Chapter 2
Between Cuvier and Darwin: Issues in a Changing Heritage

ABSTRACT

The chapter presents a reflection on the evolution of cultural heritage concept, from the second half of the 20th 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”1. 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 identity 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 splinteting 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 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).
Archaeological Heritage: Representation Between Material and Immaterial
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