The Cultural Heritages of Asia and Europe: Global Challenges and Local Initiatives

Rapporteurs’ Report of the Roundtable
(2-3 September 2010, Amsterdam)
In preparation for the Fourth ASEM Culture Ministers’ Meeting
(9-10 September 2010, Poznan, Poland)

Adèle Esposito
Inès Gaulis
This report contains an analysis of the discussions at the Roundtable, *The Cultural Heritages of Asia and Europe: Global Challenges and Local Initiatives* (2-3 September 2010, Amsterdam) by the rapporteurs, who are also the authors of the Background Document commissioned prior to the Roundtable. The Report does not reflect the views of the Asia-Europe Foundation.

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*Cover page: “Ordinary Heritage” in Hanoi; photograph by Clément Musil*
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The Roundtable and its Objectives

The Cultural Heritages of Asia and Europe: Global Challenges and Local Initiatives
(2-3 September 2010, Amsterdam)

The Roundtable, “The Cultural Heritages of Asia and Europe: Global Challenges and Local Initiatives” was co-organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation and the International Institute of Asian Studies. The two-day meeting brought together 20 academic and civil society experts from Asia and Europe to openly discuss the multifaceted aspects of cultural heritage and the various challenges experienced. The objective was to recommend concrete, contextualised strategies for development and social empowerment through cultural heritage.

Objectives
As the only permanent institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the Asia-Europe Foundation has an important function in connecting reflections on the ASEM level with the concerns of civil societies in the two regions. The recommendations from the Roundtable were presented at the Fourth ASEM Culture Ministers’ Meeting (9-10 September 2010, Poznan, Poland), which focused on the theme of “Heritage and the Challenges of the Present”.

The second purpose of the Roundtable was to assist the International Institute for Asian Studies (based in Amsterdam and Leiden, the Netherlands) in identifying potential research and policy-relevant topics focusing on global interaction and local agency in the areas of culture and the politics of cultural heritage in Asia.

Organising Institutions
The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) promotes greater mutual understanding between Asia and Europe through intellectual, cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Through ASEF, civil society concerns are included as a vital component in the deliberations of the Asia-Europe Meeting. ASEF was established in February 1997 by governments participating in ASEM and has since implemented over 450 projects, involving over 15,000 direct participants and reaching out to a much wider audience in Asia and Europe. www.asef.org.

The International Institute of Asian Studies (IIAS) is a postdoctoral research centre based in Leiden and Amsterdam. Its objective is to encourage the interdisciplinary and complementary study of Asia and to promote national and international cooperation. The institute focuses on human and social sciences and on their interaction with other sciences. IIAS acts as an international mediator and as a clearinghouse for knowledge and information. www.iias.nl.

1 ASEM now brings together 46 member states (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, Vietnam) plus the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat. www.aseminfoboard.org
The principal findings of the Roundtable, as listed in the Summary Report are as follows:

- There is an urgent need to recognise the plurality of the notion of 'heritage' within ASEM Member States and between Asia and Europe; in the latter context, the notion of 'shared heritage' needs to be addressed by ASEM Member States.

- There is a need to move from the notion of 'heritage' as an assemblage of objects and texts to a dynamic understanding of heritage as a process.

- The participants proposed the use of the notion of 'situational heritage' (i.e. including a diversity of stakeholders together with the plurality of their values) in order to resolve important omissions in earlier notions of cultural heritage created by the distinction between the categories of 'tangible' and 'intangible' heritage.

- Such an expanded understanding of 'heritage' (as outlined above) would incorporate the inherent multivocality of all representations of culture and the legitimacy of alternative modes of producing knowledge and representing the past.

- Given that history is, by definition, unavoidably selective, there is a need to recognise the existence of numerous groupings of social actors and acknowledge that such groupings and their needs shift over time.

- There should be a more substantive response to the changing needs articulated by local communities at various levels and to the cultural aspirations of different generations.

- The most urgent priority is to allow legitimate forms of contestation and to facilitate the articulation of various stakeholders such as NGOs, local communities, educational institutions and local intellectuals, activists and micro-entrepreneurs.

- The participants particularly emphasised the need to recognise that hitherto underrepresented disciplines and professions have now productively entered the ongoing debate.

- Regional and local languages faced with extinction require particular attention.
Recommendations for ASEM

Following the discussions summarised and analysed above, the participants formulated the following recommendations for the consideration of the governments of the Asia-Europe Meeting at the Fourth ASEM Culture Ministers’ Meeting (9-10 September 2010, Poznan, Poland):

- To recognise, explore and support the potential and actual contributions of cultural practitioners, micro-entrepreneurs, and activists in cultural transmission and change.

- To acknowledge, sustain and provide platforms and networks for the interaction of different social actors as equals in the representation, transmission, governance and sharing of heritage.

- To develop heritage-related programmes, planning and projects on the basis of ethical principles that promote the concept of an inclusive, equitable society.

- To strengthen the effectiveness of cultural heritage management at different levels through participatory methods including through online technologies.

- To include critical perspectives on heritage at all levels (local, regional, national and transnational) in educational curricula, comprising both institutional and non-institutional knowledge.

- To encourage and support research and documentation that aids the creation of shared knowledge and promotes collaboration among all interested groups in Asia and Europe.
The Background Document

Prior to the Roundtable in Amsterdam, a Background Document was commissioned by the organisers with the aim of providing some keys for discussion during the Roundtable. The report questioned the global and local scales of heritage reflection and practices as well as the shift which has taken place from one to the other. The document also attempted to identify the “terms of dialogue” between European and Asian countries in the field of heritage.

The notion of heritage and its scope has evolved throughout history. The Background Document retraced this process, which could be divided into three phases:

- the recognition of heritage in European states in relation to the construction of national identities;
- the export of heritage theories and practices to colonial territories;
- the internationalisation of heritage reflection in the framework of organisations created after the First and the Second World Wars.

The delimitation of the three phases is useful for following the evolution, but it is schematic as each phase is a process in itself and communicates with the others throughout history. This process also includes a shift from one scale to the other, from the national to the inter-national and, finally, to the global.

One of the main points of the report was that the first instance of internationalisation was the export of European theories and practices within colonial contexts. European powers imposed their vision of heritage, set up an institutional framework and organised conservation practices in the colonies. An unequal relationship of domination was thus the starting point for the consideration of Asian heritage by the European powers. Asian cultures were perceived through the “filter” of the production of knowledge by the colonisers: while questioning the culture of others, Europeans did not question others about their heritage.

The authors of the Background Document argued that this cultural scheme founded the internationalisation of heritage reflection even after decolonisation, when the regime of political authority was replaced by a framework of international cooperation. Texts on the basis of which international reflection over heritage was initiated show that while the historical events had rapidly changed the political context, the cultural construct of domination was still in place. The World Heritage Convention of 1972 is the landmark of the internationalisation process, which established the exceptional value of cultural and natural heritage in line with a given set of criteria. As a consequence of the Convention, not only were heritage notions and a conception of the past expanded worldwide due to the development of international responsibility in the preservation of universal heritage, but so was a whole “package” of thoughts, doctrines and categories. The State Parties connived to accept the consensus to this “package” through the ratification of international conventions and the nomination of objects and sites which reflected dominant values.

As these notions, categories and practices had been previously defined within the historical context of European countries, the consensus in Asian countries cannot be the result of any linear – we might say, peaceful – process. Despite the discourse which has attempted to smooth over the differences in the name of universality, it remains a contested process where traces of domination are still recognisable and where the strategic interests of Asian countries in joining the international networks of cooperation may prevail over a sincere appropriation of heritage notions and practices. In the future, the authors would like to pursue research on the process of appropriation of a dominant discourse on heritage into Asian contexts: is the “dominant language” of international reflection translated – or, even better, transposed - into new configurations which negotiate with local values?

The second point made in the Background Document was that the international discourse over heritage is not static. On the basis of the documents produced by UNESCO, the authors argued that this discourse started to change at the end of the 1980s. Proof of the ongoing transformation came in the form of the introduction of “cultural landscapes” as a heritage criterion in 1992 and the Conference of Nara (1994), which questioned the notion of authenticity. Afterwards, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) showed that dominant notions are being reconsidered in relation to non-European contexts. Japan is the country leading this transformation and Asian countries seem to be the fields in which criticism of dominant categories is taking place.

However, the Background Document could not study in any depth the role of these countries in “shaping” international reflection. The important role they are currently playing in this process was evaluated solely on the basis of international charters, Conventions, recommendations, reports and other normative works by UNESCO and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). These documents may be considered as “posters” of an ongoing process which they announce while reducing its complexity.

Another limit of the Document was that the role played by Asian countries was only questioned within the framework of the palimpsest of international reflection. The “local dimension” of heritage was acknowledged from the perspective of the recognition accorded to these forms by international organisations. This approach was justified by the attempt to consider the two terms of the dialogue of the Roundtable –global and local – together, as being jointly involved in heritage recognition at an international level. The global scale of heritage was reached through a process which started on a national scale and then expanded worldwide. If the Convention of 1972 conveyed a western-based knowledge which tended to even out differences, international reflection is currently “returning” to a local scale through the introduction of new values.

The role of non-institutional groups was only examined within the case studies. This limit is, at the same time, a research stance: case studies show the particularity of a specific context in which negotiations of international heritage categories can be assessed. It reveals the diverse manners in which contemporary values can be recognised. Generalising the role of these groups, whose specificity to the context would have required extensive fieldwork, would not have be an honest approach within the framework of the Background Document.
Rapporteurs’ Report of the Roundtable

This post-Roundtable report by the rapporteurs\(^3\) aims to put forth the questions and topics discussed at the Roundtable.\(^4\)

The discussion at the Roundtable was organised into six sessions over two days. The Roundtable format was chosen to focus on dialogue among Asian and European experts. Formal presentations and lectures were strongly discouraged. The presumption was that all those seated at the Roundtable were well-prepared and had something useful to contribute. Hence, skilfully-managed conversation around well-designed topics was the main format employed. The reason for choosing the Roundtable format was also to enable all the participating experts to talk freely about their ideas and recommendations.

As an introduction, the framework and objectives of the Roundtable were set out by the organising institutions, namely IIAS and ASEF. At this session, the participants also introduced themselves. The authors of the Background Document summarised the main points and the limits of their work.

Five thematic sessions, each chaired by a participant, followed and dealt with the following topics and questions:

- **What is heritage?** This session focused on the evolving scope of the term ‘heritage’ in different contexts in Asia and Europe and for different stakeholders (including institutional and governmental organisations and civil society actors).
- **Heritage, for whom?** This session focused on heritage ownership in relation to different stakeholders (including policy makers, communities, educators and other civil society actors).
- **Institutional players and the role of civil society**: This session focused on institutional frameworks at various levels (international, national and local) and the role of civil society in heritage-related activities.
- **Cultural heritage and economic constraints**: This session focused on the possibilities of reconciling market economies and heritage-related activities.
- **Cities and heritage**: This session focused on maintaining the balance between preservation and modernisation in urban contexts.

The five Session Chairs then summed up the key points raised during the sessions and a discussion on the same followed. In the very last session, the participants worked together to compile the principal findings of the Roundtable and a list of recommendations for the consideration of the Fourth ASEM Culture Ministers’ Meeting (9-10 September 2010, Poznan, Poland).

The richness and the diversity of the contributions, the different points of view and the multidisciplinary approaches to heritage have been a challenge for the authors who have tried to transpose the content of the discussion into the “unique voice” of this report, which is organised in three parts:

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\(^3\) Adèle Esposito and Inès Gaulis, the authors of the Background Document also served as rapporteurs at the Roundtable in Amsterdam and prepared this report.

\(^4\) An overview of the Roundtable and all related documents including the List of Participants, Programme and Summary Report are available online at: http://www.asef.org/index.php?option=com_project&task=view&id=658
1. **Towards a situational definition of heritage:** As it is impossible to give a single and exhaustive definition of heritage, an open, situational and provocative approach to understanding and defining 'heritage' has been proposed. This flexible approach criticises the dominant categories of heritage created by UNESCO (e.g. the distinction between tangible and intangible heritage). Alternatively, a situational definition of heritage requires an accurate description of the stakeholders involved in the recognition of a form of heritage within a particular temporal and geographical context.

2. **Circumstantial recognition:** Heritage is a cultural construct that implies the inclusion of forms which are suitable for a particular social project and the exclusion of others which are of no use to that project or may even put it in danger. Heritage is, thus, intrinsically linked to a process of selection. However, perceptions of heritage may change over time. Heritage that was neglected in the past may thus be revaluated in the future and a sense of ownership may change from one group to another. Analogue processes of recognition/refusal of particular forms of heritage can be recognised in different contexts according to their level of economic development.

3. **Who holds the stakes in the heritage field?** This section deals with two issues: the share of competencies and responsibilities among institutions, non-governmental groups and international organisations in the field of heritage; and, tools for planning and managing urban development where heritage ought to be systematically included. As master plans are inadequate for managing the rapid pattern of development of contemporary Asian cities, strategic and action planning has been suggested as an appropriate solution, if it is guided by a coherent vision and a set of principles and is implemented with the support of new regulations and expertise.
1. Towards a Situational Definition of Heritage

Heritage without heritage: when notions are insensitive to their own origins and evolutions

In the Background Document, it was argued that the notion of heritage is Euro-centric. The authors have situated its birth in European countries during the 18th century. They have retraced the process of its evolution, which was linked to the construction of national identities in the newly-constituted Nation States. They argued that Asian heritage was considered through the filter of European concepts, which were exported during colonisation and that it was restored and conserved according to a set of practices experienced in European countries. The internationalisation of heritage notions and practices, which started after the First World War, was conditioned by these well-established theories and practices. While the colonial powers were dismantled, this "palimpsest" resisted and still influences the way UNESCO and ICOMOS conceive heritage.

On the basis of these arguments, the participants questioned the reasons why notions of heritage are deeply intermeshed with European countries and to what extent the current treatment of the topic is dominated by them. Etymology has been chosen as a field of exploration. In some European languages, such as Italian and French, the term used to define heritage (patrimonio; patrimoine) has a direct connection with the notion of patrimonial succession and inheritance. The expansion of the pre-modern idea of the person and of individual property has been used to sustain the formation of Nation States, which founded their identity on the idea of holding a common culture.

To move away from the Euro-centric vision, the notion of the "collective persona" should be abandoned in favour of the notion of "collective property" of heritage. The radically Western components of heritage should be investigated, along with the reasons why such notions are well-rooted in the European imagination. It might also lead us to question non-European notions of heritage, such as those which might have been defended in pre-colonial Asian contexts.

The notion of "authenticity" is open to exploration: its etymology is linked to the idea of authority (the Latin word authenticus), of a justification established on this basis (the Latin word authentes) and also to the idea of "genuine, original, and principal" (the Greek word authentikos). As Choay5 and Jokilehto6 have argued, these meanings have contributed to establishing authenticity on the basis of the materiality of the inherited objects studied as historical and scientific documents. This conception has been central to the notion of heritage in European countries.

The participants argued that "heritage has no heritage" if it is insensitive to the exploration of its historical origins and evolutions. A set of notions has been taken for granted at the international level but has rarely been problematised. Its blind acceptance has caused problems in the implementation of heritage policies: exogenous models have been exported into contexts that have different backgrounds. A critical approach which "deconstructs" these notions may lead to a deeper understanding of their signification and migration from one context to another. As a consequence, it might influence their current use.

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Adèle Esposito; Inès Gaulis
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Once this comprehension is established, corresponding notions may be searched for in Asian cultures: Asian heritage could be considered from an Asian perspective. Authenticity could be studied in a context where the reconstruction of religious buildings “reincarnates” spiritual values, while compromising the conservation of the historical document.\footnote{For example, the rapporteurs – in their capacity as researchers - had to interview a Bhutanese national as part of their fieldwork. When asked about “architectural value”, the interviewee could not dissociate it from the sacred traditions which are immanent in architecture.}

A case study was briefly presented by the participants at the Roundtable to illustrate the investigation of local perceptions of heritage: a Chinese newspaper ran the story of a village located in the south-west of the country. This village had a bridge where several generations of peasants used to meet. When a natural event destroyed the bridge, young people walked along the river to collect its pieces and rebuilt it. This case shows that the community was sentimentally attached to the bridge. Not only was its function important, but so was its materiality. An empirical method could thus put into perspective the perception of an Asian heritage which is made more of traditions and beliefs than of individual creations.

\textbf{Behind and beyond heritage categories: “tangible” and “intangible” heritage}

The participants argued that the distinction between tangible and intangible forms of heritage is a Western model. Even if the category of intangible heritage was created by UNESCO with particular attention being paid to Asian heritage, the separation between the two aspects does not exist in Asian cultures. However, the dissemination of international reflection led by UNESCO and ICOMOS contributes to the emergence of these categories in the way Asian countries now perceive their heritage.

In particular, the participants criticised the concept of ‘intangible’ attached to inherited forms such as languages. The untruthfulness of the distinction comes from the lack of recognition of the material effects of this heritage defined as intangible. Neglecting these effects could lead to destruction of the heritage itself.

Some participants argued that forms of heritage such as minority languages do not have any economic value. Governments could invest the revenues from the exploitation of other forms of heritage in favour of this ‘uneconomic’ heritage. Other participants did not share the point of view that language conservation might conflict with economic interests. Whilst they are not a direct source of revenue, languages and dialects facilitate communication between people (for example, in Cataluña). Moreover, the variety of the dialects linked to local practices can be attractive to tourists (for example, in Italy; in the town of Lijiang, China). Languages thus have material consequences, and also material advantages. These advantages go beyond economic benefits to tourism.

Furthermore, the category of intangible heritage is connected to the notion of tradition, which is a trap, because it has been used to define a classical expression of arts and crafts which must not change if their values are to be preserved. While excluding these forms from socio-cultural changes, the product is shifted away from its producer and from the process of its production. So, the category of intangible heritage may lead to discrimination.

However, speaking about heritage in the present context cannot make abstraction of the terminology which is employed in international reflection. UNESCO might be encouraged to use the concepts and the terms of social sciences. Meanwhile, the act of safeguarding should look beyond objects: attention must be shifted from the “products” - that the intangible category recognises - to the process which leads to their production.
Finally, the distinction between tangible and intangible creates two “spheres” of heritage conservation. Other forms of heritage might fall into the gap between them, into the neglected gray zone filled with forms which fit neither into the first category nor into the second.

The authors would like to use Cambodia to illustrate this point. Angkor was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1992. Over the last fifteen years, heritage recognition and conservation by Cambodian institutions, with the assistance of international organisations and donors, have focused on archaeology. The Royal Ballet was designated as a masterpiece of humanity in 2003. The gap between these two forms of heritage is huge. In particular, architectural and urban heritage are situated in the unrecognised space created by the separation of tangible and intangible aspects. Even if its “tangibility” is evident as it is constituted by material objects, its values are found not only in the aesthetic, historical and artistic qualities, but in the set of local beliefs which would be classed as “intangible”.

Provocative heritage: acknowledgement of the complexity of social practices and interactions

The criticism of notions which are taken for granted reveals that heritage cannot be defined in a unique way. Every definition may be contested if it is considered from another point of view. It has been argued that heritage is dynamic as it can be perceived and defined from a multiplicity of perspectives. This relativism can be observed in a precise historical moment, when the same form of heritage is shared by different groups and defined in a particular way by each of them. It can be observed throughout history: the consideration accorded to a form of heritage may change over time.

The definition of heritage must accurately and actively describe the situation in which the definition is drawn as well as the stakeholders involved. This description cannot make abstraction of values other than cultural ones - economic values for example. Indeed, economic advantages gained from the exploitation of heritage have been said to be a form of value that everybody can understand, even those who are not interested in cultural values. In particular, monetary value is a common language for all stakeholders, because it can be used for comparison. A "situational definition" of heritage would be the result of this encompassing type of analysis. It would be ethical because it would provide an accurate description of the values which justify the conservation of a particular form of heritage.

A situational definition of heritage recognises the complexity of social practices and interactions. It does not mean merely taking into consideration the cultural diversity which might be limited to a simple recognition of a heritage produced by the elite; it also means taking social diversity

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8 Participants made the distinction between “common” and “shared” heritage. A form of heritage is common when a unique perception and meaning is attached to it by the people who recognise it. A form of heritage is shared when different groups attribute different significations to it. An example was given: the roads in Singapore are a shared heritage, as the ethnic communities all use them while giving them different names in their own languages.

9 As an example, colonisers photographed Aboriginal Australians despite the local belief that photographs ‘steal’ the souls of those being photographed. Ten years ago, an exhibition of these photographs was organised. The consideration of this “forbidden art” had changed meantime: photographs were used by people to recognise their ancestors. When looking at a particular heritage, one should, therefore, specify when and in what circumstances the heritage was produced and conserved and any possible changes in meaning which may occur in the future.

10 Participants identified two forms of economic assets of heritage: the profits from their use of economic activities such as tourism and the benefits for the population. The economics of heritage combine these two aspects.
into account. A situational definition is thus provocative, because it assumes that a certain degree of conflict is healthy. It enriches heritage with a plurality of visions.

Encouraging institutional stakeholders to think in terms of diversity requires a certain level of permissiveness. Some systems accept it, as in Italy, where the proverb says “fatta la legge si trova l’inganno” (“once the law is passed, the cheat is found”). The participants demonstrated that beauty has often been created by breaking a previous rule (for example: the balcony built by Napoleon in Piazza Venezia, in Rome). Conflict and permissiveness are thus intrinsic to the production of future heritage. An idea by Enzo Scandurra, Italian professor and urban planner, illustrates this point: a decent urban life does not exist without a certain level of conflict: the production of a false consensus in urban planning and practices is illusory, whereas conflict might produce urban quality.

11 This acceptance may be due to the strong presence of Catholicism in Italy. According to catholic morality, human beings are not perfect. The creation of a monument which aspires to perfection is in some way inhuman and denies history.
2. Circumstantial Recognition

Perceptions of heritage are dynamic because its definition is circumstantial and may vary through time. A situational definition of heritage assumes that “there are multiple stakeholders whose views and answers on heritage may differ”.\(^{12}\) “Time and socio-economic factors may affect the identity and sense of ownership of heritage by the relevant communities”.\(^{13}\)

The participants formulated three questions to be considered when investigating heritage policies or projects:

- Who recognises a particular form of heritage?
- Under what circumstances does recognition take place?
- For whom is the preservation of heritage pursued?

**Heritage is a process of selection that implies inclusion and exclusion**

The building of European Nation States is a "circumstance" in the history of heritage that influenced the recognition of a particular heritage. The selection was guided by a question: what forms of heritage are suitable for representing the nation?

A selection of time periods and monuments was made to serve the construction of national identity. Scholars helped institutions define heritage policies. They were the first authors of heritage selection and still play a paramount role by enacting national laws and listing heritage.

During the process of heritage selection, while some forms were included as being representative of a nation, others were excluded. For example, a unique language was used to enhance the community’s sense of belonging to a Nation State. To this end, minority languages and local dialects have often been ignored. How to deal with these neglected forms? The problem is particularly serious in the case of Governments, such as in Greece,\(^{14}\) where the government explicitly denies the existence of minorities.

In countries where the plurality of languages has been accepted and the Government has, to some extent devolved, disruptive forces have a lesser impact: minority languages can thus serve the national interest (for example, in Italy and in the USA). Indeed, devolution makes it possible to understand local values whilst demolishing the paternalistic structure which was built in Asian countries during colonisation and which destroyed many expressions of cultural heritage. The 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions acknowledges that this model has come to an end: people must not be told how to act, but they must be facilitated in the expression of their own knowledge.

Inherited colonial buildings also illustrate the contested nature of heritage selection. Colonial buildings have often been neglected or rejected; however recent experiences show that authorities sometimes recognise this contested heritage. In Taiwan, for example, buildings dating back to the Japanese occupation have been listed and protected. On the other hand, Japanese buildings have been destroyed in Seoul. Dalat, Vietnam where a resort for health tourism was created by French colonisers, is now a popular destination for domestic tourists. In Phnom Penh, the population considers the Royal Palace to be the symbolic centre of the country. People care about the preservation of the palace and its surroundings. In contrast, people do not

\(^{12}\) As recorded in her notes by Dr. Keiko Miura, Chair of the session, *Heritage: For Whom?* at the Roundtable

\(^{13}\) Ibidem.

\(^{14}\) With the exception of the Turkish minority of Thrace whose presence is specifically recognised and protected by the Peace Treaty of Lausanne, signed by Greece and Turkey in 1923.
mind much about the French districts because they do not represent anything to the Cambodian mind. In this context, how is it possible to reconcile the conception of local people with the Western vision of the colonial past? A similar question may be asked about Old Batavia, which has a meaning for Dutch people and scholars: does it have significance for the 20 million inhabitants of Jakarta?

Looking at how, in a particular space, one group considers the heritage belonging to another group, the participants argued that, where institutional stakeholders do not intervene, conservation needs a shared recognition. However, conflicts may emerge if the groups do not have the same cultural background. Destruction may occur, as in Bamyan, Afghanistan.15

**Heritage recognition and urban development**

The recognition of a particular form of heritage is often a question of time: neglected forms may be reassessed in the future. Recognition may depend on the level of economic and urban development. As Asian and European cities have radically different rhythms of development, the situations of their urban heritages are different. While European cities have grown and been modernised over the last two centuries, Asian cities are now experiencing the same processes. Globalisation considerably increases the changes that modernisation induces. The rapidity of urban development in Asia calls into question the place of urban heritage and of its conservation. So, while in the West ordinary building heritage, such as housing, is generally recognised and preserved, in Asian countries – and in some European countries, such as Greece – it fails to be protected by their owners. The participants outlined a tendency to modernise housing: owners often consider their houses as inappropriate for modern life.

Economic factors may contribute to the destruction of heritage. As the participants argued, local Asian communities might take care of their monuments as places of worship, but do not have enough economic strength to look after a whole area. Poor urban populations that are struggling to survive will be more interested in securing their access to land than in the conservation of historical buildings. In Karachi, Pakistan for example, if the owners could get an equivalent amount of money or the same benefits by maintaining an old house or by demolishing it, they would prefer to maintain it. These examples show that owners are still considering their houses in line with the first meaning of heritage: patrimonial succession. The construction of a new building instead of an old house, or the sale of inherited buildings, can be a way to increase their “heritage”16 intended as personal/family wealth. The participants stressed the importance of improving the local living conditions in order to foster conservation. In the case of housing, this is preferable to restoration, which would only consider the physical state and appearance of a monument. Hence, grants might be a solution.

When private owners are disinterested in heritage matters, the institutional stakeholders may act as temporary custodians of heritage until a broader awareness of heritage values has been raised: “after the right kind of development with advanced education, the same people may realise the importance of their heritage for their own identities and want to recover it or have it

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15 The authors of this report would like to use the example of Cyprus (Greece), where Greek cemeteries and churches have been systematically desecrated in the Northern part of the island while mosques and Turkish cemeteries have been respected in the southern area. The question of the heritage of a specific community is chronic and haunting: can one community recognise the heritage of another group? This question can be asked in relation to the countries which were created after the disruption of the Ottoman Empire; for example, Turkish heritage in Greece or Armenian heritage in Turkey. Some of the destruction can be attributed to the institutional stakeholders, but not all of it.

16 This process, the antiparochi, is very common in Greece. One family can give its property to a real estate developer who will demolish the existing house, build apartments and give the family several flats in the building. The family thus obtains flats for each of its members and rents out the others. There would be no benefit to the family to keep the old house.
The individual perception of heritage may change, and in particular the perception that inhabitants may have of the inherited houses. This is the reason why “both top-down and bottom-up approaches for heritage conservation may be required”.17

In China, for example, authorities are trying to alert people to the value of their houses and to undertake restoration programmes. The authorities in charge of heritage are currently undertaking surveys on the state of housing. Within this framework, they are explaining to the inhabitants that they will improve residential areas “for them” and that their living conditions will be improved. Sometimes, the inhabitants are unaware that their houses are valuable; in these cases, action by the authorities also serves to raise their awareness. At the same time, Chinese authorities encourage conservation on a larger scale and with a long-term perspective: they affirm that “they conserve the heritage for the whole city” in order to induce economic development, and “for future generations”. Education may, therefore, be a solution to mobilise local awareness of heritage values: “Through education on cultural values of heritage and the right kind of economic development, local communities may become more aware of the importance of conserving their own heritage for the future generations”.19

However, inhabitants can also show their attachment to the place and claim their right to stay there despite the pressures exerted by institutional stakeholders. For example, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration undertook a project for the “beautification” of the dynastic districts. The community living in the area (comprising of about 300 houses) has resisted resettlement for 18 years, having been offered inadequate compensation. The authorities had to revise the project and offered the community decent houses in the same area, in exchange for their commitment to conserve the historical buildings. The population can, therefore, benefit from the tourist activity in that area. Inspired by this example, the participants wish to encourage Governments to choose projects where populations can play a participatory and collaborative role, so that both the historical areas and their residents are gentrified. As this type of initiative is not easy to implement, Governments could start with pilot projects on a small scale, where “it is possible to think the unthinkable”.

The participants explained that the desire for modernisation takes place at individual and collective levels. The rapid development of Asian cities supports this. The concept of World Class cities plays a part in this process, as it encourages competition between cities at a global level.20 Cities have to be competitive from the economic point of view. They also have to organise events, brand their image, promote iconic architecture and high standards of living and foster tourism rather than local markets and commerce. Competition, thus, means creating a new identity for the city through prestigious urban development projects that might involve heritage. However, participants explained that modernisation led by the desire for international recognition often occurs without any coherent vision (for example, in Singapore, where many commercial malls were created).

Urban revitalisation: when and for whom does “ordinary heritage” become valuable?
Participants cited the “rubbish theory” by Thompson (1979), according to which “things become more valuable when they become rubbish”. Rescue is possible when those objects become so

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17 As recorded in her notes by Dr. Keiko Miura, Chair of the session, Heritage: For Whom? at the Roundtable
18 Ibidem.
19 Ibidem.
20 “World class cities” is a relatively vague concept. Different criteria are used to rank cities: economics, liveability, the quality of life and environment, education and research, culture and events. The ranking can change depending on the criteria used for listing the World Cities and on who does the classification.
scarce that their value dramatically increases. Transposed to the architectural field, shop houses in South-east Asia are sometimes considered as heritage when they are seriously deteriorated and when most of them have been destroyed. For example, Singapore was full of shop houses but most of them were destroyed. The few that survived were recently revaluated and restored in a “colourful way” which raises the question of the role of imaginative rethinking of architectural shapes. On the other hand, there are still plenty of shop houses in Bangkok where economic development has been more uneven. However, they are shabby and people living and using them want to move away. Their owners are actually relatively rich Chinese merchants who may soon be able to abandon these shop houses in favour of more modern housing. The comparison between these two situations shows that the sensitiveness towards a particular architectural form depends on the scarcity of its representation in the city. The comparison between Asian and European examples demonstrates that similar dynamics take place at different moments according to the rhythms of economic development: about twenty years ago, urban European populations wanted to move away from the cities and settle down in the suburbs. Nowadays, a reverse movement is taking place: people are returning to the cities.

Restoration and conservation may induce gentrification of older areas. Gentrification is a major and well-known phenomenon common to both European and Asian cities. It often occurs when a new population with higher incomes than the locals settles down in the area. Sometimes, the process is encouraged by authorities as a means of moving people who are considered dangerous or to reconvert the image of historical areas (for example, in Bangkok). Consequently, land values increase; as a result, the local population is obliged to leave. The new population may recognise the value of the area, while locals may not have perceived them yet and remain unaware of the urban development that could modify the perception of the area.

Asian examples of gentrification for tourism were shared during the Roundtable. The sense of ownership may be shared by the locals and visitors, and/or the locals’ sense of ownership may be enhanced. In the town of Galle, Sri Lanka, owners are selling old houses to foreigners, who want to spend their holidays there, and who are offering large sums of money in return. In Hanoi, foreign companies have restored many colonial villas which were neglected by the Vietnamese. The interactions between locals and tourists can, therefore, affect the sense of ownership. Foreign tourists or companies act in a manner similar to the upper or middle classes in the gentrification of European historical centres. The enhancement of historical areas led by private investment is positive (for example, in Malacca, Malaysia), but it implies the transformation of economic activities in the area (the number of hotels and restaurants increases). These activities introduce new uses for the urban fabric, but may have an impact on the social composition of the areas.

Gentrification questions the connection between “local communities” and heritage: how to preserve both the heritage and the population? Georgetown in Penang, Malaysia has been cited as an example where a local committee took action to conserve the old area. Restoration did not turn into a gentrification process, since the old shop houses are still in use and “they do not look like an open-air museum”. However, it was not clear if the present occupants of the buildings are those who lived there before the project began.

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21 As recorded in her notes by Dr. Keiko Miura, Chair of the session, *Heritage: For Whom?* at the Roundtable.

22 If it is not “reinvented” by the new owners in the way they restore it.
2. Who holds the stakes in the heritage field?

This section of the report deals with two areas:

- the share of competencies and responsibilities among institutions, non-governmental groups and international organisations in the heritage field; and,
- the tools for planning and managing urban development, wherein heritage should be systematically included.

Questioning the terminology

The terminology for the identification of the groups that play a role in the field of heritage was discussed. While it is necessary to use the terms that are taken as a given in international discourse, it is also useful to question their exact meaning and implications.

As the notion of 'civil society' is vague and often refers to a multitude of groups, the terms “non institutional” and “non-governmental” actors/groups are preferable. Furthermore, the expression “local communities” takes into account any possible internal divisions of so-called civil society. It is, thus, more suitable to refer to the complexity of a population composed by several social groups and ethnic minorities.

Finally, the notion of “stakeholders” has been criticised from the anthropological perspective. The participants argued that within the framework of Asian villages, it is not possible to speak about stakeholders, but only about professions and their role in the symbolic space of the village.

The distribution of labour

Three questions were raised in the session, “Institutional players and the role of civil society”:

- To what extent must conservation be led by Nation States or by non-institutional groups?
- What kind of policy would acknowledge the role and the usefulness of groups which do not have legitimacy in the eyes of the State?
- How could UNESCO be less influenced by the Nation State model?

Reflection was motivated by the desire to find innovative ways for reversing the top-down approach in order to enable other voices – participants employed the expression "mute voices" – to play a part in the process of heritage selection. The notion of “public good” might sustain this process by encouraging people to think beyond the national agenda. In order to achieve increased involvement from non-institutional groups, should States deliberately evacuate the space of control? Decentralisation might be an efficient tool for giving more space to non-institutional stakeholders. However, the participants explained that even in countries where decentralisation has taken place (such as in Pakistan), heritage management still remains centralised.

Even in a context where non-institutional groups are empowered, who should be responsible for making the first step in heritage conservation and enhancement? Some participants believed that authorities should start the process, while others argued that in many Asian cases, non-governmental groups have taken the initiative and convinced authorities of the importance of cultural heritage. Malacca’s case was put forward in defence of the first position. Here, the Government started a process of urban revitalisation. The private sector then renovated many historical buildings; the Muslim community restored the mosque while the Chinese community took care of the temples. Tourism flourished: Malacca now welcomes about ten million tourists per year. The whole of Indonesia has a similar number of tourists per year. In this country, the
private sector led the process of tourism development. The numerous NGOs cannot fill the role that the Government should be playing.

In Lille, the renovation of the inner town and the arrival of the high-speed TGV (Train à Grande Vitesse) trains began a process of urban enhancement in the 1980s. A museum of fine arts was opened and the town was designated as the European Capital of Culture in 2004. A combination of initiatives thus contributed to the economic development of tourism. As tourists found new reasons to go to Lille, the private sector was able to undertake many other projects which increased the attractiveness of the town.

At the same time, governmental and institutional stakeholders must encourage the creation of “spaces” where the expressions of diverse voices is possible. Here, space is not exclusively intended in the physical or geographical sense, but also for its symbolic implications. Activism might find its proper place in this space and might be empowered by the access – often denied – to technical guidance and knowledge. This space could be created in educational institutions, where bureaucratisation is progressively reducing opportunities for the production of ideas. This process is due to the neo-liberal economy that is also threatening State structure. The adoption of a more human and flexible approach would be profitable for the States’ own constituency. However, only stable democratic States would probably be able to allow such spaces. In countries where different institutions are still competing for legitimacy, diversity of voices may be considered a threat.

In addition, economic opportunities may be created on a small scale. In the case of crafts or of heritage recognised by local communities, interpretation and mediation is needed in order to present these forms to outsiders (for example, tourists). Donors, NGOs, the diaspora or community leaders could be made responsible for this. However, these initiatives are not sufficient unless the Government sustains them and provides the necessary infrastructure for facilitating the access of tourists. In Cambodia, for example, good quality silk and ceramics are produced by a Japanese NGO whose activity is ignored by the authorities and has little impact on the market: the majority of souvenirs are still imported from Thailand and China. These examples support the argument that the Government has to take the first step and has to sustain the process of economic development. However, contact and discussion between public and private stakeholders should be encouraged.

Participants argued that in Asia, the increasing number of university students might encourage the inclusion of “informal” parts of society in education. However, the distinction between “formal” and “informal” social groups was criticised by participants. Indeed, some systems do tolerate a certain level of corruption, which implicitly acknowledges the existence of “informality”. Some participants argued that maintaining this distinction could be dangerous, as institutions might choose to deny what they are not able to incorporate. Moreover, the so-called “informal sector” has never been more conscious of the part it plays in society and it is learning to negotiate from a position of strength. This change is visible in the evolution of the terminology which is used for describing its economic activities: in the beginning, it was called “black”, then “underground”, then “informal” and now it is usually referred to as “people’s economy”.

Can UNESCO evolve?
Some participants distrusted the evolution of UNESCO. In contrast, others argued that UNESCO is changing in relation to the changes taking place in Nation States23 and can encourage local community awareness in the field of heritage.

23 Even if UNESCO plays an important part in the recognition of international forms of heritage, participants explained that the World Heritage List is not the only tool for this. The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat (1971), popularly known as the
Certain arguments were put forward:

- **The criticism of the World Heritage List which started at the end of the 1980s**: In order to go beyond the nationalistic approach to heritage selection, a regional approach has been introduced, according to which nominations would recognise the shared heritage of different States Parties;

- **The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) as a representative example of the actual evolution of notions of heritage**: This Convention is the result of fifteen years of work, but until now it has lacked implementation. Increasing ratifications of the Convention are a positive sign;

- **The international celebrity status of some heritage may contribute to sentimental attachment of the community**: the Cambodian royal ballet was traditionally the property of the elite. However, after the period of genocide during the Pol Pot regime, this art form spread to wider Cambodian communities throughout the world, who were first living as refugees and later resettled in various countries forming a strong diaspora. For Cambodians overseas, the royal ballet became the symbol of belonging to Cambodian society. Heritage ownership may thus be transferred from the elite to the general population.

**Tools for planning: master plans are “out of fashion”**

Master plans have always been the main tool used by authorities to manage urban development both in Europe and Asia. However, these are Western instruments that were imported from Europe during the colonial period. While colonial powers have been dismantled, central planning often reproduces colonial models in Asia.

Participants argued that the planning process is a lengthy one. The example of French Indochina was given to illustrate the difficulty of implementing planning in South-east Asian countries. Colonial models were given as negative examples of planning. A law enacted in 1928 formally required each city to develop and implement a plan, but by 1940 no plan had been implemented. Afterwards, the Vichy Government (1940-44) was more interested in planning than the previous administrations and created a central planning department. However, the plans were ambitious as they were intended to cover long-term and large-scale development. The construction of a large number of villas would have provided housing for the 2.7% of the population represented by European migrants. In contrast, the Vietnamese population would only have found housing locations on the outskirts of the planned town and would have lived in huts.

Nowadays, the planning process appears to be too lengthy to cope with the fast rhythm of urban development in Asia. Participants explained that authorities often fail to control rapid development that continues to take place during the long process of the implementation of Ramsar Convention has been used by some Asian countries, such as Vietnam, for recognising its natural heritage. This Convention aims to protect wetlands of international importance. It is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

24 As recorded in her notes by Dr. Keiko Miura, Chair of the session, *Heritage: For Whom?* at the Roundtable.

25 The authors provide examples of contemporary Cambodia. Numerous master plans have been put into effect for the city of Siem Reap, but none has been implemented. The latest one provides a very small land area for public services such as schools, in the context of a country which is selling public land to raise money. European city planners had to “fight” with the authorities to ensure that some lands were reserved for public functions.
master plans. These plans also fail to meet their objectives because they are conceived without consulting local populations. On the other hand, authorities need to recognise the capacity of local communities in organising their own environment, as they generally have a good understanding of it. This is the reason why an anthropological approach should be included in planning. Bureaucrats must learn to accept that local people, even if they are not formally educated, have a deep understanding of the environment in which they live and that they can provide practical inputs to guide the planning. In India, for example, the curriculum for urban planners has been changing to keep up with new emerging approaches to urban development. Presently, a programme for revising the curriculum is being undertaken in association with the help of the Development Planning Unit in the United Kingdom. 26

Projects prevail over planning
Because of the failure of planning, projects have precedence over the development strategies of institutional stakeholders. Money is more easily invested in projects than in planning, which contributes towards the failure of programmes through international cooperation. For example, each UN agency has a programme, but the short-term projects for which funds are raised do not often fit in with that programme.

A radical reaction is required to fight the injustices affecting people and spaces in Asian cities, which are experiencing a massive explosion of urbanisation. These are contributing to the erosion of the social fabric on a major scale. This is one of the dangers of a devolution that does not integrate the social dimension: the State supports the private sector, which acquires power over land acquisition. As a consequence, the poor become increasingly marginalised. The “World Class City” concept has also helped projects prevail over planning. To achieve “World Class” status, the city encourages interventions which are funded by direct foreign investment, but have nothing to do with planning because they conceive the city as a sum of parts without any overall vision. The problem is that nowadays cities cannot refuse investment because they cannot function without it.

One solution might, therefore, be to incorporate into projects the values which planning would encompass. For example, the city of Karachi, Pakistan has established principles according to which projects are evaluated:

- Projects should not damage the ecology of the city;
- They should promote land use on the basis of social and environmental values and not only on the basis of land values;
- They should provide benefits to the majority of the urban population; and,
- They should not damage the tangible and intangible heritage of the community living in the city.

Proposals for strategic and action planning
As master plans are generally unable to express global visions for city development, participants argued that they could be replaced by a more dynamic way of thinking and of managing urban development. Action and strategic planning is a possible answer as an effective and comprehensive instrument. This type of planning could be successful if four conditions are filled:

26 The Development Planning Unit (DPU) is an international centre specialising in academic teaching, practical training, research and consultancy in the field of urban and regional development, planning, and management. It is concerned with promoting sustainable forms of development, understanding rapid urbanisation and encouraging innovation in the policy, planning and management responses to the economic, social and environmental development of cities and regions, especially in Asia, Africa and Latin America (http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu/).
The idea of principles goes beyond regulations: while regulations are enforced and have to be respected even in cases of insincere adhesion, principles are shared if they are felt to be right.

Planning may take into account the “fourth dimension”. Participants referred to the fourth dimension in two ways: not only should monuments be conserved, but also the people who take care of them. Ruskin had already considered this articulation between the urban fabric and the life taking place within its framework by describing the city as an “organism”\(^{28}\). When this dimension is considered, space can be analysed in different ways: streets and public areas may be seen as “self organised” spaces where people move by instinct and where a certain level of conflict is allowed. Also, the fourth dimension implies the passing of time: planning should take into account the rapid transformation of contemporary cities.

Planning should acknowledge that the attempt to push “dangerous” groups away from the city actually marginalises desperate and poor inhabitants. On the contrary, planning should rescue heritage for local people and include participation at every level. It should be a flexible instrument that systematically incorporates the social dimension and where initiatives are able to flourish with contributions from local actors. Planning should be conceived more as a process than as a statement of facts.

Heritage should be systematically included in planning as it would provide a “flavour of ethics”. Indeed, in Jakarta, Indonesia even if many conferences on cultural heritage have taken place, no action was taken because heritage was not considered in planning. Heritage should also be included in national economic strategies. However, this is not an easy task in contexts where people struggling for survival have more urgent preoccupations than caring about heritage conservation.

Small and medium-size towns could be considered as laboratories for experimenting with new methods of planning. At the same time, planners must acknowledge that smaller towns tend to implement more exclusionary policies. In Lucca, Italy, for example, the number of ethnic restaurants in the town centre was restricted in order to conserve the local colour. In Rome, ethnic food was forbidden in schools on the pretext that immigrants have to get used to Italian cuisine. Central policies are, therefore, needed to contrast these tendencies at local levels.

The negative effects of heritage exploitation (for example, for tourism) must not be underestimated. Positive and negative examples of heritage exploitation for economic purposes could be given to Governments to increase their awareness of both opportunities and dangers. In particular, Governments should be advised of the recurring life cycle of tourist destinations, which usually experience the following phases: the discovery of the destination; its development which compromises the integrity of its resources and, therefore, its attractiveness; and finally, stagnation and recession. Governments must understand that the same phenomena destroy the environment and will consequently undercut the economic benefits coming from tourism.

\(^{27}\) Indeed, it is not always easy to elaborate strategic planning if contrasting visions for a town coexist in the minds of different stakeholders (for example, in Karachi, Pakistan).

\(^{28}\) According to John Ruskin, Gothic architecture represents the harmony of feeling, faith and organicism. It embodies the organic relationship that existed between the worker and guild, worker and community, worker and natural environment, but also between worker and God. Cfr. Ruskin, John (1851), The Stones of Venice, New York, John Wiley, 3 vol.
Comparing Asia and Europe: from a Euro-centric notion to shared heritage.

Heritage as a Euro-centric notion was first exported to Asia under the colonial rule. The long process of internationalising heritage practices and theories that started in Europe after the First World War became more generalised after UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention in 1972. However, Euro-centric discourse and practices have evolved since the 1980s. In this evolution, Asian countries and their local cultural conception of heritage play a part.

During the Roundtable, participants argued that the conceptions, perception and traditions of heritage have existed in Asian communities for centuries and are now coming into contact with international notions and practices. Asian "contents" of heritage come from pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial times. They also include traditions and customs which are intrinsically linked to the materiality of heritage. Asian heritage is nowadays a palimpsest where local and international conceptions coexist.

The comparison between Asian and European examples shows that similar dynamics take place at different moments according to the rhythms of economic development. In Asian cities, conservation policies are currently dealing with the need for modernisation and accelerated development processes (that have taken place in Europe since the Industrial Revolution). As heritage conservation depends on the stage of economic and social development in each country, even within the Asian continent dynamics follow different rhythms. The same heritage category (shop houses, for example) will not therefore receive the same attention in all Asian countries. An important part of the heritage might thus disappear over coming decades in the wake of modernisation.

In some developing countries, consideration for heritage conservation together with the need for modernisation can be interpreted as a paradox. How can they develop and modernise while conserving heritage at the same time?

Heritage is plural

The participants insisted on the notion of “plurality”: in terms of the meanings which can be given to the notion of heritage; of content; and, of stakeholders involved in heritage recognition and practices throughout history. Heritage recognition or refusal depends on geographical and anthropological contexts. Circumstantial definitions of heritage are critical of “taken for granted” notions which focus on artefacts and texts. The participants emphasised that heritage should move from the recognition of valuable objects to the safeguarding of the process in the framework of which heritage is produced.

Top-down policies were also criticised as they tend to leave aside content and non-institutional groups even though they are involved in the field of heritage. The participants insisted on the necessity of broadening heritage policies to a larger set of actors. The plurality and values of stakeholders need to be recognised. On the one hand, educating people on heritage values is a duty which falls to the institutions; on the other hand, Governments must recognise the ability of local communities in defining and preserving their own heritage. Heritage values can, therefore, be introduced into the educational curricula, while students can go outside university to experience local knowledge in the community framework.

Conclusions

Culture and education have paramount roles to play, particularly in the context of developing countries where they can facilitate development processes. As a cultural phenomenon, heritage has a similar role to play, a role which must be recognised and supported by institutional
stakeholders. As values are intrinsic to heritage, strategies and planning around heritage must be undertaken within an ethical framework.
Authors

**Adèle Esposito** is an architect specialising in architectural and environmental heritage conservation. She is a PhD candidate at the doctoral school, Ville, Transport, Territoire (City, Transport and Territories) of the ‘Pôle de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur (PRES) of the University of Paris Est. Her dissertation project deals with urban development for tourism in Siem Reap, the town situated at the doorway of the archaeological site of Angkor.

**Inès Gaulis** is a historian of art with a PhD in city planning. She is a researcher at IPRAUS (*Institut Parisien de Recherche Architecture Urbanistique Société*), in the UMR AUSSE 3329/CNRS department (National Centre for Scientific Research). Her research deals with cultural heritage issues, notably in Greece and Asia (specifically, Cambodia and Bali).

Both authors are involved with IPRAUS, the Parisian Institute of Research Architecture, Urbanism and Society of the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d’Architecture de Paris-Belleville. Under its auspices, they participate in several collective programmes of research focused on architecture, heritage and tourism. The research is approached using interdisciplinary methodology at the intersection of architecture, urban planning, anthropology and sociology. The authors teach undergraduate programmes at the Architecture School of Belleville.