

Research and Intangible Heritage Workshop Summary, by Alex van Stipriaan

30th of November, AWAD conference

Session 1: Identifying the field:

- Different 'historical parties' can share the same physical heritage; however the values and experiences surrounding it, or being part of it are absolutely not the same
- The Aruban example teaches us that – in relation to the rest of the Antilles- at first it seemed that there was not so much mutuality, however, after 20 years of *status aparte* people realize that they share much more with the others than they could think of them.
- We voted for the most favorable heritage term: mutual heritage: 3 votes (it is future oriented); Common heritage: 1 vote (referring to science which we have in common); shared heritage: 7 votes (it does not cover up the inequality in sharing); abstentions: 5.

Recommendations:

- We need international platforms where knowledge, information and material can be exchanged, as well as visiting research groups
- We should be specific about goals of our (research) projects, also in relation to what's in it for the community?
- We have to identify and establish stakeholders and counterparts in/for our projects
- Researchers have to give back results and raw materials to the communities they have researched
- Responsibilities for projects have to be taken on both sides, locally as well as internationally

Session 2: Challenges and pitfalls

- Quite some discussion on authenticity: are there objective standards for authenticity, or is authenticity for the one not the same as for the other.
- We should be careful / critical with helping to legalize 'authentic' claims based on cultural heritage (documents on titles to land etc.)
- Access to knowledge and information is a basic need; language is a problem to be solved
- Accessibility of heritage is often needed, but not always, it can endanger the existence of some heritage too, physically as well as mentally
- Using new media is not a guarantee for the preservation of (oral) heritage. Technology and hardware soon is out dated, material sometimes dissolves
- Identifying the right counterpart in research (projects) is very important, however not easy; take your time stay critical. Use universities and the internet to check.
- Partnerships are crucial

- (Research) money should in a substantial part come from the country itself (say the larger countries); private philanthropy does not exist out of the US.
- To do research you need governmental funding, it is often too far removed from the people to make it attractive for private funds; research can be an offspring of commercial projects, even if it is not at first intended to.
- Research should be done via public entities in order to sustain a guaranteed level of professionalism and to disseminate the results to a large audience.
- Endangered cultural heritage attracts more attention, we should make use of that

Recommendations

- Combine private and public initiatives and activities (cf Antillean Archives: research for third parties)
- Create Friends of... (your institute or project) associations to generate or handle private funding, it is also a way of linking the community to your initiative and v.v.
- Research for education projects also is a way of linking the community to your initiative and v.v. and of stimulating heritage awareness
- Before starting local projects or supporting /joining foreign projects first phrase your own questions, needs and priorities and construct a research protocol. Always have a priority list in stock to refer to.
- Go for equality in joint/mutual/shared/common projects
- Respect local professionals and local methodologies
- Always take care of, as well as build in securities for CONTINUITY
- Awards for excellent research might stimulate, particularly local research

Session 3: towards a mutual future

Recommendations (some of these go for all countries concerned, some go particularly for the poorer and/or smaller ones

- Contact the local government
- Never talk/deal with only one local person, always go for more opinions
- Let the local community profit from your project
- For foreigners: try to speak a bit of local language
- Before going to a foreign country start building a network at home of people from that country, or via internet
- Beware of exploitation
- Don't just walk in wanting to be helped with your (research) project, get in touch in advance
- Make contact with colleagues/relevant institutes/universities in advance
- The larger countries have databases, research guides etc. on the internet (cf Curriculum Lattes in Brazil: c.v.'s of scholars; Aruba's heritage guide)
- What is needed, by some, is training in (old scripture) Dutch. What is needed by all concerned is a guide of do's and don'ts in all kinds of heritage projects as well

as a how to-guide about the research- and institutional culture in every single Awad country. This could be offered in a special section of the Awad web site.