Critical assessment/perspective

The inherent sharing of conservation decisions

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This paper provides an understanding of an under-explored aspect of the sharing of conservation decisions. In particular, it argues that conservation decisions are inherently shared in at least three senses. First, conservation is conceived as a field of shared values, principles, and decision-making methodology, and aspires to a universally shared ethic. This view is supported by the logical and ethical consistency of existing Codes of Ethics, and is made manifest with the aid of a conceptual model of what science is. Second, conservation decisions are conditioned by the identity of heritage entities. The values comprising the heritage identity of an entity transcend space and time boundaries; they are interrelated and interdependent and, as such, shared. Third, the benefits but also the harms stemming from conservation decisions and actions are distributed and shared among all people for whom the object of a conservation decision is heritage. As dictated by the do-no-harm principle, conservators have a duty to consider risks of such harms when making decisions.

Keywords: Conservation theory, Conservation philosophy, Conservation decision making, Conservation ethics, Heritage values

Introduction

It is now widely accepted that in addition to objects, conservation decisions involve the sharing of values, ideas, information, and ethics. Following Stephan Michalski's (1994) paper 'Sharing Responsibility for Conservation Decisions', the Getty Conservation Institute's Research Reports (Avrami *et al*., 2000; de la Torre, 2002, 2005), publications in the field of heritage management[1] (Aplin, 2002; Smith, 2006; Smith *et al*., 2010), and other research initiatives and activities such as the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) course *Sharing Conservation Decisions* (Varoli-Piazza, 2007), a key topic in discussions has been the co-operative method both for making and for disseminating decisions among conservators, other heritage professionals, institutions, local communities, and the general public. Less explored, however, is another aspect of the sharing of conservation decisions pertaining to the relationship between the conservator and the value system of society at large, namely that conservation decisions are inherently shared. That is to say, they are shared in the sense of establishing a common ground. In response to the need for research into the mechanisms of conservation decision-making, this paper will argue that 'sharing' is a concept inherent to all conservation decisions in virtue of the foundational assumptions and principles that define and frame conservation as a distinct field and profession. By conservation's foundational principles and assumptions, this paper refers to the key concepts and principles that gave rise to the conservation profession in the early-twentieth century (Clavir, 2002, pp. 24–25), and which have been incorporated in existing conservation Codes of Ethics to guide decision-making and practice.

Conservation could very freely be defined as the activity responsible for the preservation, or the extension of the lifespan of cultural heritage (ICOMOS, 1993). Although, in the West, traditionally associated with the hard sciences and with direct intervention on materials, conservation activity has further implications for meaning, value, and identity. Arguably, knowledge of the aim, the object, and the outcome of a conservation intervention is what enables the correct evaluation of the effects of conservation decisions and actions. Presuming that these are the three main points of reference for a conservation

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[1]While the author acknowledges that conservation decisions are largely management decisions, conservation is a distinct field from heritage management, since the former is only one of the aims of the latter. Heritage management is 'the way that those responsible choose to use it [heritage], exploit it, or conserve it' (de la Torre, 2002, p. 5).

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decision, three respective arguments may be made, each exhibiting how conservation decisions are inherently shared: a) Conservation emerged as a field of shared values, principles, and decision-making methodology and it aspires to a universally accepted ethic. The fact that conservation is practiced at several scales – East, West, local, global, personal, family, community, city, region, etc. – does not necessarily undermine the possibility of universally held values. This is evidenced in the commonality of aim between western and eastern approaches, i.e. to extend the lifespan of heritage, regardless of use of different means to achieve it; in the recent adoption of western perceptions by eastern conservation Codes of Ethics (Agnew & Demas, 2004); and in the wider acceptance of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) List of world heritage monuments. Universality is not necessarily absolute, i.e. something accepted by all without exception; rather it may have a character similar to that of Human Rights, whereby 'universal' values comprise a common standard 'recognized, or hoping to be recognized both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction' (United Nations General Assembly, 1948, Preamble). b) Conservation decisions are conditioned by the values comprising the identity of heritage entities which are interrelated and interdependent. 'Entity' is employed as a generic term to incorporate objects, or sets of objects, and places, but also the living dimension of things usually classified as heritage. It further aims to shift focus from a perceived strict divide between the tangible and the intangible and to highlight instead the values framing and defining cultural heritage. This is somewhat in line with the view that all heritage is intangible (Smith & Wateron, 2009, p. 292). c) The benefits and the harms stemming from conservation actions and informing conservation decisions are distributed and shared among cultural collectives. A collective is a group of entities that share or are motivated by at least one common issue or interest, or objective (Feinberg, 1988, pp. 34–37). In the case of cultural collectives, the shared issue or interest is cultural. For the purposes of this paper the shared interest is a cultural identity, and more specifically the cultural identity of a collective.

Universal ethics

Conservation as an activity stems from the assumption that there is a moral duty to preserve cultural heritage. According to this assumption, cultural heritage is an inheritance from the past and a non-renewable resource (Almqvist, 2005). It is also deemed to be inextricably linked to cultural identity or the value system of society.[2] According to the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, a sense of identity is considered to be essential to human dignity. It is also accepted that defence of cultural diversity is an 'ethical imperative inseparable from respect for human dignity' (UNESCO, 2002, Article 4). It therefore arguably follows that cultural heritage entities can be considered morally significant in themselves and, as such, they ought to be preserved (Almqvist, 2005).[3]

The realization that certain objects have particular value or significance, expressive and even constitutive of cultural identity, gave rise to a need to limit arbitrary decisions and interventions on their substance. This is why a conceptual frame was formulated to guide conservation decisions and how the conservation profession emerged. Conservation's conceptual frame is mainly expressed in various National and International Codes of Ethics. It includes values and principles meant to resolve conflicting situations, where the issues that arise do not so much concern what conservators can do, but rather what they should or should not do (Kapelouzou & Ashley-Smith, 2009, pp. 1–2). Salvador Muñoz Viñas (2005, pp. 27–29) has outlined a series of paradoxes, which indicate that conservation cannot be defined as an activity either from its objects or from its techniques alone. While similar practices, like maintenance or repair, are often employed in the service of conservation, the very existence of ethical rules aiming to regulate conservators' decisions with regard to appropriateness of means for the attainment of the main goal distinguishes conservation.[4]

The ethics and values of conservation, as they are stated in conservation codes, were developed through the historical course and evolution of the discipline principally in the West, through the handing over of experience, and the varying mental milieu (Sease, 1998). While conservation's central concepts and principles emerged from theorists writing mainly about architecture or works of art, and the first Codes of Ethics referred precisely to the conservation of monuments and sites, they eventually came to apply to all conservation objects, i.e. all kinds of cultural heritage entities, whether these are artworks, machines, functional objects, human remains, ethnographic materials, and so on. Since most values are embodied in Codes of Ethics, ethics is the source of values that

[2]Cultural identity is the identity of a group or culture, or of an individual, as far as people are influenced by their belonging to a group or culture. In heritage literature, cultural identity is linked to ways of understanding and making the present meaningful and to a sense of place in the social world (Smith, 2006, p. 75; Smith & Wateron, 2009, p. 293).

[3]While the notion that cultural heritage is intrinsically valuable has been strongly contested (Smith, 2006, pp. 2–5), the debate has not been resolved. Nevertheless, it is this assumption that led to the establishment of the conservation profession.

[4]An activity is not conservation unless guided by the moral duty assumption and by the values and principles of action that derive from that assumption. Correspondingly, any activity operating under this assumption and guided by these ethical principles, is conservation.

shape the identity of conservation as an activity. Otherwise put, ethics are the source of goals for conservation. The perception of the task of the conservator changes, depending on the set goal of conservation. In the process of achieving conservation aims, decisions are taken to control interventions. The specific goal, or goals, of conservation determines what ethical rules conservation ought to fulfil and what it ought to do.

Because philosophical opinions, theories, methods, and techniques employed are products of particular traditions and cultures, differences are often observed in the setting of values, goals, and strategies of conservation. In spite of such discrepancies, however, there seems to be unity in aims and means expressed not only in existing Codes of Ethics, but also in attempts to reach a globally accepted ethic. More specifically, there seems to exist basic agreement on, and common acceptance of, central principles and concepts among the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations Code (ECCO, 2002–04) and other national and international codes such as those of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC, 1994) and the Burra Charter of the Australian International Council on Monuments and Sites (Australia ICOMOS, 1999).

In her book *Preserving What is Valued: Museums, Conservation and First Nations*, Miriam Clavir (2002, pp. 253–62) has traced the appearance and evolution of key concepts and principles in the historical development of these and other conservation Codes of Ethics. However, the content of these codes reveals logical and ethical consistency, not only in comparison with one another, but also in terms of internal structure. That is, the codes do not contain logical contradictions among their main principles, while at the same time, the values and principles they include seem to derive from and point towards the same ethical assumptions. This may be revealed with the aid of John Warfield's (1990, pp. 109–27) Domain of Science Model (DSM). The DSM is a generic model which identifies the constituent parts of a science with applications and organizes its information. The model reveals the systemic character of science, which is not identical to any one of its parts, but rather the result of their interdependence. It also disciplines discussion about the scientific character of an activity and facilitates reference to it. The DSM has been constructed as a feedback mechanism composed of four parts, namely Foundations, Theory, Methodology, and Applications. The component-parts are linked to each other in such a way that the Foundations steer Theory, Theory steers Methodology and all these steer Applications. In their turn, Applications provide information as to the strengths and weaknesses of the Science. An activity fits the model if it satisfies the requirements of completeness, i.e. presence of all the components, and consistency.

The case for conservation will be examined through the example of the ECCO Code. Established in 1991, ECCO is the unique body currently representing the profession of the conservator at a European level. The ECCO Code is one of the more recent conservation Codes of Ethics and may be considered representative to a large extent of the content of the previously mentioned codes. The ECCO Code incorporates principles that advocate the public character of conservators' profession, independence in the practice of conservation and personal responsibility for one's actions (ECCO, 2002–04, Articles 2 and 3). It also provides guidelines for the execution of conservation practice. The code sets as the basic aim of conservation the 'preservation of cultural heritage' with the provision or obligation to 'respect its aesthetic, historic and spiritual significance and the physical integrity' (ECCO, 2002–04, Article 5). The goal of 'preservation' as stated in the ECCO Code may be interpreted as an act of such respectful attitude. The code sets as guiding principles indicative of the requirement for 'respect', the principles of 'preventive conservation', of 'minimum intervention' (ECCO, 2002–04, Article 8), and of 'no removal of original material' (ECCO, 2002–04, Article 15). It further provides criteria for the selection of materials and procedures or techniques such as 'harmlessness', 'reversibility,' and 'detectability' (ECCO, 2002–04, Article 9). The first three of these principles refer to the attitude required from the conservator towards the object, while the rest refer to properties of the materials used for conservation. With slight variations, nearly all of the aforementioned principles are explicitly adopted by the other cited Codes. In addition, the Codes stress the need to avoid confusion as to the objects' 'authenticity'.

According to the DSM, the Foundations include, among other things, axioms from which the principles of Theory logically derive. The assumed moral duty to preserve cultural heritage is the aim of conservation and as such cannot be included in the Foundations. However, the obligation to do that with 'respect' may be considered an axiomatic component of the Foundations of the ECCO Code. The assumption of 'uniqueness' of heritage objects may also be included in the Foundations; it highlights case specificity. The Theory component includes principles guiding the application of Methodology, such as 'prevention' and the retaining of 'authenticity' and 'integrity'. Particular attention may be drawn to the 'do-no-harm' principle which has been included in Theory; it is an integral moral principle delineating the overall attitude of respect, albeit implicit in conservation theory and practice. Similarly, 'prevention' or 'precaution' may also be considered attitudes of

'respect', in line with the principle to 'do-no-harm'. Methodology includes criteria for selecting among available conservation materials and techniques, i.e. 'harmlessness' of materials, 'reversibility' of materials and techniques, and 'detectability' of conservation interventions (either in terms of materials used or techniques employed). These may be considered specifications of the 'do-no-harm' principle. 'Minimum intervention' and 'no removal of original material' may also be included in this block. Minimum intervention may be seen as a specification of the principle of 'prevention', while 'no removal of original material' may be linked to conceptions of 'authenticity' and 'integrity' of heritage objects (Kapelouzou, 2010, p. 41) (Fig. 1).

This reduction of the ECCO Code to the DSM reveals a consistency among the prerequisites that this aim sets for conservation and which provide the general orientation for conservation (Foundations), the guiding principles and values included in Theory, and the prescriptions for action (Methodology). All these are, in turn, consistent with the aim of conservation which they propose to serve. While there may be variations in the Methodology block among different Codes of Ethics, the shared Foundations and Theory indicate a possibility for a shared ethic guiding conservation decisions, accepted at a global level. This was, arguably, not only the starting point for conservation Code of Ethics, but is also an aspiration of the present for the future.

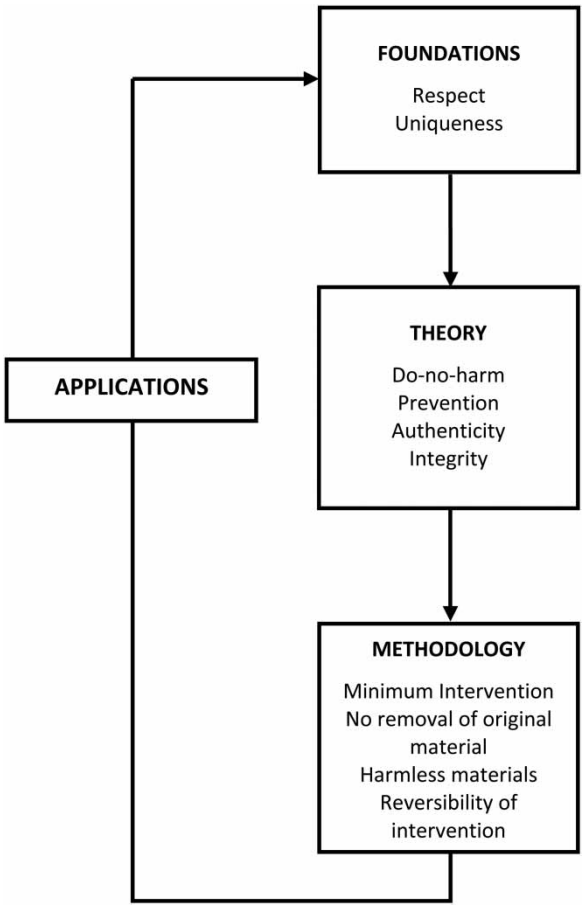

Figure 1 Reduction of the ECCO Code of Ethics to the Domain of Science Model.

The different activities, for instance, that are performed as part of conservation and which are often quoted within conservation definitions include cleaning, retouching, restoration, adaptation, explaining, examination, documentation, preventive care, remedial conservation, etc. The specific practices employed by conservators may be divided into three main categories of activities, namely (a) prevention, (b) preservation (in the limited sense of 'freezing' in a certain physical state), and (c) restoration. These practices have at times been considered distinct aims within conservation, or even different kinds of practices from conservation all together. Today it is widely acknowledged within the conservation community that each of these three categories includes practices which may be performed by conservators depending on the needs of each case, in order to attain the goal of extending the lifespan of cultural heritage objects. All these activities are understood to be specifications of different processes, included under the tenet 'conservation profession'. Characteristically, the latest definition of conservation abandons the traditional distinction from restoration, suggesting a common definition (de Guichen, 2007).

Following a similar line of thought, UNESCO (1972) has provided a general framework for conservation ethics, claiming that this framework has universal validity. Universality is the assumption that some heritage is meaningful to all of mankind, regardless of cultural, social, political, economic, or other differences. The possibility for ethical principles with universal application is a philosophical debate that remains unresolved. Indeed, as Jukka Jokilehto (2009, pp. 73–78) has stressed, the Western–Eastern difference of approach has raised many questions within conservation about the universality of internationally adopted conservation principles. Western tradition is associated much more with attempts to arrest objects in a certain physical state, or attempts to restore them to a previous condition, regardless of whether such a thing is in fact possible. Eastern tradition is closer to Viollet-le-Duc's practices of reconstructing, rebuilding, and building with variation. Characteristic is the example of Japanese historic buildings, which are often completely rebuilt with new materials and techniques without compromising their heritage values to the Japanese (Smith, 2006, p. 54).

Much like the Greek notion of 'hysterophemia' (eternal remembrance), the aim concerning the fate of heritage objects is the extension of their lifespan, the perpetuation of their existence, in order to secure

their endurance for posterity. As a confirmation of convergence of aims, the Principles for Conservation of Heritage Sites in China (2000), the most recent code of what may be called Eastern Conservation Ethics, are based on the Venice (1964) and Burra Charters (Agnew & Demas, 2004). The observed difference in practice may be interpreted as resulting from a divergence in the understanding of how an entity continues to exist (Kapelouzou, 2009, pp. 38–41). The Western models traditionally assume that a heritage entity exists so long as its original constitutive material survives, while Eastern models assume that a heritage entity continues to exist by exhibiting physical continuity through the successive coinciding of the object with new material constituents. Each of these conceptions may require different means to achieve the same goal, i.e. preservation in the sense of extending the lifespan of the heritage entity. Yet again, more recent attempts to reconceptualize the relationship between the material and the immaterial in the West (Smith & Wateron, 2009), to accordingly redefine held notions of conservation concepts and principles like 'authenticity' and 'reversibility' (Larsen & Jokilehto, 1995; Oddy & Carroll, 1999; Laurenson, 2006) and to justify practices like substitution and recreation within the ethical frame of existing Codes (Kapelouzou, 2010), exhibit how a shared aim is gradually leading to shared means to achieve it.

Interdependent values and heritage identity

Within the context of culture, certain entities, tangible or intangible, which are either representative of a particular culture, or exhibit interactions among various cultures, or convey developments in architecture, technology, art and science, or testify important changes in human history, are valued as evidence of the past, as mnemonics and as an integral part of cultural identity. As such, they are deemed worthy to be passed on to the future and they are called cultural heritage (Blake, 2000, p. 68). The fact that the decision whether an entity is cultural heritage or not is based on values is widely recognized (Smith *et al.*, 2010). What is further accepted is that the same heritage entity may be the carrier of multiple values at the same or at different times. This means that people may attribute different values to the same entity at the same time; that people may attribute different values to the same entity at different times; and also that people may attribute the same values to the same entity at different times. Diverse meanings, associations, beliefs, etc., which accompany cultural heritage, may be considered under their respective value, i.e. the value of having that meaning, or of generating that belief.

If conservation's aim is to prolong the existence of heritage, then it is the value of cultural heritage that conditions conservators' decisions as to the means for the attainment of the main goal, in a manner similar to Cesare Brandi's (2005, p. 48) assertion that 'the artwork conditions the restoration and not vice versa'. Otherwise put, conservation's aim is the extension of the lifespan of the values that define the entity as cultural heritage and the cultural values that determine the heritage identity of an entity by extension also determine its conservation approach. While it has been argued that it is often political or economic values that drive decisions as to which entities as opposed to others will enter the category 'heritage' (Smith, 2006, pp. 16–18), the heritage identity of one such entity, i.e. the determination of what kind of heritage entity it is (e.g. an artwork, an historic object), is subject to the values that link the entity to cultural identities. In the present paper these have been called cultural values. Comparable distinctions have been drawn by David Throsby (2002), who defines cultural heritage as an asset that embodies a store of cultural value, separable from whatever economic value it might possess. This is in line with the premise of a moral imperative to extend the lifespan of cultural heritage because of its relationship to cultural identities. In principle, only the values that link an object to a cultural identity may ascribe to it heritage status. In a manner similar to John Ruskin's exclusion of financial gain from considerations about conservation (Ruskin, 1989), values not linked to cultural identity are not the primary concern of a conservation decision.

Lack of reference to political and/or economic factors in official National and International documents (usually in the form of lists) outlining the values that constitute an entity part of a collective's heritage confirms this. Cultural values attributed to heritage entities are to be distinguished from possible uses of these entities or other values attributed to them such as the political or the economic. Political or economic factors may have played a significant role to the prioritization of criteria defining their identity as kinds of objects. A heritage entity may further be used as, e.g. a political tool to shape the identity of a Nation, or as an investment or asset by which to facilitate economic growth (Aplin, 2002, pp. 16–17; Smith, 2006, p. 113). But so long as these are not cultural values, i.e. expressive or constitutive of the cultural identity of a collective, they do not impose a moral duty for the preservation of the respective value conferring aspects of the heritage entity. In the context of conservation decision-making, non-cultural values may be considered either irrelevant or as second-order values. So, for example, if a heritage object has been used politically to steer an action,

and it is valued as heritage on account of that political use (among other things), then the particular political value is also a cultural value in the sense adopted by the present paper and thus ought to be considered in conservation decisions. If, however, a political value attributed to a heritage entity relates to a possible use of that entity in the far or near future, and is thus not constitutive of its identity as heritage at this moment, then this political value is not a cultural value and ought not to be considered in a conservation decision prior to those values that ought to be considered.

Because a thing becomes heritage on account of being the specific kind of thing that it is, it follows that the primary role of conservators is to preserve heritage entities as the things that they are. This role, on the one hand, requires the determination of the identity of things, and, on the other hand, the choice of appropriate means by which to extend their lifespan without compromising this identity. According to the conception adopted in the present paper, the identity of an entity as cultural heritage at a given point in time is provided by the interrelationship of the cultural heritage values attributed to the entity at that point in time. The values constitutive of heritage identity are all cultural values, i.e. values of the same kind. As such, they are ultimately commensurable and a hierarchy of these values can in principle be formed (Hsieh, 2005). The formation of hierarchies, such as those illustrated below, is what Marta de la Torre (2005, p. 7) calls 'prioritization' of one value over another.

The value at the top of this hierarchy is the value providing the main orientation of the identity of a specific entity as heritage. For example, if a work of art becomes heritage because of the fact that it is a work of art, then it is primarily the artistic value of that object that provides its identity as heritage. An artwork may be considered heritage because of another kind of value, it bares e.g. historical. In this case the heritage object is an historic object, which just also happens to be a work of art, and thus whose artistic value is ranked lower than its historic. This clarification is significant, since different values often pose different conservation demands. Such a hierarchy is not based on a true or objective criterion by which all cultural values attributed to a heritage entity are measured. Rather, it is a dynamic hierarchy; at different points in time the hierarchical relationship among the heritage values of an entity may be perceived differently and therefore its identity as heritage may also be perceived differently.

Yet, implicit in the traditional conception of conservation is an existing set of criteria, which acquire a degree of objectivity for establishing the hierarchy of values comprising the heritage identity of an entity. These are criteria of breadth and they are based on shared or wide acceptance of one set of values over another (de la Torre, 2005, pp. 6, 8). In a manner similar to Aristotle's 'endoxa' (opinions accepted by all, by most, or the wise), their validity stems from the authority of their source (Kapelouzou, 2003, pp. 18–19). That is, they are valid either because International they have been officially acknowledged by the because community as represented by UNESCO, or because they reside in the collective consciousness of a Nation, or, finally, simply because they stem from knowledge of the skills, methods, and ethos specific to conservators.

Some heritage entities acquire 'universal' significance in virtue of which they are included in the UNESCO (n.d.) World Heritage List. Each of these listed entities has been included on the basis of a proposal stating how they meet UNESCO's criteria of 'outstanding universal value' which justify their inclusion. The dominant value of each heritage object on the UNESCO List is thus determined through the process of identification, and it automatically constitutes the value-criterion on the basis of which the proper, or respectful, conservation approach is to be decided (UNESCO, 2008, pp. 29–31). This does not mean that other value conferring aspects are to be disregarded, but rather that the conservation demands posed by other values are to be met to the degree that the requirements of the dominant value permit. For instance, both the *Athens Acropolis* in Greece and the *Statue of Liberty* in the USA are included in the UNESCO (n.d., ID 404, 307) List, but their conservation approaches in relation to the cleaning of surfaces differ according to the criterion of their inclusion. In the case of the *Acropolis*, cleaning of black crust created by air pollution on marble surfaces is considered necessary in order to preserve the monument's aesthetic value, which is considered predominant. In the case of the *Statue of Liberty*, on the contrary, the dark patina of the metal surface formed due to corrosion was retained, for this was the image of the sculpture that had established its social value as a symbol of faith.

On the National level, the values shared by a Nation's or State's people are the criterion for assigning particular importance to a cultural heritage object and, on many occasions, for its legal protection. This notion is incorporated, for instance, in the Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments (1931) (Omland, 1997), which characteristically states that 'the question of the conservation of the artistic and archaeological property of mankind is one that interests the community of the States, which are wardens of civilization'. This criterion determines the dominant value on which conservation interventions are to be based. For example, in the case of the conservation of a piece of fabric stained with blood, though

the stain would have to be removed if the fabric had acquired its value as a cultural object due to its decorative design, the stain would have to be left intact if the same fabric had been used as a banner in a revolution, thus acquiring National historic value.

Concerning cultural heritage objects of lesser significance or of yet unrecognized greater significance, determination of the dominant value of their identity rests with the conservator. The identity of the heritage entity usually comes as given to conservators, largely from the two preceding levels of shared acceptance. On the one hand, it has been argued that official designation schemes very often exclude heritage values held by cultural collectives of lesser breadth than the International and/or the National with legitimate stakes in a heritage entity (de la Torre, 2005, pp. 6–7). Other values ignored and excluded may also be values or cultural referents from the past (Anico, 2008, p. 67). The perceived flaw of these schemes is usually attributed to the fact that they are expert based, the views of different groups being only articulated by e.g. archaeologists, anthropologists, and the authorities, instead of the people who experience the heritage (UNESCO, 2008, p. 51). However, even though the conservator is also an expert, it is part of her moral responsibility to recognize and protect values that might go beyond those identified by designation or listing criteria (de la Torre, 2005, p. 7).

On the other hand, there appear to be cases in which, for example, minority groups do not wish to be a part of their host Nation and are therefore unlikely to want their heritage to be included within the National heritage (Aplin, 2002, p. 141). Such situations may present similar issues with privately owned entities in which conservators recognize greater or broader heritage value than the owners', and which would be annihilated by the intervention their owner demands. Assume, for example, that an entity is the legal property of one community, which considers this entity heritage because of a certain value (e.g. artistic), while another community considers the same entity heritage because of a different value (e.g. historic). Each value provides an alternative heritage identity for this entity (artwork and historic object respectively). A third community may also value this entity as heritage on account of the relationship in which the two prior values attributed to it stand (e.g. as an historical artwork). Should the first community make a conservation decision ignoring the value of the second community, then the third community is also threatened by a loss of its heritage. For the third community, the entity cannot exist as the specific heritage, unless the value-conferring aspects for both values attributed to it exist. Hence, while not each of the values attributed to the heritage may be shared in the sense of being accepted or recognized by all individuals, they might nonetheless be shared through their interdependency. Again, it is the expertise of the conservator that will allow her to recognize that greater value and it is her ethical responsibility to refuse intervention detrimental to that value on the basis that it is shared (CAPC, 2000).

Because all the values attributed to a heritage entity at a given point in time comprise its identity at that moment in time, the entity cannot exist as the specific heritage unless all of these values are retained or, alternatively, unless all of its value-conferring aspects are retained. Though in the previous levels responsibility is shared among representatives of the above sources of criteria and conservators through inter-disciplinary decisions, it is at this level that the moral responsibility of the conservator unfolds to its full extent.

Collective harms and benefits

Heritage is considered to benefit people and this is why nearly all the aforementioned conservation Codes of Ethics specify that the goal of conservation serves the good of present and future generations. Hence, the duty to extend the lifespan of heritage entities emerges from their conception as 'goods'. A good stands in opposition to an evil, a wrong, or harm. The role of the conservator has been linked to processes of change over time, change referring mainly to the physical aspects of heritage objects (e.g. deterioration, fading, malfunctioning). Conservators 'benefit' heritage entities by extending their lifespan; their duty to preserve, however, also entails that they avoid causing or prevent the occurrence of harm to these entities. Similar to the objectives of medicine, conservators have a duty both to intervene in ways that benefit the objects in their care, and to avoid or refrain from interventions that may cause harm to these objects. Hence, for example, conservators are equally obliged to stop deterioration of existing material damages and to find ways of intervention to prevent them in the first place. Acts of omission, i.e. the decision not to do anything to the object under conservation, are also included in the notion of intervention or action.

According to UNESCO, preservation aims to protect artefacts made by previous and present generations from any change, damage, or loss caused by the course of time or by man, so as to pass them intact and in the authentic condition to the future generations. The contrary would constitute 'a harmful impoverishment of all the nations of the world' (UNESCO, 1972, p. 1). This indicates that conservation practice is evaluated against the degrees of harm, damage, and loss it avoids or causes. Arguably, these concepts form the basis on which most conservation decision-making and practice are justified, but also the basis on which

conservation failures are identified. Depending on the kind and degree of damage or loss suffered by an object, the conservator interferes in order to preserve or correct the mishap (Appelbaum, 2007, p. 38). Anticipation of such negative changes presents for conservators an additional role, i.e. to prevent damage and loss. A case of conservation failure may be considered one in which the intervention has caused harm or damage to the heritage.

While damage and loss are usually defined in terms of gain or loss of material properties, in the last few years damage and loss have been associated by conservators with the values attributed to heritage objects. In particular, Jonathan Ashley-Smith (1999, pp. 99–119) has linked damage not only to loss of material but also to loss of value, and by extension to loss of well-being and of expectation. Well-being and expectation of course refer to people; students, scholars, museum visitors, and society at large. People have certain expectations of cultural heritage objects, which conservators try to meet, and which stem from a perceived gain or benefit from interactions and encounters with these objects. Audience expectations correspond to a specific look or overall condition of objects. They also correspond to specific conservation interventions and, more importantly to specific conservation decisions prior to intervention.

According to Joel Feinberg (1984, pp. 32–119), the concept of 'harm' is generally employed in three main senses. The first is a derivative sense, in which it is possible to say that any kind of thing, as opposed to just people or sentient beings, can be harmed. The second sense is that of setting back an interest. The third sense of harm is that of wrongdoing. Wrongdoing or treating unjustly is the normative sense of harm, which is the sense the concept must bear in any (legal) formulation of the do-no-harm principle. Negligence is considered to be a direct and deliberate harm, while decisions and actions based on insufficient guidance may be considered risks of harm. The people for whom a heritage object is meaningful are usually called stakeholders (Feinberg, 1984, pp. 32–119; de la Torre, 2005, p. 7). Stakeholder interests are distinguishable components of a person's well-being; as such they are affected by the decisions that are taken regarding these 'things'. Interests can be blocked or defeated by events of impersonal nature, e.g. natural disasters, but they can only be invaded by human beings, e.g. conservators. In this sense, 'harm' is a more appropriate concept to employ than 'damage' or 'loss'.

Because heritage entities relate to cultural collectives, they are collective goods. According to Feinberg (1988, pp. 34–37), collective goods express and depend essentially upon shared meanings, understandings, and valuing which are not just convergent individual interests, but common and interdependent. In this conception, the private good or stake in the achievement of collective goods presupposes them. That is, the collective interest exists prior to any other private interests that individuals who are part of that collective may have. Moreover, collective interests define a state of affairs in which each individual has invested his or her own good, so that none of them can flourish unless it does (Postema, 1987). This view entails the necessary priority of the collective interest – regardless of the size of the collective (e.g. a small group of people, a nation, the United Nations) – over private ones in decisions about cultural heritage, including conservation decisions. Following such a view, National and International legislation on the protection of cultural heritage places the collective interest above the private one. So, for example, the damage, the destruction, and the export of heritage entities is prohibited unless authorized by State officials, and conservation of heritage entities is a mandatory requirement even for entities owned by private collectors (*World Heritage Properties Conservation Act*, 1983; *Heritage Conservation Act*, 1996; Hoffman, 2006; *Malta Cultural Heritage Act*, 2009). Since, in the case of conservation, interest is collective, harm is suffered by all individuals who have a direct personal stake in the heritage, insofar as they regard themselves as members of a collective. There is a question as to whether an individual who is part of a collective can be benefited (or harmed) by being part of that collective without being aware of it, in the same manner by which a child is thought to benefit through school education even though the child does not necessarily realize it at that time. This paper follows the view that such a thing is possible, not least because it is in line with a central conservation assumption, i.e. that the cultural identity of future collectives (individuals belonging to which could not possibly have awareness today of whether they will benefit or not) – will in fact benefit. In this case, one has a personal stake, e.g. in the preservation of his community traditions or heritage objects, a vicarious stake analogous to that which a mother, for example, can have in the well-being of her child, so that when the other is harmed, they are also, or instead of.

'Heritage' has been conceived in this paper as a dynamic multi-valued concept, defined by the hierarchy of the values attributed to an entity by different collectives. These collectives are not only geographical but also temporal. That is, the values comprising the heritage identity of an entity extend both in space and in time. The fact that the ethics framing heritage require the prolongation of its existence from the past into the future support this view. Therefore the benefits but also the harms that may be inflicted by conservation decisions and actions also extend in

space and in time. In the context of heritage, harm is affective; it is inflicted to people, not objects, and it involves past, present, and future collectives. Moreover, it is numerically independent (Feinberg, 1984, pp. 136–141); the degree of the harm suffered is not measured by the number of people who suffer it but by the severity of the implications it has for cultural identities. Following this line of thought, the heritage object may be conceived as an aggregate of heritage identities, each provided by the hierarchy of the values attributed to the object at different points in time. In such a conception the heritage object incorporates all past, present, and future heritage values that may be attributed to it; what is perceived as the heritage identity of that object at present is only one of its projections. Different projections represent different heritage identities and, as such, different value systems (Fig. 2). By extension, in assuming the duty to preserve cultural heritage objects, conservators assume a duty to preserve value systems.

Harm to interests may occur in conservation not only by direct intervention on the material but on a conceptual level as well. Such would be harm resulting, or potentially resulting, to an alteration of the nature of the thing under conservation, i.e. of its identity as heritage and in particular of its identity as the specific heritage. The concept of 'integrity' serves to ensure that such harm does not take place in conservation decisions. In the various Codes of Ethics, different aspects of 'integrity' are identified. The Hellenic Code of Ethics of 2000 states that 'the Conservator is obliged to respect the aesthetic, historic, material and structural integrity of the objects he undertakes to conserve' (Pan-Hellenic Association of Conservators of Antiquities, 2000, Article 6). Other Codes also refer to the 'aesthetic', 'material', 'historic,' and 'conceptual integrity'. The formerly adopted Code of Ethics and Rules of Practice of the United Kingdom Institute for Conservation (1996) mentioned 'cultural, scientific and religious integrity'. In 1979, the AIC Code distinguished 'aesthetic, historic and material integrity'. The same Code, as revised in 1994, maintained that cultural heritage items may have an 'artistic, historic, scientific, religious or social significance' (AIC Ethics and Standards Committee, 1994, Preamble). In 1984, the definition of the professional conservator-restorer, which was adopted by the International Council of Museums-Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC), referred to the 'aesthetic and historic integrity' of objects (ICOM-CC, 1984, Article 2.1); while the 1993 Guidelines of the ICOMOS made reference to cultural heritage 'messages', which are 'artistic and historic', and which should be conserved without compromising authenticity and importance (ICOMOS, 1993, Article 3). The Australian Institute for Conservation of Cultural Material Code of 1986 divides integrity into 'material', 'historic', 'aesthetic,' and 'cultural' (Australia ICOMOS, 1999, Article 2), and commands the preservation of the 'aesthetic', 'conceptual,' and 'material' aspects of the object (Australia ICOMOS, 1999, Article 33). Finally, the ECCO Code employs the term 'integrity' to define solely the material integrity of the object, but elsewhere it refers to 'aesthetic, historic and spiritual significance' (ECCO, 2002–04, Article 5), to which it adds 'artistic, documentary, scientific, social' (ECCO, 2002, Professional Guidelines I).

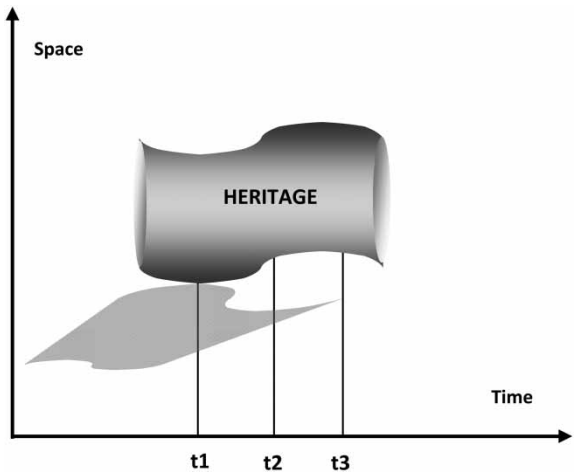

Figure 2 The heritage object exists in spacetime. It is perceived through its projections, each of which makes manifest the hierarchy of the values attributed to the object at different points in time.

The concept of 'integrity' cannot be clearly defined through the Codes and it often seems conflated with other concepts, such as 'significance'. Through their evolution as texts, however, conservation Codes reveal a tendency to include more parameters describing or characterizing integrity. Overall, the parameters of 'integrity' that have been recognized are the 'material', 'structural', 'aesthetic', 'artistic', 'historic', 'archival' (or 'documentary'), 'scientific', 'conceptual', 'cultural', 'religious' (or 'spiritual'), 'social', and the integrity of the 'parts of a whole'. According to the way in which 'integrity' appears in Codes, it may be conceived of as a (case-dependent) multi-dimensional value concept, comprised of the values attributed to an object, which is, in turn, conceived as an integrated whole with multiple dimensions or values (Fig. 3). Integrity implies integration; it alludes to the unaltered, to that which is not diminished. As such, it implies that all heritage values are to be included in decisions and no value-conferring features are to be eliminated in intervention.

According to the objectives of the International Institute of Conservation drawn up in 1950, the term 'conservation' was deliberately chosen for the activity over other terms such as preservation, restoration, etc., precisely because it embodied the concept of

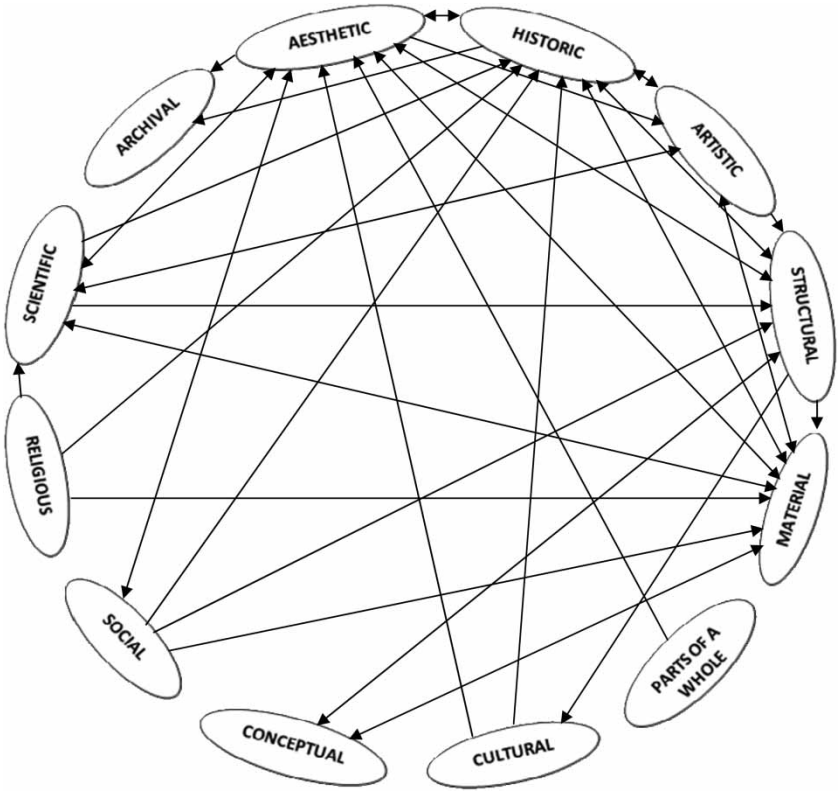

Figure 3 'Integrity' as a multi-dimensional value concept with potential interractions among the values comprising the 'integrity' of a heritage entity as mentioned in existing Codes of Ethics.

'integrity' (MacDonald & Fyfe, 2004, p. 49). Hence, the demand for retaining all values comprising the heritage identity of an entity is inherent to the concept of conservation as a distinct field and profession.

Conclusion

Conservation should be conceived as a field of shared values and commonality of aim. It relies on the assumption that there is a moral duty to extend the lifespan of cultural heritage, and its decision-making methodology is guided by ethical Codes that meet the requirements of science. The Domain of Science reveals the logical and ethical consistency of the existing Codes of Ethics, which transcends minor differences. Conservation was born out of an aspiration to universal conservation ethics. The conservators' duty is to heritage; hence it is the heritage object that will condition the conservation decision. The heritage identity of an object is provided by the values attributed to that object. The heritage object cannot exist as the specific heritage object unless all of the values conferring its identity are present. Conservation decisions are based on the values attributed to the object, which comprise its identity as heritage, and which are interrelated and interdependent. Because heritage objects are collective goods, the harms caused by conservation decisions are also collective harms. The notion of the collective implies shared values among larger or smaller groups of people, not only across space, but also over time, i.e. among different generations. The concept of 'integrity' requires that none of the values attributed to an object are to be eliminated, thus securing a spatiotemporal notion of the collective and of the sharing embedded in conservation decisions.

The foundations, the aims, the nature of the objects, and the implications of conservation decisions and actions comprise the conceptual frame for conservation decision-making. And the foundations, the aims, the nature of the objects, and the implications of conservation decisions and actions are all formed by shared values. Therefore, it is inherent to the very conceptual frame of conservation that decisions are shared.

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