

DECLARATION OF SEVILLE ON UNIVERSITARY HERITAGE AND ITS SOCIAL ROLE

1.-INTRODUCTION

At the first European Union, Latin America and Caribbean Heads of State and Government Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) on 28th and 29th June 1999 an agreement was reached for the reinforcement of interregional collaboration in various áreas, one of them being cultural heritage. As a result of this political agreement a group of European and Latin American experts held a meeting from November 19 to 22nd 2001 in Oaxaca (Mexico) 1. The objective of this meeting was to establish the proposals for the lines of investigation and main projects for scientific and technical cooperation between Latin-America, the Caribbean and the European Union (EU-LAC) in the field of cultural heritage.

Also, in Salamanca, on January the 11th 2008 the rectors of the universities of Salamanca, Alcalá, Barcelona, Granada, Oviedo, the Basque Country, Santiago de Compostela, Seville, Valencia and Valladolid signed the "Declaration of Salamanca on the Historical and cultural University Heritage" (Salamanca, 2008), where it was agreed upon a request to the government for the inclusion of a plan on Historical and Social Heritage of Universities amongst the action plans of the Ministry of Culture.

From May the 15th to 17th 2024 the University of Seville is hosting a meeting of the rectors of the Ibero-American universities that conform the executive comisión of the AUIP (Ibero-American Association of Postgraduate Universities). This international and non-governmental association has been recognized by UNESCO and declared Association of Public Utility by the Spanish Government. This association integrates more than 300 prestigious institutions of higher education from the 22 countries that conform the Organization of Ibero-American States. This organization sponsored the first Ibero-American Congress on University Heritage celebrated in Seville from May 13th to 15th 2024. This congress offered a space for reflection and for the mutual exchange of knowledge and experience with a desire for continuity and serves as a baseline for the present "Declaration of Seville on University Heritage and its social role"



As an introduction for these intentions it is also important to point out the importance of heritage in a global scale as it has been reflected in a corpus of international documents. In this regard we consider worth mentioning UNESCO'S "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" from 1972. This treaty establishes that certain locations of the world which have an "*outstanding universal value*" belong to the common heritage of humanity." It is also worth mentioning UNESCO'S "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" (Paris 2003). This convention recognizes a wide range of cultural manifestations and expressions representative of humanity's cultural diversity with an anthropological and wholistic perspective. This convention recognizes the importance of communities, groups and, by extensión, educative institutions as transmitters of the intangible heritage of humanity and emphasizes the role of universities as guardians of that heritage.

We also would like to mention The Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro 2005), usually known as Faro convention. This Convention is an international agreement established by the European council. With the objective of promoting a new perspective on cultural heritage focusing on its importance for today's society and the recognition of its potential to contribute in sustainable development, social cohesion and cultural identity.

Furthermore, as the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda are a universal call to action for the improvement of people's lives and the protection of the planet, SDG11 contemplates the protection and safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage as a physical space and system of relationships.

2.CURRENT SITUATION AND OBJECTIVES

Cultural heritage is regulated by the legislation of each country. But it does not , specifically address the topic of university heritage, despite the fact that universities, by virtue of their history, culture, heritage and current activities, are institutions of excellence throughout the Ibero-American sphere. Furthermore, its management is shared between governments, public authorities and universities, with AN interest in constant improvement and quality in the management and protection of these cultural legacies, as well as the enhancement of such an extraordinary cultural heritage.

Understanding the diverse and complex realities on the subject of heritage in the Ibero-American sphere, it is worth remembering that heritage as a social construct is a reflection of the societies and the events those societies have experienced, shaping their present and their future. Therefore, from a place of respect for local legislation, the maintenance of identities and respect for diversity, we want, in this "First Ibero-American Meeting on University Heritage" held in Seville, to set ourselves the objective of learning about the praxis, the plans and the actions considered of



excellence in the management and protection of the heritage of universities while pointing out the obvious referents that lead the way and innovations in matter of cultural heritage and the exemplary contributions that are transferred from universities to civil society.

3.- CULTURAL HERITAGE TODAY

Currently, the concept of cultural heritage encompasses a complete value chain that includes research and knowledge, protection, conservation and restoration, as well as the exhibition, diffusion and communication of the tangible and intangible values of movable and immovable cultural goods. All of this is framed in a context that prioritizes sustainable development and the improvement of the quality of life.

At the same time, cultural heritage is considered one of the great contemporary assets when it comes to social transformation. It is recognized as a key instrument for education, science, the appreciation and value of identities, the interpretation of the landscape and the promotion of sociocultural and economic development. Its influence on the urban and rural environment places it in a central position. This influence demands responsible management in order to avoid indiscriminate use and safeguard its substantial value.

4.- RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE IBERO-AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HERITAGE OF THE UNIVERSITIES

For all these reasons, universities, as cultural institutions at the service of society and its development, should be encouraged to establish institutional policies to protect and raise awareness about the value of their cultural heritage and its social significance. And urge people in charge of those universities to consider the institution's heritage, its spaces and collections, as a fundamental part of their administrative and legal responsibility.

We also consider that universities must make explicit their objectives and policies for university heritage and we recommend the adoption of a "General Plan for University Heritage", which defines the mission, vision and values of universities in terms of cultural heritage and identifies measures for its research, documentation, protection, conservation, transmission and cultural enhancement.

Likewise, we propose to university heritage institutions, such as museums, collections, libraries, archives, documentation centers, cultural spaces and university institutes,



that they clearly express their objectives and policies for the university heritage under their supervision through Guiding Plans that are coherent with the global policies of the institution to which they belong.

It is important to encourage universities to make acquisitions, legacies, loans and deposits an integral part of their heritage policy that allows them to benefit from appropriate conservation measures and ensure their administrative and budgetary viability.

It is also suggested that universities seek complementary external funding sources, exploring opportunities in the field of patronage, to strengthen their heritage and implement effective heritage policies. These financial resources can come from various sources, whether local, regional, national or international. It is crucial that they ensure participation and co-responsibility between the public sector, civil society organizations, the private sector and the local community.

The management of university cultural heritage requires the establishment of networks of interdisciplinary organizations that contribute to the development and the protection of cultural heritage and the professional attitudes necessary for the conservation and transmission of heritage collections.

The transmission of these practices to society and raising awareness are equally relevant aspects. This is achieved through forms of technical, political and civil society cooperation that favor participation and access to heritage assets. Furthermore, it is crucial to promote the transfer of ideas, values, and goods through information technologies, as well as generate new instruments of citizen consultation and collaboration to promote intercultural dialogue in plural societies. Awareness and shared responsibility in the preservation of cultural heritage are fundamental aspects to improve the heritage governance of universities and strengthen their cultural identity. It is especially important to carry out education and transmission actions on cultural heritage issues aimed at the local population.

5.- TOWARDS A COOPERATION PROGRAM OF IBERO-AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

In the general framework of cultural assets, universities are one of the greatest producers of knowledge and research related to cultural heritage. They have capabilities through research and management centers of excellence, research groups and units, researchers, etc., with the possibility of establishing joint strategies, both to address the universities' own legacy and to offer it and make it useful to the whole society. This lays the general foundations to advance in the definition of a Cooperation Plan for Ibero-American universities, which focuses on: A Research Program that outlines the fundamental avenues for research in cultural heritage and Ibero-American universities, with a particular interest in projects, as well as actions that promote the accumulation of knowledge and its application to reality where cultural



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heritage and universities are immersed. , in addition to its journey to become a solution to multiple specific problems.

In order to support both programs and guarantee the commitment assumed, we propose the creation of an initial working group and the establishment of an Ibero-American Network of Researchers that can formalize the content generated through a platform. This will be in charge, with respect for the competencies of each university, of the design, creation, maintenance and dissemination of a repository of Ibero-American university heritage, thus fulfilling the need to preserve and share this invaluable legacy.

6.- INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Finally, we suggest establishing avenues for cooperation and collaboration with leading international organizations and institutions, such as UNESCO, the European Union, the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the Council International Archives (ICA), as well as other entities interested in offering support and resources to strengthen the Cultural Heritage of Universities and promote the Ibero-American relationship in this area.

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