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Keynote

Heritage Interpretation in a Globalized World

Introduction

Dear Dr. Madumulla (Vice Chancellor, University of Iringa), Dr. Mbuzukongira (Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academics, University of Iringa), dear Dr. Ngoro, Dr. Ilomo (Director for Postgraduate Studies, Research and Publications, University of Iringa), dear colleagues from around the world, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear students,

“Heritage Interpretation in a Globalized World”, is a challenging project. The reason for this is that globalisation includes diversity and this means that the understanding of heritage is as broad as how the individuals and cultures of the world understand and define heritage. Therefore, Heritage interpretation, no matter how it is disciplinarily, epistemologically or methodologically reasoned, needs to be seen in the context of an intercultural and transcultural understanding of the world. It is exactly this that needs to be considered for every theoretical underpinning of interpretation. In this respect, it is difficult to develop a universally valid concept of Heritage Interpretation for large and diverse target groups; as different professional, gender, social, age, national and international groups will each have to be taken into consideration. And this, in turn, calls for specific intercultural analyses of each of these groups.

Let me explain this concern based on some questions related to *Leonardo Da Vinci’s The Last Supper*

Introduction

Church and Dominican Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie with "The Last Supper" by Leonardo da Vinci, Italy

Date of inscription: 1980
 Criteria: (i)(ii)
 Property: 1.50 ha
 Ref: 93



Leonardo da Vinci - Last Supper

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“If you look carefully at this picture, what do you think is the message that is here conveyed? Europeans with their mainly Christian background know precisely what this picture means. There is always the same interpretation, namely Jesus from Nazareth at his last supper.

Jesus of Nazareth stands for the founder of Christianity. In the fundamental documents of this belief, the *Old* and the *New Testament*, the *Last Supper* until today represents the central values within Christianity: for hospitality and helpfulness within the Christian community. It stands for charity and understanding, which the Christian God bestows on his followers, even after the death of Jesus. But it also stands for the betrayal within the Christian community. Judas, one of the here represented followers of Jesus, betrayed Jesus as agitator to the rulers of the region, the Romans. For that reason, he is crucified the very next day.

Would you have had the same interpretation without the background information or would you have had interpreted the picture differently? What about interpretations from people without any religious background? What about interpretations from people with an Islamic, Buddhist or Hindu religious background? If they have similar interpretations, what is their common ground? If not, how can the message here be translated?

Heritage Interpretation is culturally dependent. I would, therefore, like to address in my keynote speech not so much heritage interpretation strategies as such. But I would rather like to explicate framework requirements, which need to be taken into account for every concept of heritage

interpretation. In this respect, heritage interpretation deals at first with the globalisation and the diversity it creates. For understanding this it is important to ask:

In which society do we live?

The world society	The risk society	The post-industrial society	The civil society
The post-colonial society	The disintegrating society	The multicultural society	The developing society
The working society	The rural society	The trans-cultural society	The knowledge society

Source: Pongs, A. 1999. In which society do we live?, Dilemma-Verlag, Munich.

It is a provocative question that the journalist Armin Pongs used for the title of his two-volume publication concerning societies in the process of globalisation. This question appears to be so relevant that 24 of the most internationally renowned protagonists of the global *zeitgeist* (spirit of the time) discuss it in these volumes. The books were already published in 1999. The statements reflect the views in the first volume. The question itself as well as its answers are still very much up-to-date and are still the focus of a continuing intensive scientific discussion.

In which society do we live?

Publications of the UNESCO Chair in Heritage Studies:

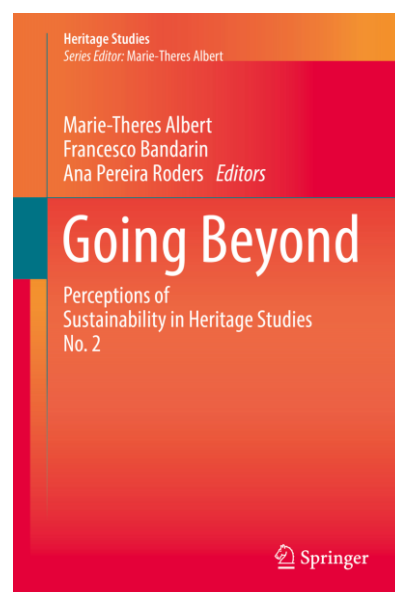
- Natur und Kultur / Nature and Culture
- Perspektiven des Welterbes / Constructing World Heritage
- Training Strategies for World Heritage Management
- World Heritage and Cultural Diversity

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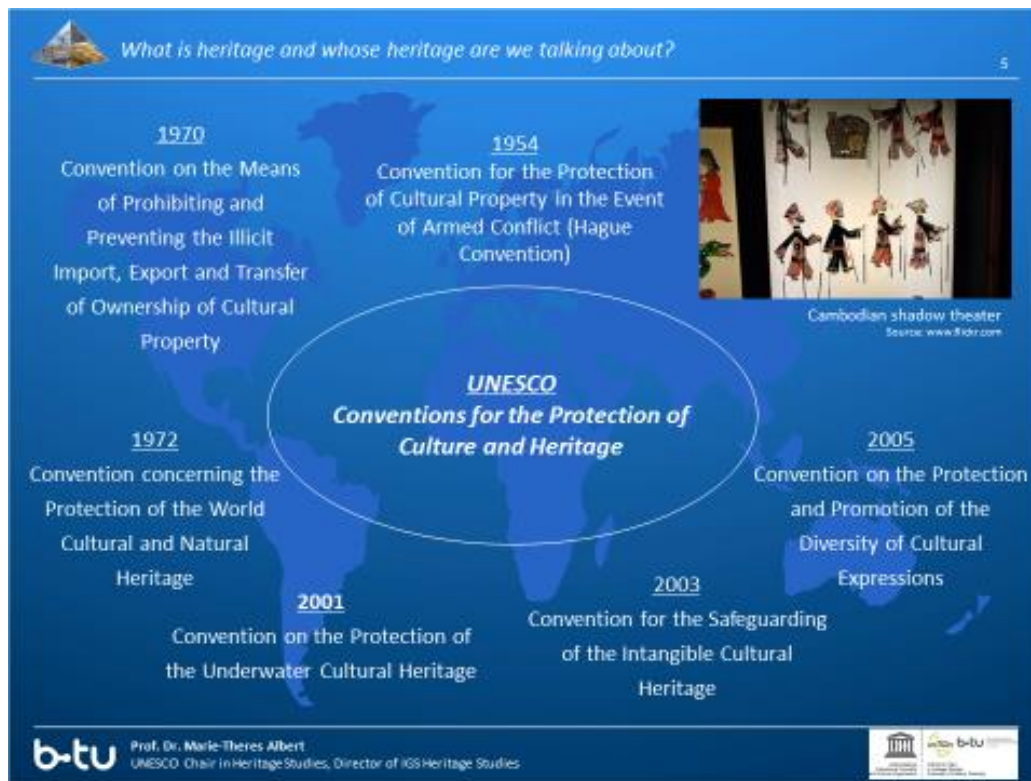
As it is internationally accepted and has been presented in our publication series, for a deeper understanding of heritage it is necessary to clarify these facts, mainly when people reflect upon heritage. It has to be clarified that opinions about the needs for protecting heritage differ based on the cultural or social background of people. The diversity of cultural heritage has, in the same way, to be regarded for the future of mankind and how heritage can be mediated as the diversity of the cultures themselves across the borders. The debate, therefore, deals with the question whether and how heritage diversity can be maintained globally.



Again I would like to refer to our own conferences and publications.



What is heritage and whose heritage are we talking about?



The epistemological interest of the approach in the field of Heritage Interpretation aims at heritage analogue to the UNESCO Conventions, of which, since UNESCO was founded in 1945, up to now, six conventions concerning the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage have been adopted. Although the global society has created tools with these Conventions that allow placing goods under protection that have been identified by the global society as worthy of protection, it has still only been able to identify a fractional amount of heritage. According to Graeme Aplin (2002, p.13), in relevant literature heritage is described as:

- [...] the portion allotted to a specified person, group, etc.
- Property consisting of land etc. that developed on the heir at law as opposed to the executor [...]
- A gift which constitutes a proper possession [...]
- Inherited circumstances or benefits

and contains thus meanings, which exceed the narrower understanding of UNESCO. But heritage represents objects, products and also experiences of the past and constitutes in this manner projections towards the future. In this respect, it can be said that tangible and intangible heritage form identities and transform them at the same time.

What does it signify for heritage interpretation when heritage itself has many different functions?

What does it signify for heritage interpretation when heritage shapes identities?

What is heritage and whose heritage are we talking about? 6

Holy Cow in Hinduism

The burka in Islam

Jesus as the bearer of the cross on Good Friday

Community Baptisms in Tanzania

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Inherited objects, circumstances, benefits or problems, traditions and customs, norms and values include experiences with history. But it is the inherited circumstances where people make experiences from which they learn. Every person, every society and every culture makes experiences within the historical process and utilizes them to shape their present or future life.

People have developed values and norms as a result of specific events, incidents or circumstances, which have been passed on to them. They have learned to decide which circumstances in the present they wish to improve, change or keep the way they are. These values are handed down to the successive generations, which in turn employ them to shape their own values. Thus, the way people deal with the inherited circumstances, objects or modes of life, is constructed in individual, cultural and social processes of socialization and have therefore to be considered in heritage interpretations strategies and concepts.



Two Nazi transport trains in Krakow, Poland.

Let me give you some examples: Some time ago I went to the World Heritage City of Krakow in Poland to participate at an event organized by the International Cultural Center. During this event, we visited the Schindler Museum featuring a new exhibition of the German Nazi attack on Krakow. This period of German history occurred before I was born.

But still: looking at the exhibition was for me a painful, an uncomfortable and unpleasant reminder of my national heritage. Until that moment I was not aware how much this heritage still continues to have an effect on my perception of today. I am sure that other Germans who had come to the exhibition felt something similar. The reason is that even though we were not involved in the holocaust, in the perception of the Holocaust victims we still belong to the group of the perpetrator. But what did my Polish colleagues feel, or the Polish and German members of the Jewish communities who had attended the exhibition?

I did not ask my colleagues because I feared their answer. Even if they did not put me personally to the group of perpetrators, this part of history still belonged to me as a German with precisely this German heritage. And heritage, no matter whether it is lived in the role of the victim or the perpetrator, encompasses the legacies of individuals and cultures or nations.

Until today, the German Holocaust is for all participants a heritage which is difficult to cope with. As a place of horror, Auschwitz is represented as a heritage site on the world heritage list. Auschwitz, which is located outside of Krakow, is a heritage site which warns us of the inherited circumstances where people make those experiences from which they learn.



The Wall in Berlin, Germany

Construction of the Berlin Wall on 12. August 1961.



The Wall separated the city from 1961-1989. It is an iconic symbol of the Cold War.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 signaled the end of the Cold War

A further example for inherited circumstances is the construction of the Berlin Wall and its fall. And although the construction of the wall directly affected Germans, politically it was only indirectly to do with Germany. The Berlin Wall was a product of the Cold War, a geopolitical staging and expression of the power blocks which were not able to reconcile after the Potsdam Conference.

But, during the Cold War this political heritage was not explained, neither in West nor in East Germany. On the contrary, the image of the enemy was constructed accordingly. The result was that even after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the wall that remained in our heads and in our hearts, as we say today, affected us for a long time.

It is always the inherited historical circumstances that shape our conscience. The separation of Germany shapes the German awareness until today just like all other historic experiences of peoples shape their awareness. It is this kind of construction of heritage that is relevant for the interpretation of heritage, also in respect of the UNESCO conventions. These inherited circumstances that shape consciences and awareness, as I would like to point out, are unfortunately not safeguarded with any of the conventions. For that reason, these circumstances cannot be found in the Heritage Interpretation Strategies.

Cultural diversity in the view of globalisation – What does this imply?

Cultural diversity in the view of globalisation – What does this imply?

Sweden: World Mixed Heritage Laponian Area, home of the Saami, or Lapp people

Kaodiyattam, India

Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania

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UNESCO b-tu

In an interview with the UNESCO-Courier, the Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano once said: *“The best of the world is its diversity of the universes contained within. And the preservation of this diversity is a challenge for the future.”* (Eduardo Galeano 2001, p.64).

Important parts of the diversity of universes are nature, with its biodiversity, and culture, as tangible and material aspects, as well as intangible intellectual culture including its many aspects and representations.



Cultural diversity is also expressed in a broad range of very different expressions of life and needs, as well as in the dealing with cultural and natural resources. It is expressed in a wide range within the subcultural milieu, including its respective preferences for literature, art, economy or religion.

The global protection of cultural and natural goods, and of the expressions of life and human needs, in view of globalisation enables the peoples of the world to understand and interpret their own past. And this permits them to cope with the present and to shape their future.

Culture is the origin of our progress and our creativity. This requires our respect for all cultures. In their different manifestations, cultures have, in different ways for all people, a constructive, constitutive and creative function. Every development is thus linked to culture. All economic, social or technological developments are always connected to cultural development (UNESCO, 1995, p.15-17).

The protection of the natural and cultural diversity is therefore the concern of the peoples of the world and is expressed in a series of declarations such as in the “*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*” (1948), in the “*Millennium Declaration of the United Nations*” (2000) or also in the “*Conventions for the Safeguarding of Cultural Diversity*”.

Investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue

“Cultural diversity is above all a fact [...] The awareness for this diversity is today much more disseminated than before. It is supported through globalised communication and growing intercultural contacts.” (UNESCO, 2009, p.3)

The most significant of these *“Conventions for the Protection of the Diversity of Human Expressions of Life”*, are the Conventions adopted in 2003 and in October 2005 concerning the protection of intangible cultural goods and their diverse cultural expressions. Particularly with the *Convention* adopted in 2005 *“on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions”* the international community set significant accents to arrest worldwide *“homogenization”* and *“commercialization”* of cultural goods and to oppose the commercialization processes of culture by the implementation of an instrument according to international law.

The distinctive features of national cultural expressions, as they are represented in literature, arts and cinema, in photography or in the theatre, should be now considered as cultural expressions **and as goods**. This means they can be defined as commodities and are therefore subject to the criteria of free international trade.

In a text written by German minister involved in the negotiations it says: *“Basically, the UNESCO convention concerns the relationship between “market” and “state” as well as the relationship between cultural industry and cultural policy”* (von Schorlemer ,2006, p.40).

Why is the preservation of cultural diversity in the view of globalisation so important?

Globalisation can be classified as the third industrial revolution, which has produced and still produces global communication and information systems. Worldwide, globalisation has launched industrial and technical development processes and has strongly shaped cultures all over the world. It has also produced structures of modernity, which successively will cause traditional life styles to disappear.

The formation of a Global Society was triggered by scientific, technical and economic globalisation. The Global Society is also characterised by the opening of national borders for direct investments of international capital into the national economy. These processes affect not only financial and commodity flows but also the cultures of the world.

The result of the opening up of national borders for foreign investments, goods and services was that *“something like a global integrated economy”* emerged (Helmut Schmidt, December 12, 1999, pp.23). It has denationalized products on the global market and has homogenized the needs people have.

This signifies that the global market was consistent with a global distribution of products and thus in the same way generated human needs for these very products on the global market. In other words,

globalisation supplies the global society with all sorts of products and generates, at the same time, the according structure of needs.

Global consumer and entertainment industry has become the standard for human needs and satisfaction of these needs and has driven out local products of local markets and national products out of national markets. The globalisation process has not only compromised the development of many national economies (see Stiglitz, 2002), but this development itself has reduced diversity. In other words, in the same way as parts of the global society have been able to profit from globalisation, others have become its losers.

Why is the preservation of cultural diversity in the view of globalisation so important? 11

The slide features two side-by-side photographs. The left photograph shows the interior of the Le Meurice restaurant in Paris, France, characterized by ornate chandeliers, white tablecloths, and a grand architectural style. The right photograph shows a garbage dump in Mumbai, India, with a mother and her son sitting on the ground amidst piles of trash, eating breakfast. A faint world map is visible in the background of the slide.

Dining at Le Meurice in Paris, France
One of the most expensive restaurants in the world

A mother and son have breakfast amidst the garbage in
Mumbai, India

Conflicts in a globalised world

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Nobel Prize winners of economy, Joseph Stiglitz (2002) and Amartya Sen (2007), pointed out that the gap between rich and poor has increased. While one part of society will dine in more and more luxurious restaurants, the other part will spend their lives on garbage dumps. The differences of economic development of globalisation are located between the poor and the rich nations and are more than ever the constituent element of national cultures and societies. In this respect, these differences are also present in the perception and interpretation of mankind's heritage.

Why is the preservation of cultural diversity in the view of globalisation so important? 12

Anti-xenophobia walk on Mandela Day 2010 in Cape Town, South Africa

Sticker sold in the U.S. state of Colorado

Fight against racism, discrimination and xenophobia

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And let me point out the last characteristic aspect of globalisation. It consists of the fact that the real and the propagated infinity of the world aim to draw new borders between peoples, ethnic groups and cultures. Instead of promoting values, which represent particularity and diversity, new borders are drawn. The degree in which this is occurring is thought-provoking. One gets the impression that boundlessness and the drawing of borders are two necessary sides of the same historic process.

Not so long ago, national states served for the identification of places, which provided the according value and norms systems for a subjective and collective sense of affiliations. Now, on the other hand, these affiliations are dissolved by global migration processes. Instead of increasing the places of identification analogue to the global opening up, a reverse movement can be observed.

Why is the preservation of cultural diversity in the view of globalisation so important? 25

Demonstration in Barcelona for the freedom of the Catalan region

Celebration of the South Sudan Independence

Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk at Mandela's inauguration

Source: www.flickr.com & www.GlobePress.com

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The units which shape identities with their values and expressions of life in the 21st century are constantly decreasing. Despite all technological and economic developments worldwide, people search for identity back on regional and then on local levels. Borders are increasingly drawn between ethnic groups, nationalities or other groups, although these groups do not really exist (Brubaker, 2007).

The more complex and therefore confusing social structures become, the more each individual is in search for guidelines. And it has become more and more obvious that this search is crossing borders, cultures and situations. On a global level we can observe that centuries-old cultural imprints of peoples are on the verge of disintegration. New identification patterns do not appear to be available.



On the contrary: In a global world everybody has the possibility to choose between and become part of the uniform McDonald's, Coca Cola, cell phone, laptop or jeans-culture. Everybody has the possibility to decide whether he or she identifies with provincialism and bourgeoisie of ethnic movements, or whether he or she is capable to integrate particularity **and** globalisation into their individual and collective identity.

Heritage Interpretation and Intercultural Competence

“The identity of peoples and the cohesion of societies are deeply rooted in the symbolic tissue of the past. Or, in other words, the conditions for peace reside, to a large extent, in each individual's pride in their cultural roots, and the recognition of equal dignity of all cultures” (Koïchiro Matsuura, 2003).

Globalisation exerts on individuals and societies a pressure to adapt and homogenize. Also, organisations and institutions, dealing with heritage and heritage interpretation are confronted with this pressure. They will require professional knowledge in global disciplines and in the affective fields of human personality structures. The requirements of globalisation and thus the effective, efficient and sustainable interpretation strategies exceed the strategies of cognitive mediation.

In this respect, heritage interpretation strategies should be initiated as multidimensional and intercultural learning and communication processes, which can also mobilise the psycho-social

resources of every individual. In heritage interpretation processes, target groups will have to be empowered to determine the constructions of heritage-meaning and to make them accessible for their own culture, as well as for other cultures and societies. Heritage of mankind should be understood as a common, which should be only used if it remains sustainable for all parties.

This type of heritage interpretation is consistent with the development of intercultural competence, which is understood as a fundamental interpersonal and social competence. This competence consists of the ability to think and act in dimensions of diversity, and to mediate mankind's heritage in the times of conflict.

Intercultural competence within the concept of heritage interpretation consists of the ability to communicate and take action within and across cultures, subcultures and value systems. And precisely for this reason, the strategies for heritage interpretation will have to be balanced with those for the development of intercultural competence.

Thank you very much for your attention!

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