

# Chapter 77

## Between Cuvier and Darwin: Issues in a Changing Heritage

**Stefano Brusaporci**  
*University of L'Aquila, Italy*

### ABSTRACT

*The chapter presents a reflection on the evolution of cultural heritage concept, from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until now, moving the attention from the distinction between natural and anthropic heritage to tangible and intangible matters. According to the line from postmodernism to new materialism, the idea of heritage reflects an evolving and inclusive cultural approach, where the notions of place and landscape combine tangible/intangible issues and participative involvement in heritage definition, keeping in mind problems of memory, integrity and authenticity.*

### INTRODUCTION

UNESCO defines Cultural Heritage as “the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations”<sup>1</sup>. It ratifies the inescapable importance and interconnection of tangible and intangible characteristics of cultural heritage.

*The Burra Charter* (ICOMOS, 2013) puts together tangible and intangible aspects in “Place” defining: “Place means a geographically defined area. It may include elements, objects, spaces and views. Place may have tangible and intangible dimensions” (p.2). About “Places”, Silberman (2016) asks the following question: “How can such sweeping, all-inclusive definitions – attempting to cover all material, immaterial, objective, and subjective aspects of heritage places – possibly capture their irreducible essence? How can we identify the distinctive characteristic of heritage places without endlessly extending the list of specific material forms and subjective associations a heritage place may possess? At a time when officially recognized heritage types are splintering into distinct regional, ethnic, and religious variants [...], when the UNESCO World Heritage list has exceeded a thousand inscribed properties all said to possess Outstanding Universal Value [...], when the possession and control of cultural heritage resources have become symbols of political legitimacy, no single physical definition of a heritage place

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8054-6.ch077

seems capable of capturing the thoroughly fragmented reality of cultural heritage in the twenty-first century. Thus focusing on process, rather than object, may be a more useful approach” (p.30).

Silberman highlights the difficulty in heritage definition, and the complexity in heritage identification. Elsewhere he comments different characteristic from which the investiture as heritage has derived: Official monuments with outstanding historical or artistic significance; Religious places; Places of civic manifestation, symbol of resistance or freedom, or on the opposite (or in parallel) of state power; Heritage places as entertainment venue; heritage places as reaction to change, related to self-perception and memory of communities. (Silberman, 2016, pp.29-40). Therefore, the lesson is that it is important to reflect on the process of heritage defining, rather than on authored outlining.

The UNESCO *World Heritage Cultural Landscape* (2009) fixes the concept of culture as cornerstone for “Landscape” definition, according to an interpretative line, which tends to integrate both tangible and intangible values into the landscape idea. What pointed out by the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO, 2003b), recurs in all its relevance: Heritage is constantly recreated by communities. Not only intangible heritage, but also tangible heritage because it is the outcome of the secular and continuous interaction of anthropic action and use with nature. It suggests a bottom-up process to merge the traditional authoritative role of experts with participative approaches. This method could be useful to point out the cultural changing dynamics.

In conclusion, cultural issues are nodal characteristics of the present era of globalization, mass communication and content production (Schafer 2014).

## **BACKGROUND: WHAT IS HERITAGE?**

A deep reflection on heritage conservation and protection moved from the rise of a critical consciousness of the past. At the beginning, it originated from the archaeological findings of XVIII century, and it has grown especially from the XIX century – let us remember the works of Viollet Le-Duc in France e John Ruskin in England –, with important consequences in the culture, documents and laws of different countries. Without retracing the well-known history of conservation and protection, it is useful to develop the discourse from the consideration made in the second half of the XX century.

The *Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* (1954), adopted soon after the WWII, is the first international treaty on heritage safeguarding with a worldwide vocation. It focuses on the protection of cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict and “It covers ammovable and movable cultural heritage, including monuments of architecture, art or history, archaeological sites, works of art, manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest, as well as scientific collections of all kinds regardless of their origin or ownership”. Heritage is intended as a material artifact with evidence of culture. The wording “Cultural Property”, to define heritage, has a “legal” suggestion, influenced by the French concept of “bien culturel”. “Bien” recalls the idea of “value”, here not in an economic sense, but referred to historical, formal and cultural characteristics of the work of art. Somehow, “property” evokes the idea of belonging, affiliation and identity, namely the “historical value”. Similarly, the Anglo-Saxon “heritage” remembers that artifacts are a legacy, embodying the story and witnessing the past cultures.

The UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972, aka *World Heritage Convention*) distinguishes between “cultural heritage” and “natural heritage”:

Art. 1 For the purpose of this Convention, the following shall be considered as ‘cultural heritage’:

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/between-cuvier-and-darwin/222970](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/between-cuvier-and-darwin/222970)

## Related Content

---

### The Use of GIS and Remote Sensing in Schistosomiasis Control in China

Edmund Y.W. Seto, Bing Xu, Weiping Wu, George Davis, Dongchuan Qiu and Xueguang Gu (2003).

*Geographic Information Systems and Health Applications* (pp. 188-207).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/use-gis-remote-sensing-schistosomiasis/18842](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/use-gis-remote-sensing-schistosomiasis/18842)

### The Cadastral and Land Information Systems for an Effective Land Governance

Abdeslam Moulay Adad (2019). *Geospatial Technologies for Effective Land Governance* (pp. 215-232).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-cadastral-and-land-information-systems-for-an-effective-land-governance/214490](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-cadastral-and-land-information-systems-for-an-effective-land-governance/214490)

### Merging IFC-Based BIM Models: A New Paradigm and Co-Design Support Tool

Omar Doukari, Benoit Naudet and Régine Teulier (2017). *International Journal of 3-D Information Modeling* (pp. 51-64).

[www.irma-international.org/article/merging-ifc-based-bim-models-a-new-paradigm-and-co-design-support-tool/188403](http://www.irma-international.org/article/merging-ifc-based-bim-models-a-new-paradigm-and-co-design-support-tool/188403)

### Geovisualization of Socio-Spatial Data on Outdoor Activities and Values in the Southern Appalachians

Diane M. Styers, G. Rebecca Dobbs, Lee K. Cervený and Isaac T. Hayes (2018). *International Journal of Applied Geospatial Research* (pp. 55-80).

[www.irma-international.org/article/geovisualization-of-socio-spatial-data-on-outdoor-activities-and-values-in-the-southern-appalachians/204553](http://www.irma-international.org/article/geovisualization-of-socio-spatial-data-on-outdoor-activities-and-values-in-the-southern-appalachians/204553)

### Colorado 14ers, Pixel by Pixel

Brandon J. Vogt (2011). *International Journal of Applied Geospatial Research* (pp. 17-32).

[www.irma-international.org/article/colorado-14ers-pixel-pixel/53192](http://www.irma-international.org/article/colorado-14ers-pixel-pixel/53192)