

Bridging epistemic divides in cultural heritage protection: An exercise in confrontation and conversation (8 - 9 May 2023; Badia Fiesolana, Florence)

Introduction

Government responses to recent efforts to topple monuments and statues, whether of James Cook, King Leopold, Cecil Rhodes, or the Confederate generals, have demonstrated how heritage laws continue to be rooted in colonial notions of who heritage belongs to, the values heritage serves, and whose interests determine how heritage is protected/regulated (Knudsen et. al., 2021).

These events have triggered polarized discussions about contested heritage: Is the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas a similar crime to the toppling of statues of known enslavers like Colston? To whom do the “Elgin” marbles really belong? Are artefacts looted from conflicts in Syria and Iraq “safer” in the hands of private collectors? Should the Slave Trade Route be memorialized as heritage? Where does one draw the line between memorialization and valorization? What does heritage protection really mean, beyond the confines of a sanitized Western museum? What role does the law have to play in these debates?

Although heritage policy on these questions is of interest to and significantly impacts communities around the world, all too often heritage policies are negotiated in insular, Eurocentric, expert circles. This partition is created on the basis of civilizing logics that see local communities as incapable of holding policy conversations with Global North networks (Sud and Sanchez- Ancochea, 2022). There is also little engagement with the growing body of data produced by other relevant heritage disciplines such as history and critical heritage studies, where the politics of heritage policy and its colonialities are regularly up for discussion (Petrie, 2005). Even within disciplines such as heritage history, connections between heritages in different spaces are rarely sketched out. The only running thread that cuts across discipline and borders is that heritage experts – while identifying international organizations and States as political/interested actors – hesitate to accept their own political aspirations and their complicity in the inequalities of policy structures (Meskell, 2014).

A natural consequence of this insularity is that activists, heritage custodians, and the broader field of those affected by heritage policy see little utility in engaging with heritage “expertise”. This cements a model of policy making which puts Eurocentric expertise at its nucleus, leaving communities far from

this decision-making epicenter. This structure has become so naturalized that it is all but impossible for heritage expertise based on epistemologies outside the nucleus to find their way in.

This workshop is an attempt to resolve this impasse. It is designed to create a safe and interdisciplinary space where all people who are affected by heritage policy can come together for knowledge-sharing and discussion. Conscious of our own individual privileged positionalities and the social capital of the academic institution we belong to, we deliberately intend for this workshop to transgress the traditional way that ‘scholarly’ spaces are created by inviting those who are excluded from academic discussions and forging a bridge between siloed networks. The objective of the workshop is also to spotlight what Santos calls an ‘ecology of knowledges’ (Santos, 2007) and understands how new grammars can be discovered in equal collaboration with Global South and other disciplinary partners.

The workshop brings together scholars and practitioners from various parts of the world, in a multilingual long-table format conversation. The conversation will cut across five broad themes, intersecting disciplines such as law, archaeology, history, political science, development studies, tourism, and urban planning.

This event has been organised with the support of the [Decentering Eurocentrism](#) Interdisciplinary Research Cluster.

Programme

8 May 2023

Sala del Capitolo, Badia

11:00 - 12:00	Heritage Walk (Optional)¹
13.30 - 14.00	Registration
14.00 – 14.45	Introductory Remarks

¹ The heritage walk will take place at Villa Salviati after which participants are free to explore the EUI buildings and have lunch. The lunch following the walk will be at each participant’s own expense.



14.50 – 15.20

Heritage and Custodianship I

A decolonialidade como enfrentamento epistemológico: a 'ativação popular do patrimônio-territorial' para o estudo da relação turismo e patrimonialização na América Latina

Bruna Galindo, Mozart Fazito and Ilia Alvarado-Sizzo | Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

The creation of heritage and an axiological investigation of Gubei Water Town, China

Chujun Wang | Hokkaido University

15.20 – 16.00

Coffee Break

16.00 – 16.30

Illicit trafficking of heritage

Cultural catastrophe' or the 'Golden Age of collecting': confronting the narratives on illicit trafficking of Iraqi archaeological heritage

Alesia Koush | University of Reading and CAMNES

Cultural properties of Afghanistan: colonial presence, looting and restitution in times of conflict

Anais Mattez | University of Hong Kong and Science Po

16.45 – 17.30

Heritage and Custodianship II

Participation as panacea? Addressing forced displacement in international cultural heritage law

Sophie Starrenburg | Leiden University and Tilburg University

Ethics of care in heritage engagements

Charlotte Woodhead | University of Warwick

Decolonizing museum curation

Matilde Dani | EUI, School of Transnational Governance

9 May 2023

Sala del Capitolo, Badia

9.30 – 10.45

Intangible Cultural Heritage II

Endangered cultural heritage in Vietnam on behalf of the British Museum

Diana Lê, Rachel Tough, Son Thanh Nguyen and Lê Thái Hoàng Nguyễn | EMKP, British Museum

Re-thinking value chain of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH): Connecting archaeology with ICH to recognize skills and traditional knowledge systems in documenting value-chain approach

Rutuja Sahasrabuddhe | Ahmedabad University

Connecting skills and knowledge in value-chain method for crafts documentation – a case study of Tambat Ali, Pune

Anna Karlstrom | Uppsala University

Tangible vs. intangible: The living heritage of Anarkali Bazaar

Tajammal Rai | Hazara University and **Ayesha Rogers** | LDE Centre for Global Heritage and Development

10.45 – 11.30

Heritage and Custodianship III

Shifting notions of custodianship: internalization of mainstream cultures by indigenous communities

Ashok Danavath | National Commission for Dalits Human Rights

Determining community heritage through caste locations

Rajesh Dheena | STEPS Foundation, Thindivanam

Custodianship of heritage in Syria

Lama Abboud | Turathuna Foundation

11.30- 12.00

Coffee Break

12:00 - 12:30

Troubling Heritage I

Commemorating the 'invisible' Asian laborers of the Thailand-Burma Death Railway: the Malaysia Death Railway Interest Group as justice entrepreneur

WL Cheah | NUS Singapore

Whose flag to rise over the archeological site in Sabastiya?

Jawida Mansour | Independent Researcher

12.35 – 13.35

The normative role of law in heritage regulation

An International Court of Cultural Heritage

Ankit Malhotra | SOAS

Private and public rights in cultural objects ownership

Sabrina Ferrazzi | University of Verona

International criminal law and the protection of cultural heritage: a space for cultural heritage protection?

Samuel White | University of West Scotland

The colonial lives of the legal framework regarding the restitution of sacred cultural objects: the Magdala Collection

Andreas Giorgallis | University of Glasgow

13.35 – 15.00

Lunch

15.00 – 15.45

Epistemic authority in heritage management

A renewed role of the 1972 system: suspended between international policy choices and the need of strengthening local community-linkage

Elisa Fallani and Tatiana Rozochkina | HeReLab, Florence (UNESCO)

International negotiators as arbiters of cultural heritage loss and damage

Tejas Rao | University of Cambridge

Non-state actors in global heritage governance

Roger Negro | Blanquerna Observatory for Media, Religion and Culture

15.50 – 16.20

Epistemic Authority II

Transnational organisation or policy tool? The UNESCO World Heritage Programme as a global arena for the exertion of state influence

Federica Falchetti | EUI and the University of Sienna

World heritage listing procedures: a case study from Ahmedabad

Manvita Baradi | Urban Management Centre, Ahmedabad

16.20 – 16.50

Coffee Break

16.50 – 17.30

Troubling Heritage II

Deheritagization processes in the Global East

Julie Deschepper | Utrecht University

On Ephemeral Memory Politics and Conservationist International Law of Cultural Heritage

Uladzislau Belavusau | TMC Asser Institute

17.30 – 18.30

Roundup and Closing Remarks

