Chapter 1
Concepts and Contingencies in Heritage Politics

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The booming field of current heritage studies is complex, versatile, and often characterized by contradictory significance or interpretation, as claims for heritage can appear to be simultaneously uplifting and profoundly problematic[1]. In essence, heritage is a value-laden concept that can never assume a neutral ground of connotation. Heritage indicates a mode of cultural production with reformative significance. My discussion of cultural heritage focuses on the practices of arbitration and engineering in the context of cultural politics. I propose to investigate the framework of concepts and contingencies that situate emergent heritage regimes. To start with the semantics of the core terms presented in the title, the act of arbitration conveys the idea of giving an authoritative decision, of judging or deciding in case of a dispute; engineering, in turn, signifies the making or achieving or getting something through contrivance, implying thus invention and formulation. In the following paragraphs, I will observe some aspects of engineering and arbitration from an abstract perspective, via the lens of concepts and contingencies that have proven instrumental in shaping and situating the discussion of heritage regimes. This reflection on concepts draws from the anthropology of politics concerning the domain of cultural heritage and its emergent regimes of engineering and arbitration while exploring relations between the communities, the state, and international institutions, which are defined by the circumstance of globalization, postcolonial empowerment, cross-cultural relations, 'translation', and management of cultural heritage.

When criticizing the notion of authorized heritage discourse, Laurajane Smith contends that the ways in which we write, talk and think about heritage issues matter

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a great deal: this discourse privileges some social actors while disengaging others from their active use of heritage (2006). Dissonance and intangibility form the core qualities that channel and guide the perception of the nature of heritage and its effects; this concerns fundamentally the domain of cultural rights. Heritage is about the regulation and negotiation of the multiplicity of meaning in the past, and it is about the arbitration or mediation of the cultural and social politics of identity, belonging and exclusion. Perhaps it would be appropriate to use here the concept 'ideo-logic' suggested by Marc Augé: to designate configurations that articulate both relations of power and relations of meaning (Augé and Colleyn 2006, p. 47).

1.1 Curative Concerns

Regardless of the commonly prevailing celebratory approach, the fundamental conceptualization of the phenomenon comprises negative emotions and painful experience—destruction and loss are constitutive of heritage. The discordant nature of heritage preservation becomes painfully revealed in the context of the veneration of archaeological sites: their identification as such is the result of modern Western scholarship and its process of knowledge production. The archaeologist Lynn Meskell (2002), who has analysed disciplinary as well as political approaches to the Taliban destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan, describes the destroyed Buddhist statues as a site of 'negative heritage'—for the Taliban the statues had to be jettisoned in the nation's construction of contemporary memory precisely because they symbolized their own exclusion from the international community. For the West the site represents a permanent scar, a reminder of intolerance and symbolic violence (Fig. 1.1).

It has been suggested that the mission of UNESCO—which was originally mandated to engage in a worldwide educational campaign aimed at preventing new destructive conflicts like those suffered in the first half of the twentieth century—is an experiment in social engineering on a global scale (Stoczkowski 2009, p. 7). Here is the curative concern and ambition from the very beginning, finding a more recent translation into new meta-narratives of redemption and global reconstruction in the context of heritage care (Rowlands and Butler 2007, p. 1). The concept of care emerges as a central theme in the discussion of conflict and preservation. Phenomenologically, caring for something or somebody is fraught with anxiety, for it is contingent on unpredictable future events. Heritage care takes the notion of caution out of the museum—the birthplace of cultural curation—and re-embeds it in personal life (Rowlands and Butler 2007, p. 2). The fundamentalist ideology of heritage preservationism derives from the modernist obsession with loss, although David Lowenthal pointed out nearly three decades ago that loss expressed in the form of a monumental past is a feature of the present (Lowenthal 1985). When discussing the basic tenets of UNESCO's doctrine of human diversity, Wiktor Stoczkowski proposes to call it a 'secular soteriology', referring to the doctrine of salvation but giving it an extended meaning of

Fig. 1.1 Research planning meeting on intangible cultural heritage, CRIM–UNAM (2012) Cuernavaca, Morelos. *Source* photo by Carolina Buenrostro

deliverance from not only spiritual evil but also from material, social, economic, psychological, demographic, intellectual, etc. evil (2009, p. 8). The multivalent connotation of the verbal noun of 'engineering' has inspired Ulf Hannerz (2006) in turn, who has claimed that UNESCO's strategies are a mode of 'cultural engineering' based on nation-state logics and global governance. Heritage emerges from the nexus of politics and power; it is a project of symbolic domination: heritage privileges and empowers an elitist narrative of place while dominant ideologies create specific place identities which reinforce support for particular state structures and related political ideologies (Graham et al. 2000, p. 37). In addition, it simultaneously correlates with economic concerns which conversely relate to poverty and deprivation when we think about cultural expressions and environments in marginal communities or less affluent non-Western settings or countries. Heritage maintains a deep and complicated relationship with poverty. Heritage regimes and mobilizations create new arenas for competing political and economic interests that seek to appropriate viable heritage resources.

1.2 Arbitration

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has argued that heritage as a mode of cultural production emanates from a metacultural relationship—heritage is created through metacultural operations (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 2004) which gear the

analysis of cultural heritage towards the examination of sociopolitical and economic entanglements. Heritage is about identifying and managing, and defined by selection and ownership. The policies of cultural heritage reveal presumably conflicting individual, communal or state perspectives observable in the predicaments of appropriation, contested restitution or celebration. Property relations are ultimately social and political. The making of heritage does not just depend on conceptual valorization; value is added both to symbolic and to material resources (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006). Cultural heritage has reformative and powerful organizational and economic significance. In addition, even if the heritage under consideration and identified is claimed to be intangible, the process involved assumes materiality and tangibility, whereas the converse is true, depending at which end one stands or observes. At the same time the metacultural is inevitably turned into or embraced by the cultural.

The claims for materiality or intangibility of heritage unravel into essential ambivalence. On the one hand, cultural heritage is more widely known to be about place; about the situated, material, aesthetic and experiential aspects of culture. The dominant perception of 'heritage' draws heavily from the Western European architectural and archaeological conservation and preservation practices that define it as material, monumental, good, aesthetic, and of universal value. On the other hand, a conceptual shift has occurred in the last decade that has legitimized the term 'intangible' to define cultural expressions and practices (storytelling, craftsmanship, rituals, etc.) with the aim of being universally inclusive in avoiding the references to social stratum or inferiority that are perceived to be present in terms like 'folklore', 'traditional', or 'popular culture', and which global cultural politics considers too delimiting or prescriptive. At the same time the historicity of heritage needs to be formalized through material symbolism, which makes the intangible and ephemeral into something that has material form, be it on paper, a book, an audiovisual recording, particular elements of a festival, or an archive. Nevertheless, Laurajane Smith (2006) has argued that in an epistemological sense, all heritage is intangible because of the value ascribed to it and its social impact. The concept of heritage is used to legitimize or make material the intangibilities of culture and human experience. In essence, polarization into tangible and intangible is organizational and political, largely applied in order to demarcate target spheres and areas of expertise; it is the institutional distinction inside heritage industries that needs the division between tangible and intangible heritage. The recent re-theorization of heritage not only as sites, places, performances or events, but rather as a social construction and cultural practice, draws attention to the process of heritage-making by applying and recognizing the social significance of objects and expressions. Heritage is a social construction, a result of the process of 'cultural work' where the creation of heritage is directed by the 'authorized heritage discourse' (Smith 2006).

The latter emanates from a close interconnectedness of relevant national institutions with international organizations such as UNESCO, which has distinguished between the three major areas of heritage through its legal instruments of conventions: cultural heritage, divided into tangible and intangible, and natural heritage. The major documents that focus on and provide impact for heritage and

initiate heritage studies are the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage,* adopted in 1972, and the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, adopted in 2003.

1.3 Engineering

An international convention is a mandatory (legal) instrument for the member states that they are invited to ratify; subsequently they are invited to follow the operational guidelines for implementing the prescription of the document. The UNESCO conventions call for signatory states to prepare inventories, and if entries to various lists are attained, this entails the presentation of a vast amount of descriptive material. In sum, they need to produce documentation, which poses a problem from the point of view of the reification of culture. Any documentation is a parallel act to previous collection practices and is complexly related to issues of ownership, while such practice concerns itself with and highlights the exceptional (even if the opposite is aspired to).

Regina Bendix (2009) has claimed that heritage nominations reflect small-scale power play with large-scale effects of moralizing and ennobling. She contends that regimes of quality control and evaluation are always present in the process of heritagization, which depends on the late modern competitive practices that correspond to and signify the tendencies of 'audit culture', thus labelled and studied in academia by Marilyn Strathern (2000).

Inventorying is by default an act of classification. But it has been claimed that classification is culturally biased, being in essence a Western concern and practice (Arantes 2009, p. 54). The conflict becomes particularly significant when observed from the perspective of the triangle of indigenous groups, issues of ownership, and state. For example, indigenous groups may not wish or allow their intellectual property or environmental knowledge to be registered, because once documented, its ownership may easily pass out of their hands (Napier 2002). Inventorying raises the problem of subjectivity and agency in relation to the state—who has the right to travel, to document, to preserve? For example, in Venezuela inventorying has been carried out by the army, which probably acts in this capacity as it is the only institution accorded such 'liberties' under the prevailing sociopolitical circumstances.

An exercise in identification and categorization of dynamic and vibrant forms of human expression and mental capacities, the making of inventories proves eventually to be a task that instigates heated debates between cultural administrators, policymakers and scholarly experts in the field, but also on a larger scale between different social and political systems as well as between representatives of different historical experience and administrative practices. The principles of management that favour clearly defined categories and tacit hierarchies here confront the scholarly perception of culture that resists fixation and favours the living practices negotiated by their carriers on a daily basis between tradition and

innovation. Drawing up inventories is an ambivalent problem—it is a controversial identification and mapping of cultural phenomena, a defining of communities and their heritage. This is an intervention that generates hierarchies and complicates the position of marginalities. On the one hand, all research relies on some kind of stocktaking, even if only mental stocktaking. Historically, archives and museums function on the basis of making catalogues and lists of cultural elements, even though these may often represent extinct past practices. Yet such a historical overview of culture comes from long-term observation, from going deep into the field, and also from participating. In the case of inventories of living cultural practices, however, the dissecting of different elements into distinct compartments means that cultural phenomena are detached and fragmented into manageable units. Yet cultural planning and management relies inherently on clearly defined and categorized elements. Thus cultural research and cultural politics deviate in essence, although they are actually interdependent. Nevertheless, in the present world of integrated global existence and the continuous collapse of time and space (thanks to the technologies that affect the size and scope of interaction), cultural research and cultural politics are inherently interdependent.

The politics of representation and decision-making happens to favour particular social groups. Antonio Arantes has pointed out that more often than not, the construction of public policies serves the cause of the elites, while he defines two social spheres in society: the cultural communities and the preservation institutions (2009, p. 62). On the other hand—and particularly in the preservationist camp—hybridity continues to be regarded as a negative feature from the perspective of heritage politics. This aspect can create additional friction, for example if we consider Brazilian culture in general, where the overall richness of cultural phenomena and practices derives inherently from hybrid mixtures. It may eventually appear an impossible task to pin down and define the moment when ‘a hybrid’ begins, i.e. when or where a mixture, a combination, a blend, a cross-breeding commences.

The identification and the evaluation of cultural heritage are inevitably surrounded by contestation. Programmes for its preservation and safeguarding pertain simultaneously to the politics of inclusion and exclusion: about who matters, who is counted in, who defines. The veneration of heritage tends to overshadow social inequalities (Bendix 2000). Heritage politics is never neutral, it is all about a choice that is implicitly and explicitly dependent on a notion of purity, whereas it shuns the existence of hybridity and qualities related to it. Heritage is selected or appointed in a complex process that involves particular politics when different groups simultaneously select and promote their symbols (Klein 2006). Furthermore, the relationship between community and heritage need not always be good and comfortable (Smith and Waterton 2009). Communities are not homogeneous, nor is their heritage; disjunctions occur, while the heritage claimed may not be consensual. A lot of social experience and practice can be related to contrast and conflict; these lead to pain and suffering, as has been shown by studies on dissonant heritage (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). This reflects the complexities of how communities define and negotiate memory and identity, how they

communicate and engage with each other. On the other hand, the whole concept of community has been criticized for its presumed universalist claim. The choice as to how we define community membership can have serious social, political and economic impacts on individuals and groups within the state.

The other angle of potential achievement and concurrent deprivation emerges from programmes of development—another mechanism tacitly dependent on cultural engineering and arbitration—that either neglect or manipulate culture, with the potential involvement of communities.

1.4 Universalism and Representation

Heritage is perceived as providing a special sense of communal belonging. Though communities are seen as natural organizations of the populace, they actually come into existence through a need to organize boundaries and to interact with the community's antithesis, e.g. the government (Bennett 1998, p. 201). This becomes apparent in the context of making cultural policies where local communities find an outlet in activism, and seek to create an operational mechanism that gives them agency in local cultural policies. Policy-making will then function and activate at the community level, depending on the inclusion (as well as exclusion) of community representatives. The claims for heritage involve policy-making embedded in the framing of culture and its history and expression, combining insider activism with outside interests that involve political gain.

The politics of heritage protection has been traditionally mobilized from a Euro-American platform based on the presumed universalism of 'World Heritage', the logic of which has widespread effects in international and localized settings (Meskell 2010, p. 196), and impinges on the notions of development, neo-liberalism, and governmentality. The ultimate beneficiary is then the state authorities who manage to showcase 'culture', but is also transnational tourism companies, and perhaps those who gain employment in the process, mostly via consumption through global tourism.

The concept of 'World Heritage' involves a universalist pretension combined with a complex, highly structured praxis, based on uniform criteria descending from global to local contexts, thus inadvertently endorsing a globalizing programme (Turtinen 2000). And yet its impact and reverberations are still most poignant at the local level. An international organization like UNESCO depends on the institutionalization and maintenance of elite power and expert knowledge, while experts often come from the ranks of economic elites.

The underpinning or paradigm of intangible cultural heritage presumably differs from 'world heritage' (that of monuments, architecture and natural sites), the 'intangible heritage' being an outcome of a cultural relativist perspective influenced by postmodernist trends. If World Heritage designates and promotes 'outstanding universal value', then, in turn, Intangible Cultural Heritage manifests 'representativeness' in the regulatory conventions of and aspiring nominations to the UNESCO listing systems. The concept of 'intangible cultural heritage' involves a reflexive

approach which depends on the 'human factor', as the potential for heritage is assumed to be established by its 'bearer' (Bortolotto 2010, p. 98). We might refer here to the notion of 'grassroots globalization' suggested by Arjun Appadurai (2002) when such collaborative approaches to heritage are assumed.

However, the involvement of communities is predestined to be weakened by the national validation process necessary for heritage authorization in the UNESCO system. The United Nations' definition addresses only a 'state party'. To what extent would protecting or safeguarding mechanisms go beyond securing the interest of state parties, in order to be capable of addressing localized needs and delivering culturally appropriate safeguarding mechanisms?

In the field of heritage policy, authority is accorded to expert knowledge and precedence given to professional interventions that create in turn particular communities of interest, involving stakeholders and stewardship. The discursive impact of the concept and perception of cultural heritage paves the way for a battleground of celebration and contestation among those entangled in the process of heritage production. Frictions based on cultural competence appear, conflicts between conservationists and innovators, hierarchies of authority. To a certain extent, these are opposed by local communities who claim ownership of a particular cultural heritage, and by communities for whom reaffirmation of their sense of belonging matters and hence who participate in the process of heritage production.

1.5 Governmentality and Culture

When heritage increases the value of a community, it serves the interest of the state.

With this in mind, it seems inevitable to consider the notion of governmentality in relation to heritage. My work in the anthropology of politics suggests an investigation into the construction and modalities of legitimate authority. As Marc Augé has proposed, in institutionalized power relations one should study not only the rules but also the practices that may be seen to contravene the normative dimensions (Augé and Colleyn 2006, p. 49).

Cultural forms and activities are deployed by governments as part of social management programmes. There is obviously a gap between the government and the communities, defined by various forms of unevenness. The state—a structured and centralized political organization, a mode of grouping and controlling people—is mostly perceived as a source of administrative authority and control, and as a repressive force; it is the entry point for international funds and it exercises control over different kinds of resources. However, it would be better not to see the state simply as an apparatus of power, but to study the diversity of ways in which power is exercised, the mechanisms of domination and stratification, the extension of political networks, the hierarchy of central institutions, the configurations and articulations of authority. One should likewise investigate the mechanism of power

distribution, while distinguishing with Max Weber between power and authority, authority implying a promulgated measure of legitimacy.

Political discourse about a nation state entails disjunctions and discontinuities that are embedded in the political distinctions between centre and periphery. Anna Tsing (1993) has investigated the emergence and design of status-ranked areas from the perspective of unevenness, in order to tease out the logic and mechanisms that construct this gap between the government and the people. In her analysis of the formation of state authority from the perspective of the periphery, Tsing argues the need to move beyond "classic Marxist or Weberian frameworks, in which the state is an instrument of class interests or bureaucratic rationalization", in order to indicate "the symbolic fields in which power and politics are constituted". Scholarly understanding of the state could move "beyond the apparatus of government to show how the magic and power of state are formed in everyday discursive practice" (1993, p. 24) With the term 'state', Tsing refers to "those aspects of the governing, administrative, and coercive apparatus that are experienced as external yet hegemonic". The perspective of the periphery helps her analyse the imposed quality of state authority, and how the categories of state rule are actualized in local politics. 'Village politics' contribute to making the state, but the formation of local communities begins with the subjective experience of being both outside the state and subject to state power. While making explicit the political distinctions between centre and periphery, Tsing points to a dilemma of marginality that implies simultaneous placement inside and outside the state. She proposes to expand analyses of "the working of the state to include the political negotiations of out-of-the-way people" (1993, p. 25). This lends me the framework to study negotiations with the state in creating local cultural politics. Inspired by Tsing's conclusion that official state categories do not have the quality of 'always already', I consider it meaningful to look at cultural politics not as 'always already', but as an emergent framework formed in the nexus of culture, management and community.

When regarding the perspective of the state, the implementation of the framework of 'culture' stands out as the prominent preference: 'culture' is endorsed at state level for its capacity to provide a relief in potential conflict situations; it serves the state as an alternative to those politics that might complicate the state's authority (Tsing 1993).

1.6 Cultural Management

Tony Bennett has argued that the field of culture is now increasingly governmentally organized and constructed (1998, p. 61). He investigates the relationship between culture and the social by analysing the organization of contemporary cultural life through the various levels of engagement in policy-making. He examines the triangle of community, culture and government, to bring out the potential tensions between indigenous community and government, where

government is usually observed from the position of cultural critique with indignation, condemning it as external and impositional, and indifferent or antagonistic to the creative cultural life. Yet it is "precisely from within the practices of government that 'community' acquires this paradoxical value of something that is both to be nurtured into existence by government while at the same time standing opposed to it" (1998. p. 201).

Bennett reaffirms that policy is central to the constitution of culture (1998, p. 106). He has called it "a reformer's science" when drawing attention to the management of cultural resources in a way that goes along with the intention to reform ways of life, as part of active politics and the policy of culture in contemporary society (1998, p. 104). Among the reforming endeavours is situated heritage politics, guided by ambivalent relationships between culture and power, depending on the organizational frameworks and institutional spaces under observation, embedded in the condition of either self-determination or its absence. Bennett's discussion of cultural policy from the perspective of normative mechanism outlines the historical conception of legislative or reforming orientation to culture. He is particularly interested in the management of cultural resources and cultural maintenance and administrative requirements in multicultural policies in particular.

Bennett's contention for the vital significance of cultural politics stands in opposition to Zygmunt Baumann's view of culture as a spontaneous process devoid of an administrative or managerial centre. From Baumann's position of postmodernist critique, culture cannot be 'made' or 'remade' as an object of practice, but should be considered a reality in its own right and beyond control, being "mastered cognitively, as a meaning, and not practically, as a task" (Bennett 1998, p. 102). Bennett considers this position particularly erroneous in multicultural situations (with marginal, minority communities in a modern society without nationalist uniformity) and points to the necessity of legislative mechanisms to produce respectful and tolerant relationships of cross-cultural understanding (1998, p. 103). Concurring with Bennett's claim that such cross-cultural understanding does not emanate naturally from the postmodern condition, I highlight here an important reason for studying cultural politics and how it is applied, or manipulated, at the local or grassroots level. When stating that "we do not only interpret the world, we also shape it" (1998, p. 104), Bennett locates a task of cultural management in the effort to recognize dissimilar cultural values and to promote forms of exchange between them.

1.7 Situatedness and Particularities

To conclude, let me return to what constitutes a heritage regime and how to go about investigating it. The deconstruction of an international 'authorized heritage' regime seems an obvious, though easy, undertaking. But what kind of agency will be gained or lost as a result of such an academic exercise? What is the moral

agenda of this investigation and critique? The descriptive explanatory attitude unavoidably continues to assume normative dimensions such as social criticism, political commitment, and utopian longings, and perhaps even the defence of treasured ideals.

Heritage is a project of ideology that is dependent on ambivalent temporal entanglements. Its conceptualization depends on modernity's sense that the present needs to re-forge links with a past that appears to be severed and lost in the changing world. Its value-laden nature alludes to preservation and celebration of past elements of a reified culture intended to manifest ethnicity, locality and history; and yet the cultural politics involved with heritage proposes to address the concerns of the present, possibly with a perspective on the future. However, like all terms in the discourse of culture, heritage is an abstraction, and what it signifies is subject to an interpretation and an evaluation that may fluctuate between positive and negative over time and space.

Keeping that in mind, my suggestion is to take the situated character of globalization seriously, including in the critical study of heritage regimes, despite their seemingly common mechanisms at an abstract level. While considering the contended perceptions of globalisms, Anna Tsing has emphasized that anthropologists should extend their study of communities as narrowly defined social spheres to a wider-ranging scope of (transnational) networks, social movements, state policies, etc. (2002, p. 472). Transnational and global networks and 'universal' tendencies need to be ethnographically studied to unravel encounters, trajectories and engagements. But these processes with their global implications should not be observed simply as cases of imposed hegemony or self-evident homogenization, because globalist phenomena include not only unification but also local cultural divergence (Tsing 2002, p. 477).

Richard Handler (2002) has contended that cultural processes (such as heritage curation) are inherently particular and particularizing, so it would be unjustified to expect the reverberations and effect of a global policy to function and produce similar results under different circumstances. An anthropological approach advocates an investigation that utilizes different perspectives, so that it could contribute to our understanding of the social world by complicating simplicities. This means that concrete cases would benefit from being studied from a multi-sited perspective (as suggested by George Marcus 1998) which analyses decision-making at various levels: international, national, and particularly local. The local level also needs to be studied and analysed as a multi-sited field.

The observation of communities would penetrate deeper if communities were investigated as particularities—different circumstances make them perceive and employ the emergent potential of recognized agency and the acknowledgement of their cultural rights differently. The claimed universality is criticized for equating with Western values and codes of behaviour, whereas critical studies suggest instead an enabling resolve in pluralist approaches (Messer 1997). It seems important not only to elucidate and examine negative experiences and the violation of rights, but also to define and investigate moments of empowerment, real instances of emergent agency, situations where subjective agents take part in

grassroots policy-making. 'Universal' rights acquire meaning by being applied as local variations. Communities may find agency in different aspects of their local politics. Thus the carefully explored particularities should help us bring out the complexity of the detached universalism of criticizing an institutional regime.

Heritage, itself a late-modern European concept and cultural phenomenon, is most controversial and yet instrumental from the perspective of 'intangible cultural heritage' in the context of non-Western cultural politics—it carries a strong potential for the acquisition of sociopolitical capital as well as channels for economic resources.[2] Cultural heritage has started to play an important role in international culture-orientated politics—cultural traditions and suppressed history have become powerful tools for regions that were dominated in the past. But it involves an ambivalent implementation of the category of time, where the preservation and celebration of past elements of reified culture mentioned above are implemented by cultural politics in order to address the concerns of the present, perhaps with a view to the future. In its programme to empower local and indigenous groups or equip particular expressive forms with political resonance, the employment of the notion of 'cultural heritage' has the capacity to overshadow the complexities of history and politics.

The mapping and identification of 'intangible heritage' as the premise for formulating cultural politics concerning indigenous groups signifies a new phase for them of reformative modernity, where shared experience and practices are transformed into political assets in both local and global arenas. This process inevitably involves the codification of cultural practices into manageable symbols of representation and argumentation. In this context, lived elements of culture are subjected to the discursive impact of previous ethnographic research and the veneration of past repertoires. On the other hand, the project of maintaining intangible heritage at local, national, and possibly international levels denotes an intervention that generates, or re-shifts and complicates, explicit and implicit hierarchies in or for the communities involved. Consequently, culture defined as 'intangible heritage' will eventually appear to be 'in transit'—from lived expressive forms to codified symbols implemented in cultural policy-making, and mediated at national and international levels through various agencies and organizations. However, it is not just a process of outside manipulation, but a two-way street with responsive local representation and appropriation from within in producing cultural, political and also economic agency. I wish to argue that 'heritage' groups are not passive receivers of cultural policies but also actors who make choices in negotiating or rejecting the options available, including those of contradiction and dissent. In the global reconfiguration of 'heritage production' and universal programmes of controversial impact, it seems important to recognize the

[2] In Europe, 'intangible cultural heritage' and the related UNESCO programmes have stirred great interest mostly in Eastern, post-Soviet Europe—explained, perhaps, by their relative political marginalization in comparison to the West, but also by their significant historical experience of the manifestation of identity through pre-industrial practices of expressive culture (Kuutma 2009).

Fig. 1.2 Chinelos at Yautepec's carnival (2009). *Source* photo by Edith Pérez-Flores

enabling conditions for particular instances. Even while concurring with the claim that 'the reification of tradition as culture entails its loss as social practice" (Herzfeld 1992), our research should be extended to observe the ways these 'reifications' function in the maintenance of cultural selfhood (Fig. 1.2).

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