

Olaf Kaltmeier, Mirko Petersen, Wilfried Raussert, Julia Roth (Eds.)

Cherishing the Past, Envisioning the Future

Entangled Practices of Heritage and Utopia in the Americas

INTER-AMERICAN STUDIES
Cultures – Societies – History

ESTUDIOS INTERAMERICANOS
Culturas – Sociedades – Historia

Volume 24

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 **Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier**

Copublished by

UNO University of New Orleans Press

Cherishing the Past, Envisioning the Future.

Entangled Practices of Heritage and Utopia in the Americas /

Ed. by Olaf Kaltmeier, Mirko Petersen, Wilfried Raussert, Julia Roth. –

(Inter-American Studies | Estudios Interamericanos; 24)

Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2021

ISBN 978-3-86821-804-6

New Orleans, LA : University of New Orleans Press, 2021

ISBN 978-1-60801-206-0



SPONSORED BY THE

Federal Ministry
of Education
and Research

The project, on which this book is based, has been funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF). The responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the author.

Cover Image: Christopher Columbus Statue Torn Down
at Minnesota State Capitol, June 10, 2020

Cover Design: Brigitta Disseldorf

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kaltmeier, Olaf, 1970- editor. | Petersen, Mirko, editor. |
Raussert, Wilfried, editor. | Roth, Julia, editor.

Title: Cherishing the past, envisioning the future : entangled practices of
heritage and utopia in the Americas / Olaf Kaltmeier, Mirko Petersen,
Wilfried Raussert, Julia Roth (eds.).

Description: Trier : Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier ; New Orleans :
University of New Orleans Press, 2021. | Series: Inter-American studies:
cultures - societies - history = Estudios interamericanos: culturas -
sociedades - historia ; volume 24 | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020044372 | ISBN 9781608012060 (paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Collective memory--America. | Cultural property--Social
aspects--America. | Utopias--America. | Time perspective. |
America--Civilization. | America--Colonization.

Classification: LCC E20 .C44 2021 | DDC 970--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020044372>

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Publisher: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, Postfach 4005, D-54230 Trier,
Bergstraße 27, D-54295 Trier, Tel. 0049 651 41503, Fax 41504, www.wvttrier.de, wvt@wvttrier.de

Copublisher: University of New Orleans Press, 2000 Lakeshore Drive, Earl K. Long Library,
Room 221, New Orleans, LA 70148, United States, 504-280-7457, unopress.org

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Introduction: Cherishing the Past, Envisioning the Future. Entangled Practices of Heritage and Utopia in the Americas

OLAF KALTMEIER, MIRKO PETERSEN, WILFRIED RAUSSERT,
JULIA ROTH

Abstract

In the introduction to this edited volume, we reflect on heritage, utopia, and questions of temporality in light of recent changes in the Americas, that is to say the rise to power of several right-wing governments. We argue that the focus of analysis should not simply be on changes of government, but rather on long-term transformations which have an impact of temporal imaginaries in the hemisphere. Finally, we present the contributions to this volume.

Heritage and Utopia

The objective of this edited volume is to shed light on questions of temporality in the Americas. In this regard, “heritage” and “utopia” are key terms used to explore the cultural, social, historical, and political entanglements within the Americas and their relation to coloniality, modernity, and contemporary neoliberal globalization.

The last decades have witnessed a heritage boom. The concept can be found in a variety of different contexts (for Latin America, see Kaltmeier and Rufer 2016; for music heritage in the Americas, see Raussert 2021a). Heritage has played a central role for the politics of memory (da Silva Catela and Foley 2019), production of knowledge, standardization of language, establishment of power and hierarchy, distribution of land and urban space, identity politics, and the conceptualization of time (e.g., Western, indigenous, African). Heritage politics dictate social and cultural norms, shape the

development of urban and natural environment, and define and re-define narratives of memory and history.

Utopia is a key trope for the very imagination of “America/América”¹ and supported both foundational narratives and independence movements in the Americas. Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein differentiate the utopian foundation of the Americas by emphasizing the differences that lie within utopian conceptualizations: North America’s “utopia of social equality and liberty” and Latin America’s indigenous “utopia of reciprocity, solidarity, and direct democracy” (Quijano and Wallerstein 1992, 556-557). Utopia is at the base of national, transnational, Pan-American, and imperial visions. It formed the base for Barack Obama’s promotion of new pluralist cosmopolitan imaginaries in the United States and propelled Evo Morales’s push for an indigenous multicultural vision of society in Bolivia. Utopia looms large behind Justin Trudeau’s government of diversity in Canada and has continued to nourish protest, resistance, and dissident attitudes toward the social, along with the creation of alternative communal forms. Utopian visions spurred the Zapatista movement in Mexico and the Occupy Movement in the U.S, as well as the current Black Lives Matter movement.

Questions of Temporality in the Light of Recent Changes in the Americas

Recent changes in the Americas have triggered new debates on temporality. The progressive cycle linked to governments like the ones of Barack Obama in the United States, Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina, Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, and Rafael Correa in Ecuador has come to an end; other governments of the so-called pink tide in Latin America, like the one of Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela, are only a shadow of what they used to be. A new shift to the right goes along with a longing

1 On the term “America,” cf. Rinke 2019; on the gender dimension of the term, cf. Roth 2014.