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## STUDIE/ARTICLES

# RETHINKING DIALOGUES IN MUSEUM SPACES: AN AMERINDIAN ETHNOGRAPHIC COLLECTION IN ITALY

PARIDE BOLLETTIN

<https://doi.org/10.5817/MuB2022-2-2>**ABSTRACT/ABSTRAKT:**

This paper presents some challenges for the reorganization of the ethnographic collection hosted at the Centro Studi Americanistici “Circolo Amerindiano” in Perugia, Italy. Since the collection will move to a new site, the possibility to reformulate curatorship and exhibitory narratives arises. Current claims for more inclusive, decolonized, dialogical and participative experiences of museums and exhibitions highlight the importance for contributions from the people that produced and live with the artefacts, images, and other elements constituting the collections. The aim of this paper is to describe some of the difficulties and possible solutions for making such participation effective in a European collection dedicated to Amerindian peoples.

## Nový pohled na muzeum jako prostor pro dialog: italská etnografická sbírka indiánských kultur Ameriky

Příspěvek pojednává o některých problémech spojených s reorganizací etnografické sbírky, která je v současnosti uložena v Centru amerických studií „Circolo Amerindiano“ v italské Perugii. Plánované přestěhování sbírky na nové místo poskytuje možnost nově přeformulovat kurátorské a výstavní narativy. Současné požadavky na vytváření více inkluzivní, dekolonizované,

dialogické a participativní formy muzeí a výstav podtrhují důležitost informací o lidech, kteří artefakty vyrobili a používají je v každodenním životě, obrazových dokumentů a dalších prvků tvořících sbírky. Cílem tohoto příspěvku je představit některé problémy a možná řešení pro zefektivnění této participace na příkladu jedné evropské sbírky věnované indiánským kulturám Ameriky.

**KEYWORDS/KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:**

*Ethnographic collection – Amerindians – Italy – collaboration – participation – challenges etnografická sbírka – indiánské kultury Ameriky – Itálie – spolupráce – participace – problémy*

**Introduction**

Ethnographic museums and collections play an important role in producing critical reflections on possible encounters between diverse socio-bio-cultural experiences.

In recent years, innovative suggestions from these museums and exhibitions have mushroomed throughout the world, with clear impacts on their meanings, their proposals, their engagements and their roles. New and alternative proposals, sensibilities, curatorships and debates are emerging, from “indigenous museums”, such as the Maguta Museum of Ticuna

Amerindian people,<sup>1</sup> to “museums of traditional popular”, such as the ones in Italy,<sup>2</sup> or to museums as spaces of resistance for marginalized people in European cities.<sup>3</sup> Along with these, new challenges for more inclusive and dialogical approaches to exhibitory processes raise questions about the role and functions of exhibitions and collections. As Onciul<sup>4</sup> discusses, an effective collaborative approach should move further the engagement of “natives” in the museum, but it requires to rethink the exhibitory processes beyond the academic and/or professional curatorial perspectives. This claim for alternatives is anchored in a wider and growing panorama of discussions about the decolonization of museums and their exhibitions.

The request for an effective participation moved from previous invisibilized, marginalized and silenced people relates directly to the emergence of new sensibilities

1 OLIVEIRA, João Pacheco de. A refundação do Museu Maguta: etnografia de um protagonismo indígena. In MAGALHÃES, Aline Montenegro and Rafael Zamorano BEZERRA (eds.). *Coleções e colecionadores. A polissemia das práticas*. Rio de Janeiro: Museu Histórico Nacional, 2012, pp. 201–218.

2 PORPORATO, Davide. *Feste e musei. Patrimonio, tecnologie, archivi etnoantropologici*. Torino: Omega, 2007.

3 BADA, Konstantina. Society and Museums Today. Museums ‘from below’? *Urbanities*, 2022, vol. 12, no. 5, pp. 29–42.

4 ONCIUL, Bryony. *Museums, Heritage and Indigenous Voice: Decolonising Engagement*. New York, London: Routledge, 2015.

toward the impacts that museums and exhibitions can have in the production of emancipatory narratives. These sensibilities affect the cultural, linguistic, sensorial, and methodological dimensions of museums approaches both in terms of bureaucracy and exhibitions.<sup>5</sup> This emerging panorama shapes not only museums and exhibitions, but is widely impacting academic and non-academic discussions on methodological, conceptual, ethical and political facets.<sup>6</sup> As claimed by Chakrabarty,<sup>7</sup> this displacement, which enables alternative sensibilities to emerge, should come together with subversive conceptual and material displacements. In this sense, the revision of the canonical knowledge systems and practices should promote reflexive analyses as well as political activisms from the possibilities opened by the revision of ethnic, gender, classes and other vocabularies and forces.<sup>8</sup> Museums and exhibitions focusing on alternative socio-bio-cultural experiences, past and present, such as those defined as “ethnographic”, are particularly affected by this movement. Consequently, they are progressively moving from discourses “about others” to discourses “with others”.<sup>9</sup>

#### A meeting between Tlingit people and curators at the Portland

5 SMITH, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books Ltd, 2012; PRASAD, Anshuman. *Toward Decolonizing Modern Western Structures of Knowledge. In The Routledge Companion to Critical Management Studies*. London: Routledge, 2015, pp. 161–199.

6 KIM, David D. (ed.). *Reframing Postcolonial Studies: Concepts, Methodologies, Scholarly Activisms*. Cham: Springer, 2021.

7 CHAKRABARTY, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcoloniality and the critique of history. Cultural Studies*, 1992, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 337–357.

8 STOLER, Ann Laura. *Duress: Imperial Durabilities In Our Times*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

9 RUSSI, Adriana and Regina ABREU. *Museologia colaborativa: diferentes processos nas relações entre antropólogos, coleções etnográficas e povos indígenas. Revista Horizontes Antropológicos*, 2019, vol. 53, pp. 17–46.

Museum of Art in Oregon stimulated Clifford<sup>10</sup> to define museums as “contact zones” (an idea inspired by Pratt<sup>11</sup>), recognizing as these produce different expectations on involved actors. He emphasised the shifting from museums as a space of collecting for museums “as specific places of transit, intercultural borders, contexts of struggle and communication between discrepant communities”.<sup>12</sup> A different approach that, on its own, creates gaps to be bridged. Diverse strategies can allow this bridging, due to the variability of involved actors, of their memories and experiences, of mobilized temporalities, and so on. In a growing number of cases, the previously “described”, or “represented” people claim for an effective participation in the construction of narratives that are concomitantly about themselves and the ones supposedly just “describing” or “representing”. Some collective efforts present this variety of possibility. Kreps<sup>13</sup> and Karp, Kratz, Szwaja, Ybarra-Frausto<sup>14</sup> among others, are excellent examples of how such variety produces different forms of collaboration, conflicts, dialogues, impasses, renovations, etc. A common dimension of these experiences, as well as of numerous others happening in diverse places and involving different subjects, is an interrogation about the representativity of ethnographic

10 CLIFFORD, James. *Museums as contact zone. In Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, pp. 188–219.

11 PRATT, Mary Louise. *Imperial eyes: travel writing and transculturation*. London, New York: Routledge, 1992.

12 CLIFFORD, James. *Museums as contact zone. In Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 213.

13 KREPS, Christina. *Curatorship as Social Practice. Curator: The Museum Journal*, 2003, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 311–323.

14 *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.

museums when of their attempts to “explain” other socio-bio-cultural experiences. When assuming these spaces as “contact zones”, plural and polyphonic, it is important to be aware that “*contact work in a museum thus goes beyond consultation and sensitivity, though these are very important. It becomes active collaboration and a sharing of authority*”.<sup>15</sup> This note redefines museums as spaces useful as tools for “natives” being recognized as proper actor in the global panorama through the materialities, narratives, visualities, and sensitivities of their experiences.<sup>16</sup>

The recognition of museums and collections as a product of western culture<sup>17</sup> and of the related colonial influence,<sup>18</sup> is unavoidable for effectively bridging the gaps between diverse socio-bio-cultural experiences. The history of collections of Amerindians’ artefacts dates back at the time of the invasion of the Americas, with the constitution of assemblies both in the colonial centres (mostly in Europe) and in the colonized regions.<sup>19</sup> In recent years and with a growing emphasis, however, Amerindians are appropriating of these exhibitory spaces in a movement that some authors define as “indigenization” of

15 CLIFFORD, James. *Museums as contact zone. In Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 210.

16 ATHIAS, Renato. *Museus, objetos etnográficos e pesquisa antropológica: um debate atual. Revista Antropológicas*, 2015, vol. 26, no. 1, pp. 231–250.

17 WU, Dai-Rong. *Cultural Hegemony in the Museum World. In INTERCOM Conference paper* [online]. 2006 [accessed 2022-03-14]. Available from www: <<https://pdfslide.net/documents/cultural-hegemony-in-the-museum-world-intercom-keywords-cultural-colonialism.html?page=4>>.

18 ONCIUL, Bryony. *Museums, Heritage and Indigenous Voice: Decolonising Engagement*. New York, London: Routledge, 2015.

19 RIBEIRO, Berta Gleiser and Lucia Hussak van VELTHEN. *Coleções etnográficas: documentos materiais para a história indígena e a etnologia. In CARNEIRO DA CUNHA, Manuela (ed.). História dos Índios no Brasil*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992, pp. 103–112.

museums.<sup>20</sup> This indigenization of museums and exhibitions assumes diverse forms, from the participation in collaborative curatorship and projects to the organization by indigenous people of their own museums, from the claim for “repatriation” of culturally relevant objects to the elaboration of narratives about the history of artefacts and related interethnic frictions, and so on. This (re)appropriation of museums and collections by Amerindians also shapes the epistemological horizon produced by artefacts, images, videos, and other elements composing collections and museum exhibitions (as well as their archives), toward a more collaborative dimension. Examples of this process in Brazil are numerous, such as the aforementioned Maguta Museum,<sup>21</sup> figured out, organized and managed by the Tikuna Amerindian people. Another is the visit of a Xikrin Amerindians’ delegation to the Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia of the University of São Paulo,<sup>22</sup> or the elaboration of a virtual exposition by the Kamayura Amerindians and the staff of the Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia of the Federal University of Bahia.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile,

these collaborative approaches also influence the exhibitions of Amerindians artefacts outside South America. Barcelos Neto,<sup>24</sup> for example, describes the collaborative constitution of a collection of Wauja artefacts, especially ritual masks, that had been collected specifically, but not exclusively, to create an exhibition at the Museu Nacional de Etnologia of Lisbon.

In this panorama, concomitantly with the emergence of Amerindian protagonism in ethnographic museums and exhibitions, also a new way of discussing “objects” has emerged. Changes in debates on materiality initiated by the work of scholars such as Gell<sup>25</sup> or Appadurai<sup>26</sup> promoted the idea that “objects” are real actors that can influence human experiences. This expansion of the concept of “agency” has sparked debates about how “objects” affect their producers, users, and observers, so enabling the emergence of new social dimensions and embodiments. Such debates have shaped the discussions at both ethnographic and theoretical levels. Regarding the former, for example, see the volume edited by Santos-Granero<sup>27</sup> dedicated to Amerindians’ theories of materiality. The diverse ethnographies composing the book describe objects as having subjective, social and historical

lives, requiring to redefine their materialities and agencies toward the “multiple ways of being a thing in the Amerindian lived world”.<sup>28</sup> Theoretically, such discussion goes beyond the boundaries of ethnographic research and it encouraged innovative research questions on how materialities embody specific cognitive, sensorial, social, and cultural experiences.<sup>29</sup> These movements promote alternative perspectives on core issues in anthropology and museology, such as social organization, belief systems, embodied experience of the world, gender roles, and so on. The tangible experience of such cultural aspects of materiality is also related to the attention given to socio-technical features of the present. This reassessment of material culture and its social and semiotic power has also influenced the way museums and collections are approached. Byrne, Clarke, Harrison and Torrence<sup>30</sup> highlight the importance of focusing the dynamics of collections, both in synchronic and diachronic perspectives, through which it is possible to describe the multiple involved social relations. The multiple dimension of materiality in ethnographic museums and collections shapes light on the biographies of the artefacts and of the collections, especially when these are produced with a direct involvement and collaboration with Amerindians.

Far from considering Amerindians as simple local experts, the new

20 GOMES, Alexandre and Renato ATHIAS. *Coleções etnográficas, museus indígenas e processos museológicos*. Recife: Editora UFPE, 2018; OLIVEIRA, João Pacheco and Rita Cassia MELO SANTOS (eds.). *De acervos coloniais aos museus indígenas: formas de protagonismo e de construção da ilusão museal*. João Pessoa: Editora da Universidade Federal da Paraíba, 2019.

21 OLIVEIRA, João Pacheco. A refundação do Museu Magüta: etnografia de um protagonismo indígena. In MAGALHÃES, Aline Montenegro and Rafael Zamorano BEZERRA (eds.). *Coleções e colecionadores. A polissemia das práticas*. Rio de Janeiro: Museu Histórico Nacional, 2012, pp. 201–218.

22 SILVA, Fabíola Andréa (ed.). *Xikrin. Uma Coleção Etnográfica*. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2010.

23 TROMBONI, Marco, Paride BOLLETTIN and Sidélia TEIXEIRA. Mediações com os índios Kamayurá do Alto Xingu/Amazônia/Brasil no Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia da Universidade Federal da Bahia. In TEIXEIRA, Sidélia, Patrick FRAYSSE and Nathalie SEJALON-DELMAS (eds.). *Mediações científicas potenciais: museus e coleções*

da Universidade Federal da Bahia/Brasil e da Universidade de Toulouse/Paul Sabatier/França. Salvador: Editora da Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2022, pp. 35–54.

24 BARCELOS NETO, Aristóteles. *Visiting the Wauja Indians: Masks and other living objects from an Amazonian collection*. Lisboa: Museu Nacional de Etnologia, 2004.

25 GELL, Alfred. *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

26 APPADURAI, Arjun (ed.). *The social life of things: commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

27 SANTOS-GRANERO, Fernando (ed.). *The Occult Life of Things: Native Amazonian Theories of Materiality and Personhood*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2009.

28 Ibidem, p. 8.

29 GERRITSEN, Anne and Giorgio RIELLO (eds.). *Writing Material Culture History*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015; HENARE, Amiria, Martin HOLBRAAD and Sari WASTELL (eds.). *Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically*. London: Routledge, 2006; MILLER, Peter N. *Cultural Histories of the Material World*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

30 *Unpacking the Collection: Networks of Material and Social Agency in the Museum*. New York: Springer, 2012.

collaborative engagement offers the possibility to rethink curatorship as the assemblage of diverse perspectives about materialities and their dimensions.<sup>31</sup> This is an operation that also requires innovative and interdisciplinary proposals to emerge.<sup>32</sup> In this panorama, in this paper I would like to describe some possibilities offered by the actual conjuncture of a future dislocation of an Italian museum to a new site, the reorganization of the ethnographic collection, and of its public exhibition. This is the ethnographic collection of the Centro Studi Americanistici “Circolo Amerindiano”, which is dedicated to Amerindian people of North-America, Mesoamerica and Southamerica. The focus of my discussion will be on the difficulties for engaging in an effective dialogical and participatory curatorship with Amerindians and on possible strategies to be developed for its realization. Due to the limited space available in a paper, I will concentrate on some of the Amazon Amerindians people and their artefacts hosted in this collection, but I hope that the general discussion will offer suggestions valuable for a wider reflection.

### The Centro Studi Americanistici “Circolo Amerindiano” and the Ethnographic Collection

The Centro Studi Americanistici “Circolo Amerindiano” is a non-profit association whose purpose is to research, divulge and support

31 SILVA, Fabíola and Cesar GORDON. Anthropology in the museum: reflections on the curatorship of the Xikrin Collection. *Vibrant – Virtual Brazilian Anthropology* [online]. 2013, vol. 10, no. 1 [accessed 2022-03-14]. Available from www: <<http://www.vibrant.org.br/issues/v10n1/fabiola-a-silva-cesar-gordon-anthropology-in-the-museum/>>.

32 Nova pesquisa sobre as coleções de Richard Spruce na Amazônia: uma colaboração Brasil – Reino Unido. *Ethnoscientia*, 2018, vol. 3, pp. 01–06.

the peoples and cultures that inhabited or inhabit the American continent. It was founded in 1977 in the city of Perugia, by a group of people, academics or not, who were interested in the theme of “Americanism”. Americanism indicates the absence, in the interests of the Centro Studi, of geographic limits, including the entire continental territory, from the Bering Strait to Tierra del Fuego, of temporal limits, from the first settlements to the present day, and of disciplinary limits, covering disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, history, arts, politics and linguistics. The philosophy underlying the activities of Centro Studi since its foundation is that research (as a modality of knowledge) should be associated with cooperation with the Amerindian peoples, through collaborative projects, as well as through the dissemination of the historical and contemporary reality of these peoples for the non-specialized public. In this sense, I disagree with the association of the Centro Studi “Americanism” with “orientalism”,<sup>33</sup> since the latter is related with the auto-identification of the West with an idealized East.<sup>34</sup> The specific understanding of “americanism” emphasized in this case focuses on a research-action activity carried out taking into account primarily the local realities of the American continent as the starting and ending point of its different activities.

In 2005 the Centro Studi opened a second headquarter in the city of Salerno, in the south of Italy, and in 2007 a group of associates organized a working group in the city of Padova, in the north of the country. Anyhow, The Centro Studi maintains its principal

33 COELI MACHADO E SILVA, Regina. Memórias pessoais de um desencontro em 2000. *Travessias*, 2010, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 255–257.

34 SAÏD, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge, 1978.

headquarter in the city of Perugia, in spaces offered by the local Municipal Council. Here, it also organises the annual International Congress of Americanism, in which hundreds of researchers participate from several countries, including several Amerindian representatives throughout the years. Other activities are the dissemination to the wider audience of Amerindian current lives and struggles for resistance, courses of Spanish and Portuguese languages, didactical activities realised with local primary and secondary schools, internships for university students, etc. In the context of its activities, the Centro Studi created a Documentation and Research Center in 2004, when it moved to its current site.<sup>35</sup>

The Documentation and Research Center is composed of a specialized library with more than forty thousand volumes and around four hundred titles of specialized and general journals, which constitutes one of the more relevant collection in the Italian panorama, available for free to the public.<sup>36</sup> In 2004, with the movement to the actual headquarters and the opening of the Documentation and Research Center, the library acquired two important collections: one from the Lelio Basso Foundation and the other from the researcher Rodolfo Carpini. In 2010, two more collections were incorporated in the library: one from the Latin American Institute and the other from the researcher Roberto

35 MARCHETTI, Michela and Katia NICOLARDI. La Collezione Etnografica. *Thule. Rivista Italiana di Americanistica*, 2007, pp. 55–59.

36 The activities of the Centro Studi are possible thanks to the contributions of various public and private institutions such as the Consulta per l’Immigrazione of the Regione Umbria, which supports the Centro Studi since more than twenty years, the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio, which in 2003 funded the acquisition of exhibitory materials, and the Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali, via its Segreteria per i Beni Bibliotecari, which offers an economic support for various initiatives.



Giammanco. In 2015, also the private collection of the researcher Iginio Gatti was added. Other collections, such as the private ones of the professor Gerardo Bamonte and of the professor Ettore Biocca, are in process of being acquired. Together with these collections, the library is also constantly increased through donations from individual researchers and through a network of exchange of publications with other institutions (for example, the Instituto Socioambiental and the Iepe-Instituto de Pesquisa e Formação Indígena, in Brazil, the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, in Mexico). The library became a public one in 2007, when it had been inserted in the municipal network, and in 2017 it has been dedicated to the memory of professor Tullio Seppilli.

Together with the library, the Centro Studi has an Audiovisual Documentation Centre, dedicated to the memory of Daniele Fava. This hosts photographic, visual and audio materials, which had been collected during the decades by the researchers of the institution, or acquired via donations. These materials (amounting to some thousands of items) include fiction movies, ethnographic and archaeological documentaries, as well as research materials, records of conferences, etc. In 2008, the Centro Studi started the project *Americas in Digital*, which is aimed at digitalising these materials in order to both preserve them and to make them available to the public.

Additionally, as a part of the activities of the Documentation and Research Center, the Centro Studi created a photographic exhibition, composed by 653 images with associated explanations installed on 297 panels of rigid PVC panels. This is organized in a modular format, being possible to exhibit it

according with diverse thematic, geographic, temporal focuses, according with the aims. The exhibition was first presented in 1980 during the Latin American Week in the city of Gubbio, also in the region of Umbria. The first curatorship of this exhibition was focused on presenting an historical and ethnographic portrait of Amerindians' people and cultures. It was named *Teocucatl: the sacred song*. Along the years, additional modules have been added, each one on a specific topic: "People of corn" presents the history and culture of Mesoamerican people, "Hoke hey" on North American ones, "Latina America: a suspended continent" on the history of colonization and of the identity formation of this part of the continent, "Notes from America" on the history of indigenous and popular music, "The signs of the universe" on Mesoamerican science, philosophy and writing, "Pacha kunturpa" on the people of the Andean region, "People and forests" on the Amazonian peoples, "Body ills, soul ills" on shamanism and healing practices of the Amerindians, "The names of God" on the multiple Amerindian religiosities before and after the arrival of Christianity, "Land and Liberty" on the history of the Mexican revolution, etc. These modules of the exhibition, in variable formats, are regularly presented to the public in a variety of contexts, such as other museums, schools, community centres or public spaces.

In addition, other temporary exhibitions, of a more specialized nature, are organized with materials from the Audio-Visual Documentation Center. An example of these is the photographic exhibition *The Mebengokré-Xikrin childhood*, which was presented in 2007 as a part of the XXIX International Congress of Americanism in the halls of

the Palazzo dei Priori in the city of Perugia. This was composed of 20 photographic panels accompanied by ethnographic descriptions describing the different phases of social growth of individuals among this Amerindian people. Another example is the ethnographic exhibition *The Amazon at Perugia* that was presented in 2011 in the Government Building within the scope of the XXXIII International Congress of Americanism. In the latter case, in addition to the photographic panels, several Amazonian artefacts from the Centro Studi's Ethnographic Collection were included in the exhibition.

This Ethnographic collection was officially founded in 1991, when the temporary exhibition *Teocucatl: the sacred song* was organized. From this experience, the Centro Studi decided to bring together in a single space the ethnographic artefacts collected by the members during their travels in the Americas, which constituted the initial core of the first collection. This has progressively incorporated a significant number of artefacts from the Mesoamerican, North-American, Andean, and Amazonian regions, especially through the contributions of members of the Centro Studi, such as the archaeologist Mario Polia, the ethnologists Gerardo Bamonte, Miguel Angel Menéndez, as well as the architects Leszek Zawisza and Chiara Cipiciani, among many others. Throughout the years, several other partners donated more artefacts to the collection, such as the two hundreds artefacts from the southern part of Mexico from the personal collection of the ethnologist Nina Borruso, and the almost sixty Amazonian ones from the ethnologist Gerardo Bamonte. Other members and collaborators also contributed and contribute

to the collection donating more artefacts, so that it takes the form of a “work in progress”. It is not a closed and static collection, but it is continuously reformulated and ‘re-semantized’ at each new acquisition, gaining new formats and curatorship, visual and material experiences, as well as new narratives. It is important to highlight how many of the pieces present in the Ethnographic Collection were expressly donated by members of different Amerindian peoples with the purpose of being incorporated in it. This is the case, for example, of some Mebengokré artefacts (an Amerindian people of central Brazil), which were delivered to me when of one of my visits to the Trincadeira-Bacaja Indigenous Land. To mention an example, in 2006, Karangré Xikrin, a *mebenghete*, “old person”, with whom I was discussing the diverse uses, circulations and relations with the “traditional” and “imported” (meaning the non-Mebengokré) artefacts, spent a whole week producing a *ko*, a cylindrical wooden mallet. Once he finished, he gave it to me, asking me to show it to my people and emphasizing that the artefact was ideal “*in order to allow people there to know our culture*”.<sup>37</sup> Other artefacts were donated to the Ethnographic Collection by representatives of Amerindian peoples who participated in the annual International Congress, or in other events organized by the Centro Studi, or when of their visit to the museum.

An important remark concerns archaeological materials. The Centro Studi does not accept original or non-reproducible artefacts. The only exceptions being those that are already outside the

American continent and that are in danger of being deteriorated or dispersed. In this direction, the Ethnographic Collection only accepts donations of ethnographic artefacts of common use and reproducible, and of archaeological reproductions. Among these reproductions of archaeological objects, the reproductions of North American artefacts by Sergio Susani and Mesoamerican ones from the Taller de Reproducciones of the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in Mexico City stand out. Other significant reproductions present in the Ethnographic Collection, which have an important didactic use, are the scale reproductions of different scenes of everyday life of North American indigenous peoples and of a Yanomami *maloca* (“common house”) made by Antonio Masetti.

In 2004, when the current headquarters of the Centro Studi was inaugurate, the Ethnographic Collection gained its current installation. In 2009, it was dedicated to the memory of Gerardo Bamonte, its ideologue and promoter, a tireless disseminator of the knowledge about Amerindians people and a supporter of their struggles toward the broad public. The current exhibition resumes the structure of the original one. It is organized by geographic areas and within these by thematic and chronological axes. The spaces are composed of three rooms, covering almost one hundred square meters. The first room is dedicated to the people from the Circumpolar, North American and Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican regions, the second to the contemporary Central American peoples, and the third, the largest, to the Andean, Amazonian and Southern Cone peoples. The artefacts are presented in closed tempered glass shelves or in open spaces depending on their resistance to the climate and to

the handling by visitors. Thus, for example, Amazon feather crowns are kept in dedicated exhibitors, in order to preserve the organic material that compose them, while Andean percussion musical instruments are made available to the public who can experience their different material textures and sonorities.

In 2019, the Perugia City Hall allocated a new space for a new installation of the Ethnographic Collection, also in the centre of the city of Perugia, which covers an area approximately double than the current one. This new space will ensure greater visibility to the public and it will make possible to implement new teaching activities with schools. The opening of this new space, with the consequent transfer of the Ethnographic Collection, was originally scheduled for the end of 2020, but, due to the eclosion of the Covid pandemic, all the activities had been suspended, and are being resumed only recently (2022). The transfer to this new spaces will also create the conditions for redefining and reorganizing the actual exhibition, as well as, more important, it will offer the basis for a more effective involvement of Amerindians in such an effort. The inclusion of artefacts donated by Amerindians themselves with the aim of their inclusion in the Ethnographic Collection can define it as already having a dialogical character. Anyhow, the possibilities opened by the dislocation to the new site will let to promote their effective inclusion in the curatorship process and in the exhibition overall structure.

### **Amerindians protagonism in the exhibition’s reformulation**

The possibility to reorganize the ethnographic collection in a new exhibition format offered by the new spaces implies a necessary reflection about its aims, strategies,

<sup>37</sup> BOLLETTIN, Paride. As vidas dos artefatos Ameríndios amazônicos numa coleção etnográfica italiana. *AntHropológicas*, 2019, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 63–90.

tools, and narratives. In this direction, for being effective, the process of Amerindian inclusion in the curatorship will require a reformulation of methodological, conceptual, and political starting points.<sup>38</sup> As discussed by previous studies, artefacts are not simple objects, and they have impacts on both social and cognitive dimensions.<sup>39</sup> This is true also for Amerindian artefacts exposed in a very distant place from their place of origin, such as in this case. They can act in order to bridge the gap between diverse socio-bio-cultural experiences when these are located in diverse temporal and geographical contexts, consequently promoting a “dialogue” between these experiences also in the absence of their producers.<sup>40</sup> Anyhow, together with the agency of artefacts and ethnographic objects,<sup>41</sup> the possibility to proliferate the participants in the curatorship of the exhibition allows a deeper collaborative effort, in this way symmetrizing the voices.<sup>42</sup> This is the case of various experiences, for example with Amazon Amerindians realised in Brazil.<sup>43</sup> This

38 KIM, David D. (ed.). *Reframing Postcolonial Studies: Concepts, Methodologies, Scholarly Activisms*. Cham: Springer, 2021.

39 DOMÍNGUEZ RUBIO, Fernando. La cuestión del objeto como cuestión sociológica. In SÁNCHEZ CRIADO, Tomás et al. (eds.). *Tecnogénesis. La construcción Técnica de las ecologías humanas*. Madrid: Antropólogos Iberoamericanos en Red, 2008, pp. 79–112.

40 BOLLETTIN, Paride. As vidas dos artefatos Ameríndios amazônicos numa coleção etnográfica italiana. *AntHropológicas*, 2019, vol. 30, no. 2, pp. 63–90.

41 MILLER, Peter N. *Cultural Histories of the Material World*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

42 HODGE, Christina J. Decolonizing Collection-Based Learning: Experiential Observation as an Interdisciplinary Framework for Object Study. *Museum Anthropology*, 2015, vol. 41, no. 2, pp. 142–158.

43 ATHIAS, Renato. Objetos indígenas vivos em museus: temas e problemas sobre a patrimonialização. In LIMA FILHO, Manuel, Régina ABREU and Renato ATHIAS (eds.). *Museus e Atores Sociais: perspectivas antropológicas*. Recife: Editora da Universidade Federal do Pernambuco, 2016, pp. 189–211; VELTHEM, Lucia Hussak van, Katia KUKAWKA and Lydie JOANNY. *Museus, coleções etnográficas e a busca do*

direct Amerindian participation, however, is more complicated in a European museum, for diverse reasons, requiring the elaboration of alternative strategies.

As mentioned above, the Ethnographic Collection is thought of as a tool with a double aim. On the one hand, it aims at studying Amerindian material experiences, as these are made accessible through their artefacts. Rethinking these possibilities through an effective Amerindian participation is a core preoccupation of the Centro Studi in the process of reorganising the curatorship of the exhibition. The inclusion of their own expectations, claims, preoccupations, and experiences could enable us to redefine the future researches conducted on the collection. Some artefacts are, for example, currently being substituted by others among the people that produce them, and in some cases, this brings a challenge for the curators of the collections as well as for the Amerindians themselves. This is the case of a collaborative effort involving the Kamayura people and the staff of the Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia of the Universidade Federal da Bahia.<sup>44</sup> On their visit to this museum, the Kamayura described some artefacts stored in the archives (some feather crowns and straw baskets) as not being realised anymore among them. In that case, they decided to take back

diálogo intercultural. *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi*, 2017, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 735–748; RUSI, Adriana and Regina ABREU. Museologia colaborativa: diferentes processos nas relações entre antropólogos, coleções etnográficas e povos indígenas. *Revista Horizontes Antropológicos*, 2019, vol. 53, pp. 17–46.

44 TROMBONI, Marco, Paride BOLLETTIN and Sidélia TEIXEIRA. Mediações com os índios Kamayurá do Alto Xingu/Amazônia/Brasil no Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia da Universidade Federal da Bahia. In TEIXEIRA, Sidélia, Patrick FRAYSSE and Nathalie SEJALON-DELMAS (eds.). *Mediações científicas potenciais: museus e coleções da Universidade Federal da Bahia/Brasil e da Universidade de Toulouse/Paul Sabatier/França*. Salvador: Editora da Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2022, pp. 35–54.

to their village images of these artefacts and to use them as a tool for remembering the techniques for their production. Similarly, in the Ethnographic Collection of the Centro Studi is hosted a collar made by shells given to the collection by the Mebengokré Amerindians (as of the example of the *ko* mentioned above). Since some years ago, they are substituting this artefact, used during some *metoro*, rituals/parties, with another one with the same aesthetic, structure and design but made of steel plates, since these are described to be easier to be modelled. Does the artefact of the collection have the same memory function of the Kamayura objects? Is it enough to share with them some picture to eventually achieve this scope? Or differently, would they prefer to have back the original piece? Or even, is it a really relevant question for the Mebengokré? Questions like these highlight the importance of assuming as a starting point the perspective of people producing the artefacts rather than assuming some given assumption for directing the efforts.

As widely discussed in specialized literature, Amerindian artefacts are not trivial objects, on the contrary they are affected and affect the direct experiences of both Amerindian peoples, as well as artefacts’ own agencies.<sup>45</sup> For example, some artefacts should not be seen by everybody, but only by some specific people according with defined prescriptions of the people producing them, such as the Wauja ritual objects described by Barcelos Neto.<sup>46</sup> Up to our knowledge, none of the objects composing the Centro Studi’s collection are covered by

45 SANTOS-GRANERO, Fernando (ed.). *The Occult Life of Things: Native Amazonian Theories of Materiality and Personhood*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2009.

46 BARCELOS NETO, Aristóteles. Objetos de poder, pessoas de prestígio: a temporalidade biográfica dos rituais xinguanos e a cosmopolítica wauja. *Mundo Amazônico*, 2012, vol. 3, pp. 71–94.



these formalized prohibitions, anyhow it is an ethical concern to be considered in the curatorship process. The choice of what objects, images, etc. to be included or not in the reformulated exhibition, and how to present these, consequently, should be decided through a dialogue with the people who produced the artefacts. A strategy in this direction could be to share images, videos and other archive information with Amerindians. Yet, this would require a previous understanding if the local interlocutors are entitled to have access to these, or if, on the contrary, they are affected by the mentioned prescription. Moreover, is it legitimate to produce digital images of these artefacts? Or would be this operation exactly the contrary of the prohibition of a general access to them? Digital images and reproduction are surely an important tool for producing a dialogue with Amerindians, but they require preliminary critical reflections on their potentialities.<sup>47</sup>

As discussed by Mbembe,<sup>48</sup> the digital has the power to detach the object from its contexts and to move it to a different context. In this direction, the use of digital tools in the new curatorship of the Ethnographic Collection can certainly offer promising possibilities, with the required attentions mentioned above. The possibility to engage in a virtual dialogue, however, is affected by the technical conditions of internet access. For example, just to follow on the same people already mentioned, the Kamayura have relatively high speed and stable internet access, enabling them to participate in videoconferences, to share high quality videos, and so on. On the contrary, the

Mebengokré have only limited internet access, which allow them only to share pictures, texts and audio messages (mostly via WhatsApp), but making hard to be organized online videoconferences. Clearly, these conditions have impacts on the effectiveness of such possibilities, while not excluding them. A pilot project of 3D digitalization of some artefacts, which is currently being developed through a collaboration between the Centro Studi and the Department of Anthropology of the Faculty of Science of Masaryk University, offers an interesting example. The digitalization and the production of 3D models of some artefacts is focused on artefacts that are not covered by formalized prohibitions to be seen by everybody, as the Amerindians producing these objects already confirmed us. Anyhow, it presents other challenges. It requires adequate internet connection, as well as adequate digital devices and competences, for sharing the resulting virtual reproduction. If these technical conditions are not available among the Amerindians, what are the aims of these digitalizations? Clearly, the models can efficiently work for didactical purposes, but is it legitimate to use them if their producers can not have access to them? How to engage Amerindians in this exercise, especially for an evaluation of the accuracy of the 3D rendering? We are planning a project to introduce these technical skills to some Amerindians, engaging them in the use of such 3D modelling, in order to solve the questions. Anyhow this will require adequate funds for being realised, for which we are still searching.

Meanwhile, possibilities offered by internet connection can also produce important results for an effective engagement of

Amerindians in the collection curatorship. Since 2019, when of my last visit to the Trincadeira-Bacaja Indigenous Land before the Covid-19 pandemic, we are developing a close dialogue with the Mebengokré, mentioned above. At the time they proposed to organise a specific exhibition of their *kukradja*, their material culture, to be circulated in diverse museums. Facing the pandemic, we began to discuss the possibility to have this exhibition in a virtual format, starting from the artefacts they donated to the Ethnographic Collection. When discussing this possibility, Bekwy Xikrin, a Mebengokré young friend, emphasised that “*various indigenous people have their artefacts online, it is important for us to have too, for explaining how the Mebengokré live*”. Because of his willingness and of the collective decision in this direction, he assumed the responsibility to collect and to share (via audio messages and videos on WhatsApp) information about the best way to present these artefacts: possible proximity and distances with other artefacts, descriptions of uses, descriptions of way of manufacturing, etc. The same strategy is also being discussed with the Kamayura, via the mediation of Marcelo Kamayura, who was a member of the delegation that visited the Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia of the Universidade Federal da Bahia. In this case, another dimension emerges as crucial. At all stages of the discussion about the pictures of specific artefacts I share with him, he requires to consult the collective assembly before deciding which strategy would fit better. As he repeatedly affirmed, “*these artefacts are our collective culture, they are not mine or of someone else, they are of all the Kamayura, so I need to ask to the people what they decide to do*”. The affirmation of this collective

<sup>47</sup> CANTZ, Hatje. *Secrecy. Who's allowed to know what?* Bâle: Museum der Kulturen Basel, 2018.

<sup>48</sup> MBEMBE, Achille. *Critique of Black Reason*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

dimensions of the artefacts highlights the necessary care in not to assume that a single interlocutor would be sufficient for making the Amerindian participation effective. It requires the mediator to be legitimized by her/his collective, according with each people internal dynamics. Additionally, it implies to adapt the curatorial process to the temporalities of these collective decisions, since every people adopts specific modalities for joining the people, for debating topics, for giving feedbacks about the artefacts. The planning of the reformulation of the exhibition, consequently, should include the necessary flexibility to incorporate continuative indications on a rolling basis as well as it should adapt to the specific temporalities required by the effective participation in the decision making.

Not for all the artefacts composing the Ethnographic Collection, however, information about the people who produced and/or the ethnographer that collected them and/or the year when and/or the region where they were collected are available. This lack of information could make the possibility to ask Amerindians directly about these artefacts difficult, so complicating the effort to include them. A great work of reconstruction of these information is being conducted by the Centro Studi staff (who works exclusively on a voluntary basis), consulting field diaries of the researchers, comparing the artefacts with others hosted in other collections, or in bibliographic materials, and so on. For some artefacts, however, this reconstruction appears to be very difficult due to the lack of available information. Also bibliographical studies can help in compensating this lack, specially with the increasing number of publications dedicated to the study of Amerindian material cultures.

A third strategy already in motion is the constitution of a network of collaborators. Due to the almost fifty years history of the Centro Studi, the existing network of collaborations is relatively wide and it includes Institutional agreements with North, Central and South-American Indigenous Associations, as well as with universities, museums, and others, and it includes collaborations with single researchers, activists etc. The expansion of this network, anyhow, appears to be crucial for the effective pluralization of the voices to be included in the new exhibition. Additionally, it can also promote the inclusion of new exhibitory strategies for the artefacts, incorporating solutions adopted in other curatorship and exhibition spaces.

The development of a wide network will not guarantee by its own the effective participation of Amerindians. For example, some preliminary discussions have been realised with the Maku of Rio Negro, another Amerindian people whose artefacts are hosted in the Ethnographic Collection, since they were collected by Gerardo Bamonte since the Seventies. In these dialogues, however, they expressed the concern that engaging in this collaboration would require from them time and efforts they prefer to dedicate to initiatives closer to them, such as with the Amazon Museum of the Universidade Federal do Amazonas in Manaus. The eventual possibility to secure funds for a visit at the Centro Studi in Italy has been indicated as a possible solution for this concern, since it would enable to concentrate the efforts in a short and defined period of time. It is evident how the respect for their participation must also consider Amerindian agenda as the starting point of the proposal, in order not to have it transformed into a new

form of “colonialism”. On the contrary, as previously mentioned, the Mebengokré declared their desire of constituting an entirely new collection (of artefacts, images, videos and audios) to be included in the new curatorship. Their concern is to be underrepresented in the museographic spaces, with no collection specifically produced by themselves. In this sense, they declared to appreciate this possibility for it offering them the chance to present themselves. Clearly, the dialogical possibilities change from people to people, and are influenced by the kind of previous relations already established. With the Karaja, the Tukano and the Guarani, for example, whose objects are also hosted in the Ethnographic Collection, the willingness of researchers collaborating with the Centro Studi is enabling to create a dialogue. It is clear how the search for information about the artefacts per se does not guarantee the effective dialogical possibilities, being a first step toward the creation of a network of collaborations.

Meanwhile, the inclusion of Amerindians in the curatorship of the new exhibition of the Ethnographic Collection will also offer the possibility to rethink its educative purposes. As mentioned above, the Centro Studi has also the aim of disseminating the history and diversity of Amerindian people, as a tool for making visible and strengthening their fights for their rights. In this direction, the virtual communication can offer some potentially useful advantages. The common use by Amerindians of social medias such as WhatsApp and other digital tools for sharing audio-visual materials can enable the exhibition to include new additional materials. Sharing pictures and available information about the artefacts with their

producers will lead to including their own indications about aesthetics, materials, functions, values in the exhibitory narrative, in the artefacts exposition, and in the explanatory panels. Consequently, the didactical narrative of the exhibition can include the proliferation of voices. For example, alongside the current “historical” overview of the human occupation of the Americas, Amerindian narratives can be included, complementing the “conquerors” narrative with their own “historical” views. The same can be foreseen for the colonial period, for the thematic sessions, and so on. What is figured out is not just the substitution of one narrative with another. Finally, most of the Centro Studi’s Museum’s public is constituted by local pupils, hence the narratives should be understandable to them. The multiplication of descriptions and explanations could in this way operate as the bridge between narratives assumed not as alternatives or opposites, but instead as complementary to one another.

Additionally, the recognition of Amerindian pupils as effective producers of “culture”<sup>49</sup> can promote the engagement of both the Amerindians and the local public of the Museum. The inclusion in the exhibition of kids’ drawings, for example, can work for approximating each other the two groups of kids. Meanwhile, offering the possibility for local pupils to share, through virtual communication platforms, their own drawings with kids in the Amazon can work as a feedback movement. In the same way, written cards and/or videos of kids’ games, etc. can work in the same direction. Clearly, this

possibility would face additional ethical concerns, such as the request of appropriate rights of use of the images, the attention to the respect of the privacy of the people, and so on, requiring a further reflection on the purposes and aims of the museum. Innovative and creative ways of promoting dialogues between social actors of the museums (the Amerindians, the public, the curators) appear as crucial for the elaboration of a more inclusive proposal. In the same direction, including in the exhibition productions from Amerindian handy-crafters, artists, and others, can work for to both multiply the number of points of view presented in the exhibition, as well as a strategy for the dissemination of contemporary productions. This can enable, inclusive, Amerindians handy-crafters who are selling their works to access a new potential market. This can be the case, for example, of the Mebengokré women paintings, which are commercialized via the Bebo Indigenous Association and online.<sup>50</sup> The expansion of their “selling network” can strengthen economically communities and people, contributing with their claims for autonomy. Meanwhile, it can also promote a redefinition of the imaginary, still present among a great part of European population, about the Amerindians as confined in a “pre-modern” reality. The same scope can be achieved also giving visibility to the current political struggles faced by the Amerindians, and in some cases, also of recent success, such as the nomination of Sonia Guajajara as the first women Minister of the Indigenous People in Brazil, or their fighting for the reappropriation of their lands.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> See user’s catalogue on *WhatsApp* [online]. [accessed 2022-03-14]. Available from [www: <https://wa.me/c/559388038427>](https://wa.me/c/559388038427).

<sup>51</sup> XIKRIN, Bekyi and Paride BOLLETTIN. Reappropriating the Trincadeira-Bacaja Indigenous

Concomitantly with the new exhibition in the physical space in the city of Perugia, the new curatorship also desires to take advantage of the digital environment toward complementary possibilities. A virtual tour of the exhibition is also planned, which will allow to access the Ethnographic Collection also by people unable to physically travel to Perugia, especially to the Amerindians themselves. Additionally, virtual medium can serve as tools for the inclusion of Amerindian proposals in the exhibition. On one side, it lets people share all the information, pictures, videos, descriptions collected by the curators of the Ethnographic Collection with those that produce and produced the artefacts of the collection. On another side, it enables to multiply the materials available to the visitors, via the inclusion of complementary information Amerindians indicate as necessary. This will allow to include, both in the physical and in the virtual exhibitions, for example, audios and videos with Amerindians explaining artefacts to visitors, or pictures and videos of the fabrication processes of the artefacts, as well as any other information and narratives produced with this aim by Amerindians themselves.

## Conclusion

This paper highlights some of the challenges faced by the curatorship of the Ethnographic Collection in the new spaces. These are not exhaustive of all the possibilities, desires, ideas, and suggestions, inclusive of the ones from Amerindians themselves. Nevertheless, they enable us to delineate a panorama of dynamic dialogues that can help in redefining the Ethnographic

Land. *Visual Ethnography*, 2022, vol. 11, no. 1, pp. 149–162.

<sup>49</sup> COHN, Clarice. *Antropologia da Criança*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 2005.

Collection, and with it the Museum of the Centro Studi in a more participative format. To conclude, I would like to stress that the possibilities offered by the reorganization of the Ethnographic Collection of the Centro Studi Americanistici and of its exhibition can promote an effective redefinition of the dialogical possibilities embodied in artefacts, spaces, narratives, audio-visuals, etc. I hope that the challenges described here can contribute to a reflexive discussion, not only within museums dedicated to Amerindian people, but widely in the direction of more plural museums and collections. In the case described here, it is not an easy task, and nothing guarantees its success.

A crucial point is the possibility to include Amerindian effective participation while maintaining the scope of being the exhibition a space for dissemination. Museum can work as effective spaces for educational purposes, inclusive with the direct engagement of Amerindians.<sup>52</sup> The most part of the public being composed by pupils from the central Italy, the narratives presented in the exhibition must be figured out as accessible to these specific target. If the staff of the Centro Studi and the actual direction of the Museum are concerned with making Amerindian participation effective, the impacts on the public will require a specific and continuative evaluation. The Amerindian protagonism, common in several American countries, is still a novelty among the European public. In this sense, the impacts of such a reformulation on the public imaginary about Amerindian peoples can offer the tools for disseminating their struggles, but it will require the attention to do

not reintroduce paternalism in the process.

Being as it may, some strategies are being implemented at the Museum of the Centro Studi, with the limitations due to the pandemic situation first and now of economic possibilities, others are being planned, others still figured out. Problems such as the lack of funds, or of workforce, can appear at any moment, but they should not be of impediment to pursue the realization of what Bekwy Xikrin affirmed, “*the exhibition of our culture will let people there to recognise us and to support us in our fights for our rights, it is important for us to be known since we are facing several dangers*”. The inclusion of Amerindians in the reformulation of the Ethnographic Collection, consequently, means not only the construction of a new narrative about and with them, but it implies the engagement with their claims for recognition, resistance and autonomy.

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Paride Bollettin had a PhD in Anthropology from the Università degli Studi di Siena in 2011. Since then he worked as a professor and as a researcher in different universities in Europe, South America and Africa and actually is Assistant Professor at the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Honorary Permanent Professor at the Graduate program in Social Sciences of the State University of São Paulo, Honorary Research Fellow of the Department of Anthropology, Durham University, and Scientific Director of the

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Paride Bollettin získal doktorát z antropologie na univerzitě v italské Sieně v roce 2011. Poté pracoval jako profesor a výzkumný pracovník na různých univerzitách v Evropě, Jižní Americe a Africe. V současnosti působí jako odborný asistent na Ústavu antropologie

Přírodovědecké fakulty Masarykovy univerzity v Brně, čestný stálý profesor v postgraduálním programu Společenské vědy na Státní univerzitě v São Paulu, čestný vědecký pracovník Katedry antropologie Durhamské univerzity a vědecký ředitel Etnografického muzea při Centru amerických studií v Perugii. Od roku 2005 spolupracuje s kmenem Mebengokré v amazonském deštném pralese na vytváření kolektivních etnografií. Mezi jeho hlavní výzkumné zájmy patří studium domorodých etnik, vizuální antropologie, hmotná kultura a environmentální antropologie. Publikoval řadu článků ve vědeckých časopisech v různých jazycích, napsal a redigoval dvanáct knih a v současnosti je redaktorem knižní řady Encounters with CLEUP.



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