Curated session individual abstracts form

Session name: Heritage pasts, presents, and futures in Latin America and the Caribbean

Session proposer: Naomi Oosterman

Large abstract (max. 300 words): This panel explores various contestations and negotiations of cultural heritage in Latin America and the Caribbean, foregrounding how pasts are mobilised in present-day struggles and (re)imagined for more just futures. This panel is organised by members of the Latin America and the Caribbean chapter of the ACHS and intends to showcase critical heritage studies from Latin American and Caribbean epistemological and ontological frameworks. The first presentation addresses the reburial and repatriation of human remains, focusing on Indigenous epistemologies and ethical protocols that challenge state-centric archaeological practices and affirm community sovereignty over ancestral bodies. The talk highlights the tensions between scientific institutions, state, and indigenous communities. The second presentation examines how grassroots heritage initiatives in the Netherlands and the Caribbean address colonial legacies and articulate experiences of injustice in postcolonial contexts. Drawing on interviews with grassroots actors, it explores the institutional and societal challenges to advancing justice and the strategies developed to transform heritage into a space for social change. The third presentation examines monuments and social unrest, where the politics of commemoration are understood from enduring colonial and authoritarian power legacies and collective contestations over historical narratives to claim more just narratives in (future) public spaces. Finally, the panel turns to 'atomic heritage' as a cultural phenomenon that was and continues to be experienced in the region of Argentinian Patagonia. Together, the presentations underscore how heritage in the region is an active site of memory, governance, and future-oriented justice. The panel connects to the theme of *Heritage connecting people with the past, present and future/Ki mua, ki muri* by focusing on the enduring colonial and authoritarian legacies that are still present today and require (re)negotiation and (re)imagination to think about, and understand, the future of heritage in the region.

Short abstract (between 100 – 150 words): This panel explores various contestations and negotiations of cultural heritage in Latin America and the Caribbean, foregrounding how pasts are mobilised in present-day struggles and (re)imagined for more just futures. The panel is organised by members of the Latin America and the Caribbean chapter of the ACHS and showcases critical heritage studies from Latin American and Caribbean epistemological and ontological frameworks. By focusing on the shared theme of enduring colonial and authoritarian legacies, the presentations in this panel underscore how heritage in the region was, is, and remains an active site of memory, governance, and future-oriented justice. Topics of foci in this panel are the de-patrimonialisation of ancestral remains, repatriation, uses of heritage in times of social crises, heritage place-making, and grassroots initiatives in negotiating and navigating colonial and authoritarian legacies.

Presenter 1

Name: Patricia Ruth Ayala

Organisation: Universidad de Chile

Position: Assistant Professor

Primary email: ruth.ayala@uchile.cl

Biography (max 50 words): Patricia Ayala is an Assistant Professor at the University of Chile. Her research explores the intersections between Indigenous peoples, archaeologists, and the State, with a particular focus on heritage-making processes and the ethical and political dimensions of archaeology. Drawing on collaborative, Indigenous, and decolonial approaches, she examines collecting, musealisation, repatriation and the reburial of human remains and Indigenous collections.

Presentation title: Ethical Disputes and the De-Patrimonialization of Human Remains: Reflections from the Chilean Case

Summary abstract (minimum 100 words and maximum 150 words): Since the late twentieth century, Indigenous peoples in Chile have articulated demands regarding the scientific and museological treatment of ancestral human remains, generating academic debates, professional codes of ethics, and institutional and community-based protocols. More recently, these demands have been incorporated into Indigenous consultation processes related to a new heritage law in Chile. In this context, the removal of human remains from exhibition, sampling practices, repatriation, and reburial have become central issues within processes of de-patrimonialisation led by Indigenous movements, revealing tensions with state institutions and academic authorities. Drawing on critical heritage studies and decolonial perspectives, in this paper I reflect on these processes and analyse their ethical and political implications for archaeology, museums, and heritage governance in Chile.

Presenter 2

Name: Camila Malig

Organisation: Utrecht University

Position: PhD Candidate

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Biography (max 50 words): PhD candidate at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry at Utrecht University. Her research project 'Negotiating Past and Present-Day Injustices in Cultural Heritage Spaces' examines how colonial legacies are addressed by diverse actors within cultural heritage spaces in the Netherlands and the Caribbean. She co-coordinates the Latin America and the Caribbean chapter of ACHS.

Presentation title: Colonial legacies, heritage, and justice: Grassroots perspectives from the Netherlands and the Caribbean

Summary abstract (minimum 100 words and maximum 150 words):): This presentation addresses the results of the first intervention of my project '*Negotiating Past and Present-Day Injustices in Cultural Heritage Spaces'*, which examines how colonial legacies are addressed by diverse actors within cultural heritage spaces in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and how these efforts can contribute to sustained societal change towards justice. In this first intervention, I interview actors working in grassroots initiatives to explore how injustices are experienced in the continental Netherlands and in the Caribbean islands of Aruba and Bonaire, and understand how questions of justice are articulated in post-imperial and postcolonial contexts. I will delve

on how injustice manifests within the heritage field despite ongoing efforts to address colonial legacies; main institutional and societal challenges to advancing justice; and how grassroots heritage initiatives develop strategies to engage with the legacy of the past and transform heritage into a space through which collective struggles can be articulated.

Presenter 3

Name: Naomi Oosterman

Organisation: Erasmus University Rotterdam

Position: Assistant Professor Cultural Heritage

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Biography (max 50 words): Naomi Oosterman is an Assistant Professor of Cultural Heritage at Erasmus University Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Her research interests are the illicit trade of arts and antiquities (with a particular focus on Latin America), the policing of art and heritage crimes, and contested and colonial heritage.

Presentation title: The plural policing of cultural heritage in Latin America

Summary abstract (minimum 100 words and maximum 150 words): The policing of art and heritage crimes is highly political, and often art and heritage are singularly protected by national heritage laws that apply a universalist approach ("national heritage"), which can reduce heritage that falls out of this particular scope to the margins. Consisting of 30+ interviews with law enforcement agencies, indigenous community initiatives, art dealers, and policy makers in Chile, Argentina, and Rapa Nui, this presentation will contextualise the daily routines and decision-making processes of different stakeholders tasked with the policing, and ultimately protection and preservation, of cultural heritage. The presentation will furthermore discuss how plural policing –the phenomenon of blurring boundaries between public, private, and community actors –attempts to counteract the illicit trade in cultural objects. Underlining this talk is the question of how "difficult" heritage is policed, how various actors negotiate tensions between opposing interpretations of the term 'heritage', and what constitutes 'ownership' in light of policing.