

Call for papers

SHAPING HERITAGE-SCAPES: PROCESSES OF PATRIMONIALIZATION IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

International symposium, University of Lausanne, August 27- 28, 2012

Application deadline: march 15

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Lynn Meskell (Stanford University)

Michael Herzfeld (Harvard University)

Organizers : Laurence Gillot (Université Paris Diderot, ULB), Irène Maffi (Université de Lausanne), Anne-Christine Trémon (University of Lausanne)

Scientific committee : David Berliner (Université libre de Bruxelles), Roberta Colombo (Musée ethnographique de Genève), Rami Daher (Jordan University), Maria Gravari-Barbas (Paris 1 Sorbonne), Kimberly Katz (Towson University), Silvia Naef (UNIGE), Dino Palumbo (Messina University), Dominique Poulot (Paris I Sorbonne), Michel Rautenberg (Université Jean Monnet), Laurier Turgeon (Université de Laval), Wendy Shaw (UNIBE).

The purpose of this multidisciplinary and international symposium is to give scholars from various backgrounds and geographical areas working on the topic of heritage and museums an opportunity to meet. While aware of their differences of views, we wish to raise questions that are common to heritage and museums.

We propose to regard them both as part of one and the same process referred to as patrimonialization. We thus extend the meaning of this expression, primarily used in francophone studies, to refer to the historically situated projects and procedures that transform places, people, 'traditions', and artefacts into heritage to be protected, exhibited, and highlighted. Processes of patrimonialization are primarily a matter of cultural production and preservation. However, to the extent that they entail a selection of objects, persons and 'traditions' to be preserved and/or displayed, and a choice of the places and forms of the exhibits, they unavoidably involve economic, political and social stakes.

The heritage and museum boom occurring in many countries may be linked to an increased economic and political competition between localities, the enactment of multicultural policies, as well as the growing involvement of local actors - private citizens, families, foundations, NGOs, etc. Therefore, heritage and museum projects may be considered as situated at the intersection of a variety of arenas at the local, national, regional and global levels. At the heart of patrimonialization lies a scalar dynamic that raises the question of whether we may talk of « heritage-scapes ». These scapes would result from the encounter between Western paradigms and alternative models of relating to the past, and of producing and promoting culture.

We welcome contributions that address this multifaceted process and focus on one of its aspects: objects, arenas, sites and paradigms.

OBJECTS : The social life of objects in museums and heritage.

Objects have a social life and their status change in time and space according to the contexts of meaning and of use of which they are part. A material object may begin its career as a trivial one made for daily use and end up in the showcase of a museum as the unique witness of a past civilisation. Heritage objects are a relatively new category of human artefacts or natural elements that have reached the status of valuables because they are the symbol of an invisible and imagined universe rather than for their intrinsic characteristics such as artefacts made out of precious materials. While they do not represent primarily a divine or magic dimension, even though they sometimes do, they nonetheless are symbols of an immaterial universe whose main components are historical and aesthetic. Heritage objects represent the history, the identity, the richness of the social world that human societies have inherited and ought to preserve in order to shape the present and the future. The basic question we would like to address is : how are things turned into heritage and how are the cultural processes of collecting, selecting, exhibiting, serializing and materializing the past orchestrated in the myriads of existing localities, as well as how do things turned into heritage acquire new statuses and meanings in the process. Another aspect we would like to consider is the impact on people lives of the fact that things turn into heritage. How do they transform symbolic configurations, aesthetic sensibilities and pragmatic behaviours? Finally, we wish to analyse the contours of heritage-scapes: what happens once heritage has ‘gone global’, when it becomes a cosmopolitan/cosmo-political heritage?

ARENAS : Intersections between scales

The patrimonialization process makes objects, sites and social actors interact in various arenas, producing a complex world where local and global forces intertwine. The various stakeholders of heritage production and consumption have their own cultural, social, economic and ideological background and the interactions between these actors take various forms that are related to specific historical and cultural circumstances. Colonial and postcolonial contexts constitute stimulating areas of investigation, insofar as we can compare the processes of patrimonialization taking place before, during and after colonization, considering a variety of geographical, cultural, sociopolitical and economic localities that have been under the rule of European states. Detailed case studies will highlight stakeholders’ strategies for choosing, protecting and emphasizing the value of objects or sites that became heritage through these processes. Since heritage is continuously moving, we shall consider phenomena of globalisation and/or re-configuration or ‘glocalisation’ that bring about the emergence of original forms of heritage. In this context, our approach is twofold. On the one hand, we shall consider how local objects, sites, and customs become inscribed in larger networks, national, regional or global. On the other hand, how do local populations re-appropriate and reinterpret heritage which has been defined on a larger scale? Papers may also highlight the role of heritage as a tool allowing institutions, scholars and heritage promoters to trigger an active participation by local actors, especially the civil society, a fact which is regarded as a condition for a popular and democratic definition of heritage instead of an official and elitist one. On the contrary, papers could consider heritage as a tool of power that could be used to reinforce social and economic disparities and inequalities. Finally, we would like to address the issue of ‘cultural citizenship’ in order to explore to what extent the participation of all stakeholders in the patrimonialization process may lead to modernity, e.g. the emergence of modern citizens and modern nations.

SITES: The social production of places

In the process of patrimonialization, locality is generally a crucial criterion for evaluating and selecting artefacts, people, arts and traditions. The latter draw their “heritage-value” from their close association with specific places. If patrimonialization plays a part in the globalization of culture, it contributes also to the localization of culture. Processes of making heritage or museums result, in turn, in highlighting the particularity of a place and aim at increasing its attractiveness. Places are therefore socially produced in the course of a patrimonialization processes; from localities, they are turned into “sites”. We welcome papers that document and reflect upon the mechanisms underlying this social production of place. How are specific places chosen and circumscribed, and what are the stakes involved in this selection? What are the links between processes of materialization (the creation of tangible elements of heritage, or visible museum objects) and the localization of culture within the space of the museum/the heritage site? How do objects/persons/‘traditions’ become « markers » of locality: trade marks, brands, symbols? To what extent do the architecture and designs of these sites contribute to the “branding”, the marketing of a place, and to the sites’ local or global reach? Are public spaces transformed into private places (or the opposite) and what are the consequences of such a change of status? How are these sites perceived by the local residents and are they used in ways that are not in line with their new status? We also welcome reflections on the methods used by the contributors to account for these sites and explorations of the relation between the ethnographic field site and the heritage or museum site.

PARADIGMS: encounters between Western and other models

The paradigm of heritage that has dominated the international scene in the second half of the 20th century is the product of various cultural traditions of European origin, some of which date back to the Renaissance. Exported to non-European countries by the colonial administrations as a political tool and as a symbol of Western modernity, the notion of cultural heritage and the practices, institutions, arrangements and knowledge it implies have been adopted in many contexts with various consequences. As a result, the so-called western model of heritage has been modified and reshaped in order to adjust to local configurations of the past and specific ways of preserving it.

One of the questions we would like to address is whether it is still possible today to identify a shared heritage paradigm or are we in the presence of multiple models existing side by side. We shall also explore how these paradigms interact with each other within national contexts and in transnational arenas such as UNESCO and ICOMOS. Another issue that is worth exploring is whether the dialogue between diverse heritage models is possible or whether their logics are irreconcilable. This topic is directly related to the reconfiguration of the relationships linking previously colonized or politically dominated states and the ‘West’ due to the new political and economic situation and the fabrication of globalized heritage-scapes: how shall the asymmetric relationships linking the western paradigm with other non-western models be re-examined and reformulated?

Informations

Proposals for papers, with title, a 3,000 sign abstract (including spaces), author's name, affiliation and email address are to be sent in word or rtf format. The abstract will include the sub-theme selected.

Proposals are to be sent to Laurence Gillot (lgillot@ulb.ac.be); Irène Maffi (irene.maffi@unil.ch) and Anne-Christine Trémon (anne-christine.tremon@unil.ch) before 15th March 2012. We will send out notifications around the end of April.