



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Thinking Through Heritage Regimes

De Cesari, C.

**Publication date**

2013

**Document Version**

Final published version

**Published in**

Heritage regimes and the state. - 2nd, revised edition

[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

De Cesari, C. (2013). Thinking Through Heritage Regimes. In R. Bendix, A. Eggert, & A. Peselmann (Eds.), *Heritage regimes and the state. - 2nd, revised edition* (pp. 399-413). (Göttingen studies in cultural property; No. 6). Universitätsverlag Göttingen.  
[http://www.univerlag.uni-goettingen.de/bitstream/handle/3/isbn-978-3-86395-122-1/GSCP6\\_bendix\\_2reved.pdf?sequence=1](http://www.univerlag.uni-goettingen.de/bitstream/handle/3/isbn-978-3-86395-122-1/GSCP6_bendix_2reved.pdf?sequence=1)

**General rights**

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Disclaimer/Complaints regulations**

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

# Thinking Through Heritage Regimes

*Chiara De Cesari*

## 1 Introduction

In Palestine's West Bank, the context that I know best and have studied for several years, there are many local civil society organizations dedicated to heritage preservation that essentially take care of a lot of the country's heritage. They have an ambiguous and rather conflicted relationship with the local UNESCO office, which they see as allied to the Palestinian Authority (PA), the quasi-state that runs the administration of the (still occupied) Palestinian territories. These non-governmental organizations (NGOs) use a kinship metaphor to describe the alliance between UNESCO and the PA. At a conference on heritage conservation in Palestine, which was attended by many of the key players in the field, including representatives from the local Department of Antiquities, UNESCO, major donors, and various heritage NGOs, this alliance was repeatedly derided as a "marriage" that, tellingly, had received few blessings from civil society organizations. The latter, after all, were largely excluded from this union, or else subjected to stricter regulations as an indirect consequence thereof. UNESCO's response to such chiding tended to repeat itself. As one official put it, "[our] hands are tied [...] UNESCO is an intergovernmental organization. I cannot marry you [civil society heritage organizations], even though I would prefer to marry you rather than the

Department of Antiquities.”<sup>283</sup> In other words, UNESCO is mandated to work with state institutions, and this mandate, though beneficial at the national level in terms of institution-building, is often an obstacle to community participation – another purported principle of UNESCO’s heritage programs. It is my argument, substantiated by many of the essays collected in this volume, that this marriage metaphor, far from being an expression of the exceptional Palestinian situation, applies in fact to several other contexts where UNESCO is active and UNESCOization is at work. I will argue below that UNESCO paradoxically empowers the state; however, it is important to specify that the opposite is also true, to a certain extent, especially given the supervisory function this international agency often carries out *vis-à-vis* the state.

## 2 Heritage as Regime?

It is good to think of heritage in terms of regime or regimes because this makes us focus on two aspects that I believe are crucial to understand how heritage works today. The first aspect concerns the relationship of heritage with government and the ways in which heritage conservation intersects with government, broadly conceived, in multiple ways. This development has to do, first and foremost, with the remarkable expansion of heritage conservation in terms of both the forms of culture and the practices it encompasses (heritage was essentially only about historic monuments and archaeology until twenty years ago) and the scope of its now global reach. A dimension of the *fin-de-siècle* memory boom, such expansion is deeply entangled with the growing role of culture as an economic factor (see Yudice 2003), and with the discovery of culture and particularly cultural heritage as a motor of socio-economic development. The end effect is that what we call heritage or heritagization has come to shape people’s lives more and more – particularly by intervening in ways that make social regulation much more difficult to detect, because the latter looks, at least at first, very benign if not beneficial. Heritage defines a relatively recent way of talking about and organizing the relationship between people and significant aspects of their culture, and between people and their environments. As a transnational discourse with its own set of attached practices, heritage is developed, supported and promoted by a network of powerful institutions, among which UNESCO is at present most influential. As a body of ideas and practices, one of heritage’s peculiar features is that, while deeply transnational, this discourse is intertwined with the history and logics of the nation-state. Thinking of heritage in terms of regime makes this tension immediately palpable and visible.

The politics of heritage tend to be understood as the misuse (often by undemocratic actors and authoritarian regimes) of something – the past – that should

---

<sup>283</sup> My notes from the third day of the Conference on Cultural Heritage in Palestine, Jericho, February 22, 2006.

instead be kept neutral and under the strict purview of technocratic expertise. Saddam Hussein's use of Babylonian heritage to bolster his legitimacy is a perfect example of this notion. However, the new politics of heritage that this volume tackles concerns the subtle politics of the everyday. Heritage politics for most contributors to this volume can no longer be seen as a despicable exception opposed to a technocratic norm, because heritage makes politics precisely through expertise. From this perspective, heritage intersects with "government" in the broader sense of Foucauldian governmentality (Foucault 1991; see also Rose; O'Malley; Valverde 2006). For Michael Foucault, governmentality defines the "conduct of conduct" of populations – often not immediately circumscribed as "government" per se – achieved through the deployment of particular forms of knowledge by a multiplicity of different actors. Governmentality is to be located well beyond the traditional domains of political institutions (several allegedly non-political actors and bodies do indeed participate in this form of government), and encompasses many possible ways of shaping people's behavior by applying specialized bodies of knowledge. The contributions to this volume show that "heritage" constitutes one such unusual field of government.

The second meaning of "regime" as international regime points to one if not the key location of heritage politics today, namely, UNESCO, the United Nations agency responsible, among others, for cultural matters, and especially its heritage programs dealing with world (tangible) heritage and intangible heritage. Several essays in this volume investigate the work of this international agency and its growing role in shaping what it means to carry out heritage conservation all over the world. "Regime," in its international political meaning, refers to a set of "Implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures" that regulate areas of international relations (such as International Conventions). It also refers to the international regulatory agencies entitled to manage these international domains – agencies which typically lie outside the control of national governments and constrain them.<sup>284</sup> Instead, in the case of UNESCO, while frictions do indeed occur, what several essays of this volume delineate is a strong *de facto* alliance between national and international actors, similar to the situation captured by my initial vignette.

Clearly, UNESCO's action often ends up reinforcing the power and reach of the nation-state and its bureaucracy, and its ability to shape people's lives through heritage, for example, by empowering and expanding the state heritage infrastructure or reproducing national stereotypes (Askew 2010, De Cesari 2010b). This happens in spite of a strong participatory rhetoric emphasizing the necessity to involve local communities and a poorly defined "grassroots" in heritage decision-making – a principle which is the cornerstone of recent UNESCO policies, and particularly of the 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention. In a previous essay, I have emphasized how, contrary to UNESCO's universalizing aim of establishing a

---

<sup>284</sup> See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regime><accessed August 9, 2012>.

common heritage for humanity, the World Heritage system not only draws upon the tradition of national heritages, but actually reproduces and amplifies this tradition's logic and its infrastructure (De Cesari 2010b). This, in turn, gives rise to numerous tensions in the universalist practices of the organization. I have also shown how the structural relation between World Heritage and the nation state – as inscribed in UNESCO's constitution as an intergovernmental agency and in its mandate – can hinder wider participation and local involvement in the heritage process.<sup>285</sup> Thus, despite the rhetoric of democratic participation, it is nation-states (and experts, see Smith 2006) that play the main part on the World Heritage stage and that are authorized as proper actors through the World Heritage process. Several essays in this volume detail these paradoxical dynamics.

Undeniably, UNESCO's action is characterized by a number of tensions or apparently contradictory features. UNESCO's rhetoric celebrates cultural diversity as its key value, and to be sure, this organization's interventions produce a rush for diversification since local and national actors tend to emphasize the specificity and exceptionality of their cultural practices in order to meet UNESCO's criteria. However, UNESCO is itself a powerful agent of homogenization of heritage practices all over the world, for it promotes a standardization of principles and procedures of conservation, as Chiara Bortolotto in this volume explains. This "UNESCOization" (Berliner 2012) could easily be seen as a form of cultural globalization.

A further tension is the one between centralization and decentralization of heritage management. This tension can be detected very clearly in the case of the Intangible Heritage Convention because the latter, when deployed in local contexts, both authorizes grassroots groups as legitimate stakeholders in heritage conservation and simultaneously produces an expansion of the cultural domains under the management of the state.<sup>286</sup> I will discuss the issue of centralization in more depth below; UNESCO itself is a good example to illustrate the opposing tendency towards decentralization (and transnationalization). Indeed, nowadays, we assist the growing outsourcing of some of the state's historical functions, including heritage management, to "non-governmental" sub-, supra- and especially trans-national entities, such as UNESCO, together with all kinds of mushrooming civil society associations and private groups devoted to heritage all over the world (De Cesari 2010a, 2011b).

Critical heritage scholars have tended to see only the first trends, particularly towards homogenization or cultural imperialism (e.g. Byrne 1991, Smith 2006). Several contributions to this volume show, however, that things are not so straightforward. We still do not know enough about the local impact of UNESCO's interventions and about what happens with the growing heritagization

---

<sup>285</sup> For example, only officially recognized States Parties to the 1972 Convention can nominate sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

<sup>286</sup> This tension also relates to how UNESCO promotes what Timothy Mitchell (2002) has called the "rule of experts" (for heritage, see Smith 2006) by making experts into the subjects of heritage while simultaneously empowering "local communities" to take part in conservation.

of places, traditions and cultures worldwide. By calling attention to the ways in which the translation of UNESCO's policies into local contexts produces rather different effects, this volume demonstrates that this is a very important avenue for future research.

Given such shifting politics, it is legitimate to ask whether we should indeed talk about heritage regimes in the plural or not. Should we talk about one heritage regime as a rather Eurocentric discourse – one that is promoted by powerful institutions and increasingly appropriated by grassroots actors to advance their claims but that can ultimately be only detrimental to them, like a double-edged sword? Or should we rather, as anthropologists tend to do, think in terms of multiple overlapping and intersecting heritage regimes, related to the different scales and the actors that nurture and champion them?

### 3 The Heritage Regime at Work

Today, we observe a dramatic expansion of the heritage regime. Different actors, both national and grassroots, appropriate the language of heritage to advance their demands, as well as, increasingly, to gain access to funding and investments. In the context of the so-called creative economies, “culture” is being used today as a resource towards a variety of different ends, particularly to foster economic growth (Yudice 2003). Heritage as a peculiar kind of cultural practice is a very good example of this trend. Heritagization, especially for countries with scarce resources, is seen as a potential motor of socio-economic development and, as such, is promoted not only by UNESCO, but also by powerful development institutions, such as the World Bank (e.g. 2001), in the framework of tourism development schemes. Shared heritage is also understood as a means of reconciliation, particularly in post-conflict contexts. This serves to complete an imagination of heritage that assigns it something close to a thaumaturgic capacity in what Wiktor Stoczkowski (2009: 8) has called a “secular soteriology.” In other words, heritage is imagined as a therapy to cure all evils, from poverty to ethnic conflict. While governments increasingly use heritage to attract international investments or obtain development aid, grassroots, minority or indigenous actors champion it in the name of the politics of recognition (e.g. Lowenthal 1996, Weiss 2007).

In this context, UNESCO is increasingly present throughout the world, especially in the global south, shaping heritage practices along similar lines. Heritage can be promoted as a tool to strengthen not only people's identities, but also democracy, participation and sustainable development: This is the mantra recited by UNESCO experts, in a way that Maria Cardeira da Silva compares to the repetitive call to prayer of the Muslim *almuezzin*. Yet, does heritage truly foster democracy and local development? What is interesting is that UNESCO's intervention affects in particular the traditional areas of anthropological expertise. Gabriele Mentges recounts how while UNESCO initiatives were not the focus of her research in Uz-

bekistan, at least originally, she was forced to engage with it because she encountered “traces of UNESCO in all of the places I[*she*] visited.” Thus, UNESCO’s cultural work is something anthropologists can no longer ignore, even if heritage is far away from their concerns.

What is the meaning of this growing presence? How can we gauge its impact not only on national heritage infrastructures, but most importantly on people’s lives, and crucially: What does it mean to rethink culture in terms of heritage? What happens when not only people’s culture, but also their very lives (see Adell) are made into “heritage” and regimented by both national and transnational regimes? This is a matter of governmentality through culture and cultural heritage. These are the set of questions this volume begins to ask.

A related, interesting issue concerns the meaning of such developments for anthropology as a discipline and form of knowledge production. The proliferation of heritage undeniably coincides with the growing relevance of anthropology beyond its confines, and particularly of its understanding of culture as an everyday matter and a way of life. These developments, however, also imply a certain bureaucratization of anthropology, with its knowledge turned into itemized lists and standard formats (see Broccolini). For Jean-Louis Tornatore, the application of the Intangible Heritage Convention in Western countries constitutes a kind of “anthropological payback” forcing the objectification of the culture of those who used to objectify others in the past. At the same time, one could argue that the expansion of the heritage regime constitutes a kind of objectification of the discipline of anthropology itself. Following these introductory observations, I will now turn to the four main themes addressed by the contributions to this volume.

#### 4 Imperfect Translations

Several contributors talk about the local deployments of the international heritage regime using a textual metaphor, that of translation. This use discloses the mainstay of several of the essays, which emphasize how the outcome of these processes of translation is neither homogeneous nor predetermined (see Bortolotto, da Silva, Tauschek). The etymological and semantic proximity in the original Latin roots between “translation” and “treason” (and, interestingly, “tradition” as well) points to an understanding of the local translation of the global language of heritage as a diverse and varied phenomenon that deserves careful inquiry. For Chiara Bortolotto, applied global policies are “domesticated” or “twisted” by local institutional structures and categories, resulting, in her view, in “different safeguarding approaches.” Similarly, Markus Tauschek demonstrates that previous national and local institutions, as well as, in particular, older legislation, shape the implementation of new UNESCO policies in Belgium (see also Broccolini). For Tauschek, “national heritage policies can be seen as assemblages of different patrimonial paradigms, as creative contact zones between different heritage logics that compete

against one another or that are combined in synergetic ways.” Maria Cardeira da Silva calls attention to the “eloquent dialogues [between local, national and international heritage cultures] that are in danger of remaining concealed behind apparent conformity.” The concrete implementation of UNESCO’s policies, in other words, is far from true to the letter.

Frictions, misunderstandings and negotiations appear to be the hallmarks of this complex process of making the international heritage regime work in local contexts. Anna Tsing, in her wonderful 2005 book embarking upon an “ethnography of global connection,” complicates and redefines the relationship of the local and the global, and uses the notion of friction to investigate cultural productivity in globalized times. According to Tsing (2005: 1–18), both the local and the global are produced within cultural dialogues, and universals, that is, “knowledge that moves – mobile and mobilizing – across localities and cultures” (7) are always already engaged in cross-cultural encounters dominated by “awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative” frictions (4). Among the cases discussed in this volume, frictions and misunderstandings between the different actors and scales involved characterize in particular the implementation of UNESCO’s intangible heritage policies in China, France and Uzbekistan. As Tsing suggests, such misunderstandings are perhaps unexpectedly but undoubtedly productive in that they move things forward and allow for the flexible adaptation and ultimately the success (in the sense of a diffusion) of the heritage regime at the local level. In China, for example, a focus on the “elements of excellence of national Chinese culture” (Bodolec) distinguishes this country’s intangible heritage policies, and this is in contradiction to the spirit of the 2003 Convention which promotes rather representativity and equal recognition for diverse cultural practices. In the case of France and its intangible heritage listings, the strongly universalist tenets of this centralist state seem to clash with the chief values of the 2003 Convention and its promotion of cultural diversity (see esp. Fournier). The case of Uzbekistan clearly shows how UNESCO’s initiatives to promote transnational values and shared, non-national heritages, such as the Silk Road, can easily translate into blatantly nationalist policies and images. Another interesting case of friction between the scales is the situation described by Anais Leblon for Mali, where local stakeholders’ expectations of obtaining development and food security are not met by programs of inventorying and cultural promotion.

Finally, as Marcus Tauschek rightly emphasizes – echoed also in Graezer Bideau – negotiations, compromises and a good degree of contingency decide the outcomes of nominations and the ultimate organization of management structures. An interesting example is the gastronomic meal of the French: In this case, not only the interests of the agri-food sector and restaurant businesses, but also former president Nicolas Sarkozy’s advantage in appeasing his farmers’ constituency played a role in the nomination procedure. Undeniably, the local translations of the global heritage language depend on how the latter articulates with local cultural logics and political dynamics, and in fact it varies. As Alessandra Broccolini shows, heritage can clash but also articulate with other transnational languages, such as the animal

rights discourse, in unexpected ways. For sure, a certain contingency and instability are hallmarks of this process of “vernacularization” (Merry 2006).

We tend to look at the workings of the international heritage regime from a top-down perspective, namely, by concentrating on what happens to the global heritage discourse once it is in action. It is crucial, however, to understand these processes from below as well, which means to understand the reasons why a group of people decides to appropriate the language of heritage to further their goals, and the kinds of imaginaries and expectations elicited by the heritage discourse. Heritagization for Mali villagers, for example, constitutes a potential means of achieving food security (cf. Leblon), while in other cases, it is used to negotiate “a place in the shadow of a would-be cosmopolitan modernity” (da Silva). The latter situation clearly applies in my own research on Palestinian heritage practices. Today, we are witness to a proliferation of heritage initiatives in the West Bank. They are carried out by a number of civil society organizations for whom “heritage” is a way to connect with transnational networks and culture flows. Speaking the global language of heritage bestows on practitioners a sense of being part of a broader transnational community with which they interact as equals, at least on the surface; it also bestows on practitioners a feeling of entitlement to a higher status in a cultural if not a quasi-moral sense.

I have used the term “appropriation” above to define the ways in which local stakeholders tactically approach the international heritage regime. This suggests that the heritage regime is something like a foreign language to most local stakeholders, ultimately impenetrable to impulses from below. In this regard, there is a rather hegemonic understanding in heritage studies. This, however, necessitates further scrutiny together with the vertical imaginary, so to speak, that grounds it – that of a global discourse free-floating above local contexts and left untouched by its multiple territorializations. The view that the universalization of heritage – as pursued by UNESCO heritage policies – represents a case of Western hegemony, was firstly put forward by Denis Byrne in 1991 and later reiterated by, for example, Michael Herzfeld (2005) and Laurajane Smith (2006). While I fully share these scholars’ concern for the central role of power and postcolonial politics in the making of the international heritage regime, my fieldwork in Palestine has made me question the notion of traveling heritage practices as always already oppressive. In part, these kinds of arguments reproduce the logic of accusations that perceive globalization as being fundamentally about cultural imperialism. But, as several anthropologists have noted (e.g. Inda and Rosaldo 2008), globalization is not a one-way movement, and global forms are always localized and appropriated in culturally specific ways. Scholars have given different names to this encounter between the local and the global in an effort to overcome simplistic dichotomies, so as to highlight complex processes of back-translation. Sally Engle Merry (2006), for example, coined the term “vernacularization,” debating human rights and the way in which this universalist discourse percolates and comes to be reconstituted by the local. Tom Boellstorff (2003) thinks instead in terms of “dubbing,” by com-

paring the process of translation of globalizing cultures and subjectivities to the dubbing of movies. I believe with Anna Tsing (2005) that globally circulating discourses are produced within cross-cultural dialogues, and that even highly asymmetric ones change along with their movements. Thus, the investigation of the very making of a global language like heritage constitutes a promising avenue of future research. By inquiry into the making of the global heritage discourse, I mean looking at the myriad negotiations, compromises, unexpected events, and actors, and at the expectations and imaginations that go into the writing of, for example, an international convention; but I also mean investigating the ways in which local deployments change international policies.

## 5 Heritage Effects

What are the effects of the international heritage regime once it is deployed? What is its impact on people and institutions? The initial vignette taken from my own fieldwork signals a surprising development that is delineated in several contributions to this volume as well. Heritagization along the lines of UNESCO's directives and supervision produces more governmentality, that is, an expansion of the institutional dimension of the state apparatus and its potential to reach into previously unmapped cultural terrains.

First and foremost, UNESCOization triggers frictions and conflicts between the different scales and actors involved. This concerns diverse understandings of and stakes in heritage, and occurs between international and local experts and (what I call for the sake of clarity and brevity) the "grassroots," and also between the state and the grassroots (see Ballacchino, Broccolini, Graezer Bideau, Kockel, Leblon), between the different branches of the state (Broccolini, Tauschek) and between international experts and the state (see Nic Craith, also the cases of France as discussed by Fournier and Tornatore, and China as assessed by Bodellec).

Conflicts are known to be a regular occurrence in matters of heritage, as, for example, Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) have elucidated with their notion of dissonance or dissonant heritage. What is peculiar about the international heritage regime, and especially the 2003 Convention, however, is a fundamental ambiguity concerning the very definition of one of its pillars, that is, the involvement of "local communities." It is this very ambiguity which is a major source of conflicts and misunderstandings. As several essays in this volume emphasize, "local community" is left undefined, and is, in fact, open to varied interpretations and to ideological manipulations (see also Smith and Waterton 2009). In my own fieldwork, for example, I have frequently noticed how the "local" is taken to refer, depending on the context, to both grassroots groups and professional heritage NGOs, who often have a stake themselves in this productive confusion.

What is also peculiar about the international heritage regime in relation to its impact on “local communities” is a paradox, namely, that the former both empowers and disempowers the latter. The great paradox of the international heritage regime, in spite of its rhetoric emphasizing transnational, shared values as well as democratic participation, is that, in fact, it ends up dramatically empowering the nation-state. As most contributions show, the implementation of UNESCO’s policies often means not only reinforcing traditional national heritages and close to stereotypical, hegemonic notions of national identity and national cultures –themselves frequently a product of colonial and postcolonial–nationalist authoritarian ideologies (as in the case of Uzbekistan described by Mentges; see also Bodolec, Graezer Bideau, Scher, Tornatore). UNESCO’s intervention often leads to a reconfiguration and an expansion of the state infrastructure for heritage and cultural management, which also implies that domains of people’s lives previously unregimented now pass under the state’s purview. In cases of disputed or occupied territories, UNESCO’s intervention also tacitly reconfirm a state’s sovereignty over a disputed piece of territory, or else arouses expectations and tactics of self-determination depending on which actor, occupier or occupied it chooses to deal with (see da Silva; cf. De Cesari 2011a).

This seems like a curious twisting of UNESCO’s stated aim of involving and empowering “local communities” (see Adell, Broccolini, Fournier, Mentges, Sánchez-Carretero). Marcus Tauschek rightly places a strong emphasis on the institutional productivity, so to speak, instigated by heritagization along UNESCO’s lines, and he shows that the latter implies, first and foremost, an expansion of heritage legislation and a multiplication and restructuring of the governmental entities devoted to its enforcement. The case of China discussed by Bodolec also constitutes a very good case of the expansion and restructuring I have sketched above. In China, the ratification of the 2003 Convention provided an occasion for greater centralization because it triggered a reorganization and streamlining of the Chinese administrative structure for heritage management previously split between different local and national state departments. Anthropologist Jim Ferguson (1995) has convincingly argued that development projects most frequently fail to achieve their stated objectives; instead, more often than not, they contribute to expand the reach of the state into previously uncharted terrain. Championing what I call “heritage-as-development,” or the conversion of heritage into a form of socio-economic development, UNESCO often, if unintentionally, achieves similar results.

The majority of the contributions to this volume demonstrate that UNESCOization does not mean democratic involvement in heritage. Two essays, however, contend that in the cases of France and particularly Ireland (see Fournier and Nic Craith), UNESCO’s and particularly ICOMOS’s intervention has met its target of triggering more participation. What makes or could potentially make the difference? A possible answer is that the outcome of inscriptions and management plans depends ultimately on the experts who implement them and how knowledgeable they are of UNESCO’s guidelines. It is true that, in spite of the participatory rheto-

ric, it is experts who are eventually given the greater role in the framework of UNESCO's policies and, therefore, have a lot of power in their implementation. Yet, a note of caution is in order. The hands of experts are tied by a set of structural constraints as sketched above, inscribed as they are into UNESCO's constitution as an intergovernmental agency with a specific, state-supporting mandate. Playing the devil's advocate, one could ask whether heritagization itself can be an effective vehicle of democratization at all.

What is the real meaning of participation? Is it a "mechanism of empowerment or is it a tool for management," as Chiara Bortolotto asks? In other words, does it entail empowerment or governmentality? If, indeed, we take a Foucauldian approach – grounded in an active notion of power as something that controls precisely by empowering – the two must not exclude one another. Alessandra Broccoli and Markus Tauschek draw attention to the growth of bureaucracy tied to heritagization. Heritagization triggers extended surveys and inventories of cultural sites and practices, as well as new regulations as to what is "authentic" and worth preserving, how this is to be done, and who are the legitimate stakeholders and tradition bearers. Being observed, studied, regimented, and often put on display and pushed to perform previously habitual cultural practices, becoming heritage subjects entails being subjected to the gaze and purview of the state as well as of other transnational actors. Discussing intangible heritage in France, Adell has cogently argued that recent heritage policies concerning intangible heritage generate a kind of "re-subjectivation" since it is people and their very lives – rather than objects and sites – that are turned into heritage. This process entails a form of objectification as well by making visible and tangible through the heritage gaze what was previously intangible and taken for granted.

Heritagization can also change the agents of heritage, at least to a certain extent. I remember well the anger of one of my Palestinian informants and civil society activist who had been involved from early on in a conservation project in the old part of his village, and then felt undermined and disempowered when the intervention of other national and transnational heritage actors turned him "from [active] planner to [passive in his view] stakeholder."<sup>287</sup>

In terms of tangible heritage, the "world-heritagization" of sites commonly acts as an obstacle to their use by local communities, who are subject to increased surveillance by state bureaucrats and experts. In fact it often leads to the outright suspension of everyday livelihood activities. This is exemplified by the situation in Salvador de Bahia (Collins 2008), where heritagization transformed once vibrant cultural spaces into what local inhabitants call *tombados* or "patrimonialized" but also "frozen" areas. When sites such as this fall under the strict control of experts and state bureaucracies, the result is not merely an extension of state power, but also the production and legitimation of expertise with its own domain of application, namely, fenced-off heritage sites.

---

<sup>287</sup> Interview with the author, Jerusalem, September 15, 2011.

In some cases, and against the grain of UNESCO's stated objective of defending human rights, heritagization triggers the resurgence of traditional hierarchical and patriarchal structures, such as in Uzbekistan where such "retraditionalization" undeniably serves the state's authoritarian politics (see Mentges). In some other cases, patrimonialization produces, in the long-term, a form of dependency (De Cesari 2010c, Hodder 2012). The local communities affected might have been self-sufficient before UNESCOization, but tend to become reliant on development aid and tourist flows (cf. Leblon) in its aftermath.

Heritagization, by now a known phenomenon (e.g. Herzfeld 2010), often becomes associated with gentrification processes, especially in the case of large-scale projects of urban regeneration and requalification (see da Silva, Pichler). Turning Habana Vieja (Cuba) into a destination for cultural tourism resulted in a radical change of its social geography with the resettlement of 70% of the former inhabitants in the case of the old plaza studied by Pichler. In other cases (e.g. Meskell 2005, Herzfeld 2009), evictions rather than more consensual resettlements result from the intersection of heritage regulations with capital interests.

Undeniably, as already noted some time ago by Nezar Al-Sayyad (2001), we can observe an alliance between nationalist and capitalist interests and forces in promoting institutional heritages. These often convey power-laden, traditional ideas of national identity and culture which are easily deployed to attract tourists by evoking hegemonic transnational imaginaries. The stories told are veiled with colonial nostalgia, like Pichler suggests in the case of the renewal of Habana's Plaza Vieja (see also da Silva), or they represent the return of stratified, orientalist images: In Uzbekistan, for example, old orientalist stereotypes dating back from the time of 19th century colonialism are being recycled as symbols of a new national identity by an authoritarian regime, and this all with the blessing of UNESCO (see Mentges). Moreover, the relationship between nationalist and capitalist interests and forces goes two ways, because it is not simply a matter of nationalist images being used to promote investments and profit. Scher clearly delineates a phenomenon which intersects with heritage more and more, namely nation-branding. The latter defines the use of advertising techniques to promote nationalism; in this case, promoting the nation as a brand serves all kinds of interests, both political and economic, and is mobilized to attract investments and tourism, here in the case of Barbados, but evident also in the intersection of interests discussed by Tornatore for the French case.

Heritagization is increasingly being advocated as a tool of sustainable economic growth and socio-economic development, particularly in countries with scarce resources (many of us are familiar with narratives of heritage as "oil," especially valuable at times of otherwise greatly reduced economic growth). Yet, are such expectations of democratic development through heritage and UNESCOization corroborated by solid research? What happens under the cover of heritage-as-development? More often than not, such expectations are left unattended if heritage projects do indeed get funding and manage to be completed – which is not at

all always the case. Then, why do we insist on telling ourselves this tale of salvation through heritage? How can we come up with a more realistic story?

## 6 Why We Need Ethnography

To answer these questions – to gauge how heritage affects people’s lives – we clearly need more ethnography. Several essays in this volume call for specificity and ethnographic detail and indeed we ought to continue along this path. In particular, we ought to unpack the rhetoric of democratic heritage and heritage-as-development, and to trace the real meanings of “involvement,” “local communities” and “development.” We ought to see the real people and the true stories that hide behind such terms.

The problem that I see is that heritage scholars tend to be prisoners of the very language they should dissect and criticize. This is the abstract, technical language of heritage experts and practitioners – made up of buzzwords such as environmental assessment and management plan, but also best practices, sustainability, outstanding value, and stakeholder, to mention but a few. Annelise Riles (2001, 2004) has convincingly argued that anthropologists are often too familiar, too close to the technocratic language of development – itself a derivative of anthropological knowledge – to be able to “unwind” it: Yet, this is precisely the ethnographer’s task. Something similar can be argued for heritage. Often too close to policy-making, we as critical scholars have difficulties probing heritage’s very form of knowledge and its language. At the same time, there are great advantages in being close to policy-making because this makes our critical task more effective. Analyses and critiques of UNESCOization and heritage as regime are helpful precisely because we can put them to use by feeding the fruits of our necessarily critical work back into policy-making.

## 7 References

- Al-Sayyad, Nezar (2001): Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism: Manufacturing Heritage, Consuming Tradition. *In* Consuming Tradition, Manufacturing Heritage: Global Norms and Urban Forms in the Age of Tourism. Nezar Al-Sayyad, ed. Pp. 1–33. New York: Routledge.
- Askew, Marc (2010): The Magic List of Global Status: UNESCO, World Heritage and the Agenda of States. *In* Heritage and Globalisation. Sophia Labadi and Colin Long, eds. Pp. 19–44. New York: Routledge.
- Berliner, David (2012): The Politics of Loss and Nostalgia in Luang Prabang (Lao PDR). *In* Routledge Handbook of Heritage in Asia. Patrick Daly and Tim Winter, eds. Pp. 234–246. New York: Routledge.

- Boellstorff, Tom (2003): Dubbing Culture: Indonesian Gay and Lesbi Subjectivities and Ethnography in an Already Globalized World. *American Ethnologist* 30(2): 225–242.
- Byrne, Denis (1991): Western Hegemony in Archaeological Heritage Management. *History and Anthropology* 5: 269–276.
- Collins, John (2008): “But What if I Should Need to Defecate in Your Neighborhood, Madame?” Empire, Redemption, and the “Tradition of the Oppressed” in a Brazilian World Heritage Site. *Cultural Anthropology* 23(2): 279–328.
- De Cesari, Chiara (2010a): Creative Heritage: Palestinian Heritage NGOs and Defiant Arts of Government. *American Anthropologist* 112(4): 625–637.
- (2010b): World Heritage and Mosaic Universalism: A View from Palestine. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 10(3): 299–324.
- (2010c): Hebron, or Heritage as Technology of Life. *Jerusalem Quarterly* 41: 6–28.
- (2011a): World Heritage and National Sovereignty: On Palestine’s UNESCO Bid. Leiden-Stanford Heritage Network, December 6, 2011. <http://www.networkedheritage.org/2011/12/06/world-heritage-and-national-sovereignty-on-palestine%E2%80%99s-unesco-bid/> <accessed August 8, 2012>
- (2011b): Heritage by NGOs: Why Heritage Restoration Makes Sense under Occupation. *Anthropology News*, October 2011.
- Ferguson, James (1990): *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foucault, Michel (1991): Governmentality. *In* *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds. Pp. 87–104. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Herzfeld, Michael (2005): Political Optics and the Occlusion of Intimate Knowledge. *American Anthropologist* 107(3): 369–376.
- (2009): *Evicted from Eternity: The Restructuring of Modern Rome*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- (2010): Engagement, Gentrification, and the Neoliberal Hijacking of History. *Current Anthropology* 51(2): S259–S267.
- Hodder, Ian (2012): *Entangled: An Archaeology of the Relationships between Humans and Things*. Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.
- Inda, Jonathan Xavier, and Renato Rosaldo (2008): Tracking Global Flows. *In* *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*. Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, eds. Pp. 3–46. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lowenthal, David (1996): *Possessed by the Past: The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. New York: Free Press.
- Merry, Sally Engle (2006): Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle. *American Anthropologist* 108(1): 38–51.

- Meskill, Lynn (2005): Sites of Violence: Terrorism, Tourism, and Heritage in the Archaeological Present. *In* *Embedding Ethics*. Lynn Meskill and Peter Pels, eds. Pp. 123–146. Oxford: Berg.
- Mitchell, Timothy (2002): *Rule of Experts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Riles, Annelise (2001): *The Network Inside Out*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- (2004): Real Time: Unwinding Technocratic and Anthropological Knowledge. *American Ethnologist* 31(3): 392–405.
- Rose, Nikolas, Pat O'Malley, and Mariana Valverde (2006): Governmentality. *Annual Review of Law and Social Sciences* 2: 83–104.
- Smith, Laurajane (2006): *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge.
- Smith, Laurajane, and Emma Waterton (2009): *Heritage, Communities and Archaeology*. London: Duckworth.
- Stoczkowski, Wiktor (2009): UNESCO's doctrine of human diversity: A secular soteriology? *Anthropology Today* 25(3): 7–11.
- Tsing, Anna L. (2005): *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Tunbridge, John E., and Gregory John Ashworth (1996): *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource of Conflict*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Weiss, Lindsay (2007): Heritage-Making and Political Identity. *Journal of Social Archaeology* 7(3): 413–431.
- World Bank (2001): *Cultural Heritage and Development: A Framework for Action in the Middle East and North Africa*. Washington D.C.: World Bank.
- Yüdice, George (2003): *The Expediency of Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.