson's *The Malays of Southwest Sarawak Before Malaysia*, examines the lives of coastal human communities but persistently veers into the waters around them, towards birds, dolphins, stars, the monsoon and across geological time in what he described as a “socio-ecological study.” The text itself is similarly chaotic, shifting from sociological analysis and data charts to anecdotes and deliberations that simply drift. A rolling list of the mental calculations of local fishermen, for example, includes everything from air temperature, salinity, bait and moon phases to debts, smells, children, tree trunks, shadows and more.

This sprawling prose, as with much of his work, was both praised for its polymathic vision and criticised for its lack of academic (and curatorial) rigour.

On page after page, Harrisson's syntax is either awkward or ambiguous ... Anthropologists will find it particularly frustrating that there is no list of kinship terms. Geographers will be disgusted that Harrisson refers in text to place names which never appear on his maps ... Bad grammar, awkward sentences and utter lack of organisation”. (SMJ, 1970)

Yet, within these ambiguous sentences lay a poetics that shares commonality with archipelagic poetics that have emerged across time from contexts such as the Caribbean and Oceania, drawing inherently from the lived experiences of the rhythms and political realities of the sea that challenge modernity's narratives.

Harrisson's poetics are resolutely ecological – a refusal of the ontological and epistemic exclusions enacted by Euro-American categorisation and formal disciplines. Within it was a willingness to take seriously what he understood as Indigenous philosophies and local sciences. His writings are peppered with *and-and-ands*, in place of the *either/or* impulses of more continental thinking.

These *ands* function as tides do, silting layers of matter upon one another, thickening, shifting over time or withdrawing completely. In this sense, *knowledge not so much of place but of movement* transformed into an archipelagic curatorial methodology.

A 1962 photograph of the Mammals Gallery reveals the impact of turtle engagements on the museum itself. Victorian showcases line the walls with sparse habitat displays relatively untouched since the 1930s. Nestled between the vitrines, however, is a newer open-plan diorama that weaves together multiple turtle worlds created by members of the museum's staff.

Against a painted beach backdrop, sand cascades towards the floor, strewn with marine detritus – coral, seashells, a buoy. Among it, two large taxidermized green turtles are in motion. One lays ping-pong ball eggs into a cross-section of a chamber, her back covered with sand flung up from digging the nest. The other returns to the sea, flipper tracks imprinted in the sand. Behind them is a recreation of the pioneering hatcheries with chicken wire cylinders guarding hatchlings from predators. Above the display, awkwardly wedged between a vitrine and a coconut tree, is the striking black and white flag of the Turtle Board. A white-bellied sea eagle sits among palm leaves atop a second vitrine, and a smattering of small seabirds dangle from the ceiling, supplemented by painted swiftlets receding into the distance.

The exhibit spills uncontainably in all directions, overturning the formalities and divisions fostered by the stark older displays. Turtles ebb and flow through the gallery: a rotating photo display of the hatchling program in the background, a wall featuring museum artist Paul Kuek's sketches of a *semah* drawn in situ, while down the corridor are tanks of living turtles. Tracked in photos across the years, it appears in constant recomposition: a mangrove tree strung with fabric offerings to sea spirits, new pamphlets hanging from the guard rail.

Careening between chaotic improvisation and a carefully informative scene, the exhibit incorporates public donations, the expertise of diverse local communities and several metaphysical realities, from cosmological offerings to international conservation advancements. It begins *par le milieu* – through the middle and with its surroundings – to offer a multiplicity of turtles: not the same animal from multiple angles, but instead layer upon layer of sedimented turtle realities, each as valid as the next. Significantly, the older gallery exhibits were maintained, not overturned or refurbished but worked between and silted upon. As with the museum's turtle conservation work, colonial natural history was not excluded but provincialised alongside local sciences and practices in an ever-unfolding set of turtle understandings: an archipelagic commitment to the inclusion of many worlds.

It was from this assemblage that the Sea Dragon Princess was returned to her father: a cosmic restitution by a colonial institution on the precipice of change. Though a minor gesture in the wider political context, it was significant in terms of its commitment to the entangled practices of both the museum and Sarawak's communities in the face of increasing extraction, habitat loss and threats to lifeways. The museum's archipelagic approach, at least for this moment, offered an alternate vision of political relations grounded in relation and multiplicity.

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Paddling to Onrust: Cultural heritage and ecological development in Onrust historical island, Jakarta, Indonesia

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The Indonesia archipelagic state is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) also confirms this risk. The effects of climate change in coastal areas in a variety of ways are often worsened by unmanaged developments within the areas; sea level rises, for example. It is projected that sea level will rise 40 cm or ± 20 cm by 2050, and it will increase 56 cm or ± 32 cm by 2080. If this trend is true, it is estimated that the average sea level rise will reach ± 40 cm this century (Warsilah, 2021, p. 125).

As the water facing the capital city of Indonesia, Jakarta Bay has an important meaning for the development of Jakarta itself. About 14 km from the mouth of Jakarta there is a cluster of Onrust Islands (Onrust Island, Kelor Island, Cipir Island and Bidadari Island) which, since the 16th century, have existed as resort islands of the Banten Islamic Kingdom. At present, archaeological remains can still be found in this cluster of islands, which is designated as a cultural heritage site and is now in danger of being lost.¹ In addition to sea level rise, the construction of the Jakarta Giant Sea Wall, by reclaiming 17 islands, also threatens Onrust Island (Warsilah et al., 2017, p. 24).

Indeed, archaeological data on artifacts, sites, features and buildings are non-renewable and limited. In terms of archaeological resource management (Carman, 2015), these remains have important values, such as history, science, education, religion, and culture. This is in line with Law No. 11/2010 on Cultural Heritage (article 5). Based on the existing data and facts, how do we protect and develop Onrust Island appropriately with the impact of development that is increasingly ecologically unfriendly?

¹ The regulation regarding the stipulation of Onrust Island was originally the Decree of the Governor of DKI Jakarta No. CB 11/2/16/1972 concerning Onrust Island, Cipir Island, Kelor Island, and Bidadari Island as a protected historical area and then updated through Governor Decree No. 2209 of 2015 concerning the establishment of Onrust, Kelor, Cipir and Bidadari Island Cultural Heritage Areas.

Result and discussion

History of Onrust Island and its surroundings

The Onrust island cluster includes Onrust, Bidadari, Cipir and Kelor. The total delineation area is approximately 553.09 hectares calculated 0.25 miles from the coastline of each other. Naturally, Onrust island cluster often has frequent high waves during the West Monsoon season and tides that cause coastal abrasion, especially on the north, west, and east sides of each island, while the south side is relatively stable. The southern parts of the Onrust island cluster are utilized by Jakarta's coastal community to catch fish using traditional methods, *bagang* and *sero*, made from a series of bamboo or areca nut tree trunks.

In 2002, Governor Decree number 134 of 2002 was issued concerning the Establishment of Organization and Work Procedures of Technical Implementation Units within the Culture and Museum official of Jakarta Special Province. A Technical Implementation Unit (UPT) of the Onrust Archaeological Park was formed, which is to serve the public and visitors as well as organizing, storing, maintaining, caring for, securing and researching collections, demonstrating and maintaining, developing for educational, historical, cultural, recreational, social and economic purposes, both directly and indirectly. The law covers four islands, but in practice it only manages three islands due to Bidadari Island continuing to be managed by a third party (Attahiyat, 2023).

Historically, the Onrust island cluster, before being controlled by the Dutch VOC [the Dutch East India Company] in 1619, was included in the territorial power of the Banten Sultanate (Pradjoko & Utomo, 2013). After being controlled by the Dutch VOC, an army led by Jan Pitzerszoon Coen consolidated its soldiers to attack and burn down the city of Jayakarta. The purpose of colonization was to monopolize spices from the Molucca islands. The Dutch VOC chose Onrust Island because of the lack of control of the Banten Sultanate, making it appear as unoccupied land. Another reason was its geographical proximity to Jayakarta's city. The consolidation of the Dutch VOC army was quite tactical and effective because on May 30, 1619, Jayakarta City was successfully destroyed and controlled by the Dutch VOC (Heuken, 2015; TACB DKI Jakarta Province 2015; Wei, 2015; Attahiyat, 2023).



Figure 1. Martello tower built in 19th century on Kelor Island under threat from abrasion (left) and remains of hajj-quarantine on Onrust Island (right) © Unit Museum Kebaharian Jakarta, 2022)

The Dutch East India government in the mid-19th century changed Onrust island cluster into a naval base and made the waters surrounded by Onrust, Bidadari, Cipir and Kelor Islands a port for its warships. All VOC-period buildings were completely dismantled, and new facilities and infrastructure were built for the purposes of the naval base, including the construction of Martello towers (as lookout towers) on each island. The naval base at Onrust Island did not last long due to the Dutch East India government building a larger naval base in Surabaya and then building Tanjung Priok Port in 1883. The role of the Onrust island cluster as a port and naval base faded, and it was neglected and abandoned. It only received attention in 1933 when the Dutch East India government built hajj and infectious diseases quarantines on Onrust and Cipir islands. Apart from functioning as a hajj-quarantine area, it was also simultaneously used as a prison for political arrestees of Indonesian independence fighters (TACB DKI Jakarta Province, 2015; Attahiyat, 2023).

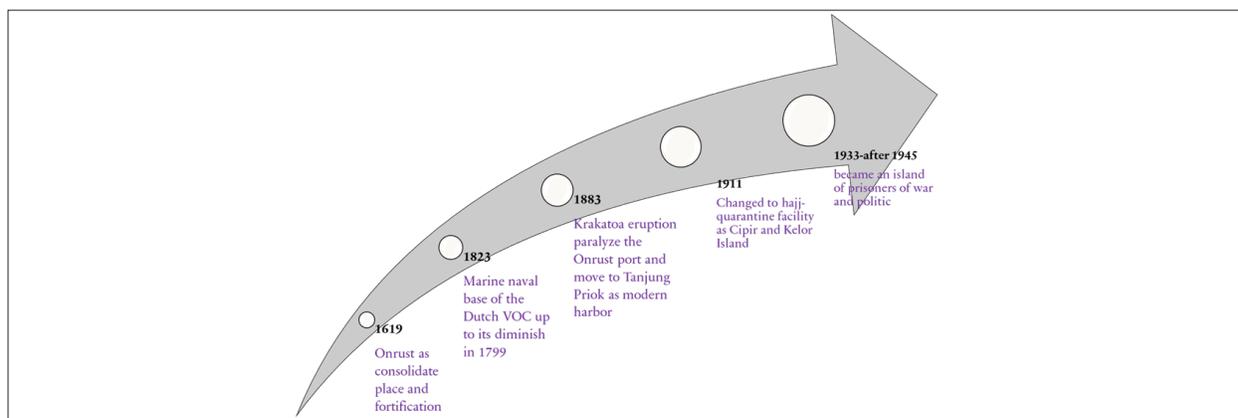


Figure 2. Onrust and surrounded islands timeline

Preservation and ecological development principles

The conservation of the Onrust island cluster carried out by the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government includes protection, development and utilization. The implementation of the protection of cultural heritage has been carried out by the Museum and History Office since 1972. Since 2010, UPT Taman Arkeologi has carried out partial revitalization of Onrust, Cipir and Kelor for the convenience of tourists. The utilization of the Onrust Cultural Heritage Island is more directed towards education and science, but not for Bidadari Island.

In line with the emergence of the ecological crisis, there have been efforts to overcome this imbalance. Environmental problems are not only through the repositioning of the relationship between humans and nature but through the reorientation of values, ethics and norms of life that are then summed up in collective action, as well as the restructuring of social relations between individuals, individuals with groups, groups with groups and between groups and larger organizations (Adiwibowo, 2007).

Ife and Tesoriero (2016) emphasize ecological and community development perspectives with principles of holism, sustainability, diversity, and balance. In accordance with the archaeological context on Onrust island and its surroundings, and along with the conservation and development of tourism in Jakarta, a tentative linkage matrix between archaeological remains and ecological principles can be derived.

Table 1. Tentative correlation between archaeological remains and ecological principles

Ecological principles	Consequences	Archaeological remains in Onrust island cluster					
		Ex hospital	tower structure	ex-hajj quarantine	keijker tower	Dutch tombs	Ex-Japanese prison
Holism	Ecocentrism philosophy	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Respect for life and nature	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Refused linear solution	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Changes	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Conservation	√	√	√	√	√	√
Sustainability	Reduced consumption	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Economy without emphasizing growth	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Constraints on technology development	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Anti-capitalism	√	√	√	√	√	√
Diversity	Appreciate differences	-	-	-	-	-	-
	No single answer to a problem	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Decentralized	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Networking and lateral communication	√	√	√	√	√	√
Equilibrium	Appropriate technology	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Global/local	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Yin/yang	√	√	√	√	√	√
	Gender	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Rights/responsibilities	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Peace and collaboration	-	-	-	-	-	-

(Source: study result, 2024)

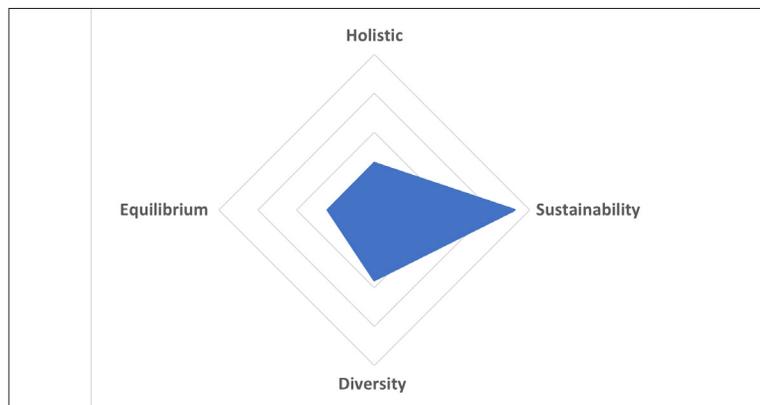


Figure 3. Tentative correlation between archaeological conservation and ecological principles (Source: study result, 2024)

Based on the matrix above, the results are still tentative. The results of this study can be considered as a basis for conservation policies for Onrust Island. In the context of sustainability, the conservation strength of Onrust Island is far ahead, but holism, diversity, and equilibrium principles still need to be developed to not only focus on archaeological conservation but also on the preservation of the island itself from abrasion and reclamation by Jakarta Bay.

Conclusion and advice

The effects of climate change in coastal areas in a variety of ways are often worsened by unmanaged developments within the areas, such as sea level rises. Onrust Island and its surrounding islands in Jakarta Bay, which have existed since the 16th century, are also threatened. As a historical site this has significance for the history of Indonesia and the city of Jakarta, as it was the beginning of Dutch colonialism in Indonesia from the 17th century to the early 20th century .

Archaeological remains on Onrust Island and its surroundings are threatened by sea level rise and development that is considered to have paid insufficient attention to aspects of cultural heritage preservation. In the perspective of ecology and community development, with the principles of holism, sustainability, diversity and balance that can be used as a reference, Onrust island cluster is strong in conservation. However, the holism, diversity, and equilibrium principles still need to be developed with, for example, an approach that not only focuses on archaeological conservation but also preservation of the island from abrasion and reclamation of Jakarta Bay. One proposal that many consider beneficial is the ecomuseum.

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Part III:
Capitalism and Slavery

***Capitalism and Slavery* round table**

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In 2024 we will commemorate the 80th anniversary of the publication of Eric Williams's seminal work *Capitalism and Slavery*. Although originally published in 1944, the global message of the book still resounds in 2024. Ideas developed in the text are increasingly being revived as we try to understand some of the major challenges of our contemporary world. A related area which is subsumed within *Capitalism and Slavery* is the issue of the perspectives from which history has been written, and by extension, the ways in which the stories of the past have been preserved or presented in books, in our museums and in our memories; as well as the ways in which such histories have shaped our contemporary landscapes. The text and its theses therefore fit neatly with the central themes of this conference. The book provides a road map which can be used to unearth hidden stories and extricate entangled economic, social and cultural spaces. *Capitalism and Slavery* thus has a unique place in our attempt to grapple with the issues connected to emerging transnational island museology.

The themes in *Capitalism and Slavery* have been applied to the relationship between the developed and the developing world; to our understanding of development challenges; and to contemporary movements which focus on economic, social and political equity, such as the Black Lives Matter Movement, the Reparation Movement and current discussions about statues and monuments. Building on this, the round table will share related and relevant ideas as espoused in *Capitalism and Slavery* and apply them in discussions which address issues of representation in history and heritage preservation. The text will therefore be positioned as a basis for discussing some of our contemporary challenges and possible pathways forward.

A round table discussion which engages five contributors will share the perspectives in *Capitalism and Slavery*. The panel will include academics as well as persons connected with history and heritage collection, preservation and dissemination. The insights will therefore come from persons actively grappling with the issues outlined above. Emphasis will be placed on how they have used ideas and themes influenced by *Capitalism and Slavery* in their research and related professional activities to better understand and illuminate history and heritage concerns, as well as to engage the wider community.

Panellists

In keeping with the Shared Island Stories, Scotland the Caribbean: Past, Present, Future Project, which focusses on the historical and contemporary connections between these two geographic spaces, the panellists are from institutions in the Caribbean and Scotland. These two geographic areas share a history that spans at least five centuries, and they are today grappling with embracing and positioning this rich story in our current understanding of ourselves and our societies. The training and occupational specialisations of the panellists facilitate constructive discussion as we

grapple with the multifaceted challenge we face today as we try to create more integrated and equitable societies. This of necessity involves rethinking the past; examining its impact through a 2024 lens; and dealing with the practicalities involved in the dissemination of new ideas. They have collectively all been directly involved in discovery, revisioning, education, dissemination and policy formation. Thus, we will share insights about work done in repositories, research conducted, creative methodologies employed, introduction of new historical narratives, challenges of transmission, continued attempts to educate and implications for our contemporary spaces.

Meet the panel

Heather Cateau, Chair, Senior Research Fellow, University of St. Andrews/University of the West Indies, Trinidad – Shared Island Stories: Scotland and the Caribbean.

Henderson Carter, Head, Department of History, University of the West Indies, Barbados – Street Names and Built Landscape.

Lorna Steele-McGinn, Community Engagement Officer, Highland Archive Centre, Inverness, Scotland – Collection and Preservation.

Stephen Mullen, Lecturer, University of Glasgow, Scotland – Economic Connections.

Diana Paton, William Robertson Professor of History, Head of History, University of Edinburgh, Scotland – Teaching and Learning.

Applying *Capitalism and Slavery* in our contemporary spaces

In his conclusion of *Capitalism and Slavery*, Williams warned that, “The ideas built on ... interests (from previous periods) continue long after the interests have been destroyed and work their old mischief, which is more mischievous because the interests to which they correspond no longer exist” (1944, p. 211). It is therefore fitting that we examine this supposition made in 1944 with respect to the interests that benefitted from sugar and enslavement in the Caribbean and Scotland. Several questions arise: Can these interests continue to work their mischief in 2024? If so, it would be particularly worrying because these are ideas from a period which was characterised by coercive labour systems such as enslavement, racialisation based on skin colour, astronomical profit making and skewed development trajectories. This should not only be worrying but should engender a sense of urgency to grapple with the ramifications. Can we identify the various aberrations in 2024? Do we understand where these ideas have come from? Are we correcting them? Or alternatively, are they still working their old mischief and perhaps have become even more mischievous?

We will start with the academic debates that have come to be identified within *Capitalism and Slavery*. This assessment will begin with a discussion of the major themes in the text and their elaboration in ways that are applicable to our communities in 2024. Williams’s theses on the origins of slavery, the extent of the profitability of the slavery system, and the reasons for emancipation will therefore set the foundation for the rest of the round table. Each panellist will also share individual

perspectives on how the text has shaped her/his research interests and professional activities. These have been elaborated in a series of Think Pieces, included here.

The discussion advances through examining the ways in which *Capitalism and Slavery* can be applied to produce a better understanding of our contemporary spaces. This will include sharing perspectives on implications for history, approaches to tangible and intangible heritage, as well as focus on sites and built landscape in both the Caribbean and Scotland/Britain. This will be further enhanced through sharing collaborations and initiatives in which the panellists have been directly involved to share insights with a wider cross section of the public. We will end by exploring the lessons learnt and the ways in which we can ensure more equity and better representation in how we treat with historical narratives, their preservation and their dissemination.

The think pieces

In “Enabling historiography: the responsibility of the archivist as conduit”, Lorna Steele-McGinn shares insight from her position at the frontlines in the Highland Archive Centre, where they are uncovering a wealth of Caribbean material in their collections and deposits. Many of the collections connect the region to African enslavement. She takes us from discovery to access of archival information in an outline which includes collection, appraisal, cataloguing and dissemination. In so doing she positions archives as both a starting point and an end in the journey to uncover the past and shape the future. She draws us into that journey from the vantage point of archival collections which are really at the base of so much of our understanding about the past. She captures the varied difficulties in establishing what can be described as a full or true story. The challenges start from the initial decisions about what is collected and preserved. The material itself is laden with conscious and unconscious bias, not just of the writers and those handling the material, but even of the eras. Thus, she posits that record keeping itself may be considered as act of writing history. McGuinn clearly establishes a power relationship in the nature of the custodial responsibilities of archives and encourages us to think about issues like, “Who polices the future?” and “Who has the right to tell the story?” Her questioning leads to re-envisioning the role of the archivist from a passive guardian to one which involves not just custodial responsibilities but also a more active role in interpretation and engagement. Thus, McGuinn’s contribution takes us back to *Capitalism and Slavery* and Williams’s warning by showing us exactly how old ideas can continue to shape our present. This think piece makes us cognizant that we must all be on our guard against these old “mischiefs” and demonstrates how archives can play a more dynamic role as we try to shape a more inclusive future with a fuller sense of the past.

Stephen Mullen recounts the life of *Capitalism and Slavery* from 1944 to 2024 in “Historiographical afterlives of *Capitalism and Slavery* and the Williams theses”. He demonstrates that historical analyses, mainstream conclusions and accepted truisms about empire, colonies and African enslavement are not static but change over time. Through these changes the narratives in our societies and indeed of our own perspectives are also transformed. Thus, he contends that the book is representative of shifts not only in historiographical theorising, but also societal understanding. Mullen outlines each of Williams’s theses and examines the body of work spawned by the book. In 2024 research calls into question glorious accounts of the British empire which underplayed the extent of the involvement of Britain’s colonies in its economic development that prevailed to the early twentieth

century. These accounts resisted challenges and were supported by strong defences mounted by historians and publishers. These are indeed examples of the “old mischief” that Williams warned would persist without questioning. Today Williams’s theses have undergone resurgence and much of that questioning has taken place in our contemporary period. There is growing support from studies expanding the depth and range of the colonies’ impact on British commercial and industrial development. Mullen also looks specifically at Scotland, where Williams was ignored until even later in the twentieth century. Through his own path breaking research, as well as new databases and studies, the full contribution of the Caribbean in Scottish commerce, institutions and landscapes are only now being revealed. Mullen ends with a call for continuing the movement from Scottish historiographical orthodoxy to truth-seeking, as we grapple with our shared history of empire and African enslavement.

Diana Paton combines her extensive academic experience with her practical involvement in pathbreaking education projects in “Teaching and learning with and through *Capitalism and Slavery*”. She demonstrates changes in action through timely examples of how the text is being incorporated into the education system in Britain. She elaborates through three of Williams’s theses which continue to engage us: the extent of the impact of African enslavement and the colonies on British economic growth; the reasons for emancipation which has two extremes of humanitarianism and economic self-interest; and the debate as to whether economic factors or racism led to the introduction of the slave system. She cautions against counterfactual claims and conservative think tanks and so echoes Williams’s warning about the mischief that can be done by interests will live on hidden within the framework of our societies. Paton gives practical examples from two innovative projects, Teaching Slavery in Scotland and Living Histories of Sugar, and shares lessons learnt from the approaches used. She advocates the importance of paying attention to the methodologies used to connect today’s learners to the past. She calls for not just intellectual or academic approaches, but what she describes as intuitive approaches. She points to the value of material that can be created by teachers and supports community involvement and engagement. She also cautions about the isolation of factors as we develop revised historical perspectives and reminds us that understanding the past requires a multi-layered approach rather than isolation of any one set of factors. For Paton, teaching and learning must be an ongoing process, and *Capitalism and Slavery* continues to provide inspiration.

In our world today one of the more visible and emotive challenges has become how we treat with areas of our built landscape that are signifiers of a past characterised by enslavement, violence and racism. These imperialist symbols of the power and by extension the subjugation of native and forcefully transported groups have existed silently among us as “great objects”, often without thought to their historical significance or impact on the people in the past and present. The question of who determines the signifiers we choose to place in positions of honour or to use as reference points is one that we are grappling with today. They, too, are representative of the old ideas which Williams warned were reflective of “old interests” which continue their “old mischief”. Henderson Carter develops his insights into this theme through his examination of the current context in Barbados in “Street names and built landscape: Scottish colonial imprint on Barbados”. He draws from his research into the shared history of Barbados and Scotland and shares dimensions of Barbados’ Scottish past that are still present in what he describes as the very imprint of Barbados. This legacy involves not only persons of Scottish ancestry but also surnames, place names and

buildings. Drawing from history, he traces the origins of this imprint and questions the reason for its persistence despite independence and current calls for decolonisation and reparations. For Carter however, it is not a simple matter of removal and change. The process must also be used as a tool for public education and for tourism and heritage development. He describes Barbados as a “country museum of tourism”. Thus, he advocates leveraging these shared stories and connections of the past to bring a better understanding of our landscapes as well as our people.

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Enabling historiography: The responsibility of the archivist as conduit

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The question of who writes history, and for whom, is one which has arisen for centuries. All historiography carries with it the conscious or unconscious biases, attitudes, and prejudices not only of its author but of its era and context. Raw material in the form of archives is shaped and used to support the theory, belief, or ideological aim of the writer.

But who has provided that raw material? Who has chosen what records should be kept, where they should be stored, how they should be accessed, and by whom? Is the process of recordkeeping an act of writing history?

Archivists, in both professional and non-professional settings, carry that responsibility and, with it, the risk of sustaining or perpetuating inequalities and attitudes through their decision-making at every stage of the process. It is a responsibility which currently weighs heavily on the profession. Archivists have traditionally been employees of the state or other institutions, their wages paid by those whose decision-making in the past has created some of the very inequalities they now strive to address. Archival theory owes much to the work of Sir Charles Hilary Jenkinson, whose *Manual of Archive Administration* has shaped archival principles since its publication in 1922, but who was employed by a government witnessing, and resisting, the end of the British Empire. His vision of archivists as neutral custodians was therefore idealistic, but his dominance in the field has meant that others who have come with different perspectives, such as that of Caribbean theorist Arthur Schomburg, have been overshadowed (Ishmael, 2018).

This paper will seek to examine the ways in which the entire archival process can play a part in both exposing the past and shaping the future, from the collection of records, through appraisal and cataloguing, to enabling access and active dissemination.

Collecting

Archives cannot tell a complete story. Records have been lost over time, some have been actively destroyed to support or obscure a narrative, some never existed because those who could have created them had no opportunity to do so. Archives cannot be neutral because some voices, some experiences, some demographics, will always dominate. Even the most complete collection will not tell a full story.

The question of where archives are and where they should be is part of this narrative. Many collections exist in official institutions because of historic power imbalances – the coloniser's evidence of "ownership". Archives displaced from their country of creation are common, with questions

arising about legitimate ownership and the responsibilities that come with custodianship. Agostinho (2019) illustrates this in relation to archives from the Danish West Indies/US Virgin Islands.

Archives often strive to increase and diversify the voices represented in their collections, but challenges, both practical and emotional, are faced by those handing over archival material to institutions. To what extent does control of the records mean control of the subject of the records (Bastian, 2002, as cited in Agostinho, 2019, p. 149)? How can those relinquishing that control trust the organisations to whom they are giving it? And with archives often resource-thin, how can they offer confidence that collections will be made accessible before years have passed?

The archival accession process has some elements of reassurance. Ownership of archives does not need to be relinquished – collections can be deposited with an archive rather than gifted – ensuring that some control of the content is retained while the physical records are protected. Postcustodial theory suggests that collections do not even need to be deposited in an archive. Owners and creators can maintain the records themselves with the practical and professional assistance of archivists, enabling the documents to be catalogued and made accessible more quickly but potentially risking the loss of some professional standards and protection. Recognising the power, and therefore the responsibility, that comes with officialdom is the first step towards encouraging confidence in the archival process.

Appraisal

Collections that make their way into an archive face an appraisal process, where records deemed to be of long-term value are retained and those classified as having no further value are destroyed or offered back to the depositor. This process, although governed by the collecting policies and remits of individual organisations, is nevertheless unavoidably subjective. The limit to what a document can tell you is only limited by the questions you ask of it, and it is impossible to predict the questions of the future. Who decides the definition of “no further value”?

Trust has been eroded in the “neutrality” of recordkeepers following the destruction of documents such as the Windrush landing cards,¹ but the reality is that archives cannot keep everything, despite Jenkinson’s belief to the contrary.

It is vital that there is transparency at this stage of the process, with evidence of decisions taken. In the spirit of “who polices the police”, it is also important to ask, “where are the records of the record keepers”?

Cataloguing

It is perhaps in intellectual control that the archivist wields the most power and must be the most hyperaware. The way a collection is structured, its provenance determined and detailed, the way in which it is catalogued, and the words used to describe its contents will all determine the way in

² In 2010 the Home Office destroyed thousands of archival records detailing arrival dates of West Indians to the UK, despite warnings from immigration experts.

which future users will access it, and these decisions are frequently made by those with no direct connection to, or deep understanding of, the subject matter. Given the range of material many archives handle, this is perhaps no surprise.

In working towards culturally sensitive management of collections, it becomes imperative to consult with, and listen to, representatives of those who do have a connection with the subject matter. Not only does this reduce (although not eliminate) the risk of bias or unintentional ignorance, but it goes some way to shifting the power balance from the archivist to the archived.

When cataloguing archives related to Britain's colonial past, the issues are manifold. Outdated and offensive terminology proliferates, but the best way in which to tackle this remains debated. Archivists have a duty to preserve the integrity of the record but also to assist and support the users of that record. There is, of course, no question of altering original documents, but how should those documents be described in finding aids in a way that neither whitewashes the truth of their content nor offends or distresses those looking through finding aids? These decisions have access ramifications, as will be discussed below.

Multiple solutions to the descriptive practices question have been proposed, from asking relevant user groups to create tags for a collection to incorporating both the original wording and an alternate wording in a description, but there is no simple solution. Who should decide which words or phrases are offensive or are likely to be offensive in the future? What should be done with words that are not intrinsically offensive, such as "owner", but which are altered by their context, as in "slave owner". Is it enough to place a content warning at the beginning of collections to advise that material contains outdated wording, or is there a further obligation?

The extensive work of Carissa Chew² and of Alicia Chilcott³, among others, is evidence of the profession's desire to face these issues, but implementing solutions is time-consuming and would frequently have to be done retrospectively to collections which have been catalogued for decades.

Beyond the thorny issue of terminology in collections that deal explicitly with colonialism, there is the question of provenance. Should archivists actively dig into the provenance of record creators to highlight their connections to colonialism even when those connections aren't immediately obvious within the collection? If so, should that ideally be retrospectively applied to all collections held by an institution? Walch (1994, p. 2), with other members of the Working Group on Standards for Archival Description, defines archival description as "the process of capturing, collating, analysing, and organising any information that serves to identify, manage, locate, and interpret the holdings of archival institutions and explain the contexts and records systems from which those holdings were selected", but this presents numerous challenges, as witnessed by the pilot project undertaken to

2 More information about the work of Carissa Chew can be found at <https://carissachew.com/> and <https://culturalheritageterminology.co.uk/>

3 Alicia Chilcott's work on promoting inclusive practice within archives includes developing a series of protocols for describing racially offensive language.

uncover “slave-ownership” within St. Andrews University Special Collections (Buncombe & Prest, 2022).⁴

Many collections were, of course, catalogued prior to the invention of the internet, with its ability to pull up information in seconds, and most archives will simply have neither time nor resource to accomplish this retrospectively, but without doing so, the archive continues to tell half a story.

Access

It is generally acknowledged today that providing access is part of custodial responsibility, and perhaps particularly a responsibility to those represented within a collection – the voiceless part of the provenance. But the word “access”, while suggesting openness, is loaded. It reinforces where power lies and emphasises the fact that the organisation that holds a collection can grant or deny that access.

While the provision of access is increasingly recognized as a significant, even primary component of the custodial obligation, access remains a contested notion and practice within debates on decolonizing archives and colonial heritage. If there is a consensus that documented communities are entitled to facilitated access to the records containing their histories, that access is often implicated in and conditioned by power differentials that complicate, and may undermine, decolonial aspirations. (Agostinho, 2019, p. 151)

In addition, the word “access” has multiple meanings which all need to be considered, from physical access to the building that houses a collection to the ability to read and understand it.

To access archive material related to Britain’s colonial past, that material needs to be catalogued in such a way that it is discoverable. Here the issue of terminology is once again paramount – leave the original wording as the description and you risk people not finding it. Change the wording and you risk rendering the description obsolete over time.

Another access challenge to archivists is that of impact on diverse users. Some, but not all, of those interacting with an archive, or with the finding aid or catalogue, will have a personal connection to the subject matter. They may be using it for one reason but at the same time be feeling a profound personal impact. Users’ experiences with any given document are not universal, and the archivist needs to be aware of the potential for trauma or distress.

Interpretation and engagement

Once a collection is catalogued and made accessible, at least in the traditional sense, what can or should archivists do with it? Is it the archivist’s role to simply act as a passive guardian of the record

⁴ This project sought to cross-reference the St Andrews University Special Collections catalogues against the Legacies of British Slave-ownership database (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>) and met with various challenges in both the process and the practicality.

or, assuming Jenkinson’s vision of neutrality is unachievable, is there a responsibility to actively disseminate the information within archive collections?

If, as would seem likely, neutrality is impossible due to inbuilt systemic processes and structures both historic and current, how can we be sure of the right, culturally sensitive way to interpret archival material and engage diverse audiences? We return to the question which opened this paper – who is writing history and for whom? As a majority white profession, do we have the right to tell this story? Do we have the right not to?

Looking ahead

The responsibility of acting as conduit to the raw material of history is currently a matter of great and passionate discussion within the archive profession. The issues are manifold and systemic – it is not as simple as flagging offensive words. It is a challenge to diversify the profession, (part of the strategic vision of the Archives and Records Association)⁵, to re-examine the nature of custodial responsibility, to embed inclusivity in our professional standards through updating the Archives Accreditation process⁶, and to engage openly and meaningfully with a range of audiences. There are divisions within the sector about how to achieve these ends, and polarised opinions about what is needed.

The Archives and Records Association, the leading professional body for the archive sector in the UK and Ireland, is a signatory to the Heritage Alliance’s Anti-Racism statement, which acknowledges that “our nation’s history and heritage is an invaluable tool in the fight against racism and discrimination”. ARA has developed a Diversity and Inclusion Allies Group to advise the sector on best practices, but for long-term change these discussions will need to be embedded into the education system that shapes the archive profession. If archive and records management courses do not address the issues raised in this paper, how will the next generations of archivists be equipped to engage with them meaningfully?

As the conduits through which many access history, archivists have both the power and responsibility to tackle these questions but need to be educated, resourced, and equipped to do so.

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⁵ Further information about the strategic priorities of the ARA can be found at <https://www.archives.org.uk/news/ara-publishes-its-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-strategic-direction-report>

⁶ Further information about the new focus areas for Archives Accreditation can be seen at (<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/archive-service-accreditation/archive-service-accreditation-10-year-review/>),

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Historiographical afterlives of *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) and the Williams theses

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Trinidadian historian Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) has been described as “perhaps the most influential book written in the twentieth century on the history of slavery” (Morgan, 2008). The book evolved from a doctoral thesis at St Catherine's College, Oxford, in 1938. Multiple publishers in Great Britain initially rejected the manuscript, with Fredric Warburg claiming: “I would never publish such a book, for it would be contrary to the British tradition” (Matera, 2018, 269). The book eventually appeared with the University of North Carolina Press in 1944 and was first published in the UK by André Deutsch 20 years later. When published as Penguin Classic in 2022, *Capitalism and Slavery* became an instant bestseller. This article here outlines why the seminal book retains relevance in the 21st century.

Capitalism and Slavery marked the shift in historiographical understandings, and wider societal perceptions, of the significance of British colonies, and by extension, chattel slavery, to the economic development of Great Britain. Chattel slavery was the economic foundation of the English colonies in North America and the West Indies. English colonisation began c.1603, with chattel slavery practised from 1661. After the Union between Scotland and England in 1707, this became the British Empire. English/British ships trafficked 3.25 million African people into slavery societies in the Americas (historically described as the ‘slave trade’), the second-highest numbers amongst all European colonial powers (Slave Voyages, Estimates). Despite this, glorious narratives of the British Empire's supposed benevolence prevailed by the early 20th century. Williams famously critiqued these approaches by commenting: “British historians wrote almost as if Britain had introduced Negro slavery solely for the satisfaction of abolishing it” (Williams, 1964, 182). Such historiographical accounts effectively minimised Great Britain's economic dependency on the colonies at a time of rapid transformation, thus obscuring the fundamental importance of the Atlantic slavery system to British economic and societal development.

Williams advanced four main arguments in *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), which radically transformed how the relationship between Great Britain and her colonies in the British Atlantic world were viewed. Firstly, Williams argued that “slavery was not born of racism; rather, racism was the consequence of slavery” (Williams, 1944, 7). Secondly, Williams argued that Africa trafficking and plantation slavery were fundamental to the origins of Britain's Industrial Revolution (Williams, 1944, 126-135). A mercantile trade monopoly governed imports and exports between Britain and her colonies. Enslaved people in slavery societies produced commodities – sugar, tobacco and coffee – that were exported to Great Britain as luxuries and foodstuffs. Cotton, another slave-grown product, was spun in mills as textile manufacturing became the leading sector of Britain's industrial transformation, which employed large swathes of the population in a wider British-Atlantic slavery economy. Williams traced the profits accumulated by African traffickers, West India merchants and absentee planters that were invested across many British regions (Williams, 1944, 85-97). Thus,

the “commercial capitalism, slavery and all its works” of the 18th century “helped to create the industrial capitalism of the nineteenth century” (Williams, 1944, 210). For Williams, the effects across Great Britain were dramatic:

By 1750, there was hardly a trading or manufacturing town in England which was not in some way connected with the triangular or direct colonial trade. The profits provided one of the main streams of accumulation of capital in England which financed the Industrial Revolution. (Williams, 1944, 52)

Thirdly, Williams argued that Britain’s Atlantic slavery economy went into terminal decline, in terms of profitability and the wider influence of those involved, after the American Revolution in 1776 as the “center of gravity in the British Empire shifted from the Caribbean sea to the India Ocean” (Williams, 1944, 123). Williams thus advanced, following in the footsteps of mentor Lowell Ragatz, what has become known as “decline thesis”.

Fourthly, Williams argued that the Africa trafficking and plantation slavery in the British West Indies were abolished in 1807 and 1834 respectively for declining economic conditions rather than humanitarian factors. Overall, for Williams, mercantilism and its foundation, chattel slavery, underpinned the development of British industrial capitalism. As British manufacturing became more profitable, with the new industrial class focusing on new markets such as India and Brazil, the unprofitable British West Indies were no longer required. Abolitions in 1807 and 1834 respectively were an economic necessity, rather than an exemplar of the British Empire’s humanitarian benevolence (Williams, 1944, 178-197).

Beginning in the 1960s, historians adopted a sceptical view of Williams’s main argument that Africa trafficking and plantation slavery were central to the British Industrial Revolution. For example, some noted African slave trade voyages came with a great deal of risk and profits were smaller than he estimated, and so could not have financed wider industrialisation. Of course, Williams actually made a broader argument that, in addition to personal profits, British development was influenced by transatlantic trade with slavery societies (especially the Caribbean). However, a seminal paper by Eltis and Engerman (2000) argued that the sugar trade’s influence upon British economic development was limited and therefore the contribution of slavery was negligible. However, this paper has been critiqued for its “straw man” demolition of an argument that Williams did not make: that slavery “caused the Industrial Revolution” (Hall et al., 2014, 29). Nevertheless, commenting in right-wing think tank *History Reclaimed* in December 2023, Rashid J. Griffith (2023) invoked the Eltis/Engerman article, apparently unaware of the dramatic historiographical shift now firmly behind the main Williams thesis.

There is increasing consensus amongst the leading economic historians of Great Britain that slavery and its commerce was a major influence upon British economic development. The Legacies of British Slaveownership projects (LBS) at University College London, and Nicholas Draper in particular, examined British residents who claimed compensation from the British government when plantation slavery was abolished in 1834, producing a database of absentee enslavers in Great Britain. Successive LBS projects (2009-2112; 2013-15) have provided the most significant interventions in the historiographical debates around the Williams theses. Firstly, *Capitalism and*

Slavery was interpreted in a new way, noting that Williams advanced a distinct thesis about the private profits derived from slavery (Hall et al., 2014). Williams was accused of invoking examples of grandiose absentees devoid of analytical context, thus inviting accusations that he over-emphasised the significance of slavery-derived investments relative to wider processes (Williams, 1944, 85-97). The LBS dataset facilitated assessments of representativeness. Secondly, the LBS project advanced a modified Williams thesis: arguing that whilst Williams envisioned Atlantic slavery as central to Britain's 18th-century economic development, these processes continued into the 19th century, which was an important conclusion: Caribbean slavery was profitable across almost the entirety of the British Industrial Revolution era, c.1760-1830 (Draper, 2014, 11). Overall, the LBS team argued that Britain's Atlantic slavery economy was a "significant contributor" to British industry (particularly cotton and railways), and especially commerce, into the 1850s (Hall et al., 2014, 11).

Works by leading economic historians continue to underline the importance of Atlantic commerce and slavery to British development. Joseph Inikori (2002) underlined that wider Atlantic systems had significant multiplier effects on English industrialisation, shipping, and the commercial and financial infrastructure. Rönnbäck (2018) estimated that, rather than being marginal, slavery-associated economic activities represented the equivalent of 11 per cent of Great Britain's eighteenth-century GDP. Zahedieh's (2021) study of the copper industry in England endorsed William's vision of "commercial capitalism", showing how the Atlantic slavery economy underpinned growth in industries apparently unconnected to Africa trafficking and slavery. Berg and Hudson (2021) claimed that Atlantic commerce was a "major causal factor" in the British Industrial Revolution. The authors recently refined this argument, noting that "slavery certainly was formative in the timing and nature of Britain's industrial revolution" (Berg and Hudson, 2023, 12).

The Williams thesis on slavery and industrialisation is now orthodoxy in Scottish historiography. Ignored by almost all historians of Scotland writing in the late 20th century, it is now accepted that Atlantic slavery played a more disproportionate role in Scotland's economic development compared to England, Ireland or Wales (Devine 2015). Hamilton (2005) represented the first explicit endorsement of *Capitalism and Slavery* in a Scottish context. Subsequent works have outlined that Caribbean slavery was central to Scotland's economic development after 1760. Anthony Cooke (2012) noted the significance of West Indian merchant capital. Mullen (2022) mapped the repatriation of wealth by Scots in the West Indies, estimating returns of slavery-derived fortunes worth up to £894 million in modern values between 1784 and 1858. Investigations – such as "Slavery, abolition and the University of Glasgow" (Mullen & Newman, 2018), as well as *Historic Environment Scotland's Properties in care and the British Empire* (Mullen, Mackillop, Driscoll, 2024) – have confirmed the significance of Atlantic slavery and its commerce to Scottish institutions and landscapes. Scotland is now moving from a position of historiographical orthodoxy around the main Williams thesis to institutional truth-seeking and national interpretation related to the legacies of Empire and slavery.

Capitalism and Slavery remains fundamental to major debates around the history and legacies of Atlantic slavery in 21st century Britain. Williams's arguments are now more in favour amongst leading economic historians of Britain's Industrial Revolutions than at any other point since 1944. Once rejected by British publishers, written off by historians of England and ignored by historians of Scotland, it remains the starting point for scholars in the fields of Atlantic world and Caribbean

history, and increasingly for those studying Scottish and English economic change. Eric Williams, and the Williams theses, remain a topic of everyday discussion 80 years after its first publication.

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Teaching and learning with and through *Capitalism and Slavery*

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Capitalism and Slavery is one of a small group of historical texts still widely taught generations after their publication (another is the text by Williams’s fellow Trinidadian, C.L.R. James’s *The Black Jacobins*). It is taught at university level, including in my own undergraduate and postgraduate courses. In schools, at least in the UK, the educational system with which I’m most familiar, students are less likely to engage directly with Williams’s prose, but they are exposed to his ideas through two debates that remain central to the way in which the subject is taught: the question of the extent to which the Atlantic slave system contributed to the development of British capitalism and the industrial revolution, and the discussion of the relationship between economic self-interest and humanitarianism in leading to the eventual abolition of the slave trade and slavery. Indeed, the latter debate forms a core part of the Scottish Qualifications Authority course on The Atlantic Slave Trade 1770-1707, taught to 15- and 16-year-olds studying history across Scotland. A typical exam question asks pupils, “How important were economic circumstances to the eventual success of the abolition campaign?” They are expected, in response, to weigh the economic alongside a range of other factors’ contributions to abolition (of the slave trade) in 1807. These debates – the “Williams debate(s)” – also frequently frame the way Williams is used in university curricula.

These two Williams debates are indeed critically important and continue to generate new historical research. This is perhaps particularly true of the first Williams debate on the contribution of slavery to the industrial revolution. Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson’s recent synthetic book on *Slavery, Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution* is testament to that, as is the recent book of my fellow panellist Stephen Mullen (*The Glasgow sugar aristocracy*), and the publications on the copper industry of my former colleague Nuala Zahedieh.¹ While in some circles of economic history, scholars still claim that the contribution of colonialism was insignificant — that industrialisation would have happened first in Britain anyway — this argument no longer attracts much support beyond very specific quarters of economic historians and the publications of certain conservative think tanks. The counterfactual claim that industrialisation *could and would have happened* even without slavery is, after all, not very relevant in light of the reality that it *did* in fact happen with slavery. In contexts of teaching and learning, the myriad connections between specific British locations, families, and institutions and the Caribbean are particularly valuable, providing tangible connections that students at school and university level can make between places familiar to them and the world of Caribbean slavery. In the Teaching Slavery in Scotland project with which I’ve been involved since 2022, some of the most powerful material produced by schoolteacher participants has explored the connections of Scottish

1 Berg, M. (2023). *Slavery, capitalism and the Industrial Revolution* Polity; Mullen, S. (2022). *The Glasgow sugar aristocracy: Scotland and Caribbean slavery, 1775-1838* University of London Press; Zahedieh, N. (2021). Eric Williams and William Forbes: Copper, colonial markets, and commercial capitalism, *The Economic History Review* 74(3),784–808, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ehr.13050>.

industries such as linen, fishing, sugar refining, and banking to Caribbean slavery.² Similarly, the community performance project Living Histories of Sugar was particularly powerful in the way it connected the history of sugar in the Caribbean to the development of the Scottish sweet tooth.³ That is to say, this is a narrative that makes intuitive as well as intellectual sense to learners because of the tangible connections between the present and the past.

The second Williams debate has, in some ways, moved on, but in ways that again provide renewed appreciation for Williams's work. For a long time, historians' discussions of the causes of British abolition were largely metropolitan-focused and framed within the British Atlantic system. In part they took the lead from Williams's book but also from the much more dominant school of thought to which he was responding, the view that British abolition was achieved primarily as a result of the development of humanitarian principles in Britain, leading to political pressure. In a complicated series of debates that spun through the 1970s and 80s, historians addressed myriad reasons for abolition and emancipation, including Williams's argument that profits from the Caribbean colonies were declining, but also importantly attending to the rise of new working-class publics, the ideological attraction of a binary understanding of slavery, and antislavery as displacement from consideration of harsh forms of exploitation under regimes of wage labour, both in Britain and elsewhere.⁴

More recently greater attention has been paid to some other areas that were anticipated by Williams. The first is attention to the role of enslaved people in bringing about the end of slavery through armed rebellion, which Williams addresses in the penultimate chapter of *Capitalism and Slavery*, in "The slaves and slavery". As he sharply pointed out, "The slaves ... were not prepared to wait for freedom to come to them as a dispensation from above" (Williams, 1967, p. 204). Newer historiography emphasizes that enslaved people's military action — in Haiti, Barbados, Demerara and Jamaica — eventually convinced metropolitan governments that the costs of maintaining slavery were too high, both in terms of literal costs of maintaining a strong military presence in the Caribbean to defend slavery in the colonies and in terms of reputation and prestige (Blackburn, 1988; Fergus, 2013; Matthews, 2006).⁵ This is an important historiographical development, though not a straightforward one; it is easy to oversimplify especially in contexts of teaching and learning.

2 Resources produced by teachers involved in the Teaching Slavery in Scotland project can be seen on the Scottish Association of Teachers of History website, <http://www.sath.org.uk/teaching-slavery-in-scotland-project/> (last accessed 4 March 2024).

3 Living Histories of Sugar, <https://www.sugarhistories.co.uk/> (last accessed 4 March 2024). The project was led by Marisa Wilson and brought together performers from Scotland and the Caribbean. I was involved as historical advisor.

4 Important contributions to this literature include Davis, D. B. (1975). *The problem of slavery in the age of revolution, 1770-1823*. Cornell University Press; Drescher, S. (1986). *Capitalism and antislavery: British mobilization in comparative perspective*. Macmillan; Eltis, D. (1987). *Economic growth and the ending of the Atlantic slave trade*. Oxford University Press; Carrington, S. H. H. (2002). *The sugar industry and the abolition of the slave trade, 1775-1810*. University Press of Florida.

5 For older work that also addressed the theme see Turner, M. (1982). *Slaves and missionaries: The disintegration of Jamaican slave society, 1787-1834*. University of Illinois Press; Hart, R. (1985). *Slaves who abolished slavery*. Institute of Social and Economic Research.

Enslaved people fought back against slavery throughout the centuries of its existence, but their earlier struggles did not lead to the end of slavery or the slave trade. The 1760 war in Jamaica led by Tacky and others went on for months and was brutally suppressed. It led to harsher slave codes and to reflections by people like Edward Long that more white plantation residents were needed in the colonies, but not the end of slavery. Revolutionary antislavery in the Caribbean interacted with a changed political conjuncture in Britain to have long-lasting results. British governments only judged slave rebellion to be too costly because abolitionist campaigners, using the new tools of mass communication available to them, had brought into being a public in Britain that was attentive to what was happening in the colonies. Elizabeth Heyrick's stirring pamphlet *Immediate, not Gradual Abolition*, published in 1824 in the aftermath of the Demerara rebellion and the first to call for immediate emancipation in the period of the revived anti-slavery campaign of the 1820s, is an example (which I use in my own teaching) of the interaction between enslaved people's actions in the Caribbean and those of radical abolitionists in Britain. This is one of many examples of why the isolation of individual factors to explain historical change, as demanded by some forms of history assessment at the school level, can inhibit the development of historical understanding.

Alongside this increasing attention to enslaved people's antislavery mobilisation, Williams also anticipated much greater attention to British ongoing investments in societies dominated by slavery in the era after British abolition, particularly Cuba, Brazil and the United States. Recent and forthcoming work by Chris Evans and Joseph Mulhern develops at greater length the points made by Williams in chapter 10 of *Capitalism and Slavery* where he emphasizes the failure of abolitionists to achieve restrictions on British investment in slavery or ownership of enslaved people beyond British imperial territory and the major investments of Britons in these regions (Mulhern, 2024; Evans, 2013). This is an area that is currently much less attended to in the teaching of the history of slavery in the UK.

Finally, I want to draw attention to another Williams debate that gets less attention in the current moment than the other two. Williams argues that "Slavery was not born of racism; rather, racism was the consequence of slavery" (William, 1967, p. 7). In de-emphasizing racism, Williams's claim is less in tune with contemporary political directions than are some of his other arguments. More importantly — and perhaps relatedly — many aspects of recent (and some less recent) scholarship suggest that Williams's claim here was too bold. To name a few: David Eltis's (2000) emphasis on the 'enslavability' of Africans to Europeans and the non-enslavability of Europeans; Jennifer Morgan's (2021) tracking of racism in some of the earliest encounters between Europeans and Africans; Cedric Robinson's (1983) suggestion that the roots of racism can be found in European culture from medieval times; Michael Guasco's (2014) recognition that British slavery drew heavily on its encounters with Iberian slavery, which were themselves deeply rooted in the racializing process of the *Reconquista*; and Hannah Barker's (2019) emphasis that the slave trade in the Mediterranean, which was another precursor of Atlantic slavery, was built on othering of enslaved people from across the Black Sea. All these flows of scholarship emphasise that racism was there from the beginning and contributed to the emergence of the enslavement of Africans as the dominant labour form in Britain's American colonies.

Despite this, Williams's emphasis on the importance of white indentured and convict labour as a predecessor and parallel to slavery — which forms an important part of the evidence he provides

for his claim about the priority of slavery rather than racism — is well taken. It is important to note here that neither Williams nor current historians argue that indenture was equivalent to enslavement. Rather, as Simon Newman among others have emphasized, aspects of the treatment of indentured workers cleared the way for British comfort with enslavement and the violence and brutality it entailed (Newman, 2013). Historical thinking requires understanding of the interaction of different aspects of the past rather than the isolation of one as preeminent.

As I hope this summary has shown, *Capitalism and Slavery* is a rich text that goes beyond a singular Williams thesis, providing ongoing stimulation for historical debate on multiple levels. The opportunities to use the text in teaching and learning today remain substantial. I look forward to further discussion at the conference in June.

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Street names and built landscape: Scottish colonial imprint on Barbados

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There are times when a visitor to Barbados takes a cool afternoon drive through the north-eastern region of Barbados, gazing at the spectacularly eroded landscape, ravines, terraces and streams. What they observe is the enduring Scottish colonial imprint. As they follow the road from Bathsheba through Newcastle and Consett Bay, they are likely to see the descendants of the Scottish and Irish indentured labourers known as Redlegs. As the coach moves out of the Scotland District into the St George Valley and Christ Church ridge, they will see place names such as Arthur Seat and Bannatyne. The tour enters Bridgetown where the visitor takes a tour of Bethel Methodist church and the Barbados Museum, where Scottish names are emblazoned on the red bricks of these buildings. As the tour guide mentions surnames such as Boyce and Cleland, that curious visitor would have been immersed in the Scottish colonial imprint.

This paper has two objectives. First, it discusses the origins, nature and persistence of this imprint, especially considering Barbados's move to independence in 1966 and republicanism in 2021. Second, against the background of decolonization and a strident call for reparations, the paper explores how that imprint could be embraced as a strong "teaching point" on the impact of British colonialism for heritage tourism. My central thesis is that the existing colonial imprint should be perceived not merely as a negative throw back of British colonialism but as a "country museum of colonialism," which can be a critical plank of heritage tourism. Jamaica has a strong imperial heritage consisting of Great Houses, and the authorities have determined that such colonial relics must not be torn down or left to rot but commercially exploited in what is termed "dark tourism" (Simpson, 2024). But this tourism is not merely about Great Houses, windmills and burial grounds; it is about the captivating, authentic stories drawn from historical research that transport the visitor back in time to bring understanding to the present landscape.

The role of the Scottish settlers and indentured servants in the British Caribbean has been well documented in Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* (2005/1944). The first appointed proprietor of Barbados was Sir James Hay, the first Earl of Carlisle, who, in July 1627, obtained a grant of the Caribbean islands including Barbados. He organised the production, labour and capital and paid the Crown 10% of the earnings of the colonies. In Barbados, a prominent bay is named after him, and Carlisle Bay became the island's principal port from 1627 to 1961. It is now a haven for pleasure craft and water sports. Further into the city itself, Carlisle House stands as a sentinel, guarding the entrance of the Careenage. Many of the Scottish settlers who came established small farms, hired indentured servants and used African enslaved labour to cultivate these plots that would later produce sugar, molasses and rum. For example, David Dobson has shown that in 1679, James Alexander, militiaman in St Philip, owned 100 acres, employing two servants and enslaved Africans. Andrew Boyce, using a 12 acre-plot, employed three slaves in St Lucy in 1678. The surname Boyce is still a popular name in the parish today. Col William Cleland, also of Scotland, served as an

assemblyman in 1699, and while this is not a popular surname, there is a plantation in the parish of St Peter/St Andrew which carries the name (Dobson, 1989).

Dobson's research reveals the origin and nature of this system of indentured servitude. William Dundas, described as a "time-expired indentured servant" emigrated from Barbados to Virginia August 1679. So too George Gordon, also "time expired", emigrated to Carolina in August 1679 (Dobson, 1989). Yet many stayed in the country and are now known as the Redlegs, or poor whites, because of their sun-burned legs. Undoubtedly, these Scottish migrants (settlers and servants) were the ones to append place names such as Arthur Seat, Bannatyne, Moncrieffe, Castle Grant, Inch Marlow and Rouen (Marshall, 2016).

The merchant ships arriving from Glasgow were loaded with red bricks or ballast bricks, designed to stabilise vessels on the outward voyage to the Caribbean. There was no need to return to Europe with these bricks, as ships arrived in Europe laden with colonial produce. Thus, most of Bridgetown's stone buildings were constructed with red bricks, some carrying Scottish manufacturing names.

The Scottish imprint on the landscape is even more pronounced in the hilly north-eastern section of the island, first called Scotland and now called the Scotland District. This area, characterised by hills as high as 1000 feet, deep ravines and gullies, accounts for one-seventh of Barbados. The long history of erosion and land slippage have created some pulsating stories. For instance, in 1901, a small plantation mill at Breedy's plantation disappeared during the flood and landside of that year only to reappear during the widespread flooding in 1938, then disappear again (Marshall, 2016).

In 1966, as Barbados moved slowly to independence and achieved it, there was no significant rupturing of the colonial imprint. The national flag proudly displayed a British emblem, the trident (albeit broken), and it is not by accident that the day chosen for this momentous break with colonialism was November 30, St Andrew's Day. Even as Barbados was well entrenched as an independent country and had the chance to rename certain roads, it did not. The case in point is the recent naming of Fusilier Road at Gun Hill, St George, where a Scottish regiment had taken up residence. The sign reads: "Fusilier Road. This road was built by the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the twenty-first regiment, during their stay at Gun Hill from September 1862 until February 1863".

Over the last two decades, there have been stringent calls in the former colonies to remove certain colonial names and statues. In Barbados, Trafalgar Square was renamed "Heroes Square" in 1999, and two decades later, the statue of Lord Nelson, which had adorned the site for over 200 years, was removed. A more suitable monument depicting the chains of enslavement, dedicated to the family and the outstanding Barbadians produced from those families, has now taken the place of Lord Nelson. While the Nelson statue was offensive to the sensibilities of the Barbadian people who had been enslaved, British place names in Bridgetown and the rural districts still abound. My argument, therefore, is it would be folly to erase the colonial imprint by renaming all of them. With an economy driven by tourism, the colonial imprint can be used creatively for heritage tourism to demonstrate to locals and visitors alike the nature and impact of the colonial experience or what has been described as "dark tourism".

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