

CULTURAL HERITAGE: ENTANGLEMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE, CREATIVITY AND PROPERTY II

PREFACE TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE, VOLUME II

This is the second volume of the *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* special issue, presenting a selection of articles arising from two interrelated scholarly events held at the University of Tartu, Estonia, in the summer of 2009. One of them, an interdisciplinary international network and training course entitled “Local Knowledge and Open Borders: Creativity and Heritage”, comprised a session of lectures and seminars covering various perspectives and methodological approaches within heritage studies. This session included the maintenance, celebration and manipulation of cultural heritage in its role of negotiating between creativity and conservation, and featured contributions from both senior and junior scholars from various parts of Europe. Cultural heritage is a value-laden term that implies locality, and yet its categorisation or political implementation is embedded in the globalised world. The other interlinked session convened the SIEF (Société Internationale d’Ethnologie et de Folklore) Working Group on Cultural Heritage and Property, an academic network that analyses the position and meanings of cultural heritage and cultural property at different societal levels in the modern world and its individual nation states. The purpose here was to examine the repercussions of heritage politics and the concurrent influence of tourism on existing practices, and to investigate the negotiated or contested relationships between tangible and intangible heritage from the perspective of the transnational organisations of cultural politics.

The current volume continues the discussion of the particularities of conceptualisation, production and instrumentalisation of cultural heritage; particularities that reflect the legal, organisational or social dimensions present in defining representations, knowledge and repertoires via selective intellectualisation, identification or creative imagination. The analysis of the identification and instrumentalisation process of cultural heritage requires a critical investigation of the making and social dissemination of the knowledge that empowers those communities of interest who seek legitimation and make claims on ownership. The awareness of heritage is epistemologically related to scholarship, presenting a certain way of knowing cultural objects, sites or practices, and involving particular systems of meaning employed by specialists. The processes by which that knowledge is acquired, learned, organised, stored and retrieved, or by which knowledge holders claim authority, need continuous, versatile, reflexive, enquiry. On the other hand, heritage production and cultural policy-making have a

discursive impact on local communities and their cultural expression, as well as on individuals and their repertoires. Cultural heritage results from a process of selection and identification, and yet there are discernible moments of creativity that render potential for contestations.

The following set of contributions presents three points of focus for the discussion of heritage production and its entanglements with metacultural relationships: the legitimation of terminology and concepts; reflexive investigations into museal and archival representations of heritage; and the narration of histories and experience that are, or may be, disseminated within the community or passed on in the process of learning.

In his study, Stefan Groth looks at the issues of intellectual property rights as they are played out in the context of transnational organisations. He explores indigenous communities and their traditional knowledge within the framework of different sociopolitical constellations and power relations, which lead to terminological perspectives of differentiation. In the process of semantic 'othering', language ideologies determine specific meanings and rules of interpretation.

In her article, Anita Vaivade analyses whether the conceptualisation of culture in the international laws protecting persons and property changes an interpretative space into 'intangible cultural heritage'. She seeks a conceptual historical sequence within international law that has led to the existing network of legal concepts that also encompasses intangible heritage.

The contribution by Johannes Müske studies the construction of sonic heritage by taking a critical look at the accumulation of knowledge in sound archives, a process by which various actors participate in ethnographic study. His investigation focuses on the social construction of sonic cultural heritage as a consequence of archival practises involving specific aspects of knowledge production and the identification of intangible heritage.

Marleen Nõmmela investigates the process by which the cooperation of the state, the museum and ethnographers defined the Estonian national costume as heritage in the 1930s. She studies the institution and the individuals involved in the construction of national heritage to reveal the involvement of ethnographic study and national propaganda, which eventually established a knowledge format of authenticity.

Ulf Palmenfelt looks at the elements and mechanisms involved in the process that lead to cultural heritage emerging in the form of narrated local history. He detects dominant units and observes the production of grand narratives via the interplay of individual narratives and communal elements as they negotiate to form agreements, or contest discrepancies, share local symbols or consign less captivating material to oblivion.

Anthony McCann explores the meaning of 'tradition' on a personal level in order to consider it a signpost that points to conversations, communities, and contexts in controversial ways in particular circumstance. He offers a personal-is-political account that opens up analytical opportunities in the search for a substantial sense of learning, relationships and personal tragedy. This piece is boldly exploratory and contributes to testing the tacit norms of scholarly writing, thus bringing a particularly poignant dimension to the notion of creativity within the context of reflections on cultural heritage.

The lectures, seminars and conference sessions at the University of Tartu were hosted by the Institute of Cultural Research and Fine Arts, the Open University, and the Centre of Excellence on Cultural Theory. Financial support was provided by UNESCO via their Partnership Programme, by the EU through the European Regional Development Fund, and by the Estonian Science Foundation, Grant No. 7795.

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REFERENCE

Kuutma, Kristin 2009. Cultural Heritage: An Introduction to the Entanglements of Knowledge, Politics and Property. – *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics*. Vol. 3, No. 2: 5–12.