

„Conflict-Solving Strategies in Heritage Studies“ - Prof. Marie-Theres Albert

Welcome to International Academy Cottbus (ISAC) 2015

Dear colleague Hilgert, dear Wolfgang Schuster, dear colleague Lewerentz, dear ladies and gentlemen, dear students, it is my pleasure to welcome you to our now 4th Academy.

Herr Lewerentz, thank you for allowing us to work in this temple of science once again.

So far, there have been Summer Academies in which we discussed and worked on diverse heritage themes. Due to our extensive program of events this summer, this time we have planned a Winter Academy. I hope the winter does not overtake us.

What has overtaken us is the reality in view of our theme. The merciless destruction of heritage is more current than ever and more monstrous than one would have dreamed. Concepts for conflict-solving against this type of destruction do not yet exist. There are approaches on how one can work with the affected population in the conflict regions. There are programs for reconstructing destroyed heritage. Prof. Hilgert has for example launched such a program in collaboration with the AA.

When we designed these Academies, we found ourselves at the very beginning of our ambitious project, to position Heritage Studies disciplinarily with its diverse approaches and components. Our paradigmatic approach was to design Heritage Studies in the interest of human development. We intended to expand the postcolonial approaches of Laurajane Smith and others in Critical Heritage Studies in order to include the perspective of sustainable human development.

The background of our concern was the recognition that through the popularization of the World Heritage Convention, the issue of heritage protection and heritage use, particularly with regard to World Heritage, was no longer seen as unreservedly positive. Over the years, many critical questions were raised that had to be answered.

The questions were, for example, directed toward the problematic effects of the commercialisation of the heritage of humanity, such as the trivialisation of the heritage values or identity building. What also had to be questioned critically were the experts of UNESCO and ICOMOS and their “authorised discourse” selling point namely that only they are qualified and authorized to sustainably protect heritage.

Last but not least, the causes and effects of the destruction of heritage were questioned, as was the role that UNESCO played in conflict prevention, for example in times of war and conflict-solving. Strategies to provide appropriate measures for the heritage of humanity in danger have been absent altogether over many years.

Every heritage contributes to identity and awareness building. Heritage can therefore as always, be seen as a process of the transformation of the values of societies of the past into the present and into the future. This process always includes social development. And exactly at this transformation of the meaning of heritage for social development in the interest of humanity itself, is where we placed our concept of Heritage Studies and of our Academies. We hoped at the same time to be able to take into consideration the problematic developments in the implementation of the conventions in social practice.

So much for the founding concept of Heritage Studies and our Academies, - as I said - this ISAC is the fourth event. Another special feature of this Academy series is that it aims with its themes at a professional, international audience, which, just as IGS Heritage Studies, would like to further develop the theoretical discourses on the subject of heritage as well as strategies for a possible new discipline.

The claim of Heritage Studies to a disciplinary status is a relatively recent phenomenon. Although many political positionings of the UN community have been published in the context of the UNESCO conventions for the protection of heritage, theoretical foundations for the possibilities and limits of sustainable implementations and effects are largely absent.

Among the few available are the writings of the classics of the discourse such as those from Lourdes Arizipe about the global cultural commons or those from Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett with the title Theorizing Heritage. Mention may also be made of a few disciplinarily or methodologically oriented publications such as the new insights in Methods and Approaches of Heritage Studies published by Routledge.

Newer publications with contributions from Anthropology to Heritage Studies come from Helaine Silverman, who, by the way, will also hold a presentation in our Academy as a member of the board of our Heritage Studies Series. The postcolonial reflections in the field of Heritage Studies in the books of the archaeologist Laurajane Smith were already mentioned.

That means for the positioning initiated by us of Heritage Studies in the interest of human development that we had to identify and work out the challenges associated with the paradigm that the heritage discourse faces. That concerned concepts such as heritage and sustainability, participation and community involvement, concepts of sustainable social development, the empowerment of stakeholders or conflict causal research and solution processes.

In other words, themes and focuses that we took up, discussed and reflected upon as part of our Academies as well as the resulting publications form the basis of our understanding of Heritage Studies.

With this in mind, we worked on the theme Constructing Heritage in the Light of Sustainable Development in the first Summer Academy. The topic and the focus of this academy were connected to the activities of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention.

The analysis of exactly this topic was chosen to motivate the heritage community to address in theory and in practise the challenges of globalisation pertaining to the sustainable protection and sustainable use of heritage.

Understanding Heritage

When we started to reflect upon this theme we were very much aware that sustainable development is not possible without including the local stakeholders. In that first academy we therefore wanted to go a step further and propose the hypothesis, that mankind's heritage is both representative of and a tool for human development, and that human development is not possible without the participation of actors within their own development.

Our publication *Understanding Heritage – Perspectives in Heritage Studies* can thus be seen as a result of our first Academy. *Understanding Heritage – Perspectives in Heritage Studies* is the mirror of that which we initiated with this Academy in the summer of 2012. The Cottbus Declaration on Heritage Studies: The Need for a Holistic Understanding of Heritage was the agreement adopted by all participants and the content basis for further developing research in the field of Heritage Studies as well as for publications but especially also for continuing the series of Summer Academies.

Subsequently, the second Summer Academy in 2013 was devoted to the theoretical approaches for the understanding of sustainability in Heritage Studies and its foundational disciplines. Also for this second Academy, we had already formulated the paradigmatic basis with The Cottbus Declaration on Heritage Studies in 2012 and published it in the first book. In this Academy, our objective was to further advance the scientific identification of the broad constructions of heritage and sustainability under the conditions of globalisation.

Perceptions of Sustainability

This concerned, for example, the protection and the use of heritage in consideration of worldwide migration or growing tourism regardless of heritage type, tangible or intangible, irrespective of status, whether World Heritage, local heritage of ethnic groups or of specific traditions, or concepts of heritage conservation etc. The impacts of globalisation on the heritage of people concern people themselves; in several respects, in fact. They pertain to tangible and intangible goods of people as well as their appropriations directed by diverse and differing interests. They pertain also to people's constructions of heritage and the dynamically changing cultural and social processes.

40 Years WHC

Also integrated into the overarching theme: 40 Years World Heritage Convention – Popularizing the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage, the diverse results of our first Academy were published and thus made available to the international public.

As part of the thematic focuses of our Academies, it was logical to work on more gaps in the heritage discourse. So it was with the third Summer Academy in 2014 with the inclusion of participation and empowerment in the preservation and use of heritage.

The publication for this Academy is still pending. With our further experiences on these themes by means of various conferences, we are however now ready to tackle this publication.

With our current thematic focus: Conflict-Solving Strategies in Heritage Studies, we did not just want to further develop the concept of Heritage Studies, we wanted to explicitly deal with the real conflicts that threaten the heritage of humanity.

Therefore, the ISAC 2015 will contribute to the identification of heritage-related conflicts and to the elaboration of innovative multilevel approaches for solving them. As a fundamental component of conflict-solving strategies, ISAC 2015 will take into consideration the interests of various authorities, institutions, organizations and other actors.

We will discuss the subject from a theoretical perspective with the interest of enlarging our understanding of Heritage Studies, including approaches from social, political and technical sciences as well as from the humanities. At the same time, we will develop practical, context-based tools that will enable different stakeholders to achieve mutually satisfying decisions in questions related to all aspects of heritage protection, use and development. ISAC 2015 covers five thematic areas:

Conflict-solving strategies in the context of historic urban landscapes

The background is that the past decades have seen a number of serious disputes arising around heritage sites worldwide, particularly in relation to historic urban landscapes. The authenticity and visual integrity in this type of site often becomes compromised by the construction of new high-rise buildings or traffic infrastructure and by rapid city growth and gentrification.

The speakers will discuss the reasons and effects of such developments and will seek possible solutions towards the enhancement of communication between different actors, which can facilitate decision-making in relation to urban policies, planning and management of historic urban landscapes.

Cultural landscapes in conflict: challenges and solutions

Cultural landscapes present a complex phenomenon, expressed in both the tangible and the intangible components. Given the speed and scope with which cultural landscapes develop and change in the modern world, they often become “battlefields” of interest between various stakeholders, whose conflicting agendas impede the balanced and well-informed decisions with

regard to their protection and use.

The speakers will look into the possible causes and effects of conflicts in relation to cultural landscapes and will discuss the tools that can be applied for solving such conflicts.

Heritage in the event of war and terrorism

Abundant examples of destruction of cultural properties in the event of armed conflict and terrorist attacks over the past decades demonstrate that heritage presents a highly sensitive target. The speakers will present examples of heritage involved in war action and endangered by possible terrorist attacks. They will elaborate on the background and the impact of these destructive activities and will discuss possible solutions in the context of heritage.

Climate change and natural disasters as challenges for natural heritage

Apart from armed conflicts and terrorism, there also exist other, long-lasting and highly hazardous factors that jeopardise the safeguarding of the world's natural heritage, through the conflicts they attract. These include climate change and various natural disasters, which have far-reaching implications for societies worldwide, with effects on social relations and economic activities. Speakers will discuss the causes and effects of these hazards on the world's natural heritage and the tools for their mitigation.

Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) as a tool for solving conflicts

The aim of HIA lies in assessing the impacts of the threats to heritage properties from various large-scale developments, as well as of inappropriate constructions, renewals and demolitions that do not take into consideration the original layout and fabric of these properties.

HIA also assesses threats related to natural heritage, such as changes in land-use policies. The speakers will present examples of successful implementation of HIA in different heritage contexts and will discuss the ways in which it can contribute to the alleviation of conflicts between various stakeholders involved in the protection and development of heritage sites.

You see, we once again have very high expectations and I am convinced that we will meet our expectations.

I thank you for coming and look forward to two interesting weeks.