From closed museum spaces to inclusive cultural meeting points: connecting indigenous heritage collections and communities in the Dominican Republic

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CHAPTER 2. Museology and community engagement with heritage collections in Caribbean context and beyond

2.1 Introduction

As the main objective of this dissertation is to identify ways of connecting communities with Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic, a literature review on the topic was the first activity of the research process. Since literature targeting this specific concern—for either the Dominican Republic or the Caribbean in general—is scarce, the present literature review takes a broader stance. It examines studies from Europe, the United States, and Latin America on Indigenous heritage objects, the evolution of museology, documentation issues, community engagement, ethics, and digital access to reveal the potential for connections between communities and Indigenous heritage collections (Ünsal 2019; Cross 2017; Kinsley 2016; Coffey et al. 2015)

This chapter also reviews the context of Dominican Indigenous heritage collections and the challenges posed by decolonial thinking. The review prompted me to realize that European and North American museological models alone are not enough to create a framework for studying how to connect communities with Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic, given its complicated colonial history. The chapter concludes with a positive evaluation of the use of critical museology as a framework to rearticulate knowledge systems and build community-based narratives that are reflective of current meanings assigned to Indigenous heritage collections.

2.2 Objects of wonder and evidence

Seeking to discover how Indigenous heritage objects have been studied, Elvira Vilches (2004) explored the ways "the discoverer's list of wonders," as she categorized them, acted as pieces of the puzzle in the conquest of new lands, the formation of territories, and the control of immense wealth by the Spanish crown (201–202). She linked the tendency of medieval European society to associate the exchange of goods with the "orderly collection of the gift of tribute," as well as the association of market values with the ideas Columbus wanted to convey in writing and his presentations of the evidence of things produced in the newly found lands (Vilches 2004, 203). In her analysis of his *Diario*, she notes that Columbus "made several stops (in Spain) while *en route* to Barcelona to satisfy the crowds," who were curious to see the natives of the lands discovered and the objects they bore (Vilches 2004, 209). Calling on the focus of spectacle, Wayne Modest (2012) also describes

Christopher Columbus's show of wonders from the discovered lands as arguably one of the first "Western collections in the Caribbean" (86). For him, the image of cultural unworthiness reflected in the literature on the encountered territories would later shape collecting practices in the region, contributing, through the type of objects acquired, to a common association of the Caribbean with nature (Modest 2012, 86–87).

While the show-and-tell role of objects from the Americas increased, documentation efforts can be seen to record less cultural data than they should. Objects with little indication of provenience, no documentation of how they were collected, no indication of who specifically made them, or how they were manufactured were placed into a general classification category. The same pattern can be appreciated in another study of influential collections of objects from the Americas, namely the ethnographic collection of Margaret of Austria (MacDonald 2002). This collection, dating from 1516, grew from Charles V's gifts of artifacts from the New World throughout the reign of different monarchies. It was displayed for important visitors and categorized based on who could see which parts of the collection (MacDonald 2002). Margaret of Austria used part of her collection as gifts to solidify alliances and demonstrate her power. The objects were not sequestered in a curiosity cabinet but blended into the palace's architecture (MacDonald 2002, 661–663). Few studies or articles on objects from the New World mention the details of objects from the Caribbean.

The inattention to object details has contributed to the sustained historical negligence of geographical recognition. General geographical descriptions were jotted down as part of lists to link the riches of a significant geographical area that conveyed the imperial power of the owners of the objects displayed. To this end, Keating and Markey (2011) examined the significance of German and Italian inventories of objects documented as "Indian" belonging to the Medici and the Habsburg royal families between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, as both families were significant collectors of conquest items. Their inquiry revealed that objects were classified in the same way even when their origins were from regions as diverse as China, India, Japan, Africa, the Americas, and Europe (Keating and Markey 2011, 283). The authors asserted that the lists of objects were never scrutinized to determine their origin, as the inventory focus was on examining the objects to understand their economic contribution or appeal to European culture (Keating and Markey 2011, 284). The authors offer a list of reasons for the interchange in the use of inventory as a term. These included fantastic conceptions of the geographical location and political denominations of possessed lands and, at times, a lack of understanding of the use of objects (Keating and

Markey 2011). The authors also blame language barriers for the loss of the objects' meaning. In their view, wrongly categorized objects contributed to the objects' reinterpretation within a European context and to indicate what was not European. However, the miscommunication does not fully account for the cultural bias implicit in the reinterpretation of Indigenous Caribbean heritage. Precisely, object descriptions that separated what was not common or familiar—in this case, what was not considered of European nature—is perhaps a foundation for implicit cultural bias.

2.3 Studies of Indigenous collections

The Indigenous heritage collections found in the Museo de America, a major museum in Spain, are dedicated exclusively to Indigenous heritage from the New Continent. In *Imagining America,* David Lyon and Patricia Harris (1995) present the history of the collection, housed in Madrid, Spain. In a review of the collections, they note that the portrayal of both the continent and the contact and colonial periods' challenges reflect a European perspective. The authors indicate that the Museo de America has records from as early as 1572 demonstrating their interest in creating a museum of Indigenous objects. The records depict Francisco de Toledo as the person who initially suggested the idea for a museum, linking his interest in establishing a collection to the organized inventory lists of Felipe II and the King's vast collections already known by 1667. The concept of a museum with objects from the Americas is also linked to Antonio de Ulloa, who created the first Royal Cabinet of Natural History from his 1735 travels, linking it with Carlos III's royal cabinet of archaeology and ethnology (Lyon and Harris 1995). At the end of the eighteenth century, Antonio del Rio's scientific research began to reveal object research that took into account the cultural context of objects gathered abroad. According to the authors, the museum's display of Indigenous collections emphasizes Central American Mayan and Inca objects, highlighting their grandiosity and signaling this as their reason for focusing on material excavated from the continent (Lyon and Harris 1995). This focus may help explain why there has been low interest in excavations in the Caribbean. The lack of grand architectural structures and diversity of objects in the Caribbean makes it harder to argue for the allocation of limited resources to excavate and present cultural narratives. The unleveled visual plain field of display for Caribbean objects may make it more challenging to communicate as these collections cannot be displayed beyond a justification of visual grandiosity.

In a closer panoramic view of collections from the region, the Caribbean collections of the Peabody Museum of Natural History at Yale University serve as references for understanding how Caribbean collections were formed on the American continent at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Peabody is one of the largest privately-owned Caribbean archaeological collections, and along with the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Harvard University, these collections have been studied by scholars with a focus on the history of Caribbean archaeology and the archaeologists who built the collection (Daros and Colten 2009; Guzman 2011). These collecting institutions have become another source of information about the archaeological context of Caribbean objects (Siegel 2009).

The history of the Caribbean archaeological collection at Yale's Peabody Museum of Natural History dates to the 1930s, and rather than focusing on objects, to a large extent, it highlights one of the most widely known archaeologists of the region: Irving Rouse. It was during his extended stays in the Caribbean and Venezuela that he began to formulate his widely known classification of ceramics, for which he highlighted the importance of the study of the object itself as a source for the study of history (Daros and Colten 2009, 51–52). Similarly, Harvard's Caribbean collection was formed from Samuel Kirkland Lothrop's work and his research in Puerto Rico between 1915 and 1917, which resulted in a preliminary pottery classification proposal for Caribbean Archaeology (Guzman 2011, 7–8). Although studies on these collections reveal the importance of the artifacts gathered through the researchers' detailed work, both museums acknowledge that there were very few scientific references to the context of the excavated objects. They do not mention how the collections were created or how they were initially displayed. This lack of information shows that even academic institutions with prestigious reputations and that focus on the work of pioneers of Caribbean archaeology neglected to value the excavated context of objects and sites while also making little connection with the local communities in which the research took place. Peter Siegel (2009) further explored the Caribbean collections at Yale's Peabody Museum, highlighting the importance of museum collections, but he also noted that the quality of recovery and curation methods is what determines the use of collections in problem-oriented research questions, not the lack of detailed contextual information (1–3). In a Caribbean context, the use of these collections for knowledge generation depends on the capacity to elaborate research projects. In the Caribbean, museum personnel do not tend to have enough capacity to support the expansion of research production academically.

With the growing concern about documentation practices on the Caribbean islands, a publication was released that may become a standard reference for helping heritage institutions explore how to improve collection documentation: the edited volume *Decolonizing the Caribbean Record: An Archives Reader*, by Bastian, Aarons, and Griffin (2018). The essays in this collection give a historical perspective on archiving and record-keeping practices in the region. The publication also analyzes the challenges faced at the institutional and governmental levels while presenting different approaches to dealing with current archival practices and issues of identity.

In a different light, reviewing a broader scope of literature helped understand how a lack of early systems for cataloging item details turned the reports of early collecting and looting practices into adventure tales that spoke of knowledge and glory in unexplored lands. The accounts of Vilches (2004), as well as those of Keating and Markey (2011), MacDonald (2002), and Daros and Colten (2009), criticize how narratives of the riches obtained on conquest expeditions made the collectors the stars of the exhibitions, rather than the items themselves or historical documents about the collections. The objects that account for a de-contextualized history of conquest and colonial times seem only to be a reference for setting the stage to present the stories of the people that gathered them. Objects obtained on conquest and colonial expeditions were therefore considered secondary data as carriers of cultural meaning by writers who recorded traveling and collecting accounts.

Janet Owen (2006) offers the relevant parallel of colonial collecting practices under British imperialism. The emphasis was on the collector or explorer, and as she acknowledges, there was little systematic structure to the collecting activities. Owen (2006) notes that natural history specimens collected in the nineteenth century were also studied in greater detail than ethnographic materials collected in the same period, and little regard was paid to their classification (14). In her study, Owen showed how the British Museum developed displays based on the organization of ethnographic material by geographical region. She indicates this was partly due to the museum wanting to satisfy its audience, which was interested in learning about exotic objects that highlighted differences with their European culture, rather than understanding the culture of their creators (Owen 2006, 14). Important expeditions often collected items based on the journey's geographical scope, what could fit in the ship, or what people were willing to give (Owen 2006, 14). Ethnographic collections served as a symbol of status and authority. Their use was transformed to justify claims of Western cultural

superiority (Owen 2006, 15–24), giving low priority to contextual information about the originating cultures of the Americas.

Based on colonial governments' different interests throughout time, the documentation regarding the contact and conquest periods is valued differently (Serna 2011). Post-contact and colonial accounts are a primary source of documentation of Indigenous history and culture in the Caribbean. Colonial documentation has been the basis for the establishment of the Caribbean scientific vision and approach. Still, the fantastic and imaginative character of Spanish chronicles has also led to the questioning of the historical reliability of these documents (Serna 2011). Mercedes Serna (2011) points out that studies in colonial libraries "show a generalized disinterest for the history of the New World." She also highlights that some studies indicate that the lack of colonial interest was due to the Indigenous population's own disinterest and its desire to "maintain contact with European ideology and culture" (351). From 1573 onwards, the Spanish crown gave specific indications on what to document and how to structure the accounts, prescribing an official format for reporting what happened in the New World and rejecting what was not of interest or benefit to the royal government (Serna 2011). In her article "Censorship and Inquisition in the Chronicles of the Indias: Of Its Adversities and Misfortunes" (personal translation of the title), Serna (2011) indicates that the lack of rigor in documentation is a reason for the censorship of the colonial publications. However, Serna (2011) does not go into a detailed analysis of the reasons for the change in the way official accounts on the discovered lands were reported. Serna (2011) also highlights how subsequent eighteenth-century colonial documentation originated from travel accounts, as adventurers were allowed to move more freely around the different American colonies. She also points out how the travelers relied on the initial chronicles and continued to minimize the importance of reliable documentation. The spread of such information significantly contributed to the ongoing reinterpretation of Indigenous heritage objects, as ethnographic accounts are still considered a main source of information for Caribbean archaeological studies.

Considering the study of museum objects more specifically, contemporary criticism on issues of documentation regarding knowledge embedded in Indigenous objects has been made by Lindh and Haider (2010). In their analysis of texts from "internationally dominant organizations" (World Intellectual Property Organization, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the International Federation of Library Associations), they use "traditional

knowledge" to define Indigenous knowledge and make traditional knowledge part of the definition of economically disadvantaged people (9). While in the article, "knowledge" mainly refers to the Indigenous knowledge of contemporary Indigenous groups, the authors' analysis can be applied to the knowledge embedded in archaeological objects and the lack of documentation practices regarding the cultural information that these objects usually convey. As an expression of domination, descriptions may be seen as manifestations of discursive structures (Lindh and Haider 2009, 12) that can be related to the interests of the conquest period. For the authors, acknowledging the contribution of documentation as part of an information management approach can foster a different way of learning and communicating knowledge (Lindh and Haider 2009, 13). If there is indeed a decrease in the use of colonial historical accounts as primary sources of information for documenting Indigenous heritage objects, both locally and internationally, then the understanding gained could help heritage managers reconfigure the way these objects are viewed and displayed, as well as the way communities learn from objects in museums.

2.4 From colonial collecting to modern museology in Europe, America, and the Caribbean

As in Caribbean archaeology, studies regarding Indigenous heritage collections from the Caribbean must begin with the archaeological record (Rangel Rivero 2018; Keegan and Hofman 2017; Siegel 2011; Hofman et al. 2008; Wilson 2008), the historical context of the European conquest, and the colonization process that still retains its impact on the region over 500 years later (Curet 2016; Alegria 1997). The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries witnessed the first systematic collecting approaches on the part of private collectors in Europe. They used either economic, political, or religious power to gather objects from conquests, nature, and artistic creations and make them available in specific spaces for the public to observe and admire (Delpuech 2015; Günay 2012; Keating and Markey 2011; Cabello Carro 2008, 1994, 1989; Oliver et al. 2009; Perez Linares 2008; García Arévalo 1988a; García Arévalo 1988b).

In what is acknowledged as one of the first museological treaties, Samuel Quiccheber's 1565 *Inscriptiones* laid out the initial thematic organization of royal collections and displays of objects. The treaty provided a brief framework for the definition of museums, as well as what is today considered an early museological approach to classifying museums based on the type of collection they had and details of the founder (Kuwakino 2013; Quiccheberg et al. 2013, 23).

These early knowledge systems for cataloging collections were able to be replicated as Europe and later the United States expanded its conquered territories and colonial horizons through the Caribbean and the Americas. Over the course of centuries, officials, individual adventurers, and those interested in science took up the task of collecting manufactured items, exotic specimens of nature that they deemed of interest and any material evidence that could justify the need to control trade and the establishment of colonies (Isaac and Isaac 2016; Bennet et al. 2014; Russo 2011). These modes of collecting items from nature and from non-European cultures (ter Keurs 2009), alongside Spain's increasing commercialism and its collection practices during the nineteenth century (Mora 2013, 10), affected how collections in modern ethnographic, historical, and archaeological museums formed well into the twentieth century. During this time, collectors and institutions intended to preserve the local history of the distant past based on antiquarian archetypes of collecting (Lewis n.d.; Curet 2011). The replication of these collection practices was first documented in the United States (Lewis n.d.), and later in the Caribbean, where several of the major national museums still maintain early classificatory structures for cataloging their collections (Cummins 2004; Maréchal 1998).

In late 1930s Spain, the creation of the Museo de America reflected an emphasis on highlighting Spanish imperial sentiment. In the early 1940s, Spanish historians, anthropologists, ethnographers, and archaeologists emphasized research that reflected a nationalist identity in the museum's exhibition spaces (Betrisey Nadali 2015, 96–102). There are collectors and institutions in the Dominican Republic that still value the Spanish-centric approach to display based on a particular individual's interest in collecting heritage objects and natural specimens as it was done during the mid-1900s (participant interview, June 20, 2016; participant interview, June 21, 2016).

Regarding modern views of museums, Wayne Modest (2012) has eloquently pointed out the cultural limbo in which numerous Caribbean museums find themselves today:

> [The] notions of the ancient and the modern have helped to shape early museological interest and practices in the Caribbean […] The region has come to be defined materially primarily through its natural and not its cultural history, and thus it is represented as a place of nature and not of culture. (85)

Along with other writers, Modest speculates on how the "place of nature" label further cemented the conception of Indigenous populations as noble savages from the past for centuries to come— thereby affecting the African population, who also became seen as noble

savages, since they too were enslaved after forcibly being brought to the Caribbean (White 1985 and Edmondson 1999, in Modest 2012), and considered disposable labor for the economic development of the Europeans. The enslaved Indigenous and African populations were trapped in such a cultural void that even today, it is still hard to find them represented in material culture collections beyond the traditional conceptions of display (Modest 2012, 89).

Moving from curiosity cabinets to massive displays of objects that showed the European world the wonders of nature and different peoples from the Caribbean, museology as a discourse of power and education became well established with the advent of the prominent museums (the British Museum, the Louvre, and El Prado) created in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Despite European collecting practices being rooted in elitism and the display of new commercial wealth (Mora 2013), the desire for the diffusion of knowledge drove the creation of the first large museums in North America in the nineteenth century. Canada established the New Brunswick Museum first, in 1842, followed by the United States, with the Smithsonian in 1846, the American Museum of Natural History in 1869, and the Metropolitan Museum in 1870. In 1822, Mexico's government formally established an antiquities conservatory and a natural history cabinet while major archaeological excavations took place in the capital (Galindo y Villa 1922; Podgorny 2008, Lopes and Podgorny 2000). In a parallel manner, South America also experienced a surge in museums. Public collecting institutions that displayed cultural and natural artifacts opened their doors to the public in Argentina in 1812; Brazil, in 1818; Colombia, in 1824; Chile, in 1830; Uruguay, in 1837; and Peru, in 1891 (Lewis n.d.), while Venezuela founded its national museum in 1875 (Caballero 2001.; Lopes and Podgorny 2000).

The early academic and archaeological research criteria for registering heritage collections from the Caribbean are best reflected in Cuba. The dominant class of the Cuban plantation economy paved the way for the creation of seven museums between 1842 and the first quarter of the twentieth century, as private collectors were documented to have collected objects from the war against Spain (García Perdigon 2014, 65–66). After the 1950s, in the wake of the Cuban revolution, which bore a significant focus on education and early legislation for the protection of cultural heritage, the island began developing a framework for supporting the expansion of museum initiatives (Argaillot 2012). It is also in the history of Cuban museums that the earliest scholarship activities at Caribbean museums is found. Cuban researchers of the 1850s developed collection registries, wrote scientific articles, and carried out comparative studies of collections from Cuba and other parts of the Antillies

(Dacal Moure and Rivero de la Calle 1997). Similarly, Puerto Rico's archaeological research records date the establishment of museums there to the middle of the nineteenth century (Alegria 1997), as well as the studies done in Jamaica by researchers of the Institute of Jamaica also date the creation of museums there to the mid-nineteenth century (Howard 1956, cited in Modest 2012).

Efforts toward the establishment of a museum culture in the Caribbean can be appreciated through the implementation of systematic anthropological studies in early Cuban archaeological explorations, where materials were reported as finds, described, and preserved for further study (Hernandez Gonzalez and Maciques Sanchez 1992). Cuba has collection records that date its classification attempts to as early as the eighteenth century (Hernandez Gonzalez 1992). For the Dominican Republic, the earliest formal discussion for establishing a national museum began in 1903; the museum officially opened in 1927. The first heritage legislation called for the protection of archaeological objects by declaring them as national heritage. The language used in the legislative text signals that archaeological objects in possession of private citizens were to remain safe from the threat of state appropriation (Pina 1978). This will be further explored in Chapter 4.

2.5 Communities and their connections with museum collections

Academic reflections on traditional, modern, and old museology started in the 1970s. Duncan Cameron's critique questioned whether museums were temples or forums, as he feared museums were losing their focus (Cameron 1971; Chinnery 2012). In 1985, de Varine defined new museology as "an idea of the museum as an educational tool in the service of societal development" (de Varine 1985 cited in Hauenschild 1988). An initiative to develop a new museological approach was spearheaded by French museologists Georges Henri Riviére and Hugues de Varine, the latter having first coined the term "Ecomuseum," which enhanced the visibility of the sector's concerns in France's environmental agenda (de Varine 2014). Peter Vergo's 1989 publication on the need to create new approaches in museology served as the foundation of a new paradigm. Vergo (1989) and other authors contributed essays that sought to highlight how the field focused more on museums' methods than their purpose, allowing theoretical discussions to be neglected and preventing new museology's promotion to a recognized discipline in the humanities (Vergo 1997, 3–5).

As discussions of new museology took form in France, attempts to change how museums included the public in their activities developed around European concerns for

structure and organization, hoping to cast audiences as "actors and objects of the museum's work" (Rivard 1984, 16 cited in Hauenschild 1988). The discussions then moved from Britain to the United States, where they were linked with previous debates on representation and politics in museums and whether or not museums should be recognized as institutions for the benefit of society (Stam 1993). The main issues examined the impact of the value assigned to objects; the re-contextualization of objects that were assigned meaning; the regulated access of audiences to collections; the politics behind the control of research and collections, and the monetary gain that collections represented (Stam 1993, 270-271). This movement became a breaking point in the perceived notion of the exclusive and object-based institution (Bennett 1995, Hooper-Greenhill 2000). Stephen Weil (1999) articulated this evolution of museum discussions in his seminal work *From Being about Something to Being for Somebody: The Ongoing Transformation of the American Museum*. In what has become known as the "paradigm shift," Weil (1999) discussed his projections for museums shifting their focus toward educational services to the public rather than traditional collections-centered work. As Weil conceived the shift as taking place across public and private institutions (1999), it is relevant to the creation of connections between Indigenous heritage collections and communities for the purpose of contributing to heritage preservation and protection in the Caribbean. Per Weil (1999), museums that want to make themselves more attractive to visitors have to do this based on the public's needs and interests (232–233).

UNESCO's 1982 report on "Museums, Heritage and Cultural Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean" focused on issues of management, illicit traffic of cultural objects, economic support, and descriptive cases on the formation of cultural institutions. This became the first major document circulated internationally to provide a platform for museum professionals in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO 1982) for addressing policy issues for the region after the 1972 World Heritage Convention. At the same time, new museology discussions in Latin America found support in Néstor García Canclini's (1990) critique of hybrid cultures and the commercialization parameters of art within his analysis of the region's tensions between deep-rooted traditions and its desired modernity. Additionally, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), which proposed a new pedagogical structure, placing teachers and students on an equal footing as teachers and learners, also helped contextualize the initial museum discussions regarding cultural and educational issues in Latin America. Freire's (1970) conceptions of education contributed to further anthropological questioning where modern Western models of cultural studies were being

explored in the backdrop of education, to include Latin America's history for creating citizenship. Nevertheless, on a regional level, throughout the decades, museum discussions have remained an echo of Western issues where authors identify instances where new museology concerns are found in Latin American museums (DeCarli 2004; Navarro y Tsagaraki 2009).

Today's notion of museology encourages new communication and styles of expression (Desvallées and Mairesse 2010), wider access, and diversity of museum audiences (Stam 1993). Furthermore, it considers museums as having increased power in transforming how knowledge is produced (Űnsal 2019). Museology has also helped redefine the role of the community and hopes for a more active role for the public. Nevertheless, after more than 40 years of museological discussions, there has been no consensus on what the benefits of the new museology framework have been. Despite more structured analysis for improvement in the use of theory (Ross 2004), transformation in governmentality (Bennet 1988, 1995), and inclusion and education (Hooper-Greenhill 2000), it is still difficult to point out how effective the implementation of new museology has been for museums. The discussions have also remained centered on European and United States museums, with meager attempts in Latin America (Ariese 2018).

Exploring who could form the tenets of the heritagescape of collections housed in museums, Stylianou-Lambert (2010) studied the audience research of the past 50 years and showed how theories on the behavior and responses of museumgoers have changed. According to Stylianou-Lambert (2010), the behavior of museum visitors and their responses have fluctuated from the use of paradigms known as effects and gratification approaches, as identified by Blumler, and Katz (1974), and the incorporation and resistance models of processing information elaborated by Stuart Hall (1989; 1999), to the paradigm of spectacle/performance as identity formation in everyday life, as presented by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998). In the museum context, for Stylianou-Lambert (2010), every audience interaction needs to consider power or resources (social, economic, cultural), audience activity, and the museum's responsibility to provide a visitor experience. Access to resources considers identifying the power relations at play in a museum visit, and museums are not always considered transformative spaces (Stylianou-Lambert 2010). An active audience does not always translate to critical reflection, and the use of technology does not guarantee that the audience interprets the message (Stylianou-Lambert 2010). According to Stylianou-Lambert (2010), the biggest challenge is to find the balance between fostering critical

thinking and responsibly supporting audience activity (141–142, also citing Sandell 2007). Finding this balance is particularly challenging in the context of Dominican Indigenous collections, as there are no visitor studies that help measure museum audience interaction.

O'Neill (2008) also explores the question of responsibility with his attempt to establish the value of museums as public goods. By analyzing various reports, the utility of museums, the role of government, expectations, preoccupations people have about museums, and democratic values, O'Neill (2008) considers that he has found the issue with defining the current role of museums in society. For him, the confusion museums have is not about their role, but more an "inability to provide a rationale for their being funded by the public, and not being able to respond to society's interest in a democratic manner" (O'Neill 2008, 28). For him, the non-responsiveness of museums in a democratic system questions the value assigned to public goods (O'Neill 2008, 303). He attributes the continued patronage of museums to what could be considered "a tribute to the power of the objects, from which people derive satisfaction rather than because of the curator's approach to display" (O'Neill 2008, 303).

Judging by the programs offered to visitors, Dominican museums do not follow current museum trends of not revolving around the accumulation of objects. Concerning the connections between museums and communities, the offerings Dominican public and private museums most often propose are the guided or self-guided general tours of collections. None of the museums in the country that claim Indigenous heritage collections have the capacity to radically change their displays (which in some instances have remained the same for over 30 years). The museums have staff with limited pedagogical skills to guide tours, design programs, or conduct academic research in line with their communities' didactic needs.

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's (2007) analysis of objects and their role in communicating heritage can help transform the way Dominican museums with Indigenous heritage collections work with communities to move beyond mere object contemplation. Hooper-Greenhill (2007) indicates that museums today tend to present objects accompanied by associations, production actions, educational programs, and diverse uses of the space to create experiences that reflect multiples voices and perspectives. For her, the museum can provide dynamic spaces to identify its "interpretative communities," which can be recognized by their "common frameworks of intelligibility, interpretive repertoires, knowledge, and intellectual skills" (Hooper-Greenhill 2007, 78, citing Lingborg 1988). This discussion of the modernist museum and the postmodern approach to creating a "new museum concept"

(Hooper-Greenhill 2007, 80–82), together with Peter Davis's (2007) argument that answers can be found as to how museums and collections are exploited, provides a wider scope for exploration. Davis sees museums open to assigning new meaning to objects, or, in extreme cases, similar to the way topics can be interpreted without any reference to real objects (2007). He also points out a basis for considering narratives that go beyond the displays as an interactive option for Dominican museums to work above their modernist limitations which mostly focus on the object contemplation and not the interaction between audiences and collections (Davis 2007).

Connecting archaeology and communities, Agbe-Davies (2010) explores how archaeological research has employed the term "community" in the Caribbean and the United States by looking at several archaeological projects and the communities identified in them to determine how to make archaeological practice more inclusive. She has found that the term has been used in a scholarly context since the seventeenth century, but there is no consensus on its use. Anthropology has given the term "community" the connotation of a group having a common interest, the same geographical location, or a similar social system (Agbe-Davies 2010, 373). She highlights the fact that researchers need to recognize their subjective bias in assigning meaning to the term "community" in order to work effectively "with stakeholders of all kinds," considering ever-changing and nonhomogeneous aspects of the community and the different ways researchers can become integrated in order to serve them well (Agbe-Davies 2010, 384–385).

Searching for discussions of community politics, engagement, and museum exhibitions, Alexandra Chan (2010) points out that "without context, an artifact is, metaphorically, mute" (174). She has studied how museum displays have isolated objects or grouped them into stylistic categories. She argues that public archaeology must empower and engage museumgoers in order for them to understand how knowledge of objects is generated and to make it more evident that the objects are cultural knowledge in themselves (Chan 2010). As Chan points out, landscapes can be "read" as maps of social relations in the past, even when the cultural systems that produced them no longer exist, and the artifacts exhibited can become information sources for decoding meaning (Chan 2010, 176–177, 181). For her, if tours can be designed to bring about critical reflection, museum audiences will become engaged by generating their own debates (Chan 2010, 187).

One particular Caribbean case touches upon a conglomerate of museum and heritage offers articulated from a governmental perspective. This systematic offer, coordinated by the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana in Cuba, was created in 1938 to preserve the architectural value of historic buildings. This action led to the establishment of a cultural institution that contributes to local development primarily through its work with the local community (Cardenas and Conde 2012). Specifically, museums serve as the central support for numerous cultural activities organized by the multiple cultural organizations that coordinate dynamic offerings in the historic city, including exhibitions, films, and conferences on identity and cultural topics (Cardenas and Conde 2012, 23). Despite challenges such as the need for greater education and professional development, as well as more observations from the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data on visitors, such cultural projects get youth and senior citizens more closely involved with museums (Cardenas and Conde 2012, 26). Through the use of school visits to museums, thematic tours, and the inclusion of recreational activities in medical care for the elderly with physical challenges or Alzheimer's disease, the interaction with museum collections has been transformed (Cardenas and Conde 2012, 24–25).

The idea of community use of museum spaces suggests the new way museums think about their audiences, and they usually associate the term with a group of people from a similar locality or who belong to the same age or ethnic group (Crooke 2010, 19). In exploring local histories, museums use interpretation strategies to examine stories, places, and collections with community members and display the results in exhibitions at local centers and museums, moving beyond stereotypes created by history (Crooke 2010). Crooke (2010) refers to the community as "the building blocks of heritage" and to heritage as "the customs, language, landscape, history, artifacts, and monuments that define a community" (17).

Another case study that examines archaeology's role in linking museum collections with their audiences is Hauptaman and Svangerg (2008). The authors analyzed three projects at the Swedish Museum of National Antiquities to explore the role of public archaeology and collection practices that could have a long-term impact on the perception of exhibited objects. In the project "Future Memories," the museum invited the public to decide what the exhibition would consist of. For the project "Archaeologist for a Day," visitors could take part in an excavation of the museum's central courtyard. In the "Public Contract Archaeology" program, museum staff generally not considered part of archaeological

projects became part of the implementation team. The results ranged from very personal reflections on the material exhibited, the educational possibilities designed with visitors, the public's use of collections' databases, and museum staff's engagement at different levels (Hauptaman and Svangerg 2008). The authors explained that the "way museums work with collections will structure and limit how they may engage with audiences and communities" and that those "limits and structures may only become visible if actively explored" (Hauptaman and Svangerg 2008, 256).

Regarding how public institutions have studied archaeological collections for the public's benefit, a technical brief from the Archaeology Program of the United States National Park Service concluded that staff's lack of familiarity with the objects "impedes the ability to explore the full potential of archaeological collections for outreach and education" (Moyer 2006, 1). The National Park Service (Moyer 2006) sought to identify the benefits of connecting with the public and found that archaeological collections can help visitors develop skills, increases public engagement in learning about the past, and provides valuable research materials to a range of fields. Their recommended actions include adopting the habit of identifying in publications where the collections are stored, making gray literature reports more accessible and better known as resources (Moyer 2006). The recommendations also include using existing collections to test new hypotheses; valuing and promoting collection research for graduate research; working with museums to identify the collections they curate and encouraging their use through web and print publications; and teaching and inspiring students about their stewardship responsibilities for collections (Moyer 2006).

2.6 The ethics of collecting, displaying, ownership, and access

In exploring ethics and Indigenous heritage collections, Sackler (1998) provides a generic definition of collecting while examining the underlying ethics of collecting Native American objects and their impact on intercultural relationships. The study addresses the questions of what benefits these collections yield, why people collect, and what value there is in collecting, with curiosity and accumulation tendencies topping the list of possible motives for collectors (Sackler 1998, 133–135). For Sackler, at the end of the twentieth century, museums began to be more concerned with the contextualization of the objects they held "as opposed to their long-accepted approach of positioning all objects as isolated instances of a timeless global heritage," providing more grounds for the polemic debate between contingent and intrinsic value (1998, 137). Even though Sackler's study concerns living Indigenous

cultures and their rights to have their objects repatriated, the ethical issues inherent in a decontextualized collection apply to most Dominican museums, with their under-documented archaeological collections. Sackler's study (1998), together with Chippindale and Gill's study (2000) of seven newly formed collections from the United States, Middle East, and Europe, reveals that at the start of the twentieth century, there was a common tendency for museums to amass major collections whose objects did not have much-contextualized documentation. The identification of provenance, the ownership pedigree of an art piece, has been prioritized at the expense of provenience, knowing the object's original context—making the ownership history the primary reference for the perceived value of the objects (Chippindale and Gill 2000, 467-468). Although the ethical studies reviewed do not list the reasons why decontextualization is disregarded when creating collections, the focus of the trade and curatorial practices today continue to be on objects.

At a broader level, issues of provenance, context of archaeological research, and ethics can be related to the Indigenous heritage of the Americas, as addressed by Rosemary Joyce (2013). Joyce (2013) reflects on the role of the archaeology and tourism fields in the development of narratives, in guidebooks, and guided tours of archaeological sites that simplify the original settlers' cultural complexity. Similar issues exist in museum collections in the Dominican Republic, where context cannot be established. The focus on the collector, the aesthetics of the objects, or general ethnographic considerations reflects how—as Joyce)2013) points out regarding archaeological sites in Central America— "genres are shot through with power relations of the most subtle form since they are reproduced by example, unanalyzed, inherent in how knowledge is experienced" (302). The lack of context and consideration for ethical issues can be addressed by raising awareness of the benefits the collections have yielded in the Caribbean historical spectrum while exploring collectors' motives for gathering archaeological material and the value of having extensive collections of cultural material.

Another aspect explored within the heritagescape of Indigenous collections is that of ownership. Peter Lindsay (2012) has examined issues related to the public ownership of cultural material, the debates surrounding its removal from its place and circumstances of origin, and the notion, in both legal as well as moral terms, of belonging. He established that such objects are part of a country's psychological landscape (Lindsay 2012, citing Greenfield 1995, 42), showing how objects have been used in the discourse of political manipulation and how nations have contributed to the identity debate surrounding dominance and exclusion

(Lyndsay 2012, 8–9). For him, looted heritage has been glorified, commercialized, and archived as objects of collections and status (Lyndsay 2012). He highlights that the UNESCO 1970 Convention indicates "the true value (of cultural property) can be appreciated only in relation to the fullest possible information regarding its origin, history and traditional setting" (Lindsay 2012, citing Cuno 2008, 26). Lindsay (2012) further points out that "whether they are treated as (public goods) depends on the strength of myriad political considerations" (12). As major cultural institutions with Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic were formed against the backdrop of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, decontextualized and under-documented objects were confirmed as national heritage that could be held under public or private care. Collections that opened to the public in the 1970s and 1980s displayed objects as art created by the long-gone Indigenous settlers. Public museums, as well as private collectors, were celebrated for making Indigenous art and general ethnographic knowledge available to the public, as important archaeological events in the Dominican Republic are dedicated to early archaeologists and collectors (Tavares María and García Arévalo 2003; 2005).

Learning what has been written on museums as places of cultural reflection can help improve how the Dominican Republic's archaeological heritage is made available. Using Anthony Shelton's (1992), analysis of public access and the use of ethnographic collections to relate to historical relationships and locality museums in the Dominican Republic with under-documented collections can use best-practice approaches to link legislation regulation. Analysis of public access can also help keep objects together in order to better illustrate economic, political, or military concepts from similar regions: "Once properly arranged, galleries can become doors that open between different worlds of thought and practices, rather than institutional confirmations of Western prejudices" (Shelton 1992, 12).

When reviewing articles to consider how museums have been perceived to connect cultural memory with a Caribbean or Dominican heritagescape, Tony Bennett's (1998) analysis of James Clifford's (1997) concept of contact zones becomes useful in conceiving of the museum as a scene of conversation rather than one of exhibition. Bennett analyzed how museum professionals have emphasized that instruction is supposed to be directed by the eyes because, in unstructured displays, visitors wander aimlessly, placing the mastery of the display in those that arranged it. To Bennett (1998), the inadequacy of display practices inherited from nineteenth-century knowledge-ordering conventions emphasized content and

how this content must reflect the knowledge of constituencies that have been historically neglected.

2.7 Digital connections with heritage

Museums have been integrating technology in object management since the late 1960s as pointed out by Burton Jones (2008) in "The Transformation of the Digital Museums." For her, technology has brought about unprecedented access to collections information and has provided greater transparency for how museums care for their collections (Burton Jones 2008). With the rise of the world wide web, the spectrum of museum jobs has also expanded to include a need for increased knowledge of technological platforms in order for museums to provide services to their audiences through information technology. Object research through digital imaging and access to object documentation are only but a few of the options for connecting with heritage collections now (Burton Jones 2008). Nevertheless, digitization of collections and the digitalization of museum services does not come without complications and challenges. Intellectual property rights, connectivity, digital literacy, and cost of rapidly changing technology can be a cumbersome task for both audiences and museums and might limit access if done haphazardly (Burton Jones 2008).

As digital access has expanded, Tereza C. Scheiner (2008) has identified international entities that contribute to the development of global cultural policy, such as UNESCO's programs, that support the identity of specific groups and to world heritage that can be linked digitally. Searching for new ways to take action, Scheiner proposed the digital space as a brief but significant stance, with multiple layers and complexity, and one that could be used for social expression on the public and private levels simultaneously. For her, virtuality can work on the social and individual levels, as well as on the particular and the collective ones with no less legitimacy than physical spaces (Scheiner 2008, 29). The recognition of virtual spaces as significant tools for the dissemination of information could help redefine the concepts of "heritage" and "museum" in order to accommodate local peculiarities in a globalized culture (Scheiner 2008, 28–30). Whatever meaning individuals and social groups assign to these two concepts can be accommodated as cultural expressions that are possible to manifest through today's virtual social media use. For the context of the Dominican Republic, the virtual space is a physically accessible outlet for cultural expression and could be adapted by heritage museums to have people help them redefine the quality of the relationships and services they wish to establish, as pointed out by Serna (2011, 29).

The digitalization of objects can become the basis of studies that focused on community interaction with museum collections in nontraditional ways. Srinivasan et al. (2010) argue that up to the mid-twentieth century, objects in collections tended to be presented, researched, and displayed as markers of collective knowledge based on their historical treatment as scientific specimens, but that in the past decades, museums have become more conscious of showing how objects are part of social practice. The authors argue that museums can become true contact zones when "expert" communities "are empowered to articulate and state their claim to an object" (Srinivasan et al. 2010, 737). This could happen when museums make their objects available digitally for communities to access their cultural information, transforming the objects into a means to illustrate world culture and putting a spotlight on their educational role (Srinivasan et al. 2010, 742-743).

When comparing the cases of the Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology at Cambridge University, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and the Ashiwi Awan Museum and Heritage Center, the authors found that specific ideologies underpinned their documentation, each portraying objects as "complex, socially understood things" (Srinivasan et al. 2010, 744). They proposed making deeper associations of the different accounts linked to objects to become the primary focus of documentation. The authors argue that deeper associations at the heart of the curatorial practice reflect different ideologies related to the objects' biographies, as they believe it is at the cataloging level that objects maintain their enduring identity (Srinivasan et al. 2010, 747). For them, the digitalization of objects presents an organic dimension for the proper documentation of objects, as it provides more mobility and flexibility to portray the objects' background (Srinivasan et al. 2010). The breadth and depth of the audience's connection with such objects may thus well depend on how their documentation is interpreted in a digital setting. Curators of Indigenous heritage objects need to take the complexities of social messages in diverse educational contexts into account.

Similarly, Vermeylen and Pilcher (2009) explored curatorial practices and online features that could help in displaying Indigenous cultural heritage which reflects the voices of Indigenous peoples. The authors identified how museums contribute to combating social inequality by incorporating the discourses and critical reflections of Indigenous peoples into their display narratives, helping address the criticism that museums only represent the colonizers' views (Vermeylen and Pilcher 2009).

Although the considerations in the article relate to living Indigenous cultures, the emphasis on how the digital realm provides museums the opportunity to form networks from collaborative projects furthers the conversation about the multiple levels of connections that are possible. The authors caution against replicating traditional museum displays based on a Western discourse of "only one dominant perspective" (Vermeylen and Pilcher 2009, 70), recommending the inclusion of multiple narratives. In the Caribbean context, community-based perspectives can transform the way Indigenous heritage narratives are portrayed.

In considering technology and free access to information as possible tools for changing the museums' surroundings, Hogsden and Poulter (2012) argue that digitalization has the potential to expand the wide array of connections that can be formed between audiences and physical and digital objects. Hogsden and Poulter also use James Clifford's (1997) concept of contact zones, which calls for the decentralization of collection information and the variegation of exhibition venues as a means of enhancing audience interaction with the knowledge the objects convey; this can contribute to creating new forms of encounters between audiences and objects (Hogsden and Poulter 2012, 187). For the authors, contact with objects beyond museum walls through such proposed digital networks can operate at the macro-outreach level (Hogsden and Poulter 2012). As with Vermeylen and Pilcher (2009), contact zones do not have to be exclusively shaped by traditional museum displays. Communities may also play a role in defining what these zones are to help shape the modern context of Indigenous heritage discussions in the Dominican Republic.

Building on digital access to information, mapping studies of museums have proven useful to understanding access and participation in Latin America. Malena Bastias (2013) mapped the diverse museum offerings in the region, taking into account the conceptualization and implementation of cultural policy and programs based on the framework of cultural rights in Latin American museums. According to Bastias (2013), the framework accommodates the region's varied notions of cultural rights, a difference that is due to the diversity of policies and discussions from country to country. For her, a more cohesive definition can be obtained by agreeing on clearer definitions of access and participation. She bases her proposed definitions on UNESCO's recommendations regarding access—considered as knowledge and information management, as well as participation—the active integration in processes for the definition, recognition, and decision-making regarding cultural references and manifestations (Bastias 2013, 4, citing Farida Shaheed 2011).

Bastias's (2013) study covered museums in Colombia, Chile, Peru, and Uruguay. It contributed to mapping the tendencies of regional museums based on their contents and programs for audience development and community participation, confirming that there is a growing change in the definition of museums in Latin America and their social and cultural roles (Bastias 2013).

While searching for studies on collection management practices and the possible use of more fundamental and practical mapping techniques, the only such study that was found addressed geographic mapping as a way to expand information about objects (Traver and McKeague 2010). Traver and McKeague (2010) analyzed the Museum Artefact Geographical Interface project, which virtually reconnects museum objects with their original locations and other resources at a national level. As in most museums created during colonial times or imperial expansion, museums that held Scottish artifacts had scarce documentation, descriptions, and classification information. The project combined entries from collection catalogs, relevant excavation sites, and information from related databases.

Traver and McKeague (2010) indicated that an effective tool for reconnecting objects with their native context included records of the geographical location of archaeological materials or monuments (even ones found by chance) and partnerships with relevant institutions. The benefits of mapping the collections included obtaining information that could be used in land planning and development; heritage management; interpretation and outreach; exhibition planning; and academic and local publications, as well as quality geographical information linked to the museum objects (Traver and McKeague 2010). Some of the challenges related to mapping were time constraints and consistency, and quality of information. Nevertheless, the authors found that the digital platform permits the formation of connections with web-based mapping resources that accommodate uncertainty in the information by allowing it to be separated into layers (Traver and McKeague 2010). Both well-documented artifacts with their original location details and objects with little information in their description, organized as layers of information, can be connected to an array of information using hyperlinks to other databases that can help illuminate the object's history (Traver and McKeague 2010). Despite the time-consuming nature of the task, the case study provides a good foundation for mapping cultural material through a digital solution that can expand the frontier of object documentation and connect with a wide range of resources and relevant information, both locally and internationally. A guiding resource for cultural mapping that can be adapted by museums looking to enrich their collaboratively cultural

planning is Canada's "Cultural Mapping Toolkit" (British Columbia 2010). The toolkit was developed to serve as a model for collecting and organizing information on cultural resources and identify networks and patterns that can be used by communities in their attempts to develop cultural plans. The guidelines in the toolkit give direction on how to set up the stages of work and how to involve the local community.

Research on the use of technology for heritage access in the Dominican Republic is also uncommon. The most relevant studies found relate to the type of technology access students and teachers have in the public sector and digital literacy levels among teaching and educational management staff (Dominguez and Lara 2016; Molina 2016). Dominguez and Lara (2016) note the problematic lack of literature on the use of technology in the country and how this limits the decision-making process for educational planning; they criticize the infrastructure-based or general qualitative nature of inquiries. Their research sheds light on digital equipment, access, and internet use among sixth- through twelfth-grade students and public-school teachers, indicating that smartphones are the most common devices for accessing the digital realm (Dominguez and Lara 2016). The findings are supported in a study of the level of digital skills of teachers, subject coordinators, and school principals (Molina 2016). The study showed a tendency to have a mid-to low-level knowledge of the use of technology for teaching purposes; that didactic software is not commonly provided in schools; that poor connectivity and inadequate use of technology resources prevails; and that smartphones are frequently used as teaching equipment (Molina 2016). Any digital resource that could be introduced into the classroom to create connections with Indigenous heritage collections and improve teaching strategies remains limited to the capacity for digital implementation that educational actors have.

2.8 Dominican education, Indigenous heritage, and collections

Indigenous heritage education in the Dominican Republic has been as understudied as the collections themselves, seemingly as if one cannot happen without the other. In the Dominican Republic, curricular revisions have focused on issues of educational quality in terms of reading, writing, mathematics, and even international collaboration to develop curriculum standards due to continued poor performance in international educational evaluations (Abreu Van Grieken 2014). The public outcry for four percent of the gross national product be allocated to public education, as established by the General Law of Education (Congreso Nacional de la República Dominicana, Ley 66-1997), reflects the

concerning issues of underfunding that the Ministry of Education faces at many levels, where heritage education is not a priority. Prior to the public protests, only half the amount of public funds had been allocated to education (Acento 2018). Although the protests proved beneficial for a higher budget allocation to the educational system, after it was raised to four percent, many educational institutions and international organizations still believe that the investment has not been effective in raising the quality of education, as a significant improvement in learning outcomes still needs to be attained (UNICEF n.d.). Abreu Van Grieken (2014) has described how both national and international interest in the quality of education arose, coinciding with UNICEF's recommendations for continued curricular revision, improved learning objectives, and continued capacity-building training for teachers (UNICEF n.d.).

It is within the context of strengthening teacher training, revising social studies curricula, and including the arts in regional curricula that Con Aguilar (2019) conducted her study on the relationships between individuals and the past in school communities in Dominica, St. Kitts, and the Dominican Republic. In the Nexus 1492 project's ambit, Con Aguilar's (2019) study analyzed discussions on education policy in the Caribbean region, such as locally in the Dominican Republic, and the representation of Indigenous heritage in the school curriculum. Through interviews, surveys, and participatory activities, the findings from the Dominican Republic attest to teachers wanting to learn from specialists and collections with a more interactive approach rather than based only on classroom materials. The study shows the importance of linking collections with student understanding and knowing the context and availability of heritage resources for the development of instructional strategies (Con Aguilar 2019, 124–126; Con Aguilar et al. 2018; Con Aguilar and Hofman 2017; Con Aguilar et al. 2017).

Other possible connections between collections and communities have been explored by Jana Pešoutová (2019) in her Nexus 1492-affiliated study within the interdisciplinary project's region-wide scope. Her research encompassed perceptions of people's health and their surrounding natural environment as these relate to cultural memories and the Indigenous past in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. Using the concept of cultural memory, Pesoutova (2019) examined how people engage with history through healing practices that incorporate the natural world and ancestral knowledge. She traced a Caribbean history of healing landscapes that incorporate ancient local knowledge along with the cultural loss that comes with land-based physical and spiritual conquest (Pešoutová 2019). The healing landscapes

identified in her study shed light on how new meaning was assigned to the local flora and landscapes in Caribbean geography (Pesoutova 2019, 141–169).

Jorge Ulloa Hung's analysis (2009) of the study and conservation of archaeological heritage in the Dominican Republic added a localized perspective to the literature review. He draws attention to the need for a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach in the study of diverse human groups, as opposed to the Western tradition of separating natural and social sciences (Ulloa Hung 2009, 6). For him, this means moving away, to a large extent, from romantic views of Dominican identity, especially from the "aesthetic and exotic"—yet distant—traits ascribe to Indigenous peoples as represented in Dominican culture (Ulloa 2009, 7). Ulloa argues that any study or conservation of the country's archaeological heritage has to be based on more realistic objectives that take into account the diversity of its past and its present to project a more inclusive historical narrative within the different educational levels of society. As Ulloa Hung (2009) points out, this has to be both a public and private effort, especially in the educational and tourism sectors, due to the complexity and challenges of the past (10–12). Within the research framework of the present study, the cooperation between public and private entities is particularly relevant for developing connections between Indigenous heritage collections and communities.

As the literature shows, over several centuries of neglecting the detailed historical documentation of Indigenous heritage collections from the Caribbean, the objects' meanings have been lost, and the objects themselves disconnected both from their place of origin and the communities that made them. School education devotes only a little attention to the Dominican Republic's Indigenous heritage, as reflected in its limited presence in the national curriculum.

Researchers have focused on how to serve local communities and include them in their programs and outreach initiatives. Nevertheless, there is a gap in the research on Indigenous heritage collections in the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic. No known research has explored how to connect communities with Indigenous heritage collections, much less in a Dominican context. The present dissertation contributes to this knowledge gap in studying how to connect educational, heritage, governmental, and local communities with Indigenous heritage collections. These connections could become gateways for multivocal engagement and inclusive community empowerment to strengthen cultural identity and improve preservation and protection efforts.

Summary

This chapter explored how heritage collections have been studied and the ways in which museums have approached community engagement to identify patterns that may facilitate the establishment of possible community connections to Indigenous heritage collections in the Dominican Republic.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework and methodology used to answer the research questions. The role of critical museology is explained in relation to the need to challenge reductionist historical narratives. Details on the research approach, procedures, participants, and data collection tools illustrate how the study was conducted.