

Challenging Heritage - New Heritage Agendas

Date(s)	Monday 4th March 2013 (00:00)
Contact	Workshop Leader: Professor Mike Robinson (/staff/profiles/ironbridge/robinson-mike.aspx)
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Heritage is a cumulative category which is expanding rapidly. Not only is the World Heritage List fast approaching 1,000 sites, more recent categories relating to the World Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the 'Memory of the World' are also attracting ever increasing numbers of candidates. Away from the transnational heritage 'lists', countries in both the developed and developing world are generating an increasing amount of heritage. Reasons for this expansion are multi-layered and complex and relate to the establishment / re-establishment / re-discovery and projection of geographical, ethnic and cultural identities, but also to more pragmatic socio-economic matters where heritage is harnessed as a resource for development, regeneration and diversification.

But the rapid growth of formalised heritages, designated in some way and embedded in matters of policy, planning and governance, is causing problems. To maintain, manage and market heritage is increasingly expensive and in many countries heritage sites are increasingly neglected, poorly managed and wholly abandoned. Museums are under threat of closure, world heritage sites are challenged by new development. On the surface there appears to have been an over-production of heritage and now, in the context of a global economic crisis, heritage is portrayed as being 'under threat'. This position is frequently characterised as some form of crisis and yet it challenges us to re-think what we value as heritage, how we value it and critically, what it means to us.

With global mobilities, the compression of time and space through technologies and what John Tomlinson refers to as the 'culture of immediacy', what was straightforwardly designated as heritage some thirty years ago, is now subject to more complex and nuanced readings by societies. Certainly, a dominant paradigm of Euro-centric, Christian heritage is being challenged by an unprecedented cultural diversity, as are the Western, neo-romantic aesthetic sensibilities which have been so instrumental in the designation of such heritage.

At the same time, and particularly within the context of normative generational replacement, new heritages are being designated. Not through formal mechanisms, nor within the powerful frameworks of 'tradition', but through more organic and sporadic means. Attachments to places have both loosened and strengthened. Personal heritages have emerged as important, as witnessed by the growth of genealogical tourism. The icons of a more recent past have gained an importance and nostalgia has been harnessed as a powerful instrument of identity-making. The 1990s are now 'heritage'.

And yet governments, policy makers and heritage professionals have been slow to react. Some deny the changes and challenges and the shift away from 'traditional' heritage. Others feel powerless to adapt, but it appears as if a majority remain largely unaware of the implications of the social and cultural changes which will impact upon the heritage category. The sorts of issues which require deeper interrogation include: the ways in which the heritage sector responds to multi-culturalism; the role of the heritage expert in the designation and management of 'new' heritage; the relevance of extant curatorial policies in the face of changing meanings of the past; populist inscriptions of heritage through practice and; the implications for policy at national and international levels.

Workshop aims:

Through a workshop format, drawing upon an array of experts based in disciplines engaged with heritage – art historians, archaeologists, geographers, sociologists, architects, anthropologists etc. – **the aim is to challenge the category of heritage as is presently understood.** We will ask our contributors to each deliver a vision of how they see Heritage developing in the future, and to offer their own Manifesto for how we should respond to the changing contexts in which Heritage exists, and to changes in the nature of Heritage itself. After the workshop there could be the first IAS Publication - a Manifesto for the Heritage of the Future. This could then be distributed and launched to agencies and invited audience.

Other internal attendees:

John Carman, IAA

Sadiya Qureshi, History and Cultures

Corey Ross, History and Cultures

Phil Jones, GEES

Robert Wenley, Barber Institute

External attendees:

Willem Derde (Belgium)

Cornelius Holtorf (Sweden)

Sarah May (London)

Josep-Maria Garcia-Fuentes (Barcelona)

John Schofield (York)

Jerome de Groot (Manchester)

Saskia Cousin (Paris)

Clara Akarosamy OBE (London)