Considerations on Authenticity and Integrity in the World Heritage Context

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Universality vs. Diversity

The World Heritage List is based on the definition of outstanding universal value (OUV). In defining cultural heritage, the World Heritage Convention notes that "monuments" and "groups of buildings" should have outstanding universal value (OUV) from the point of view of history, art, or science, while the "sites" are also seen from ethnological or anthropological points of view. The *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (2005) provide ten criteria for the identification of outstanding universal value as a condition for inscription to the World Heritage List. The first six criteria relate to cultural heritage: i) as a masterpiece of human creativity, ii) exhibiting important interchange of values, iii) bearing unique or exceptional testimony to a civilisation, iv) representing a type of construction or site, v) being an example of traditional land-use, and/or vi) having association with traditions or beliefs of outstanding universal value. The criteria from vii to x refer to natural heritage. It is noted however that criterion (vii) refers to natural beauty, which is fundamentally a cultural value. A general definition for the concept of OUV is provided in the report of the World Heritage strategy meeting in Amsterdam in 1998:

> *The requirement of outstanding universal value characterising cultural and natural heritage should be interpreted as an outstanding response to issues of universal nature common to or addressed by all human cultures. In relation to natural heritage, such issues are seen in bio-geographical diversity; in relation to culture in human creativity and resulting cultural diversity. (v. Droste, et al. 1998, p. 221)*

It is thus the issues or themes that should be of a universal nature and common to all humanity. The heritage resource itself is defined as a response that is characterised by its creative diversity. This is clearly indicated in the *UNESCO Declaration of cultural diversity* where heritage is again seen as a result of the human creative process. The ICOMOS report on the representation of the World Heritage List (2005) is built on the recognition of cultural diversity and the attempt to identify issues of a universal nature, related to anthropological, historical, aesthetic and scientific views. The critical judgement for the identification of the outstanding universal value of a particular property should be seen in relation to two distinct issues, i.e.:

- that the adequacy (or extent) of the relevant "cultural region" or "area of human knowledge" fully justifies representation on the World Heritage List;
- that the "intrinsic quality" and cultural-historical genuineness of the nominated property meet the expected level of excellence.

The List is also subject to heritage diversity, and the trend in the past several years has been towards larger areas of nominated properties, particularly cultural landscapes or historic towns. This increasing attention to a more holistic approach in the definition of the sites thus necessarily emphasises the importance of the identification of the integrity of a site. At the same time, it is fundamental that nominations of cultural sites to the World Heritage List satisfy the requirements of authenticity and integrity.

Philosophical issues

Most histories of philosophy start with ancient Greece and end up with European contemporary thought. What happened outside this region has been generally ignored apart from some references to the ancient Orient. Yet, when we speak of so-called Western philosophy, we might more correctly refer to it as our contemporary philosophy, considering that many of the ideas are now shared across the world. There are an increasing number of publications where the specificity of various regions is discussed. For example, this is the case with African contemporary philosophy. While developing their own thinking, African philosophers have been faced with the particular problem of defining their cultural identity without losing the rationality and truth that characterise modern philosophy in general. At the same time, it has been recognised that African thinking merits being dealt with like any other approach (Teffo, L.J. et al. in Coetzee, 2002:164). It is also noted that Africa is a vast continent with many traditions that are still part of the local contemporary cultures. It is therefore natural to explore the commonalities and specificities in the various reflections.

In a recent article, on the other hand, Dr. Seung-Jim Chung (2005) from South Korea has claimed that the *Venice Charter* (1964) is too strongly based on European cultural values, and "thus not sufficiently universal to be unequivocally deployed in societies outside Europe and European-based cultures". He argues that the European values emphasise mainly

visual beauty, while East Asian societies determine their values in relation to spiritual and naturalistic sensibilities. (pp. 68-69) It may well be true that Europeans have often given serious attention to aesthetics, but this is by no means their monopoly. We can take note, for example, that Japanese aesthetics have been subject to much research (e.g. Marra, 1999). In fact Japanese and Chinese art philosophies have long had an important influence even on European art. We should however also notice that evaluating the spiritual and environmental values of cultural heritage is a widely diffused policy sustained by international doctrine, and that this is relevant to the eastern as well as the western world.

Martin Heidegger (1993: 143ff) speaks about two fundamental components in a work of art, the earth (matter) and the world of significances (idea). He gives the example of a Greek temple enclosing the figure of the god, and states: "By means of the temple, the god is present in the temple. This presence of god is in itself the extension and delimitation of the precinct as a holy precinct." (p. 167) The physical presence of the temple and the god's image in themselves do not yet assign the significance to the site, but it is the god's presence, the spiritual or the intangible dimension, when evoked, that gives the real meaning. The physical aspect of the temple Heidegger calls the earth. The temple sets up a 'world' that gives a meaning to the work. The more a work represents a creative and innovative contribution, the more truthful and the more authentic it is. The preservation of the work happens through knowing its truth, and it can occur at different degrees of scope, constancy and lucidity. Even when the work has lost its original functioning, it can still offer a remembrance of this, which contributes to establishing its meaning in the present. Conservation of a work therefore is a process requiring understanding and appreciation of the world of significances, not just limited to the material.

In his *Theory of Restoration* (English translation, 2005) Cesare Brandi refers to the work of art as a whole. It is the result of a creative process, where the artist 'creates' the physical reality of the work on the basis of the form given by the 'pure reality' in the artist's mind. The artistic aspect of the work remains 'intangible' but is there to be experienced in the physical reality of the work. Once created, such a work has an independent existence; its appreciation and therefore its conservation depend on the recognition of its artistic significance every time the work is contemplated. The restoration of a work must be based on such recognition, taking note of its historic and aesthetic significance (understood almost as legal cases put forth on behalf of the work). Brandi's definition of restoration of a work of art states: "Restoration consists of the methodological moment in which the work of art is recognised, in its physical being, and in its dual aesthetic and historical nature, in view of its transmission to the future." (2005: 48) For Brandi, as well as for Heidegger, the artistic aspect of a work of art is in the present, i.e. in the mind of the person recognising it. This is fundamentally intangible, and it can be experienced through critical observation and understanding of the spatial-material reality that it puts forth.

All heritage of humanity has its intangible dimension, whether a work of art, a historic building, a historic town, or a cultural landscape. Japan is noted for being maybe the first country to have passed legal protection for intangible cultural heritage. Probably inspired by this, in 1998, UNESCO adopted the *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity,* which established a List of similar heritage. Five years later, UNESCO also adopted the *Convention for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003), which emphasises the 'intangible' processes and functions, but includes also their physical attributes in this notion. The *World Heritage Convention* (1972) is often taken as being only concerned with "tangible heritage", but this is not exact. For example, in the case of a living historic town, such as Marrakech, the convention would certainly recognise that life goes on in the town and that this life and the social functions are essential elements in the definition of the universal value of the place. The list of oral and intangible heritage would focus on the activities and processes that have traditionally been and continue taking place in a specified cultural space of the town, e.g. the principal market place of Marrakech. On the other hand, many of the practices recognised in the 1998 List are not necessarily associated with a particular space but can take place anywhere.

Authenticity

In 1994, in the context of the World Heritage Convention, Japan hosted in Nara an expert meeting on the **issue of authenticity**. Understanding truthfulness of information sources as a fundamental prerequisite for the definition of authenticity, the *Nara Document on Authenticity* (1994) makes special reference to cultural diversity as an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual richness and the need to judge cultural heritage within the cultural contexts to which it belongs. In 2004, another UNESCO expert meeting in Nara concerned the **integration of the approaches for safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage**. The declaration resulting from this second meeting recognised the importance of the 1994 Nara document in emphasising the specific cultural context of a heritage resource when interpreting its authenticity. Nevertheless the declaration also stated that this term could not be applied in the same way when assessing intangible cultural heritage even though the tangible and intangible heritages were often interdependent. It was also claimed that 'intangible cultural heritage' was **constantly being recreated** and could therefore not be seen in the light of historical authenticity, which was understood as 'static'. This issue obviously will need further examination.

Since 1994, much has been written about authenticity. This notion has also become fashionable as a qualifying aspect of all types of commercial and tourist products, not necessarily reflecting genuine traditions. This may in fact be one of the reasons for the reluctance regarding authenticity by the people dealing with the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Intangible Heritage. Another reason may be the definition given for authenticity in the earlier version of the World Heritage *Operational Guidelines*. Before the recent revision, published in 2005, the **'test of authenticity'** referred to four parameters: **design, material, workmanship and setting**. In fact, it was seen basically in reference to the tangible material of the heritage. As a result of the 1994 expert meetings on authenticity, first in Bergen and then in Nara, the revised *Operational Guidelines* have given a new definition for the **'conditions of authenticity'**: "Depending on the type of cultural heritage, and its cultural context, properties may thus be understood to meet the conditions of authenticity if their cultural values (as recognized in the nomination criteria proposed) are truthfully and credibly expressed through a variety of attributes, including ..." There follows a list which, in addition to the previous parameters, now also includes: **traditions, techniques, language** and other forms of **intangible** heritage, as well as **spirit and feeling** or other issues (par. 82), showing a much broader recognition of the different aspects of culture and heritage.

Etymologically the concept of 'being authentic' refers to being truthful, i.e. standing alone as an autonomous human creation and being a true piece of evidence of something. The concept of truth is one of the principal issues discussed in philosophy. We can find it in the various sacred texts, such as the Bible and the Qur'an; it is discussed in ancient Asian philosophies and it is present in African thought. Over the past three centuries, Western thinking has proposed that the truth represented by human creation, i.e. cultural heritage, should be verified in the cultural context where it has been generated. In the late nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche saw that the only way for humans to generate truth and values was through a creative process, guided by the 'will to power'. This idea not only referred to works of art but to all human activity, where one takes one's full responsibility in setting forth a creative contribution. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Austrian art historian Alois Riegl coined the concept of *Kunstwollen* to indicate the relationship of human creative activity with the relevant cultural context. *Kunstwollen* also referred to the regeneration of representational forms that contributed to what could then become a 'style' (see: Olin, 1992).

The first of the World Heritage criteria for the definition of outstanding universal value (OUV) refers to a "masterpiece of human creative genius". To exemplify such human creativity, we can note in the history of Middle Eastern architecture how certain architectural forms were reinterpreted in successive historic phases, from the ancient Achaemenid Empire to the Sassanid period to Islamic architecture. A late example of this evolution is the ensemble of Meidan in the Safavid capital of Isfahan, created in the seventeenth century as a highlight of Persian Islamic architecture. In such cases, the emphasis in the test of authenticity should be on the creative aspect, but it obviously also requires verification of the relevant historical and cultural context. It is in this sense that it is also useful to refer to the definition by Paul Philippot (Former Director of

ICCROM): "*the authenticity of a work of art is in the internal unity of the mental process and of the material realization of the work*". The notion of "**authenticity by creation**" thus emerges as the creative and innovative quality in art and architecture.

The third criterion for OUV refers to: "testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization" criterion five to: "a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment". Both these criteria denote **material evidence of the history** of a place. The test of authenticity should thus be made with reference to this evidence and what it signifies, i.e. verification of the truthfulness of the sources of information. For example, Bamiyan Valley, where the two large Buddha figures were destroyed by the Taliban regime, was a crossroads of civilizations over many centuries. This site extends several kilometres along the valley with hundreds of caves and other evidence of its rich history. Even though the spectacular standing Buddha statues were destroyed, the valley can still be considered to have retained its archaeological significance as a place of outstanding and exceptional testimony to cultural activities taking place for centuries as a result of inter-cultural communication. Another question is how much it is possible or even desirable to put the fallen fragments of the Buddha statues back in their place, and yet another question is whether or not it is desirable to build another Buddha, a modern one in a suitable place in this valley! It is obviously not possible to allow the re-carving of a new figure going two or three meters deeper in the same niche, where we still have the authentic testimony of the original statue. These questions require a critical examination of all the factors in order to reach a balanced judgement both in terms of the authenticity and integrity of the place.

Values and significances can only be built up in communication and dialogue with others in society, thus forming cultural identity for a community. This was the case in traditional societies and can be considered an important part of heritage particularly concerning traditional settlements and many types of cultural landscapes. We can here speak of traditional **social-cultural authenticity**, which when it exists will justify the continuation of traditional forms of life and traditional treatment of the built structures. Such a characteristic is particularly relevant in cases where the traditional form of society has survived intact to our days. For example, in the case of the historic town of Harar Jugol, in Ethiopia, where the social organisation of this Muslim community has been traditionally based on neighbourhood associations and a strong practical and spiritual relationship with the surrounding land, forming a social-environmental whole. In modern society, the tendency has rather been towards fragmentation and a decrease in dialogue. Recognising that the regeneration of values and meanings requires dialogue, the problems can clearly be seen in the loss of common horizons for shared values, which should go beyond the over-emphasis of one's personal individuality and stress common responsibilities.

Integrity

Another key issue in the identification and definition of a heritage resource is certainly its **integrity**. The World Heritage *Operational Guidelines* (2005) require that a property nominated to the World Heritage List meets the conditions of integrity (par. 88):

> *Integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes. Examining the conditions of integrity, therefore requires assessing the extent to which the property: a) includes all elements necessary to express its outstanding universal value; b) is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the property's significance; c) suffers from adverse effects of development and/ or neglect.*

The **social-functional integrity** of a place is judged by the identification of the functions and processes on which its development over time has been based, such as those associated with interaction in society, spiritual responses, utilisation of natural resources, and movements of peoples. The spatial identification of the elements that document such functions and processes helps to define the **structural integrity** of the place, referring to what has survived from its evolution over time. These elements provide testimony to the creative response and continuity in building the structures and give sense to the spatial-environmental whole of the area. **Visual integrity**, on the other hand, helps to define the aesthetic aspects represented by the area. It is on such measurements of integrity that one can base the development of a system of

management so as to guarantee that the associated values would not be undermined. In many cases, it is not enough to focus on the limited World Heritage area, but rather take into account a vaster territorial context. Therefore, the issue of integrity cannot be limited to the strict boundaries of a World Heritage site. It is also necessary to place emphasis on the economic and functional aspects of the region and the relevant land use, which could not be suitably managed if only limited to the nominated World Heritage sites.

Relativity of values and identity

In a small booklet, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, has published a series of speeches dealing with values in contemporary Europe (2005). During his predecessor John Paul II's pontificate, Cardinal Ratzinger had the task of defending the doctrine of the Catholic Church. In many ways these speeches are related to doctrinal problems. He discusses the issue of individual freedom vs. shared values in society, and the fashionable question of relativism distinguishing present-day multicultural society. He summarises the evolution that has characterised European qualities and values, particularly those founded on Christianity, the dominating religion in Europe. Three issues emerge as the most essential. The first is the need to recognise human dignity and human right as absolute values that must be respected. In fact, he objects to cloning and genetic manipulation. The second issue deals with marriage and the family. He considers the family, formed of a legal union of man and woman, as the core nucleus of society, which needs to be defended. Finally, he is concerned about respect for what is perceived as sacred and holy. Ratzinger maintains that freedom of opinion should not be interpreted so as to destroy other people's faith. In the same line, respecting other people's faith and belief's should not lead to total relativism and annihilation of one's own values.

Pope Benedict XVI is an intellectual with deep cultural awareness, and he is seriously concerned about the trends that seem to go towards 'absolute relativism'. This trend was already feared by Nietzsche a century earlier, i.e. the annihilation of higher values and the abolition of human dignity. Historically, this tendency can be ascribed to the ethnocentrism that emerged with European colonialism, i.e. interpreting the values of other cultures in terms of one's own. Cultural relativism emerged, as a counterbalance, from the German Enlightenment and the development of anthropology in the twentieth century. Simplifying this view, all beliefs would be equally valid; truth itself would be relative to the situation, the context and the individual concerned. He is concerned about the tendency by cultural relativists to deny that the values associated with Western culture could have universal meaning. In fact, cultural relativism has at times been confused with moral relativism and, taken to an extreme, it would mean that there are no universal moral standards and no values. Instead, while recognising that each culture will have its own dignity and value structure, we can claim that there are issues that can be taken as a measuring stick against which specific qualities and characteristics of particular cultures are ponderable.
We can also observe that the **identity** on which the values and the individual 'personality' of a particular culture are based cannot be defined in isolation. Rather, identity is generally founded on the cross-fertilisation of different cultures and values. Therefore, for example, Western culture has certainly obtained its characteristics as a result of contacts and interactions between different cultures, such as those existing in Europe itself, but also with those in the Middle East and North Africa. European identity is thus the result of the pondering and regeneration of values over time. We can also note that even **science** has not been without cultural linkage. In his *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn has argued that science is not simply a logical outcome of rationality, nor something objective outside value judgements. Rather, the question of understanding natural phenomena is necessarily related to human understanding, experienced in the light of new paradigms resulting from intellectual revolutions. Science therefore is not just rational, but it is also based on cultural parameters. This debate also has relevance in the World Heritage context and particularly in the identification of outstanding universal value, implying a degree of absolutism.

Taking the discussion back to cultural relativism, we may agree with the idea that each culture has its own characteristics and identity. Obviously the meanings of related issues, such as cultural heritage, need to be verified in relation to relevant cultural contexts. On the other hand, this does not mean that all values should be equal. The question is about identifying **universally valid issues** in relation to which the specific qualities

can be weighed. It is in this light that we should see the ICOMOS report on the World Heritage List (the "Gap report"), where the thematic framework is presented as an attempt to identify issues of universal validity for the evaluation of the nominations. Recognising the creative diversity of the human mind, the question is to identify genuine/authentic examples of such creative and spiritual responses. Considering also the notion of cultural diversity, we can observe that different cultures can have generated comparable responses. It is therefore necessary to raise the issue of representation, making sure that the significant responses to particular themes in the different cultures are adequately represented on the List. At the same time, it is not enough to select the most representative, but also to agree about the minimum quality required for World Heritage properties, as well as making sure about the integrity of the nominated areas. Critical judgement is required based on research and documentary evidence to decide about the quality, integrity and values of the cultural responses represented.

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