

Introduction

UNESCO World Heritage – Grounded?

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In its 2014 session in Doha, Qatar, the World Heritage Committee inscribed the one thousandth site on the World Heritage List. This was heralded as a mixed blessing, signalling the unanticipated success of an international treaty with close to universal ratification (191 states) that has created a highly coveted global distinction for cultural and natural wonders but also the administrative challenge and risk of inflation that a potentially endless listing exercise poses. In what, aside from being a global clearinghouse for heritage valuation and conservation standards, has become a breathless bureaucratic machinery, there is often little time for asking fundamental questions. But if the opportunity arises, one issue is certain to draw attention: What does World Heritage actually do on the ground of the World Heritage properties, far away from the meeting halls where the Committee takes its decisions? Does World Heritage deliver on its promise of conservation and global curatorial responsibility or does it do other things, and through and to whom exactly? Does World Heritage bring local situations under the standardizing influence of global forces, or do these remain marginal to the social processes at and around World Heritage sites? And what happens when the reverence for heritage collides with other value orientations and livelihood needs?

This collection presents a set of nuanced answers to these questions, based on the in-depth ethnographic exploration of selected sites on the World Heritage List. Impact studies of World Heritage properties, often with an applied interest, are by no means rare, and the World Heritage organizations themselves have compiled a collection for the fortieth anniversary of the convention (Galla 2012). In this volume,

however, all contributors are anthropologists – that is, specialists in the painstaking acquisition of local knowledge who have conducted long-term ethnographic fieldwork at the sites they discuss, supported by the required linguistic skills. Moreover, all have made understanding the local social situation their main priority, not merely a side pursuit subservient to a conservation agenda. What we therefore aim to deliver is a more comprehensive, fine-grained and less partisan understanding of what World Heritage does on the ground.

The Ground and the Global

In giving attention to localities, anthropologists assume that these retain their own social dynamics even in times of globalization, shot through with wider connections and force fields but not entirely reducible to these. Anthropological theoreticians of globalization have often emphasized how local communities adapt exogenous influences to their own social needs, variously labelling such processes ‘indigenization’ (Appadurai 1990), ‘creolization’ (Hannerz 1987), or ‘domestication’ (Tobin 1992), or they have focused on the ‘friction’ (Tsing 2005) generated when the global meets the local. World Heritage is a privileged site to research such dynamics: on one hand, it is premised on locality, as it is sites that are subjected to the heritage gaze here, not movable objects or the practices that are enshrined by the sister UNESCO convention for intangible cultural heritage. On the other hand, the World Heritage title subjects these localities to a global regime. Humanity in its entirety is assumed to acquire rights as well as duties over these sites. Tourists, conservationists, scholars, journalists and political leaders come and visit in often much larger numbers than before and can also have an influence from a distance. Mass-mediated images of the sites multiply in newspapers, books, films, websites and apps, vying with whatever representations the local residents embrace. Some of the star sites treated in this volume, such as Angkor, Borobudur or Chichén Itzá, drive this tension to extremes – places shaped by highly idiosyncratic past cultures they no doubt are, but the national and other diversity of its visitors, tour guides, researchers, conservationists and other stakeholders rivals that of typical ‘non-places’ (Augé 1995) such as international airports, and much of the interaction is conducted in globally distributed languages according to globally distributed social conventions. Yet within, around and alongside these transnational pockets, local life continues, often with limited direct contact to the emissaries of

the wider world but deeply affected by their presence and decisions taken elsewhere.

'The ground' is thus a relative entity. In spatial terms, the World Heritage endeavour can be read as a somewhat romantic act of resistance: it carves out places of special significance in an age when, according to many, localities matter ever less in global social and economic processes which are instead characterized by mobility, displacement and deterritorialization, often enough of a traumatic nature. Challenging the 'time-space compression' (Harvey 1990) of our time, UNESCO World Heritage insists on meaningful place, and clearly fixed and bounded place in addition: in theory at least, World Heritage properties are precisely delimited pieces of land (or, less frequently, sea), and maps specifying their outlines are a fundamental part of how the properties are represented in nomination files and on the official website (whc.unesco.org). Yet the endless debates in the World Heritage Committee sessions about the appropriate boundaries for a given property and its surrounding buffer zone; the frequent amendments made over the course of time; the increasing popularity of 'serial properties' combining a number of spatially discrete components; and the expansion of concern to locations far away from the sites (such as when debating how distant high-rises or wind farms affect their 'visual integrity') all belie the idea that World Heritage properties are naturally delimited and that an unambiguous line can be drawn between heritage ground and ordinary ground. To no small extent, World Heritage List inscriptions produce the properties they stake out, in a more arbitrary and contingent way than is often admitted.

What is true for space applies even more to the people and institutions who, by choice or by necessity, interact with World Heritage properties: even when living within or next to the latter, they do not inhabit bounded social worlds but are invariably more broadly connected. And marking out sites on a world map of curatorial responsibility inevitably increases the number of social actors near and far who will strive to become substantially engaged with the sites, perhaps by directly interacting with those who already are but affecting them indirectly in any event. If, as Arjun Appadurai suggests (1996: 3–11), the liberation of imaginations is the hallmark of the global age, World Heritage properties and their media and virtual representations are key anchors for many people's imaginations of the world. Any in-depth study must therefore take account of how these sites, beyond being (constructed as) places, are nodes in global networks and linchpins of global imaginaries and how the local and the translocal are interconnected. As a World Heritage inscription opens up

avenues for the wider world towards the site, so it may open up avenues for site communities to the wider world, whatever constraints the given power imbalances may be imposing. Accordingly, the contributions to this volume approach the local through ‘ethnographies of encounter’ in Lieba Faier and Lisa Rofel’s (2014) sense, as sites where ‘engagements across difference’ in terms of culture, power and other resources (*ibid.*: 364) take place and, quite literally, make place. In studying World Heritage sites, we are following Ulf Hannerz’s time-honoured lead of going to ‘those interfaces where the confrontations, the interpenetrations and the flowthrough are occurring, between clusters of meaning and ways of managing meaning; in short, the places where diversity gets, in some way and to some degree, organized’ (1989: 211).

Yet the chapters do not just contextualize contemporary World Heritage properties in wider geographical and social space; they also do so in time. To make sense of present-day configurations, they also follow the historical trajectories of the sites, often reaching back beyond the World Heritage designation. To understand why ‘Wondergate’ scandalized the Mexican public, for example, Lisa Breglia must draw the forgotten story of the appropriation of Chichén Itzá’s grounds to light. In addition to her chapter, those by Charlotte Joy (on Timbuktu), Noel Salazar (on Borobudur), Peter Probst (on Osogbo) and Lynn Meskell (on Mapungubwe) in particular demonstrate through substantial historical analyses how for these sites, the World Heritage inscription was neither the end of history (as conservationists intent on preserving current site conditions would hope for), nor its beginning (as critical heritage studies scholars sensitive to the changes wrought by a heritage designation might see it), but just another turning point in a richly twisted chronology. They show that the authorities in control, the meanings ascribed and the economies attached have shifted multiple times, not least through the presence and influence of external actors (colonial officials, researchers, Western artists in search of more authentic settings) who often appeared on the scene long before UNESCO did.

Our ethnographies of encounter focus on the dynamics and interactions generated by a supranational political body which is part of the United Nations system. We consider this perspective an important complement to a view of global processes as driven by modern capitalism. Anthropologists have greatly enriched our understanding of how the latter has formed the modern world and shaped trans-cultural encounters, both through historical macroanalyses (e.g. Wolf 1982, Mintz 1985) and ethnographic studies of contemporary

globalized sites of capitalist production, trade and service delivery (for just some of many possible examples, see Besky 2013, Constable 1997, Lyon and Moberg 2010, Mathews 2011, Ong 1987, Robinson 1986). It is thus understandable that in their overview, Faier and Rofel (2014) highlight capitalism, not international governance, and the evidence of the chapters in this book attests to the weight of neoliberal capitalism in many World Heritage sites (see below). Nonetheless, UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee are intergovernmental bodies formed by sovereign nation states, and while they may be as susceptible to a discourse of external audits, ‘results-based’ management techniques and ‘best practices’ as many a business firm by now, they are still dominated by political entities, not by corporations which have at best indirect representation in their meeting halls. To see them as subservient, and thus analytically reducible, to the workings of global capitalism and shareholder value is therefore too simple.

Here, we aim at contributing to the anthropology of international institutions, an emerging subfield that has begun to frame meetings, publications and scholarly organizations (such as the EASA Network Anthropology of International Governance; <http://easaonline.org/networks/aig/index.shtml>) and had the study of the European Union by anthropologists of policy (e.g. Abélès 1992, Shore 2000) as a forerunner. Contributors have prowled the summits, offices and corridors of UN agencies and other international organizations, looked at local engagements with their policies and initiatives across the globe and often also combined both perspectives in tracing the mutual articulation of the different levels (e.g. Abélès 2011, Billaud 2015, Foyer forthcoming, Kelly 2011, Little 1995, Merry 2006, Müller 2013, Riles 2000). Aside from recent human rights processes, anthropologists have been particularly drawn to those UN bodies that operate on what is conventionally seen as anthropological turf, such as the highly interesting UN developments concerning indigenous peoples’ rights and traditional knowledge (e.g. Bellier 2013, Groth 2012, Koester 2005, Muehlebach 2001, Oldham and Frank 2008, Rößler 2008, Sapignoli 2012, Siebert 1997) and the – partly overlapping – UNESCO activities on ‘intangible cultural heritage’, a new category meant to embrace performative practices, rituals, folk arts and crafts, cuisines and the like (Arizpe 2011, Arizpe and Amescua 2013, Bortolotto 2007, 2011, Hafstein 2007, 2009, Kuutma 2007, Nas 2002, Savova 2009). These activities may appear as obvious objects of study since social/cultural anthropologists are recognized specialists in the subject matter, whereas with the architectural or natural wonders on

the World Heritage List, other disciplines such as art history, archaeology, geology or biology are often considered as having more technical expertise. Of course, this does not rule out an approach privileging processes over substantive content and foregrounding the social construction of discursive and categorical fundamentals, much as it applies to anthropologists studying, for example, the World Trade Organization (Abélès 2011). For its sheer social, economic and political weight alone – which in our assessment still considerably exceeds that of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the World Intellectual Property Organization’s (WIPO) processes on traditional knowledge or the 2003 UNESCO convention on intangible cultural heritage – we consider the World Heritage Convention worthy of study. Yet we also think that anthropologists and others are insufficiently aware of how much the World Heritage endeavour has moved onto what is conventionally seen as anthropological ground. Anthropology has long been defined around the key concept of culture, understood in the inclusive, nonelite sense as the ideas, habits, customs, rules and material products shared by members of a given group or society. World Heritage too, despite innovatively including both cultural and natural heritage under its conservation canopy, is predicated on culture in numerous ways, starting with the fact that the natural sites comprise merely a quarter of the World Heritage List. And while enshrining unique masterpieces and civilizational achievements was the tacit premise at the outset, the list has opened up to everyday heritage such as vernacular architecture, industrial facilities, trade routes, canals or railway lines. Introducing the new category of ‘cultural landscapes’ in 1992 in particular paved the way for rice terraces, sacred groves and former maroon hideouts, with the connected myths and stories sometimes playing a key role. The World Heritage understanding of culture has thus converged with an anthropological one, similarly as with the word ‘culture’ in wider society (Brumann 1999: 9–11). But while anthropologists could thus lean back and celebrate their success, they instead are rather divided about it and the analytical value of the culture concept within the discipline (Abu-Lughod 1991, Borofsky et al. 2001, Brightman 1995, Brumann 1999, Fox and King 2002, Rodseth 1998, Stolcke 1995): some see it as useful, at least when employed in a responsible way that avoids essentialization, while others consider it beyond redemption, invariably leading to a politically problematic overemphasis on difference and a neglect of connections and shared reference points. There is general consensus in the discipline, however, that paying attention to the public and political usage of culture

is important. World Heritage, as a key institution shaping laypeople's views of respectable culture, thus offers itself for the study of what is being done with this word in the wider world.

World Heritage is also a privileged site to study the relation between 'culture' and 'heritage' in the present. In contrast to 'culture' which alongside its public usage has been a key disciplinary concept from the outset, 'heritage' is not usually taken as a technical term by most anthropologists. They rather approach it as a label that society glues onto specific material, performative or intellectual units extracted from the vast expanse of cultural manifestations that, because of their age and stability over time, are considered as deserving of conscious preservation efforts. Heritage has been booming beyond belief in many parts of the world in recent decades, not least because of UNESCO's missionary work. Therefore, much of what previously was addressed as 'tradition', 'customs' or 'culture' is now presented under this new and rather voracious label. (This is not always duly recognized, such as when proponents of 'critical heritage studies' reinvent the deconstructive arguments made earlier about 'tradition' [Handler and Linnekin 1984, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983] or 'culture' [see above]). Until recently, 'culture' may have pointed more to shared lifeways and 'heritage' than to the great works of geniuses, but we see the terms as converging in UNESCO contexts now, not just through the conceptual expansion of World Heritage but through the extension of the protective drive to 'intangible cultural heritage' and to cultural diversity as such, which each have their own specialized UNESCO convention now (see below). Heritage is becoming more like (anthropologically conceived) culture, but will culture also become more like heritage, that is consciously perceived, packaged, edited (in Toby Alice Volkman's [1990] sense) and put on display, with an external audience as the ultimate arbiter of value (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2009)? And will culture be increasingly addressed from the partisan perspective of the 'believer' (in the sense of Brumann 2014a) that characterizes a great deal of both lay and scholarly engagement with heritage? Our own interest in World Heritage arose through ethnographic fieldwork in the World Heritage cities in Luang Prabang, Laos (Berliner 2010, 2011, 2012) and Kyoto, Japan (Brumann 2009, 2012b), and then at the meetings of the central World Heritage institutions (Brumann 2011, 2012a, 2013, 2014b). In the course of this research, we chanced upon several dozen other anthropologists who had done field studies of World Heritage sites, without much awareness of each other. It thus offered itself to ground this virtual community, so to speak, and in autumn 2012, we invited twelve prospective authors to the Max Planck Institute for

Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany, to discuss first drafts of the chapters in a workshop eponymous with this book.

For contextualizing these chapters, some background of the historical trajectory and institutional apparatus of World Heritage is required, and this will be provided in the following section. We will then introduce the individual chapters and close with a consideration of the general questions and insights emerging from the case studies.

The Rise and Institutional Setup of UNESCO World Heritage

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted in 1972, at one of the General Conferences of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN special agency with headquarters in Paris established in 1946. The convention was the fruit of older efforts to globalize cultural and natural conservation: after adopting the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict in 1954, UNESCO had orchestrated a number of safeguarding campaigns for threatened cultural heritage through the 1960s, most famously for the Nubian monuments of Abu Simbel threatened by Aswan Dam waters, but also for Borobudur, Moenjodaro and Venice (cf. Hassan 2007). It had also been involved in convening an international conference of cultural conservationists in Venice in 1964 where these adopted the Venice Charter – the foundational document of modern historical conservation – and decided to set up the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) as a worldwide membership association. In parallel, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the US National Park Service had worked for establishing a UN-backed register of national parks and a ‘World Heritage Trust’ for quite some time, and these multiple strands were merged under UNESCO auspices in the end (Stott 2011). The World Heritage Committee came together for the first time in 1977, and in 1978 it made the first twelve inscriptions on the World Heritage List which has kept growing ever since (for the early history, see Titchen 1995).

Rather than concentrating on the interactions between sovereign nation states – the ‘normal’ subject matter of international rights – the World Heritage Convention postulated a superordinate level of concern, the common heritage of mankind, in a parallel with similar formulations in international treaties of the same time period on the high seas, outer space and Antarctica (Wolfrum 2009). But even though a

kind of global heritage commons was thus envisioned, the convention works through its nation state signatories which are the operative arms that UNESCO or the Committee itself lacks. Only such ‘States Parties’ (with a double plural) may nominate sites within their own borders – so that Antarctica, for example, cannot go on the World Heritage List – and they are free to put forward whatever they select in the order of their own choosing. To be successful, candidate sites must demonstrate ‘outstanding universal value’, or ‘OUV’, according to at least one of the six cultural and four natural criteria (whc.unesco.org/en/criteria), and the nomination files supporting the bids have grown from a couple of pages to big tomes, often further embellished by audiovisual documentation. Once delivered to the secretariat of the convention – the World Heritage Centre, a bureaucratic unit occupying its own building within UNESCO headquarters in Paris – the nomination files are forwarded to ICOMOS (cultural sites) or IUCN (natural sites) for an evaluation. The latter is based on summoning specialists’ opinions from around the world and sending one or two experts to examine conditions of conservation and management on site. The evaluation contains a recommendation for ‘inscription’ on the list, outright ‘rejection’ or two different types of postponement for minor (‘referral’) or major (‘deferral’) revisions.

The two Advisory Bodies, ICOMOS and IUCN (an organization of organizations which includes both government agencies and civil-society organizations), are nongovernmental at least in part, but the World Heritage Committee is an intergovernmental body, composed of 21 states elected by the 191 States Parties in their biannual General Assemblies and formally independent from other UNESCO bodies. The Committee makes the decisions about nominations, measures for already listed sites, budget allocation and general policies, and does so with a firm sense of independence against the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre. Once a site has made it onto the illustrious list, the World Heritage Committee has both the right and the duty to monitor its state of conservation, relying again on the expert services of ICOMOS, IUCN and the Centre. A World Heritage Fund with rather limited means is available to support nominations and conservation measures. Yet the default assumption and precondition for listing is that the nominating state itself is capable of conserving the site, and with the lure of a World Heritage title, it is indeed often much easier to attract investors and donors.

The World Heritage institutions themselves are rather strapped for cash, and the secretariat and Advisory Bodies routinely deplore insufficient funding. Just like in other UN bodies (Billaud 2015), even

core obligations must sometimes be met by temps and interns, particularly in the recent budget crisis occasioned by the withdrawal of US funding (22 per cent of the total) after Palestine was admitted as a full state member of UNESCO in 2011. The contrast of the UNESCO plight to the global visibility and traction of the World Heritage brand and the sums that nation states invest in dressing up their candidates could hardly be more pronounced.

It is important to keep these constraints in mind when assessing the UNESCO World Heritage venture: there is little that the World Heritage Committee can impose upon a recalcitrant nation state, as there is also little it can offer to buy its cooperation. Government promises made before inscription are often not honoured afterwards, but there is usually only blaming and moral pressure to fear, given that sites can be deleted from the World Heritage List in theory but this has happened only twice so far. When domestic opinion is split over such perennial questions as that of conservation versus development, the World Heritage title can become a powerful argument, but where there is domestic consensus, whether voluntary or government enforced, Paris is usually quite far away. Myths of UNESCO power and largesse proliferate at many World Heritage sites, as Manon Istasse also reports in her chapter, and to realize how little the World Heritage system can actually enforce is disappointing for many.

In addition to the softness of Committee power, its alleged Eurocentrism has also stirred much debate. The first inscriptions included quite a few African sites (cf. whc.unesco.org/en/list/stat) and until 1990, India was the overall leader in the number of World Heritage properties (cf. whc.unesco.org/en/list). European and in particular Western European states, however, have been particularly conscious of the benefits of the World Heritage title and dispose of the resources for preparing state-of-the-art nominations. Coupled with an implicit initial conceptualization of World Heritage around the typical built heritage of this part of the world, and certainly also influenced by the fact that much ICOMOS and IUCN personnel hails from there, European sites have accounted for almost half the listings until the present, with China only beginning to contest the pole position of Italy and Spain in recent years (cf. whc.unesco.org/en/list/stat). The balanced representation of nature and culture envisaged in the beginning did not materialize either, as least when the number of sites is considered (in terms of size, natural World Heritage sites are often much larger). All this provoked criticism already in the 1980s.

Attempts to impose nomination quotas or even moratoriums on the list leaders to give the World Heritage have-nots a chance to catch

up have had only limited success, however. Not least for this reason, the World Heritage system embarked on a reform course in the 1990s in which the conceptual boundaries of World Heritage were greatly expanded. This was the time when the above-mentioned ‘cultural landscapes’ were introduced, and the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List, launched in 1994, also prioritized living heritage and everyday culture ‘in their broad anthropological context’ (document WHC-94/CONF.003/INF.6, see whc.unesco.org/archive/global94.htm#debut). Authenticity criteria were widened in the Nara Document of the same year (whc.unesco.org/uploads/events/documents/event-833-3.pdf) to also accommodate authentic use, spirit and feeling, not just unchanged material fabric which ends up privileging durable European stone monuments over the wooden and earthen structures of elsewhere in the world. As a result of all these measures, Belgian coal mines, wooden peasant churches in the Carpathians, a Polynesian chief’s domain, sacred groves in Kenya, the Bikini nuclear test site or the landing place of Indian indentured labourers in Mauritius are no less likely to make it onto the List now than Roman ruins, Gothic cathedrals or Baroque palaces. Also, only 30 out of 191 signatory states still had no World Heritage site in 2014. While this diversification reflects a general trend of ‘democratizing’ heritage, the blessing of the World Heritage institutions adds independent weight to it, and the cultural landscapes in particular were very much their invention (Gfeller 2013). Interestingly, much of the impetus for these reforms came from what, borrowing on Immanuel Wallerstein (1974a, 1974b), could be called the regional and professional ‘semi-peripheries’ of the world system of heritage – Canadians, Japanese and Norwegians, not French or Italians; geographers, anthropologists and industrial archaeologists, not art historians (cf. also Gfeller 2013, 2015, n.d.). So even when the European countries were often the first to capitalize on the new possibilities, bringing in their wine regions rather than the sacred mountains for which the cultural landscapes had been dreamed up, World Heritage processes have still managed to considerably decentre and de-Westernize heritage conceptions.

World Heritage has also been innovative in an indirect way, by pushing UNESCO efforts to also honour intangible cultural heritage, first with the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (launched in 1997 and held in 2001–2005) and then with a fully fledged Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted in 2003 (Arizpe 2011, Arizpe and Amescua 2013, Bortolotto 2007, 2011, Kuutma 2007, Smith and

Akagawa 2009). Were it not for the accumulated dissatisfaction with the World Heritage Convention and the hope that the Global South would receive its due once performative arts, ritual practices and skills were also taken into focus, it is unlikely that this convention would have materialized in unprecedented speed and, against most experts' advice, with the same emphasis on lists as the World Heritage venture (Hafstein 2009). Other UNESCO activities of the 1990s and 2000s, such as the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, have also emphasized cultural diversity (Nielsen 2011, Stoczkowski 2009), and World Heritage has thus been a cornerstone in a general UNESCO policy shift towards ennobling distinctiveness and away from the initial emphasis on the global dissemination of homogeneous educational standards.

Compared to the 1990s, the 2000s have seen less programmatic innovation in the World Heritage system but more growth and procedural elaboration. From the late 1990s on, TV documentaries – in particular Japanese and German productions – contributed to making World Heritage a household name in many countries of the Global North, and the annual Committee sessions have grown into global mega-events with more than one thousand participants whose outcomes are eagerly anticipated worldwide. Procedures for nominations, evaluations, monitoring, reporting and decision making were all systematized and, most of the time, made more transparent, not necessarily to the benefit of the uninitiated who are facing a daunting machinery where the nomination manual itself (UNESCO 2011) boasts 140 pages. One is tempted to see this through a framework of Foucauldian governmentality (Foucault 1991) where only what is known, measured and rationally processed can be governed. Around the central World Heritage institutions and their year-round circle of expert meetings on specific questions, there has been growth and elaboration too, with World Heritage Studies university programmes mushrooming and Category 2 Centres – independently funded training institutions with UNESCO blessing that concentrate on particular aspects of World Heritage – opening throughout the world. Within the general growth industry of heritage studies, publications focusing on World Heritage form a sizable section, and major recent overviews of this emerging interdisciplinary field (Harrison 2012, Smith 2006, Tauschek 2013) dedicate considerable portions to the UNESCO venture.

Increasing prominence and visibility, however, has also encouraged governments to tighten their grip on the World Heritage apparatus. While cultural and natural conservationists were still largely among themselves in the early 1990s, most delegations nowadays are led by

the ambassadors or ‘permanent delegates’ that the nation states dispatch to UNESCO. Many of them have no specialized background, and when they are not involved in often poorly concealed horse trading among peers, their concerns are for peace and smooth international relations, not necessarily for conservation and the World Heritage venture. This has helped to normalize the expression of national interests within the World Heritage arena. The continuing geographical imbalance of list inscriptions, coupled with pent-up frustration with a system that is perceived as making a lot of demands for an unfunded title, has generated a new mode of operation since the 2010 session (Brumann 2014b): the Committee has taken to overruling the Advisory Bodies’ recommendations in a very matter-of-course way if these are not to the satisfaction of States Parties. While the initial push for the new mores came from strong states of the Global South, many northern states too are happy with what gives everyone the desired results, except of course those who expect consistency and a principled stance on conservation. The sometimes rather blunt and unembellished use of state power in the sessions presents a striking contrast to the above-mentioned sophistication all around it and to the charisma of the universalist mission that keeps motivating many among the specialized technical personnel, researchers and fans. Thus the fortieth anniversary in 2012 was celebrated with great fanfare but key functionaries such as UNESCO’s Director-General or the director of the World Heritage Centre presented rather critical assessments of the current situation.

Sited Stories

While this has been an executive summary of developments in the institutional core of World Heritage, the convention, just like this book, is ultimately about the World Heritage sites. And here, the 981 inscriptions on the World Heritage List correspond to at least as many stories, if only for the fact that quite a few of the properties are in fact whole series of spatially discreet sites. It is also obvious that there is quite some distance between the Committee and the sites, not only in spatial terms but also through the involvement of multiple mediators communicating back and forth, so that on both sides, there is often only a dim sense of what really goes on at the other end. What, then, goes on at the sites in this book?

All chapters are about cultural World Heritage properties and all are concerned with World Heritage sites outside Europe, except for

Jasper Chalcraft's chapter where an Italian case in among the three rock art sites compared. Natural World Heritage sites have been studied by anthropologists and others using ethnographic methods (Burgin 2002, 2003, Dahlström 2003, Green 2009, Peutz 2011) and Meskell's chapter on Mapungubwe reflects her earlier research experience (2012) with Kruger National Park which, for all its archaeological riches, has been framed as a natural site too (although not on the World Heritage List). Our contributions, however, concentrate on cultural heritage sites outside Europe since it is in these where World Heritage unfolds its greatest effects. Here, it is often the trailblazer for a heritage agenda and, as probably best demonstrated by Angkor (see Keiko Miura's chapter), dramatic changes on the ground. In European countries by contrast, World Heritage often adds only rather thin layers to long-established national conservation frameworks and decades- or even centuries-old local adaptations to a heritage regime. What is interesting, then, is not only what happens at sites that are suddenly accorded the moral extraterritoriality of World Heritage, but also how heritage discourse, practices and policies get disseminated, translated and adapted in the process; we hope that the chapters are illuminating in this regard.

Part I includes four chapters on urban World Heritage properties, and nearby cities also influence the social processes in the periurban sites described in Miura's, Salazar's and Probst's contributions. World Heritage in cities often presents special challenges, given that the properties are often larger sections with multiple ownership where a conservation agenda is often not easily reconciled with development needs. Countless are the battles around modern construction in historical town centres reported in the World Heritage Committee sessions of recent years – high-rises in Cologne, Riga, Saint Petersburg, London or Seville; bridges in Bordeaux, Istanbul or Dresden; tunnels in Barcelona and again Istanbul. Manon Istasse's chapter about the medina of Fez, which is a World Heritage property in its entirety, however, is not about landmark construction projects intruding upon historic urban fabric. Rather, she diagnoses the absence of UNESCO on the ground where it largely exists as a myth: several rehabilitation projects of the past are vaguely associated with it in the residents' consciousness, but most Fassi do not know much about the date and precise scope of the World Heritage listing and tend to conflate UNESCO with national or local agencies whose inactivity or corruption they sometimes deplore. In actual fact, these latter agencies exert considerable independence, both against the distant World Heritage Committee and the local residents who are expected to obey their

rulings. Rather than this institutional level, however, Istasse emphasizes personal experience: for the owners and residents, their traditional courtyard houses are not ‘heritage’ but lived-in spaces that produce affects and engage the senses. She presents a nuanced analysis of the whole spectrum from Moroccan residents of many generations’ standing to recently arrived foreigners who converted their structure into a guest house popular with tourists. In the personal relationships of these owners and residents with their houses, there are strong feelings they liken to love at first sight, and the beauty of floor mosaics, the peace of city sounds muffled by the thick outer walls, the pleasant touch of wood or the allure of a favourite space such as the rooftop terrace may add up to a feeling of belonging and intimacy. Living in and working hands-on with the houses provides an expertise in its own right, quite different from that of scholars and conservationists. Large-scale urban ensembles such as the medina are therefore always personal and social spaces, not just monumental spaces, and the tangible effects of a World Heritage designation may only reach so deep precisely because of the accumulated personal and social loading of the constituent spaces.

Charlotte Joy takes us to the contested World Heritage sites of Mali which made global headlines in 2013. The Islamist rebels then occupying the northern half of the country began to demolish World Heritage properties in Timbuktu and Gao, urged on by the fact that the World Heritage Committee had put the Sufi tombs, mosques and other sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger a few days earlier. What for the UNESCO arena was priceless heritage counted as un-Islamic violations of sharia prescriptions with the rebels, and defying UNESCO and the ‘international community’ was precisely the objective of their destructive acts. Joy points out the closeness of threats to people and things in many of the political statements during the crisis and shows how UNESCO’s universal humanism and intergovernmental setup is ill-prepared to deal with substate forces such as the disadvantaged Tuareg minority in the north of Mali. Yet she also places the incidents within a long series of triumphant destructions and reconstructions in Mali, often related to the shifting power balance between different interpretations of Islam. Here, the tolerant ‘Black Islam’ was more contested than current Western sympathies with urban residents allegedly helpless against fanatic incursions would have it. The recent standoff can be seen as one between competing ideologies with global ambitions, pitting Islamic fundamentalist morality and social criticism against the UNESCO gospel of world peace through the celebration of cultural diversity. Joy then moves onto her

earlier field site of Djenné (Joy 2010, 2011a, 2011b) where the tension between religion and heritage has also surfaced repeatedly but where destructions have also had more worldly motives such as real estate values. The contestations are about Mali's future much more than the past and none of the involved actors, including UNESCO, should be construed as politically innocent.

Much more economic than religious or political is the idiom of heritage spoken in Lijiang in Yunnan province, southern China, whose old town has become a tourist magnet with both domestic and international guests since its World Heritage inscription. Yujie Zhu relates that the People's Republic has joined the World Heritage arena belatedly but is now a very active player on both the World Heritage and the intangible cultural heritage fronts, and Lijiang's rise must be seen within this context. Half of the city's residents are Naxi – that is, members of an ethnic minority – and this and Lijiang's image as Shangri-La in Western imaginations converted it into a backpacker paradise and then a more broadly popular destination. Under the slogan of 'cultural industry' that is heard across the country these days, the Lijiang Old Town Conservation and Management Bureau (LCMB), a government-owned business corporation, has been in control of all planning, conservation and development measures. It strongly prioritizes commercial viewpoints, showing little compunction over reconstructing entire streets, displaying ethnic culture in theme-park settings or pushing out local Naxi in favour of immigrant shopkeepers. Local residents consider the packaged programmes where Han majority tourists experience Naxi family life as a mixed blessing, feeling like living museum objects even if they value the generated income. It is the entrepreneurial state whose developmentalism strongly directs heritage transformations in this city today.

Focusing on another erstwhile backpacker haven in another People's Republic, David Berliner analyses how Luang Prabang was converted into the 'nostalgiascape' it is for many of its visitors today. The acclaimed Buddhist centre and colonial summer resort suffered for its association with the overthrown royal line but then became 'UNESCO-ized', as Berliner has it, with a multiplicity of foreign, most often French, agencies involved in conservation measures and a World Heritage inscription. The tourist boom has driven out many residents from the centre of town in favour of guest houses and has converted the alms-giving morning ritual to the Buddhist monks into a popular attraction, provoking much local criticism. Berliner distinguishes the 'endo-nostalgia' of locals who – selectively enough – yearn for the good old days from the 'exo-nostalgia'

of foreign tourists and experts for a colonial Indochina they have not experienced themselves and that perhaps never was. Locals are appreciative of the rise in income and well-being that tourism has brought them but grumble about the conservation rules driven by 'exo-nostalgic' viewpoints imposed on their homes. They also do not share the 'exo' obsession with loss, seeing their own lives as shot through with traditions that will run on whatever happens to buildings. Heritage as a coproduction in Luang Prabang results from a convergence of the different actors' interests, but this should not be confounded with a consensus on values and meanings.

Part II moves on to archaeological World Heritage properties and to 'star sites' which enjoy special international or national fame (Yin Xu in China), draw huge tourist crowds and, in the cases of Angkor and Borobudur, have been key localities of UNESCO involvement. Keiko Miura brings her decades-long experience in multiple functions at Angkor to an in-depth analysis of the 'success story' told by UNESCO and other international actors at a site that for its sheer grandiosity, but also as a symbol of postgenocidal nation building and peace restoration, has received an unprecedented amount of international attention and support, all the way up to the International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor founded in 1993. Miura's tale is one of rivalries between big political bodies, often with the international or specially dedicated ones – such as APSARA, the national body managing the site – feuding with ordinary government ministries and departments, and the picture is complicated by key individuals moving through several of these bodies at both the national and the international levels in the course of time. But tension emerges also between the authorities and the local residents at or near this extraordinarily far-flung site, as the locals have used it for cultivation, collecting wood and forest products, raising fish and grazing livestock for a long time. Religious worship and the demand for new temple buildings also clash with a conservation regime oriented to the physical fabric, much as continued religious use could be seen as authenticating the site in its own right. By and large, local practices and rights have been increasingly restricted, making resettlement almost inevitable, and the new opportunities in tourism often benefit recent immigrants and outsiders much more than the communities of longer standing. The sustainability of heritage usage to which all involved actors subscribe thus remains a challenge, given also the infrastructural requirements of millions of tourists which have occasioned a building boom around Angkor. Clearly, some locals benefit while

others do not, and heritage designation, while ostensibly about conservation, is once again a shorthand for massive social change.

In his study of the Javanese sites of Borobudur and Prambanan, Noel Salazar takes up another prime beneficiary of the global conservationist gaze, as Borobudur was the subject of one of the above-mentioned safeguarding campaigns preceding the World Heritage Convention. A mere forty kilometres apart and both near the city of Yogyakarta, the stronghold of traditional Javanese culture, these two World Heritage properties offer a natural comparison. Their heritage fates are also linked, given that the originally joint World Heritage nomination was separated only later on. In the process, Borobudur ended up more ‘Buddhist’ and Prambanan more ‘Hinduist’, both of which belie the syncretism of the classical Javanese kingdom. Relating the complex history of Borobudur as colonial excavation site, postindependence national symbol, fundamentalist target and global tourism magnet, Salazar spots similar rivalries between different government authorities as in Angkor, and here too locals are often excluded from management decisions but fully exposed to their consequences. He also describes the diversity of tourist and religious engagements, with the latter involving unexpected candidates such as the nearby Muslim population, that nonetheless consider Borobudur as a sacred protector. Prambanan is no less the subject of bureaucratic infighting and local grievances include the muting of the local connection of the Siva temples, as the legendary Javanese princess on whose demand the complex was originally built fails to appear in the UNESCO-sanctioned narrative and official property name. Salazar concludes by strongly emphasizing how the plethora of meanings brought to these sites by diverse constituencies are part and parcel of World Heritage fame, urging us to study them in more depth.

Shu-Li Wang returns us to China, to the Yin Xu Archaeological Site, the oldest excavated capital of Chinese history where the famous oracle bones with their 3,000-year-old inscriptions were found. Many argue that this is the most important ancient archaeological site of the country. Her main focus is on the experience of nearby villagers whose everyday lives have been transformed by conservation-based restrictions. They see their agricultural production curtailed, but also their place-based personal memories unhinged by forced relocation, and their restaurant and souvenir-shop ventures catering to the tourists have met with uneven success. A cultural performance group set up as an alternative source of income also foundered, and the absence of government support is widely deplored. The villagers raise their own symbolic claims about the site, however, seeing the

Shang kings as their own ancestors even when the historical record shows the villages to be rather recent creations. This does not fully absorb their resentment, however, as high-handed state policies intent on picturing China as a great civilization have brought few benefits to themselves and often clash with their own, nonmonumental sense of place and time.

Lisa Breglia returns to her earlier field site of Chichén Itzá in Mexico to report on spectacular new developments. With 7 July 2007 as a deadline, a private initiative led by Swiss-Canadian entrepreneur Bernard Weber and initially supported by the World Heritage Centre organized an internet vote to identify the 'New 7 Wonders of the World', complementing the famous seven wonders of the ancient world of which only the Pyramids of Giza survive. Chichén Itzá's campaign was widely publicized in Mexico and received high-level government backing, with all doubts about the less-than-transparent nature of the venture being swept aside, and the Maya site eventually won its place among the New 7 Wonders. Public attention shed new light on the distribution of benefits from the famous Maya site, however, and in what became known as 'Wundergate', the fact that the land on which the Temple of Kukulcan, the Great Ball Court or the Temple of the Warriors sit was the private property of a family of landowners and tourism entrepreneurs provoked a public outcry. Breglia herself contributed her share here, as the media consulted her because she had written about this aspect earlier (Breglia 2005, 2006). She places these developments within the context of the neoliberalization of heritage agendas: sensing the site's potential for such ventures as hosting concerts by the likes of Pavarotti or Elton John, the federal state of Yucatán eventually bought up the central portions through a parastatal subsidiary (aptly named CULTUR). INAH, Mexico's powerful national agency for conservation, correspondingly lost control, much to the concern of guards and other on-site personnel who feared for conservation standards but also saw their own private side businesses (such as ticket reselling scams) threatened. All this happens against the backdrop of heritage entrepreneurialism through public-private partnerships in the vicinity, such as several museum ventures which likewise target the international tourists flocking to nearby Cancún and other beach resorts. Overall, the private corporate sector pockets most of the takings and leaves little for the local Maya populations. World Heritage properties, Breglia's chapter reminds us, are property in all senses of the word.

The final part III then takes up the broad and fluid new heritage category of cultural landscapes that often is the solution of choice for

locations where a range of different sites and valuations coexist. Some of these may still be neglected, however, and Jasper Chalcraft tries to explain cases of iconoclasm – intentional destruction and vandalism – at three prehistoric rock art sites on the World Heritage List: Valcamonica in Italy, the Tadrart Acacus in Libya and Kondoa-Irangi in Tanzania. He sees these as reactions to the inherently colonial nature of the World Heritage venture, nurtured by antipathies towards the UNESCO institutions and Advisory Bodies that sideline site communities instead of bringing benefits. Local populations both at Kondoa-Irangi and in the Tadrart Acacus Massive have their own site-specific knowledge and grounded traditional practices, but the rock art plays a minor role in these, and where the latter is under physical threat by the former, national authorities have not hesitated to fence the sites and restrict activities, thus creating resentment. Hopes for improving local livelihoods through tourism have also been disappointed. Even in Valcamonica – the very first World Heritage site of the affluent country with the most list inscriptions of all – there is substantial local antipathy to the rock art, again because of exclusion from economic benefits. In these contexts, iconoclasm takes a number of forms and different levels of intentionality: careless drills for installing viewing platforms by the site managers, accompanied by scratching attacks by unnamed (but locally well-known) perpetrators in Valcamonica; beer spitting and flicking onto the rock images by ritual practitioners in Kondoa-Irangi; a protracted act of vandalism in Tadrart Acacus attributed to a frustrated individual but possibly motivated by the authorities' reducing the tour guides' revenues by fencing off the sites. Chalcraft concludes that in all cases, national and international authorities imposed their own views of the deep past, privileging these over local visions both of that past and of a sustainable present. In the absence of any attempts towards a dialogue, the resulting antagonism ends up endangering the sites that World Heritage universalism strives to protect.

Peter Probst pursues the intriguing question of how heritage – supposedly priceless and beyond petty economic calculation – is related to the gift that in much anthropological theorizing, starting with Marcel Mauss's seminal essay (1925, 1954), has been juxtaposed to its conceptual other, the commodity, in an analogous way. Gifts engender exchange, thereby constituting sociality, and rise in value with the length and scope of exchanges, just like heritage which accrues value through the length of transmission and intergenerational transfers. For Mauss, gifts also were the first step to contractual relations in human history, which he saw with much sympathy, lending his

support to the fledgling League of Nations. Probst applies this lens to his erstwhile field site (2004, 2011), the sacred grove of Yoruba goddess Osun in the city of Osogbo, Nigeria. This grove was listed as World Heritage not just for its initial function as a ritual site but also as the place of a major artistic revival initiated by European artists and young Yoruba in the newly independent Nigeria. With its annual festival for the protector goddess of the city, the grove is now a major rallying point for the trans-Atlantic African diaspora. Probst tells the story of the World Heritage bid, supported by the above-mentioned Global Strategy and UNESCO's Africa 2009 programme, but also by President Obasanjo's symbolic politics. He then traces the exchanges taking place in the grove, between Osun, the *oba* (traditional king) and the worshippers giving their sacrifices, but also between the growing number of actors who have a stake in what here too is property in a rather literal sense. Tensions are manifested when the *oba* plays down the religious significance of the grove in favour of its heritage value, thus trying to placate his Christian and Muslim supporters, or when here again a public-private partnership with corporate investors wrests control from local authorities. Heritage, Probst argues, needs to be understood as a relationship embedded in spheres of exchange that generate both social and material forms of value.

Very material values and the corporate investment generated through them also play a crucial role in the current transformation of the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape that Lynn Meskell addresses. The World Heritage inscription honours the remains of the first pre-colonial kingdom in southern Africa, many of them in less than optimal condition today. Attempts to identify historical 'homelands' for all ethnic groups through archaeological research, thereby propping up apartheid ideology, and the De Beer diamond corporate giant's support eventually led to Mapungubwe's designation as a national park and to the World Heritage bid. Yet much as the latter emphasizes the cultural aspects, SANParks – the parastatal authority in charge of the national parks – highlights nature and wildlife in their site management, in a parallel to what Meskell observed in Kruger National Park (2012). When lions and leopards are reintroduced, walking tours of archaeological sites become unlikely. The nearby coal mining operation – a reason for the ICOMOS recommendation to postpone inscription that was overturned by the Committee – highlights the cultural value of the property, however, thus downplaying its own environmental impact, and Meskell vividly pictures South Africa's political manoeuvring in recent Committee sessions where it succeeded in fending off any painful decisions on Mapungubwe. Under

the Zuma government, neoliberal regimes and corporate interests clearly trump earlier political instrumentalizations of pan-African heritage glory.

In a conclusion, Christoph Brumann pursues the question why all these stories and the social, economic and political conditions at the World Heritage sites play such a small role when the World Heritage Committee meets once every year. One should expect the Committee to be best informed, given also that most of session time is spent with the discussion of individual properties and candidate sites rather than general issues. But the sheer number of almost one thousand sites means that only a small portion can be taken up. Also, the workload of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies discourages unprovoked fact finding, and the mandate of the convention is for the physical protection of the sites, not the site populations. More importantly, the Committee is an intergovernmental body of state members intent on mutually ensuring their sovereignty so that government versions of site conditions often remain unchallenged. But there are also more subtle obstacles, such as when an unspecialized diplomat's testimony offered spontaneously during the session sounds so much more vivid and believable than the dry technical reports into which the results of specialist desk reviews and site missions are condensed. Site community representatives often have a hard time making their voices heard in this diplomatic environment, and while the call for respecting indigenous rights has become louder, it still does not bind the nation states. Brumann pays special attention to how the Timbuktu crisis (see Charlotte Joy's chapter) was dealt with in the 2012 Committee session. Trapped in its own procedural machinery and distracted by the anxiety of States Parties to see their World Heritage bids speedily realized, the Committee took three days to issue an official condemnation. As a ground onto itself governed by its own logic and by agendas that often have little to do with conservation, the Committee has not much space for the World Heritage grounds elsewhere in the world.

Avenues for Exploration

Every new candidate to the World Heritage List has to demonstrate that it is outstanding and unique. Diversity is thus a built-in virtue, and diverse too are the social experiences at World Heritage sites. Here, the chapters demonstrate that national and local conditions are clearly more influential than the global level: what happens at World

Heritage properties is not determined in Paris or at the ambulatory World Heritage Committee sessions.

Yet what also emerges is that conceiving World Heritage as bringing ‘benefits beyond borders’ (Galla 2012) applies in an unintended way: in many of the above cases, actors and forces from far beyond the properties take control and pocket the economic and other surplus arising while local communities become ‘heritage victims’ (Meskell 2009: 11); locals see their customary rights and practices restricted by conservation requirements without satisfactory compensation, no matter that growing rice between the Angkor ruins or flicking beer onto the Kondoa-Irangi rock art are customs of long standing that might themselves be seen as having heritage value and that the houses in the medina of Fez are private property. Forced or quasi-compulsory resettlement, as in Angkor, Yin Xu or Chichén Itzá, disrupts local senses of place and grounded history in favour of more monumental visions, and hoped-for tangible benefits through tourism or support for conservation remain elusive for considerable segments of the local populations in Djenné, Lijiang, the archaeological sites and the rock art sites. The frustrations thus created may even lead to destructive acts. Yet demonstrating the local specificity of the World Heritage experience, most people in Luang Prabang and Osogbo are quite happy with the revenue boost brought by the World Heritage title. And had the Han Chinese shopkeepers migrating to Lijiang been Zhu’s focus, rather than the local Naxi, his account would have read differently as well. In all cases, however, the benefits of heritage are spread to an increased number of recipients in the considerably expanded networks forming around World Heritage sites. And even when the sum total of benefits grows at the same rate, simplistic visions of a win-win situation where just about everyone ends up better off through a World Heritage inscription are revealed as wishful thinking. Invariably also, there are not just additional national and international actors, they also concern themselves with aspects previously all but ignored (cf. also Bendix, Eggert and Peselmann 2012: 14), thus further constraining local control. All this has also been described for heritage sites that have not yet seen UNESCO glory, such as for the ‘monumental time’ that conservation authorities impose on the ‘social time’ of the historic town centre of Rethymnos, Crete, and its residents (Herzfeld 1991). The arrival of World Heritage, however, significantly widens the circle of concerned people and institutions, and outside a European and North American context, World Heritage has often been the key vehicle for spreading the heritage gospel in the first place.

A striking parallel in the case studies is the rise of new institutions that accompanies World Heritage status: if a real power shift occurs, it is from conventional bodies to these new authorities, rather than from the national level to the transnational one of UNESCO. This echoes Regina Bendix, Aditya Eggert and Arnika Peselmann's observation that 'the implementation of the international heritage regime on the state level brings forth a profusion of additional heritage regimes' (2012: 14) and also the findings of many contributions to Daniel Fabre and Anna Iuso's volume (2009). As one case in point, APSARA in Angkor is a new government agency that joins, and competes with, older units of Cambodian state bureaucracy. More common across our cases, however, is the spread of business models in World Heritage management, be it through parastatals – that is, government-owned corporations – or public-private partnerships. LCMB in Lijiang, CULTUR in Chichén Itzá, SANParks in Mapungubwe and the partnership of Osogbo authorities with Infogem Nigeria Ltd. all testify to the fact that there is increasing pressure on heritage to pay its way. At the same time, it appears that the conventional authorities such as INAH in Mexico are losing ground, meaning that their conservation priorities recede as well. Rather than keeping heritage 'priceless' and carving out spaces where the common good may not be commercially exploited, the state has taken to embrace the market here. This may be bad news for orthodox conservation and for scholarly sophisticated appreciations of site histories, but it may also be conducive to hopes for development and a broader, less elitist and more sensual sharing of heritage pleasures. Further research is evidently required but might end up confirming that World Heritage reshuffles power balances and institutional frameworks most of all nationally, one step below the global level.

Yet heritage struggles are not just over benefits, but also over meanings. Here, the case studies demonstrate that religious significance in particular does not automatically square with World Heritage glory. In Birgit Meyer and Marleen de Witte's terms (2009: 277), the sacralization of heritage may be less problematic than the heritagization of the sacred, at least for some people. The assault on the Timbuktu tombs and mosques is an extreme case of course, deliberately playing to a global audience, as also was the Islamist bombing of Borobudur. But on a less dramatic scale, people insist on religious meanings also in other locations visited by the chapters, such as by rioting when suspecting infidels of doing restoration work on the Great Mosque in Djenné; by continuing to restore and renew temples in the Angkor heritage area; by ignoring the rock art but not the spiritual sites

in which it is found in Kondoa-Irangi; or by condemning either the increasing eventization (the Osun believers) or the ‘pagan’ residue (Christians and Muslims) of the Osun festival in the Osogbo grove. Heritage often serves to render harmless the potentially disruptive nature of religious sites but, the chapters show, this does not always work. And then also, shelling the stone Buddhas of Bamiyan, destroying folk Islamic aberrations in Timbuktu or bulldozing the statues of pagan gods in the ancient Assyrian city and World Heritage property of Hatra, as Islamic State militants did in 2014, ostensibly take the original function of these sites seriously, thus giving them a rather ‘authentic’ reading. The relatively peaceful reconciliation of religion with heritage status in the secular societies of Europe should not be taken for granted as a universal default condition.

All of which should temper optimism about the role of heritage for UNESCO’s peace-building mission. ‘Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed’, the UNESCO constitution famously states (http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=15244&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html). But while the Timbuktu and Borobudur monuments did not create the tensions that led to their being ravaged, we hear of diverging interests and of social division arising in almost every case the book presents. Rosy ideas of World Heritage projecting social harmony to whatever is reached by its magic touch are undermined by this evidence. This is not to deny the possibility that World Heritage may indeed increase well-being and reduce conflict levels, but whether it does so, and to which degree precisely, is a manifestly case-specific question.

This means that the assumption that World Heritage status protects the physical sites so honoured should be taken with some caution. Spectacular victories over modern construction projects demonstrate that World Heritage inscription carries weight in the right political context, but the status can also stir up destructive impulses. Such destruction can have clear political motives, as in the religious conflicts just mentioned or in cases where an enemy’s heritage is targeted in wartime for purposes of demoralization, such as Dubrovnik or Mostar during the Balkan War. But Chalcraft’s chapter reports what seem to be more personal deeds, expressive perhaps of widespread misgivings but committed in secrecy and on an individual initiative. He also shows that destruction is a matter of definition: the residents of Kondoa-Irangi seem to be free of destructive intents when their – socially rather constructive – rituals demand physical interactions with the rock art, and the site managers in Valcamonica

had visitor benefits in mind when drilling the rocks for new viewing platforms. Again, World Heritage claims to do its conservation work for our universal benefit, but the hegemony of heritage conservation to the contrary, many people remain untouched or even outrightly provoked by it. A love for World Heritage is no more natural than the spread of harmony and peace around the sites.

Equally contingent is a nostalgic embrace of the pasts that produced the World Heritage buildings and remains. For the archaeological sites, these pasts may be simply too remote in time, even if Xiaotun villagers convert the Shang rulers into their own ancestors and if among the Maya living around Chichén Itzá, pride in the site and its global recognition is universal (Breglia 2006), despite their meagre share in the tourist business. Nostalgia seems more likely when the past embodied in the site is relatively recent and seen as connected with the present. This applies to Luang Prabang and Timbuktu, but what we find in their heritage regimes and tourist appropriations is ‘exo-nostalgia’, in Berliner’s terms – that is, the longing of outsiders for a past they have not experienced themselves (and whose colonial dimension they do not problematize). By contrast, old-time Luang Prabangers, while not bitter about the past, prefer the possibilities of today, much as Timbuktu residents are preoccupied by the challenges of crumbling houses and absent sewage systems, not the mystical desert city. There is more of ‘endo-nostalgia’ in Istasse’s Fez example where old Fassi too are drawn to the courtyard houses of the medina, approaching them through personal memories rather than Orientalist fantasies. What the old-timers experience in terms of nostalgia, however, seems to be present despite, rather than because of, the official authorities’ interventions, and the claim that heritage recognition encourages a general shift from spontaneous ‘endo-nostalgia’ to a staged ‘exo-nostalgia’ for outside consumption, while deserving further study, is certainly not disproved by our cases.

Should we stay aloof from what we observe? Most anthropologists and also most contributors to this volume see their main task as analysing social situations, not necessarily improving them, and the choice of research topic does not force us to be ‘heritage believers’, in Brumann’s (2014a) terms – that is, people who personally identify with heritage discourses and practices. The two least detached chapters, however, are from contributors with primary or additional training in archaeology who cannot so easily keep their cool when irreplaceable material traces of the past are endangered by corporate profiteering and government collusion (in Mapungubwe) or conservation regimes that turn a deaf ear to understandable local concerns (at the Italian, Libyan and Tanzanian

rock art sites). Chalcraft in particular is outspoken when castigating the World Heritage regime as colonial. While not all contributors would support this assessment, the crucial role of *past* colonial domination in constituting the sites and their heritage value emerges from almost every chapter, and the fraught social situations described certainly encourage critical assessments and political realism.

On a more general level, seeing the World Heritage phenomenon as adding a further ‘heritage-scape’ to the ‘-scapes’ identified by Appadurai (1990), as argued by Michael Di Giovine (2009), probably overstates its importance. Yet Appadurai’s optimistic prediction of the nation state’s being ‘on its last legs’ (1996: 19) is certainly not borne out; both in the World Heritage Committee sessions and at the sites in this book, we see national actors and forces very much on top of things. Yin Xu and Angkor in particular demonstrate the intimate relation between heritage and state apparatuses intent on providing their subjects with roots and glory, even if the tone is more triumphant in the former than the latter case. And as Angkor shows, international donors and supranational organizations may seek out a site precisely because of its potential for post-traumatic nation building. At least among the educated elites, however, World Heritage does contribute to the deepening of the ‘global ecumene’ (Hannerz 1996), a worldwide space of shared discourses and imaginations. No other institution does more to bring global heritage policies in touch and often also in sync with each other, and the commitment to heritage conservation, both verbal and actual, in the world is stronger than if World Heritage had never been invented. The main homogenizing effect, however, may be at the procedural and pragmatic rather than the substantive level: we see more convergence in the signboards, lighting systems, management plans, heritage impact assessments or fencing strategies than in the meanings and values attached to specific sites and in the social phenomena unfolding around them. Beyond the aforementioned parallels such as the weak position of local populations in authoritarian states or the increasing role of public-private corporate hybrids in managing the properties, much diversity remains. World Heritage is best described as an effort to bring about a ‘global system of common difference’, to use Richard Wilk’s (1995) phrase, a large-scale conceptual and institutional framework not for erasing diversity but rather for encompassing and administering it, by agreeing on the legitimate axes of differentiation and competition. World Heritage places each site in a space of comparison, thus rendering it commensurable, but produces less uniformity than might be believed.

What can the anthropological focus of this book contribute to heritage studies? We think that within this quickly growing interdisciplinary field, many of the celebratory or, conversely, very critical studies of specific heritage institutions or sites often rest on a narrow empirical basis. Critical readings of the texts produced by the World Heritage Convention and other UNESCO bodies are indispensable, but to gauge the full impact of the documents and trace their entanglement with social and political realities, in peripheral locations just as in the UNESCO meeting halls, in our view requires the sustained, close-up approach of ethnographic fieldwork. Not only is ‘a great deal of UNESCO’s agenda . . . ”lost in translation”’ (Bendix, Eggert and Peselmann 2012: 14) when it travels, the will to communicate varies a great deal to begin with between the parties involved. As the chapters demonstrate, fieldwork allows us to find out how far the much-quoted ‘authorised heritage discourse’, or ‘AHD’ (Smith 2006), really extends, what the lay and subaltern views in a field dominated by political and economic elites and by experts focused on the material rather than the social fabric look like, which hidden interests are at play and how of all this intertwines in the concrete social setting. Every chapter in this volume describes facts and views that have never made it into the nomination files, evaluations, mission reports and decision texts of the World Heritage system. While one may debate whether ‘conservation’ in a narrow technical sense requires this information, we are convinced that a comprehensive understanding of the social environment of World Heritage properties calls for it and that ignoring the latter is often the root cause for the technical conservation problems the World Heritage institutions deal with (see in particular Chalcraft’s chapter). The chapters should curtail over-enthusiastic belief in the idea that an appreciation for heritage can simply be transported intact over large spatial and cultural distances: what we present are mixed and often complex messages. They neither unanimously speak for demonizing the World Heritage venture, nor do they encourage its glorification.

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Note

We would like to thank Brigitta Hauser-Schäublin, Ulf Hannerz and Michael Rowlands for their spirited comments on the initial drafts of the chapters. Élise Demeulenaere and Rachel Giraud had to withdraw due to other commitments but are to be thanked for enriching our joint discussions. We received valuable hints from three anonymous reviewers. David Eubelen worked conscientiously on the index for which we are grateful. We would like to thank the Berghahn team, notably Molly Mosher, Jessica Murphy and Duncan Ranslem. Special thanks go to our editor, Eeva Berglund, whose meticulous, reliable and reasonable work had outstanding value for us.