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Archiving Expertise and Aspiring to Heritage

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Resumen

Antropólogas y etnomusicólogos a veces están invitados a asumir los papeles de "expertos" en relación a las políticas públicas de sus campos. Partiendo de trabajo etnográfico sobre los procesos de patrimonialización en Bolivia, este artículo reflexiona sobre la posición de los investigadores de "la cultura" en estos procesos. En Bolivia del siglo XXI, estos procesos han tomado forma a través de leyes que declaran como "patrimonio inmaterial" una sola expresión cultural. Los protagonistas que hacen patrimonio arman "archivos de las aspiraciones" (Appadurai), reuniendo investigaciones de varias fuentes. Este trabajo se enfoca en este nexo entre "la investigación" y un objetivo político-legal o un proyecto de desarrollo. Al tomar en cuenta que ninguna producción de conocimiento está fuera de un cuadro político, se consideran los efectos de lo que Manuela Carneiro Da Cunha llama "el viaje de ida y vuelta" de productos coloniales en la producción de conocimiento experto sobre "la cultura" y en los procesos de patrimonialización. Planteamos que a pesar de que la Convención de UNESCO de 2003 hace campo para que los mismos "portadores culturales" se vuelvan "expertos" de su misma cultura, y a pesar de que el Estado boliviano pretende empujar los procesos descolonizadores, encontramos un mundo de la patrimonialización en lo cual todavía se valora la pericia que se produce a través de viajes inter-étnicos de la cultura.

Palabras clave

Patrimonio inmaterial, investigación, descolonización.

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Abstract

Anthropologists and ethnomusicologists are sometimes invited to take on the role of "experts" in the public policies of their fields of study. Building on ethnographic research into heritage-making processes in Bolivia, this article reflects on the position of "culture" researchers in these processes. In 21st century Bolivia, these processes have taken the form of laws which, one by one, declare cultural expressions as "intangible heritage". The protagonists in heritage-making compile "aspirational archives" (Appadurai) that bring together research from a variety of sources. This essay focuses on this nexus between "research" and a political-legal objective or a development project. Given that no knowledge production can take place outside a political frame, we consider the effects of what Manuela Carneiro Da Cunha calls "the round trip" of colonial products in the production of expertise about "culture" and in the processes of heritage-making. We argue that, although the UNESCO Convention of 2003 (ICH) enables the actual "culture bearers" to become "experts" of their own culture, and despite the intended decolonizing processes driven by the Bolivian State, we find a heritage-making world in which expertise produced through inter-ethnic culture trips is still valued.

Keywords

intangible heritage, research, decolonization.

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Archiving Expertise and Aspiring to Heritage¹

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During our fieldwork on intangible heritage declarations in Bolivia, we often have heard people say something like: “What we need is more research.” Or “We need more funds to do research.” “More research” was seen as the perfect antidote to the multiple problems in heritage politics. In 21st Century Bolivia, and also within a State that has been going through a self-declared “process of change” and decolonization, declarations of intangible heritage have multiplied at several levels of governance. In 2005, Bolivians elected Evo Morales as President and he was hailed as “the first indigenous President” of the country.² In spite of the difficulties that are seen in 2019, as he seeks ways to remain in power, his presidency has marked a decisive moment for the country. To a certain degree, it has represented a rupture with the politics of governing from and for the mestizo elites. The heritage-making fever has increased within this national context of reclaiming indigenous rights and also in this moment of making constitutional, legal, and social changes.

Heritage-making activities in “the process of change” have taken shape through laws that declare as “intangible cultural heritage” a single dance or specific genre of music. In general, these laws contain one or two concise articles that name and declare the expression as heritage, and sometimes they mention a place as the “cradle” or “capital” of the expression. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, established by UNESCO in 2003, has something to do with this fever. However, it would be a mistake to explain this heritage “lawfare” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006: 30) only as a campaign inspired by UNESCO’s proposals. In this article, we focus on the production of expertise that is seen as necessary to satisfy the bureaucratic and legislative practices of heritage making in Bolivia. We ask: what do “research” and “expertise” mean in these contexts?

First, we clarify that the 2003 Convention lends importance to “communities, groups, and individuals” and attempts to assign expertise to the actual culture “bearers” (Blake 2009). In contrast, under the World Heritage Convention of 1972, expertise was sought among academics. One thing caught our attention here. In spite of the fact that expertise in intangible cultural heritage is supposed to come from the culture bearing communities, in our fieldwork on heritage declarations, we often heard demands for “more research” that assumed such research might come from experts outside the community. The protagonists of these processes seek advice from the supposed “experts” from outside “the community” or from academic worlds. Sometimes these practices have a very instrumental purpose: to prove a heritage claim, to help promulgate a law, or to justify the funding of a development project.

The protagonists of these cases prepare a dossier of research about the given music or dance expression. The ideal “case file”—a term used by heritage technicians in Bolivia’s Ministry of Cultures and Tourism—includes an explanatory justification (including a substantial section of research), the proposed articles for the law, and evidence that the communities related to the expression have participated in the process. For national-level declarations, the dossier is sent to the Chamber of

¹ The authors acknowledge a collaborative research fellowship of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS 2015), which made possible this research. This article is part of a broader ethnographic project on the fever of heritage making in Bolivia.

² There are many debates over this classification of Morales, and for the moment, we leave them out of this work.

Deputies and to the desks of the Ministry of Cultures' technicians, where these employees have to decide if the case is "viable" or "not viable." If this evaluation is favourable, the case is presented and voted upon in a plenary session of the Chamber of Deputies, and then of the Senate. After success in these bureaucratic and political processes—at whatever level: national, departmental, provincial, etc.—the research dossier can disappear easily in the disorganized mountains of institutional documents. For example, one heritage-making protagonist we interviewed spoke of how a detailed research project had been undertaken about a dance character called the *ch'uta*. He presented the heritage-claiming community, whose oral histories were collected in the resulting written document, as the source of expertise on this cultural expression. Our interlocutor explained that he had not kept a copy of the community's work for himself, but assured us that the document was lodged in the office where the heritage proposal had been submitted. However, in this particular case, this office no longer exists, since the government changes that came with the 2009 new Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia and with the subsequent law of autonomies in 2010 (Law 031). According to this man, the community conducted research; but it would be difficult if not impossible to find a copy of the work, after the more pressing goal of heritage making had been achieved.

The concept of the archive becomes useful to us in an analysis of these desires to access different kinds of expertise. We borrow from Arjun Appadurai the concept of the "archive of aspirations," in other words, the archive not as focussed on what was, but rather the archive as focussed on what could be (2003: 24).³ In the case of the *ch'uta*, the archive of aspirations served the politics of heritage declaration, and then it disappeared into the bureaucratic matrix. This example demonstrates the analytical closure that accompanies research completed in the service of heritage making, and it is somewhat similar to the "analytical closure" that activist anthropology demands (Hale 2006). In another field, that of "security studies," Daniel Goldstein shows how it is expected that experts give definitive facts about culture; such facts support those who work in planning; however, at the same time, it is expected that these facts are presented without complexities (2010:132). The expertise about culture that supports heritage-making processes, in a similar way, tends to be preferred as facts without ambiguities, interpretations with analytical closure. And therein lies the problem, because many academic analyses today are filled with complexities and resistant to analytical closure.

We start from the idea that heritage is something that has to be *made* (Prats 1998:63; Bendix 2009:255; Kuutma 2012:24). With this statement, we do not want to say that heritage does not exist. Rather, we want to recognize that heritage is a social fact. Following the ideas of Bruno Latour of reassembling the social (2005), we want to reassemble heritage: we follow the processes through which something is transformed into heritage. Following several authors, we want to emphasize the difference between heritage and culture. José Luis García wrote about the difference between "culture as heritage" and "cultural heritage," where the latter becomes something of a cultural resource (1998:19). Here one brings in meta levels of culture. In this way, cultural heritage is a metaphor for culture, and as such it is something "metacultural" (García García 1998:15; also see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). Heritage studies also constitute a "metalanguage" about culture (García Canclini 1999:33).

³ Appadurai attributes this new idea of the archive to Foucault who "destroyed the innocence of the archive and forced us to ask about the designs through which all traces are produced" (Appadurai 2003: 16).

Here, we focus on the role of research and expertise in these processes. We ask: How do protagonists of heritage making use research as they pursue their political objectives? How do some heritage-making projects fail, when the proposed research is never conducted? Here, we consider “failure” in a limited sense, as the inability to secure the promulgated declaratory law as desired, even as we recognize the potentially positive outcomes of many activities that may have been organized along the way. First, we will address briefly the distinct types of expertise in Bolivia. Then we will consider the archive and the expert in relation to heritage making in Bolivia. Next, we follow a case in which funds were made available for a research project that never was conducted. We argue that the general call for “more research” imposes on supposed “experts” specific hopes, although sometimes the hopes are assigned to these experts’ written works that can live quite apart from their authors. Written texts of anthropologists and ethnomusicologists can be used to pass a declaratory law of heritage or to advance a development project. We argue that in spite of the 2003 UNESCO Convention that makes room for the “culture bearers” to become “experts” of their own culture, and even though the Bolivian State professes to push decolonizing processes, we encounter a world of heritage making in which the most valued expertise is still produced in the inter-ethnic travel – away from the “community of culture bearers” - that colonialism produces (see Carneiro da Cunha 2009).⁴

Experts and Hierarchies in Expertise

Who are the experts in world heritage regimes? In summary form, under the Convention of intangible heritage, the local communities produce expertise about their own culture; members of the community are their own experts. Of course, a key question in these debates remains: Who makes up the community? Moreover, the Convention states that heritage-making cases should be led by “communities, groups, or individuals”. That small phrase opens many possibilities. However, these ideas of expertise “from below,” as conceptualized in the 2003 Convention, contrast with the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The World Heritage Convention (1972) was organized through what is now critiqued as the “authorized heritage discourse” that relied on formal experts from the world’s academic communities, many coming from the disciplines of archaeology, architecture, and art history (Smith and Waterton 2009: 290-291). In spite of the official framing of intangible heritage, in which expertise supposedly comes from below and emerges “from the collective subject” (García García 1998: 19), in practice, heritage making still references academic experts, or at least their written works. But here, expertise often comes from anthropology, ethnomusicology, sociology, or linguistics.

Today, at multiple levels of Bolivian society, the protagonists of heritage making draw on academic research to build their cases for declaratory heritage laws.⁵ Absence of research can be given as a reason to throw out a heritage bill, or to cast doubt on one project that is in competition with another. Sometimes research is imagined as already existing, as folkloric, historic, anthropological, sociological, linguistic or archaeological studies. One only awaits its donation by foreign researchers. Or one hopes that the results of Bolivia’s own expert researchers will be broadcast more widely. Research by self-taught writers sometimes is used in declaratory heritage

⁴ To see expertise in culture bearers is a potentially decolonizing strategy. It also may keep congress members from declaring heritage on a whim. However, in general this expertise emerges in the round-trip travel through which expressions of culture become “culture” in quotation marks (Carneiro da Cunha 2009).

⁵ At first, the explanatory memorandum supported by research was not seen as so important. Now, after about 2012, the Ministry of Cultures and Tourism--seen as one of the most important guardians in these processes--evaluates each proposal for heritage at the national level and definitely considers research as presented in the case file.

processes in Bolivia. In spite of the fact that such writers often are excluded from academic prestige systems (see Malcomson 2014: 225), the publications of such authors lend “expert” level status, to heritage making, sometimes because of the given author’s artistic trajectory (e.g. Cavour Aramayo 1994). Additionally, the circulation of the published works of these self-made authors often far outstrips that of academic researchers, whose books rarely exceed print runs of 500 copies or rarely enter a second edition. For example, *La Danza Folklórica de Bolivia* by Antonio Paredes Candia has been published in several editions (first edition in 1966, third edition in 1991). Similarly, *El Charango: su vida, costumbre y desventuras* by the well-known musician, Ernesto Cavour Aramayo, has appeared in multiple editions (first edition in 1980, fifth edition in 2010).

Motivated by a sense of regional competition, some heritage-making protagonists conduct their own research (see Cusicanqui 2009). One of our interlocutors saw this competition as a welcome and vital stimulus. For example, according to Freddy Maidana—the author of the books *Taraquna Cuna de la Morenada* (2004) and *La Danza de los Caporales* (2011)—the debates around the origins of several regional music and dance forms have motivated many aficionados to undertake research and publish their results. Maidana lamented that, with the increase in national concerns about Peru’s perceived appropriation of Bolivian heritage, the number of regional heritage disputes had decreased, along with the research and publications that emerged from these processes. Who are these regional aficionado researchers and what relation do they have with the “culture bearers”? In many of the cases we have studied, these aficionado researchers are not the bearers of the culture about which they write. Additionally, some heritage-making protagonists distance themselves from the concept of “expert,” presenting themselves as mere “onlookers” – literally “people with curiosity” (*curiosos*).

To summarize, in the heritage making of the decolonizing State, we continue to see a value assigned to the expert, or at least to the expertise (potentially without an author) that seems to come from someplace “outside.” Sometimes, such value comes from the stand-alone text to which Bolivian protagonists give new instrumental life, as they construct aspirational archives. This can be something quite different from the expertise that academics themselves might perform. E. Summerson Carr writes that expertise is not something that one has, but rather something that one does (2010: 18). Yet, in our work, we see how research in textual forms has been taken up by heritage-makers who may demonstrate little interest in drawing from the value regimes of an academic world. They remake academic sources in the service of another expertise that is then represented in archives that aspire to promulgate new heritage laws.

Assembling Archives for the Decolonizing State

To think ethnographically about this general call to do research, we consider the conceptualizations of the archive and its significance within the Bolivian State, which has been undergoing a self-declared “process of change.” If the archive has carried much weight in relation to colonial and state administration (Featherstone 2006: 591-592; Stoler 2009: 29), what role does the archive play within a State that claims to be going through a process of decolonization?

The archive appears in many guises in our work. Appadurai already suggested that the UNESCO heritage list is like an archive (2003: 15). Such an archive is managed through a logic of selection that identifies “the representative” or that which needs “safeguarding.” However, critical approaches to the archive have opened up metaphorical perspectives whereby the archive is no longer seen only as a place to store documents that are important for governing. If the 19th Century archive was seen as a place where national history could be narrated “as it was” (Featherstone 2006:

592), today's archive has ceased to be merely a place to store sacred documents for the rituals of nationalism. Nor is the archive a depository of facts waiting to be revealed and placed in a narrative by the persistent historian. In this critical perspective, the archive has been let loose. In the words of Ann Stoler, the "archive-as-source" has been replaced by the "archive-as-subject" (2009: 44). In its new aspirational form, the archive is constantly in formation as a political tool. As Mike Featherstone suggests, this opening, even more so in the age of the internet, presents the idea of an archive that is unstable, ephemeral, and in a constant state of change (2006: 593).

The processes of heritage making require inventories of cultural expressions, and in this way, new archives of the nation are created. In our related book project, we show how the actors in these processes assemble their own archives: they publish books of their own studies; they organize a symposium of "experts" on the topic; they write projects to acquire funding for their own NGOs; they prepare reports for the Ministry of Cultures; they organize a museum exhibition of a costume collection; or they musically mark the landscape and territory with the collective memory of indigenous insurrectional heroes (Bigenho and Stobart, n.d.). These activities, many of them future oriented, work to achieve heritage recognitions at distinct governing levels. In some cases, they achieve a declaration of heritage through a law. Sometimes they aspire to much broader political projects of claiming rights and even of forming indigenous districts. However, here we find the archive-as-source has not been replaced by the archive-as-future subject and project (see Stoler 2009). Rather, the two coexist with all of their apparent contradictions. In other words, heritage-making protagonists often expressed a belief in the archive as a source of truth, as something that only needed to be researched so that its secrets would be revealed. At the same time, they proactively elaborated archives—taking advantage of the work of experts—as part of their campaigns to make something heritage.

In April 2016, we --an anthropologist and an ethnomusicologist-- were invited to participate in the panel of "research" that was part of the "Meeting of the Masters and Researchers of the Charango, Cultural Heritage of Bolivia." (The charango is a small plucked-stringed instrument played in many areas of the Andean region.) During multiple internal sessions, we heard people mention many times that they wanted to have a "data bank." Many participants wanted a data bank filled with cultural information about the charango. In general, those who work in heritage making want their archive to contain indisputable proof, or data with "analytical closure," to mention once again the words of Charles Hale (2006). Here, research for heritage making faces similar problematics as those research projects that are linked to activism. According to the work of Charles Hale, the "analytical closure" required of activist research can contradict projects of continuous critical analysis; although we should add that he does not suggest leaving one intellectual project for the other; rather, he suggests looking for theoretical contributions that can emerge precisely by maintaining the tension between critical analysis and activism (Hale 2006: 114). The point here is that the knowledge anthropologists and ethnomusicologists produce does not always translate well to the data that heritage-making protagonists want. The Bolivians who push for a bill that will transform a cultural expression into heritage, in general, want studies that present clearly defined facts; they want something written that evokes a faithful representation of the world they want to transform into heritage.

The Research Project that Never Happened

We present an example of a research project that was funded but that never happened. We detail this case in order to underscore the contradictory motivations and objectives of many different

actors involved in such knowledge production projects. This case emerged following the failure of a heritage-making initiative for a ritual of the Northern Potosí region. Although the “ritual of the tinku (encounter)” was declared “cultural and intangible heritage of the Plurinational State of Bolivia,”⁶ various factors made it unsuitable as a candidate for UNESCO’s representative list. One major obstacle was tinku’s connection with ritual battles; fighting that often leaves participants with serious injuries, or results in fatalities (Platt 1987; Harris 2000; Stobart 2006; Platt 2009; Arnold 2015). As one Bolivian consultant who has worked in Ministries and cultural projects told us, the tinku contradicts other United Nations’ principles, such as the Declaration of Human Rights. In the face of this problem, the heritage-making protagonists who still aspired to this prestigious international list threw their organizing efforts behind an alternative candidate from the Northern Potosí region: women’s singing.⁷ For this article, we focus on the themes that emerged in relation to a Spanish Cooperation-funded research project that was supposed to focus on women’s singing. It should be mentioned that, at the time of this writing, this case of heritage making has not achieved any declaratory status, even within Bolivia—not at municipal, departmental, or national levels.⁸

Several people and institutions were active in this heritage-making campaign, although among them, there were very few women singers of Potosí.⁹ We introduce an institutional protagonist, the Spanish Cooperation in Bolivia. Since the 1990s, the Spanish Cooperation has been working throughout Latin America with a “Program of Heritage for Development” that puts emphasis on a perspective that underscores “the right to culture.” As the Coordinator of this program told us, “we are not a Ministry of Cultures. We are a development agency.” She told us that the Cooperation sees heritage as something that can generate development and “fight against poverty.” Within this perspective, the Coordinator mentioned that the Cooperation wanted to focus not on “touristic products,” but rather on “cultural products.”¹⁰ The well-cited literature that critiques development could guide us here (Ferguson 1990; Escobar 1995). We also could refer to Sarah Radcliffe’s very relevant edited volume about the links between culture and development (2006). In our work, however, we want to maintain the focus on the topic of *research* that many times is at the service of development projects.

The Spanish Cooperation made funds available to contract a team that would conduct research on “feminine singing” in the Potosí region of Bolivia, which included making an inventory and producing a catalogue.¹¹ In the end, the Spanish funds were never spent. Even though the call for a project team was advertised publicly on three occasions, the Spanish Cooperation was unable to recruit a team to conduct the research. In a heritage-making field, where everyone is always complaining about a “lack of research” or where they are calling on state entities to support these initiatives, these funds for research, in the end, were returned to the Spanish Cooperation.

⁶ Bolivia, Law 237, 2012.

⁷ The heritage case of women’s singing involves various protagonists and has a longer trajectory than we have space to present here. We write in greater depth about the case elsewhere (Bigenho and Stobart n.d.).

⁸ For this article, we leave aside questions of gender with respect to processes of heritage making. We develop this theme in the book we are writing (Bigenho and Stobart n.d.).

⁹ This raises questions about the supposed perspective “from below” that the intangible heritage framework proposes; critiques also emerge regarding the very idea of seeking those who truly come “from below” (Hertz 2015).

¹⁰ See the Spanish Embassy in Bolivia, AECID Oficina Técnica de Cooperación, Programa Patrimonio para el desarrollo en Bolivia <http://www.aecid.bo/portal/areas-de-actuacion-e-informacion-integral/patrimonio-para-el-desarrollo/programa-pd-patrimonio-para-el-desarrollo-en-bolivia/> (accessed June 13, 2016).

¹¹ The terms of reference ask for “research and inventory and cataloguing of intangible heritage, taking as a fundamental parameter native indigenous feminine song, which consists of a structural and integral politics for their recognition as something of value.”

We spoke with two people who were contacted about applying to conduct this research. Both individuals have the credentials and experience of academic experts. One is a retired professor of physics at the National University Tomás Frías in Potosi. For years he has studied the acoustic properties of Andean musical instruments. The other is a sociologist-ethnomusicologist-archaeologist who lives in Cochabamba. The two academics received the “terms of reference,” a ten-page document that identified various existing threats to intangible cultural heritage: acculturation, consumerism, the arrival of electricity in the communities that brought with it other media forms, and migration.¹² Media influences were presented in terms that reflected a modernist nostalgia. The document expressed the need to keep foreign influences out of customs.¹³ In locating the imagined project in relation to “decolonization and the fight against globalization,” the document proposed that intangible cultural heritage could “tackle this modern colonizing system.” After stating that, in general, women sing and men play instruments, the document indicated that “the feminine voice” marked a path towards other heritage elements, like poetry, stories, and beliefs. In the following sentence, the universal reference to “man” enters in a shocking way. It states that the study “will strengthen the identity of the Andean man.”

When we spoke with the physics professor about the project, he remembered that the terms of reference seemed unworkable. They required “systematic and scientific research” of all the cultural heritage in Central, Southern, and Southeastern Potosi. With a budget of \$15,000, the project had to be conducted with a team of six people, each person with academic credentials, years of professional experience, and knowledge of Andean culture in the Potosi region. The team would have to include a leader (with a degree in music, anthropology, sociology, cultural heritage management, or social sciences), and “specialists” respectively in the research of ethnomusicology, audio-visual production, marketing, indigenous languages, and law (or cultural legislation).

The document also indicated the desired results of this consulting project, putting emphasis on the high level of accuracy that the inventory and catalogue should demonstrate. The desired results included 22 points that had to be addressed and six different expected “products.” The terms of reference did not ask for anything like *ethnographic research* of women’s singing. Among other things, it called for an inventory of “feminine singing” that could identify what they called the “cultural spots (socio cultural native spaces),” and a “Program of intangible cultural property rights for Potosi Department,” with the requirement to detail which expressions were “original or influenced by the historical context of other people in the Potosi Department.” This part of the document suggests imaginings about the purity of native culture and contamination by other processes, like Spanish colonialism, mestizaje, and temporary migration to Argentina. One required result—or so-called “product”—had to be a proposal for a development project that would include a technical analysis, a financial analysis of the potential to create goods and services, a timeline of implementation, etc. The entire research project, including six products and 22 points, had to be completed in just 120 days. This research was conceptualized in terms of documenting the past or traditions that supposedly are disappearing. The plans for an inventory and catalogue have more in common with 19th Century folklore collection practices than with the way anthropologists and

¹² “Términos de referencia. Investigación e inventariación, catálogo patrimonio intangible canto femenino,” n.d. We note the change of terminology from “women’s singing” to “feminine singing,” which could reflect a lack of knowledge, by those who designed the project, about the debates of “the feminine” and “the feminist.” It could also reflect input from the regionally based singing genres, some of which use the term “feminine” in the marketing of commercial singers (see Sánchez Canedo y Suarez Sánchez 2012).

¹³ Based on fieldwork in the 1990s, Bigenho has provided a critical reading of those who are nostalgic for “lost culture”; in this way she critiqued those who always view indigenous rural communities as threatened by the influences that come from outside; such nostalgic discourses are part of modernity (Bigenho 2002: 139-168).

ethnomusicologists conduct research today. The fact that the document already defined the resulting products in the form of a catalogue and inventory could have discouraged proposals for other more collaborative and/or participatory modalities.¹⁴

In the light of the time period in which it was supposed to be completed, the professor in Potosi came to the conclusion that the project asked for the impossible. He also pointed out that women's singing in Potosi was not just one single thing; all regions had their own songs. This expert was reluctant because the object of study was poorly defined and because the initiative was detailed in such a way that it would be impossible to complete according to the terms of reference. In the words of the anthropologist Annelise Riles, "the temporality of projects" made the experts decide not to take the work; they knew that ethnographic work required a different temporality, one that is always open to the possibility of circling back once again to the same theme (Riles 2006: 63).¹⁵

Conclusions: Decolonizing Research and Expertise

Heritage-making processes reveal what expert knowledge means in a state that claims to be in a process of decolonization. In fact, when the "process of change" started, it seemed as if anyone could become an expert. In the rhetoric, new value was attributed to indigenous knowledges and new legal frameworks were set up to defend the rights of indigenous citizens who had been marginalized in the former Bolivian State. However, we see here certain persistence of and reverence for ethnographic and anthropological knowledge, a call to an expertise that has its own colonial histories. Additionally, this call is made to an imagined anthropology that has little to do with many anthropological studies today. One could say that what is wanted is something like the anthropological research that ruled the days before "The Critique," something from the time when facts about Others were collected and theorized without taking into account the position of the anthropologist and without problematizing the politics and ethics in the processes of representing Others.

Ethnographic research has always implied roundtrip movements between inside and outside perspectives. The anthropologist is imagined as an intermediary or cultural translator—someone who can recognize and reveal the practices and the expertise of communities, groups, and organizations. However, since "the Critique" of the 1980s, many questions exist about the power of anthropologists and about the role they play in the production of knowledge about Others (Marcus and Fischer 1986; Clifford 1988; Rosaldo 1989).

"The critique" that turned the discipline of anthropology upside down in the 1980s does not seem to carry as much weight in 21st century heritage-making processes. The power of indisputable and neutral facts remains in place, even if those facts can come from anywhere. These processes show very instrumental uses of expertise. Expertise of the self-taught person is used as much as that of the "professor," and at times academic work is used without citing any sources and therefore without calling on the supposed academic prestige that could be hefted with such a citation. This economy of values seems to be something else, perhaps an aspect of decolonizing practice. However, in this panorama of research about cultures, the sources of expertise remain disconnected from the "culture bearers," and supposed knowledge from below still has to make inter-ethnic trips in order to become expertise. The 2003 UNESCO Convention aims to return expertise to "those from

¹⁴ One example of such work is seen in a project in Sicalpa, Ecuador, where indigenous songs were recorded by those living in the community; the results circulated in the community in the form of a CD and book with Quichua song lyrics (Pastoral Indígena de Sicalpa 2015).

¹⁵ In the words of Riles, "the temporality of circling back."

below,” a project that has received considerable critique for the essentialisms it implies (Hertz 2015). Similarities may be seen between these desired structures in the field of intangible heritage as delineated by UNESCO and the aspirations of the decolonizing Bolivian State. However, knowledges from below still have to be made into expertise and this transformation still seems to require an inter-ethnic trip (see Carneiro da Cunha 2009). In other words, knowledge of cultural practices must move outside the sphere of the culture bearers in order to acquire value as expertise.

In our fieldwork about heritage-making processes, in many cases, the most useful research was perceived to be that which could establish the characteristics and boundaries of the cultural expression in question, and that which could eliminate ambiguities. For many protagonists, the priorities were: put the historical facts in order, reveal the legitimate owner of the cultural expression (from which nation, region, province, municipality, or people?), and fill a bank with descriptive data about the given cultural expression. In academic research, these kinds of questions tend to be of minor intellectual interest, and are even seen as problematic in and of themselves. Additionally, such questions often stir up anger between citizens in neighbouring countries. For example, which Andean country holds the evidence that shows the earliest existence of the charango instrument in its territory? Heritage-making processes expect that expertise will provide a definitive answer to such weighty questions, and as such, these processes can feed highly nationalistic positions (see Mendivil 2004, 2013).

Anthropological and ethnomusicological research projects do not always translate well to heritage-making projects, ones that are often closely linked with what Riles (via Weber) called “the iron cage of legal instrumentalism” (2006: 54). The reflexivity of anthropological work today can undermine the authority that is expected from an expert (see Riles 2010: 799). However, anthropologists working in Latin America have written much about the dilemmas, as well as the theoretical potential, of remaining in this uncomfortable dance between being an activist and a critical analyst (see Hale 2006; Rappaport 2008). Anthropological work on expertise—as with that which has emerged from ethnographies of sciences, technologies, finance, and law—has reflected on the closeness between the expert subjects and the anthropologist who supposedly studies them; they even suggest that the experts in these cases are not so “other” in relation to the researcher (Holmes and Marcus 2005: 248). We are not convinced that this perspective advances understanding of expertise and the production of knowledges in contexts like those of our research, in a country that aims to be in a process of decolonization. Perhaps more suitable to our conversations is the idea of the anthropologist Manuela Carneiro Da Cunha about “culture” in quotation marks, which is like the colonial product that travels on a roundtrip, and that is heard in a very different register from *culture* without quotation marks (2009). In a Bolivia that aims to decolonize its state, heritage research is about an inter-ethnic space of “culture” in quotation marks. Here, research becomes an instrument that serves the law and/or development projects. Here, everything is a potential input for the aspirational archive. Here, almost everyone has the possibility of becoming an expert. With or without decolonization, however, “the bearers” of these cultures generally continue to occupy the margins of these processes.

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