***SLAVHERIT’s objectives***

SLAVHERIT aimed to understand how the memory of Atlantic slavery is *breaking the silence* and entering the public sphere in contemporary Brazil, following the archaeological discovery of slave trade docklands in Rio de Janeiro and the creation of a Circuit of African Heritage. SLAVHERIT has approached the public memory of slavery not as a discrete issue but as a *process* observed in real time*,* ethnographically accounting for the experience and interactions of the multiple actors involved (e.g. black social movements, city council officials, UNESCO representatives, researchers), in a country where the slave past has inflicted social wounds that are still open today. In this effort to link public slave memory to contemporary debates about equality, SLAVHERIT used an interdisciplinaryapproach that combined the fields of anthropology, history, literature and politics. This goal was defined and methodologically achieved by pursuing two specific objectives:

**SO1**) To trace how silence about slavery has been produced and preserved in the port area of Rio de Janeiro until recently.

**SO2**) To understand how slavery and black heritage are now being memorialised via policymaking through the creation of a Circuit of African Heritage in the port area of Rio de Janeiro.

***SLAVHERIT’s activities***

**Years 1 and 2** of the project consisted of the outgoing phase of the project, in which the researcher was on secondment at the Laboratorio de Historia Oral e Imagem of the Universidade Federal Fluminense in Rio de Janeiro, under the supervision of Professor Hebe Mattos. This phase coincided with the researcher’s training in historical methods, with bibliography and fieldwork data collection, and with the publishing of part of the project results, alongside their discussion at conferences, seminars and guest lectures. **Year 3** of the project was based at King’s College London, where the researcher continued the activities of output production and dissemination. A significant part of Year 3 was used for film editing, but also for the training of the researcher (in Adobe Premiere Pro for film editing, NVIVO, SPSS statistics, endnote) and for his career development. A trip back to Brazil was carried out in Year 3 in order to discuss the project’s outputs with academics and local communities in Rio de Janeiro.

***SLAVHERIT’s written and visual outputs***

As at June 2016, SLAVHERIT has produced the following outputs:

* Five articles for peer-reviewed journals have been produced. Four of these articles have been published at the time of the submission of this summary, and can be freely accessed online.
* Three chapters in edited books have been published.
* An ethnographic documentary film, “Other Africas: Unearthing ‘Afro’ Memories in Rio de Janeiro” was produced and uploaded on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8iEsY1TyQY>

***SLAVHERIT’s conceptual results***

1) SLAVHERIT has concluded that the creation of the Circuit of African Heritage is not simply the effect of the somewhat fortuitous archaeological finding of slave trade docks in the port area of Rio. This process of heritage making, in fact, is also deeply entangled with the gradual change in racial politics in Brazil over the last four decades, with multicultural ideals challenging the official image of Brazil as a mixed-race country, and/or a ‘racial democracy’. SLAVHERIT has been a pioneer in establishing a dialogue between the fields of race relations and heritage in contemporary Brazil. The project highlighted that the Circuit of African Heritage, due to its size, symbolism, and the dynamics implied in its creation, has a revolutionary character in many regards. Firstly, unlike other monuments that have expressed some level of black subjectivity in Rio de Janeiro, the Circuit of African Heritage includes a route of real places that have been historically, socially and culturally part of black people’s lives in Rio de Janeiro. Secondly, the Circuit of African Heritage is the first heritage site through which the memory of slavery in Rio de Janeiro is centrally displayed. Thirdly, the Circuit of African Heritage is the first example of black social movements’ engagement with the archaeology of slavery in Brazil. SLAVHERIT, in this regard, notes that black activists had previously been involved with an archaeology of ‘slave resistance’ in former maroon settlements, while substantially avoiding the memory of slavery due to its potentially disempowering content. This position of memory avoidance among activists has changed only recently, as the memory of slavery has gradually started underpinning discourses of slavery reparation in the Caribbean and in other regions of the Atlantic. Another important observation is that the Circuit of African Heritage is the first example of ‘black’ heritage whose creation has significantly involved the participation of local communities in Brazil.

2) SLAVHERIT has highlighted and discussed certain contradictions that have been observed in the process of the creation of the Circuit of African Heritage. The first contradiction relates to the fact that this heritage intervention has intersected with the gentrification of the decayed port area and its recent regeneration in view of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. This process of regeneration has enhanced Afro-Brazilian heritage but, paradoxically, also threatened the permanence of lower class and black residents in the area as a consequence of the rising cost of living. Another contradiction relates to the fact that the Circuit still tends to privilege those cultural and material memories that have clear currency for the tourist market. SLAVHERIT, for example, highlights that the historical experience of dockworkers in the port area has been largely overlooked, even though the experience of these workers is deeply entangled with blackness and with the memory of slavery. Finally, although the creation of the Circuit of African Heritage has involved a vast system of participation of local communities and offers some tools of emancipation to Afro-Brazilians, this process has also, paradoxically, reflected some of the historically-rooted ‘racialised’ hierarchies typical of Brazilian society. In this sense, the role of black governmental bodies and civil society has been somewhat secondary in this heritage making, while the process is still largely governed by light-skinned bureaucrats and experts. This fact reminds us that the process of ethno-racial ‘recognition’, which the Circuit embodies, does not automatically subvert racialised inequalities. SLAVHERIT argues that this apparent contradiction can be understood and explained through the current global framework of neoliberal political economy. Within this framework, in fact, ethno-racial ‘differences’ are recognised and valued, but can also be controlled and exploited commercially by groups other than the ‘recognised’.

3) SLAVHERIT has carried out a novel reading of Brazil’s racial identity in the contemporary era of multiculturalism. Contrary to predictions that have seen multicultural policies as the deconstruction of Brazil’s traditional imagery of racial democracy and mixture, SLAVHERIT points out that such ideals remain solid in Brazil. The project illustrates that there is no real incompatibility between ideals of multiculturalism and ideals of racial mixture in the Brazilian context, but that these ideals actually reinforce each other.

***SLAVHERIT’s impact***

In addition to addressing the academic community, SLAVHERIT has targeted groups such as policymakers and civil society. This goes hand-in-hand with the nature of the study, which has explored the intersections between governmental administrations, social movements, local communities, UNESCO technocrats, and researchers in the making of social policy. All these different groups, at the national and international levels, may find the results of this project useful, particularly in terms of analysing the process of participation in the creation of the Circuit of African Heritage, and in terms of discussing what the creation of the Circuit of African Heritage may tell us about the current stage of official thinking about race and national identity in Brazil. The documentary ‘Other Africas’ is enjoying a positive response within the academic community in Brazil and the UK, being considered a useful tool for teaching and for prompting intellectual discussions about race and inequality in Latin America. Local communities and social movements, on the other hand, are seeing this film as useful to build identity and to support the social claims of vulnerable communities within and outside Rio’s port area.

***How to obtain up-to-date information about SLAVHERIT and its outputs***

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/sga/kbi/people/Andre-Cicalo.aspx> (see also link to Pure Profile)

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Andre_Cicalo>

<https://kcl.academia.edu/AndréCicalo>

[andre.cicalo@gmail.com](mailto:andre.cicalo@gmail.com)