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Clarifying the critical in critical heritage studies

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This paper considers the term critical in the unfolding formulation of critical heritage studies. It argues for a shift in emphasis from the subject of our effort to the object of attention, in other words focusing primarily on the *critical* issues that face the world today, the larger issues that bear upon and extend outwards from heritage. To that end, the paper presents two key directions. It suggests much is to be gained from tackling the uneasy relationship that currently exists between social science and humanities-based approaches to heritage and the professional conservation sector oriented by a scientistic materialism. Second, there is a need for heritage studies to account for its relationship to today's regional and global transformations by developing post-western understandings of culture, history and heritage and the socio-political forces that actualise them.

Keywords: critical heritage theory; conservation; heritage studies; material culture; post western

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Introduction

It is evident heritage studies has embarked upon a critical turn, and the question thus arises, what should 'critical' mean precisely? In the 1969 founding statement of the Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, now Critical Asian Studies, momentum for a critical scholarship on Asia stemmed from:

> opposition to the brutal aggression of the United States in Vietnam and to the complicity or silence of our profession with regard to that policy. Those in the field of Asian studies bear responsibility for the consequences of their research and the political posture of their profession.
>
> (Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars 1969[1])

At a time of intense unrest and introspection in the academy, adopting a forthrightly critical position had a clear moral and ideological impetus. Can we draw any parallels for the field of heritage today? At first glance, it would appear to be an incredulous suggestion. But linger longer and we might recall the wholesale criticism, if not damnation, of the 'heritage boom' that took hold in countries like the UK in the late twentieth century, by those who pointed towards its conservatism, nostalgic politics, bogus histories and so forth (Wright 1985, Hewison 1987). I would wholly endorse the importance of such critical thinking, together with the influential critiques on heritage practice that have been made by Smith (2004, 2006), Meskell

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(2009), Waterton (2010), Hamilakis and Duke (2008) and many others. My own work has been in this space and I believe a healthy critique of where policy falls down, or where it refuses to acknowledge, let alone address, its socio-political implications warrants sustained, critical scrutiny. However, as critical heritage studies continues to chart out its trajectories there is a risk it occupies a similar intellectual stance to that of the anti-Vietnam war scholars of the 1960s and 1970s. Much of the work today being produced under the banner of critical heritage is about criticising professional practice and organisations like UNESCO, amongst others. In their most strident form, critical approaches to heritage can even be anti-heritage.

While critiques of policy approaches and paradigms will always be important, I argue here, however, that critical heritage studies should also primarily be about addressing the *critical* issues that face the world today, the larger issues that bear upon and extend outwards from heritage.[2] This means, firstly, continuing to advance the approach that is currently the mainstay of critical heritage studies that is bringing a critical perspective to bear upon the socio-political complexities that enmesh heritage; tackling the thorny issues those in the conservation profession are often reluctant to acknowledge. But I would argue that at its most significant level it means better understanding the various ways in which heritage now has a stake in, and can act as a positive enabler for, the complex, multi-vector challenges that face us today, such as cultural and environmental sustainability, economic inequalities, conflict resolution, social cohesion and the future of cities, to name a few. Finally, it should also be about recognising there are critical challenges and benefits related to the safeguarding of culture and the preservation of heritage itself, an issue critical heritage theory too quickly dismisses or passes over.

If we are to move in such directions, I believe it needs to be oriented by two key priorities. First, critical heritage studies pursues a post-western perspective, a theme I shall address in more detail later. Second, it creates a more productive, engaged dialogue with the heritage conservation sector. Without such a dialogue, I fear critical heritage studies will become a marginal endeavour, by (further) alienating those working in the heritage sector outside academia. Working inside the academy, it is easy to forget that the overwhelming majority of institutions and resources related to both natural and cultural heritage focus on their conservation and preservation. Today, conservation is a billion dollar industry and growing fast. If critical heritage studies is to have any influence in this arena it needs to cultivate a language that crosses intellectual and sector boundaries. The themes explored below illustrate why this task is an extremely important one, as those working in the social sciences and humanities have much to offer. As the attention and funds dedicated to heritage continue to grow, it is increasingly being stretched across, or dragged into, other arenas of public life. In many countries it is now commonplace for heritage to feature in debates and policies on climate change, sustainable development, human security, multiculturalism and conflict resolution. But for reasons I shall illustrate, most notably an epistemological bias towards scientistic materialism, it appears the conservation sector is struggling to respond to these various issues and the complex issues they throw up. As we shall see, this situation is most glaring, and the challenges most pressing, in middle income and developing economy countries.

The future of the past

The shifting world order is delivering ever greater levels of unpredictability and uncertainty about the future. Nonetheless, certain patterns seem clear. As we shall

see, for numerous countries globalisation at the beginning of the twenty-first century means profound and long-term physical and social change. Modernisation, the lure of modernity, and rapidly growing economies are liquifying existing social structures and detaching people from place, whether it be through their own mobility or the radical transformation of their physical environment, in ways that destabilise and redefine relationships between past and present (Bauman 2007, Campanella 2008, Samers 2010). Outside Europe and North America governments are embarking upon programmes of economic development and reform that are transforming the lives of tens or hundreds of millions of people and creating enormous societal upheaval on the back of (near) double digit economic growth. Much of the media discussion in the West about the 'great recession' of 2008 continually overlooked regional economic variations. While the 'rise' of the supposed super powers of India and China has been documented extensively, a host of other, smaller countries continue to show similar patterns of economic expansion, with Zambia, Sri Lanka, Argentina, Kazakhstan, Turkey, Qatar, Nigeria and Indonesia among those that have experienced accelerated growth (7–11%) since 2010.[3] Elsewhere – in Egypt, Afghanistan, Libya and Iraq – heritage resources have found themselves embroiled and endangered by militarised conflict and political turmoil, and simultaneously acting as a source of ethnic or religious tension (Bevan 2006, Anheier and Isar 2007, Stanley-Price 2007). In June 2012, for example, UNESCO was helpless to prevent the destruction of cemeteries and mausolea in Timbuktu by Islamists of the Ansar Dine. In broad terms then, from societies experiencing conflict to those witnessing rapid economic development, what we now see is a widespread use and abuse of heritage, which often reaches a level of intensity, pace and impact that has few parallels in Western Europe or North America.

As Figures 1 and 2 illustrate, there are dramatic differences in the demographic makeup in countries residing in the so-called 'global north' and 'global south', with the latter possessing a much higher percentage of younger people.[4] Youthful societies tend to be more forward looking and future oriented, and, not withstanding particular national situations, are more confident than ageing societies about what that future will bring. This means the past – its remnants and residues, both material

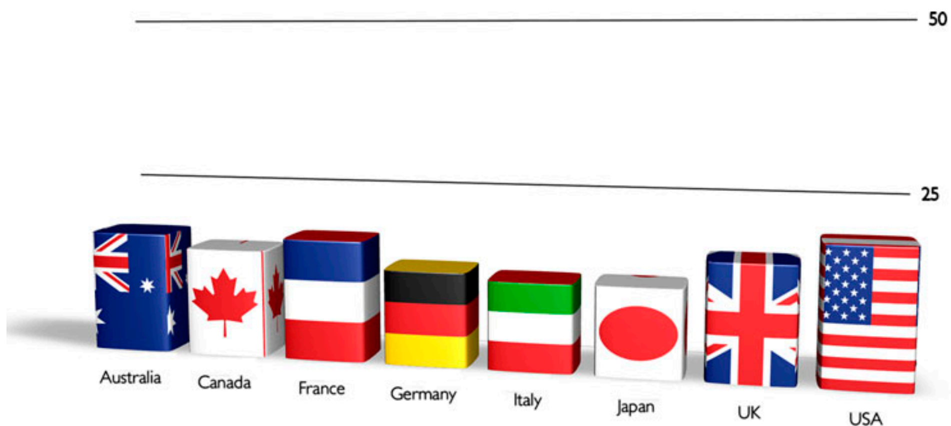

Figure 1. Population percentage under age 14, by country (Source: UN stats http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008.htm [Accessed 10 July 2012]).

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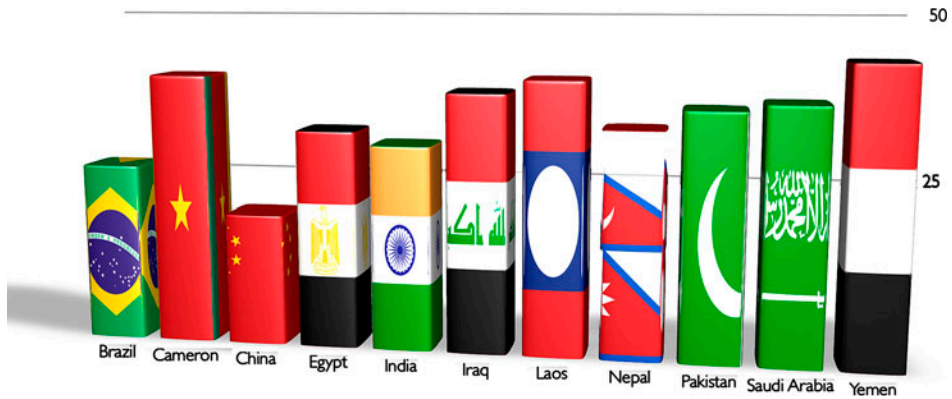

Figure 2. Population percentage under age 14, by country (Source: UN stats http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008.htm [Accessed 10 July 2012]).

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and immaterial – is more explicitly seen through a prism of present futures. For those experiencing the vitality of youth, history rarely bears as heavy. With age comes a greater sense of that which has been learnt and inherited, as well as a more nuanced but fraught appreciation of what is to be cherished and protected, anguished over and discarded. Memory is illustrative of regional differences here, described by some as an industry or obsession in the West; it is a theme that rarely features as prominently in the collective identities of younger societies (Rosenfeld 2009).

Regional variations in demographics also hold the key to the very different futures that cities around the world now face. With more than half the world's population now living in cities, long-term urbanisation is set to continue, albeit with stark geographical differences. In Europe and North America, many cities will continue to experience a slow, but distinct, decline in population. In contrast, a staggering 95% of urban population growth will come from the so-called 'developing world' over the coming four decades (United Nations 2008, p. 15). According to UN-Habitat, five million people a month are currently relocating to cities in low-income countries. In Africa and Asia around 60% of the population are still rural. With Asia witnessing a level of region-wide social and physical change that has few parallels elsewhere in the world today, it will continue to be one of the fastest urbanising regions in the world. As Friedman (2005) notes, China accounts for the lion's share of the march, with its cities expanding at a rate more than double the global average.[5] In the next 15 years Asia's population will grow by more than 1.25 billion people, more than half of whom will live in cities. With few exceptions, its urban environments face many of the challenges confronting other developing economy regions. Poor planning, corruption and ineffective management all mean the infrastructures of ever-expanding, extended metropolitan areas will struggle to cope with the demands placed upon them. Energy, water, waste, population, health, housing and highly stressed transport infrastructures will continue to be critical issues for cities, small, medium and large. While the quality of life will undoubtedly improve for many, hundreds of millions will continue to live in sub-standard housing, without access to basic services (United Nations 2008). Patently, such developments will place immense pressures on heritage, in all its guises.

At the same time, however, the widespread re-orientation of national and urban economies towards tertiary sectors has brought culture and nature into ever more complex social relations. It's equally critical to be responsive to the ways in which such trajectories present unfamiliar opportunities for those involved in preserving and maintaining heritage. A vivid example of this is the arena of sustainability, which has powerfully solidified as a progressive addition to the vocabulary of modernisation and development in the developing world. Sustainability has changed the socio-political framework within which cultural heritage operates and is situated, and the near ubiquitous discourse of 'sustainable development' has explicitly moved conservation much closer to modernity and the political economies of capitalist wealth creation in those countries across South America, Africa and Asia that are now oriented towards rapid economic growth. Since the late 1990s cultural and creative sector industries have also become important drivers for urban regeneration in these regions and enabled their cities to position themselves competitively in the global arena (Kong and O'Connor 2009). The widespread trend towards the incorporation of cultural quarters or hubs into planning processes means museums, historic waterfronts, historic properties and urban parks, which together constitute an urban heritage, help position cities in these regions on the global stage. In the new cultural economies of heritage, Mexico City, Abu Dhabi, Macau and Seoul all now promote their 'unique' pasts in an effort to attract tourists, business travellers and expatriates. Crucially, much of the economic impetus for such initiatives now stems from domestic and intra-regional forms of mobility and consumption associated with fast rising middle classes (Winter *et al*. 2009). And in Doha, the highly ambitious Musheireb project will seek to draw on the region's architectural heritage to create a distinct urban environment on the edge of a desert less reliant upon energy intensive air conditioning.[6] If successful, the project will deliver significant innovation in an area of global import.

Together, these various examples point towards the ways in which a 'heritage culture' has rapidly come to the fore in many countries around the world, one that is expected to fulfil a multitude of ends. Its ascendancy needs to be read, in part, as an expression of contemporary social and political life and shifting modes of governance, and, in part due to the formation of identities and economies tied to new modes of post-industrial, globalised capital production (Winter and Daly 2012). Heritage is both enmeshed in, and constituted by, complex, entangled and contradictory processes. The question thus arises then, is the professional heritage conservation sector adequately equipped to address and respond to these challenges? For reasons I will discuss shortly I believe it is not, and that the professional conservation sector would benefit significantly from a sustained dialogue with those working in the space of critical heritage in the social sciences and humanities. However, for such a dialogue to be productive, I would also argue it is also incumbent upon those of us working within these traditions to consider how the above prevailing trends bear upon our production of knowledge, theory and critical perspectives, an issue I will return to later.

Conservation, a history of scientistic materialism

To better understand the capabilities and limitations of the conservation sector for negotiating and contributing to the critical issues of today, it is helpful to consider how the field has formed historically around certain forms of expertise and

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knowledge practices. In what is an undoubtedly complex history, limited space here only allows for a schematic account, oriented by certain points of focus. My primary concern is tracing the history of the conservation of buildings, art objects and archaeological sites and their material artefacts – in today's parlance 'tangible heritage' – as this has been where the vast majority of attention and funding has been directed, a situation I do not expect to see change dramatically any time soon.

To this end, I wish to briefly return to the categorisations of 'disciplines' and knowledge production that formed around material culture and the past in Europe between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Many of the ideals held by thinkers of the Enlightenment, such as the secularisation and restructuring of scholarly enquiry, were pivotal to the configuration of knowledge production pertaining to cultural heritage. For example, with the emergence of fields like geology, interest in antiquarianism evolved into the more scientific disciplines of archaeology, architectural history and the classificatory systems that formed within the museum (Foucault 1990, Stiebing 1994, Bennett 2004). The evolution of art conservation is indicative of wider trends here, in that scientific approaches were inherently connected to aesthetics and connoisseurship, such that proclamations of objectivity were continually entangled in, and thus tempered by, the need to understand context, period style, historical practices, iconography and so forth. But while debates in the arts and sciences evolved, at times exploring mutual points of interest such as landscape, nature and the value of architecture, rational, scientistic forms of knowledge secured their position as the arbiters of truth. The scientific paradigm was not a separate field, as it is often seen today, rather a way of knowing the world, a form of enquiry that gathered evidence, privileged discovery and classification, deduced verifiable truths and subjected those truths to further sceptical enquiry. As such it was a paradigm that straddled emerging fields as diverse as anthropology, architectural history, archaeology and epigraphy. Indeed, over the course of the nineteenth century fields like archaeology and architectural conservation drew on empiricism and natural history as starting points for constructing increasingly technical methodologies that cast their focus on the texts of heritage – objects, buildings, artefacts, paintings, inscriptions and so forth (Tilley 1990, Muñoz Viñas 2005). In effect, what we see is the consolidation of a *scientistic materialism* of heritage conservation.

Crucially, from the early-mid nineteenth century onwards, the new techniques and technologies of excavation, anastylosis and photography became the intellectual keys for unlocking and interpreting cultures and histories outside Europe (Guha-Thakurta 2004, Lyons *et al*. 2005, Clémentin-Ojha *et al*. 2007, Blackburn 2011). Scientistic materialism thus served as an important instrument for advancing the ideologies and governance structures of European Empire in Africa, the Islamic world and Asia (Singer 1921).[7] As Wallerstein (2006, p. 54) states, for the World System of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to work smoothly, the domination of Europe was dependent upon a particular 'cultural-intellectual scaffolding'.[8] As studies of Egypt (Mitchell 1998, 2001, Meskell 2004), Turkey (Shaw 2003, Given 2004), India (Cohn 1996, Cunningham 1999, Guha 2010), Cambodia (Edwards 2007), Thailand (Peleggi 2002) and Australia (Porter 2010) have all shown, archaeology, architectural conservation and museums all deployed modern, rationalist, empiricist and scientistic methods to advance the infrastructure of imperial rule.

As ways of knowing culture and the past, these scientistically oriented knowledge practices would provide the epistemological and intellectual foundations

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for the transnational cultural agencies that would emerge in the aftermath of the Second World War. As various commentators such as Wallerstein (2006) and Escobar (1995) have observed, in the post-colonial decades of the 1940–1960s, the scientific paradigm continued its ascendency in the international arena, even in the domain of culture, as its supposed universality enabled European knowledge to sidestep the post-colonial critique, including accusations of its role in unjust imperial rule. For Wallerstein (2006, p. 78), the pursuit of 'new, complicated and expensive technology in the operation of the modern world-system', together with the soul-searching of humanists created by the collapse of previous Orientalist certainties, ensured science pulled further ahead. In the formation of the United Nations it was recognised that so much devastation caused by aggressive nationalisms and hostilities had, in part, been created through cultural, religious or ethnic prejudices. The founding of bodies like UNESCO and UNICEF thus reflected a desire to promote 'collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture'. Nonetheless, and as Kennedy (2007) notes in his history of the United Nations, such organisations were established at a time when it was widely believed that little or no social and cultural progress could be achieved in the absence of a robust economic environment. By implication, in order to gain traction in an environment that privileged rational, positivist models of security and socio-economic development, discourses of heritage conservation sought their legitimacy on the international stage via scientific rational enquiry; a language, which as Escobar (1995) and others have pointed out, enabled European ideas to maintain their authority at the global level (see also Singh 2011).

It was from within this environment that the field defining 1964 Venice Charter and the 1972 World Heritage Convention emerged. Looking back at these landmark agreements it is now widely accepted that they overwhelmingly prioritised a 'fabric' centric concept of conservation (Jokilehto 2002, Munjeri 2004). In the case of the 1972 convention this extended beyond cultural sites to include natural sites as well. It was a prioritising of the materiality of culture and nature, and the subdividing of these two, that not just depended upon, but actually extended the reach of certain scientifically oriented discourses. The centrality of a scientific paradigm to the newly minted concept of world heritage is evident in the instructions to state parties laid out in the 1972 Convention. Article 5, points 3–5 state each country is:

> to develop scientific and technical studies and research and to work out such operating methods as will make the State capable of counteracting the dangers that threaten its cultural or natural heritage;
>
> to take the appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage; and
>
> to foster the establishment or development of national or regional centres for training in the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage and to encourage scientific research in this field. (http://whc.unesco.org/en/convention-text. [Accessed 16 April 2010])

It was an approach to cultural and natural governance that would be embedded into and reproduced by, the other key institutions formed in the post-war decades, including the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 1948), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS, 1965) and the

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International Council of Museums (ICOM, 1946). Even today, if we take the case of ICOMOS, its approach towards cultural heritage conservation is clearly evident in its *International Scientific Committees*, which together provide guidelines, offer training, create charters and 'exchange scientific information' in order to promote best practice. Currently numbering 26, these bodies tackle a plethora of issues and challenges and thus pull in experts from a variety of fields.[9] They do, however, share an institutional culture that prioritises a language of 'scientific studies', 'surveys', 'technical reports' and 'risk assessments'. Authority of voice stems from a knowledge practice primarily informed by material-centric disciplines that privilege scientific and/or positivist methodologies. Such approaches are rooted in a discourse of scientific knowledge as apolitical, objective and value neutral, a problem I have highlighted at length elsewhere (Winter 2007). Not only are anthropologists, sociologists or cultural geographers poorly represented in such institutions, their inclusion largely depends on a willingness to produce 'technical reports' and assess heritage in relation to a set of specified 'scientific criteria'. Writing about the field of conservation today more broadly, Muñoz Viñas (2005, pp. 1–26) points towards the 'new scientific conservation', which emerged in the latter decades of the twentieth century, wherein the conservation professional is defined by two factors: close physical proximity to the object and a 'strongly specific knowledge'.[10]

Perhaps one of the most significant developments driving the field in recent decades has been the growing influence of digital knowledge tools. The scopic regimes we saw solidify in the late nineteenth century through the use of photography for 'objective' documentation have been powerfully reaffirmed in the digital age through the rapid uptake of geographic information systems, computer-aided modelling, electron microscopy and microanalysis, digital archiving, 3D laser scanning and so forth (Rico 2013). The vast resources dedicated to such techniques suggest we have now entered a whole new scopic regime of modernity, to cite Jay's (1998) aphorism, within conservation practice (see also Crary 1990). The full sense of this epistemological orientation becomes apparent once we contrast the level of precision within scientistic material approaches to conservation – now sub-molecular – with the vague, poorly conceived notions of 'community' or 'cultural tourism' which lie at the heart of heritage conservation debates today. Significant advances are being made to address these problems. The 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention in 2012, for example, provided a platform for workshops and meetings around the world specially focused on the topics of 'sustainable development and the role of local communities'. The vigorous attention given to 'intangible heritage' in recent years has also revealed the need for policies and conservation frameworks that are much more sensitive to the complex interplays between the human/non-human, past/present. Today much greater attention is also given to 'community-based' and consensus building approaches, which de-centre 'expert' testimony in the conservation process. Notwithstanding such developments, the majority of resources and expertise in the conservation profession are directed towards the preservation of the heritage text itself, which in most cases takes on an immovable or movable material form (Muñoz Viñas 2005, Richmond and Bracker 2009). This is particularly the case in fast growing regions like Turkey, China or Abu Dhabi, which are now aggressively connecting landed heritage 'properties' from museums to archaeological sites to national programmes of socio-economic development. Regardless of location, for many organisations conservation primarily remains a material centred, technical process. Whilst this approach to conservation

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will naturally always remain valid, the challenge remains of developing approaches to heritage governance and conservation that better grasp and respond to the socio-political complexities now converging upon the sector in the twenty-first century. And it is here that critical heritage studies can play a distinct role.

Orienting critical heritage studies

For those of us working in universities, the intellectual chasms that emerged between the sciences and humanities in the nineteenth century – the 'two cultures' of scholarship as CP Snow (1998) famously coined them – remain ever present in the area of heritage studies. Writing in the late 1950s, Snow argued knowledge production came to be defined by a widespread inability of scholars to comprehend, and thus communicate with, peers working on the other side of the science/humanities divide. It is a chasm that seems stubbornly difficult to resolve, as evident in the two journals – *International Journal of Heritage Studies* and *Journal of Cultural Heritage* – both of which have done much to advance research and publishing on heritage. Regarded by many as leading journals in the field, and constituting the core of heritage studies research, they exist in entirely different arenas of knowledge production, as even the most cursory glance at their contents pages reveals. Both proclaim to be multi-disciplinary in approach. In reality however, each has come to privilege particular scholarly traditions. IJHS operates in the realm of the social sciences and humanities, with all their attendant epistemologies, methodologies and methods. Whereas, the overwhelming majority of articles published in JOCH are scientific in nature, often focusing on the technical, technological aspects of heritage conservation. A look at the list of most cited articles in both tells us much. In IJHS the semantic currency is politics, power, contestation, landscape and values; whereas in JOCH, it is documentation, carbonatation, microscopic, photogrammetry and consolidation. It is a division that means there is extremely little overlap, and cross fertilisation of ideas between the two approaches to the topic of culture, heritage and its conservation. Indeed, they cater to, and circulate in, quite separate fields of academia. The same could be tracked for book publishing houses, where again there is little overlap between whole series that come down on one side or the other of the scientific and humanist divide. This fragmentation is entirely understandable and facilitates the feeding of multiple skill sets into the field. It does, however, mean that ideas about heritage are intellectually enclaved, divided by languages and knowledge practices that are, in the end, invariably mutually exclusive. Of course the analytical scale pursued here risks accusations of oversight and omission, and I fully acknowledge numerous examples could be cited of robust and productive inter-disciplinary work being done in the arena of heritage conservation and governance. Nonetheless, I would suggest mainstreaming such approaches remains a real challenge as knowledge production continues to fragment and become ever more specialised.

It would be a platitude to suggest enabling cross-disciplinary dialogues within academia and beyond poses a real challenge. There is little doubt creating ways of talking and engaging that straddle intellectual boundaries is extremely hard work. The inbuilt biases towards disciplinary vs. inter-disciplinary forms of knowledge production, as manifest in university appointment policies, research funding schemes and journal rankings are among the obstacles that warrant much greater discussion than space allows here. Nonetheless, there is a real need for a more

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substantive engagement between those working in critical heritage theory and those writing about the practices and challenges of heritage conservation. There is much potential for points of contact extending far beyond themes of visitor or site 'management', which constitutes much of the cross-disciplinary dialogue today. And there is much to be gained in constructing meeting grounds that help us better appreciate the issues and problems which define scholarship and research in other fields. Undoubtedly, many in archaeology or history 'look down' upon, and dismiss, those working in the space of heritage studies. The task is finding, and connecting with, people who are willing to look outside their own scholarly and professional tradition, and accept there are bigger issues at stake. Through the process of interpretation and dialogue, differences are often diminished, whereby trust becomes an enabler of position re-evaluation and the opening up of new horizons.

There is a growing number of excellent teaching programmes built around such understandings.[11] It is important this trend continues to gather momentum, as there are still many countries where courses that conceptualise heritage in cross-disciplinary terms, and read it as a facet of contemporary society through a lens of interpretative, critical theory are either absent or rare. Such courses can valuably complement sector specific programs in archaeology, architecture, urban planning, performance studies and so forth. But if 'heritage studies' is to claim its place in higher education alongside geography, economics, architecture or anthropology, or, perhaps more productively, develop a post-disciplinary outlook, some big questions need to be asked. As heritage continues to evolve as a boundary concept, encompassing everything from language to sacred objects, and from rock music to 'queer spaces', its analytical purchase and conceptual integrity becomes increasingly nebulous. Understanding the economic, political and social relations that weave in and through and constitute heritage is crucial to thinking about how we analyse it: as lived experience, as political relations, as an expression of modernity or as a cultural economy? In considering such questions of conceptual development though, it would be prudent to address the degree to which these important modes of thinking can be fed into the various professions associated with heritage and conservation. At present too many heritage professionals have been trained via disciplinary specific methodologies, often oriented by technical, science-based epistemologies of culture, as noted above. While the specialist skills required for preserving and restoring buildings, paintings, temples and manuscripts will always be essential, this needs to be complemented by a far stronger grasp of the socio-political complexities which envelope the field of conservation today. This is particularly the case in low and middle income countries, where all too often those responsible for issues like tourism development, community relations or departments of fine arts are trained in fields like engineering or archaeology, or, indeed have no relevant training at all.

A critical approach to heritage should thus not only be about remaining cognizant of contestation, competing values, economics or the advancement of critical theory in areas like memory, consumption or identity. I would suggest as critical heritage studies scopes out its ambitions and intellectual terrain, it does so by more ambitiously engaging with, and responding to, the critical issues we now face. Presently, much attention is given to a familiar analytical triad: monuments, memorials and memory. Such work has been valuable, but there are many other pressing issues that receive much less attention within the field. Given the limited resources of academia it would be prudent to arrange knowledge production for heritage in ways that engage with the challenges of today's problem domains and their manifold

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implications. Complex, multi-vector challenges require cross-disciplinary modes of engagement. As I have argued above, material-centric, science-based approaches to heritage and conservation are inadequately equipped to deal with the array of issues heritage is now enmeshed in, such as poverty reduction, climate change, sustainability, human rights, democracy, the future of the state and of course the protection and preservation of cultural heritage itself. There is therefore real benefit if those working on heritage in the social sciences and humanities *engage* in issues-based research more directly. But for this to happen, critical heritage theory needs to do more than merely revel in problems or complexity.

To this end I argue heritage studies seriously considers a post-western perspective. As Delanty (2009, p. 12) states:

> As a result of the worldwide impact of global forces and the growing importance of societies that have emerged from non-western modernities, a genuinely global assessment of the current day needs to be less confident about the centrality of the West and the equation of globalisation with Westernisation.

To be clear, this certainly does not imply questioning the merits and need for studies on Europe or North America. But even here it is important to remember Europe itself is increasingly post-western, a space that needs to be read as a 'larger and more diverse political community in which the Central and Eastern heritage has become more prominent' (Ibid.). Such points of departure will also help us move beyond those accounts of Eurocentrism that continue to construct an homogenous picture of pan-European historical and cultural governance. To cite just one example, considerable comparative work still needs to be done differentiating the socio-political histories of material culture and curatorial practices in Sweden, France, Britain, Italy and elsewhere (Jokilehto 2002, Wetterberg 2011, Aronsson and Elgenius forthcoming). But more significantly here, and to paraphrase Dirlik (2010), I believe critical heritage studies needs to account for its relationship to today's regional and global transformations, in ways that validate its conceptual development and respond to the new ideologies of globalisation. This is not an intellectual politics that foregrounds the indigenous to counter 'western rational thought'. Instead, it is an arena of knowledge production that responds to and engages with pressing challenges by moving beyond the limited repertoire of epistemologies currently privileged. It appears the multitude of societal challenges to which culture-natures inherited from the past now connect, demand another way of knowing, of talking about and of doing, heritage. To this end, this paper has sought to lay out the above navigational markers – conceptual, methodological, pedagogical and institutional – which, it is hoped, provide helpful points of departure for a series of highly challenging, but critically important, conversations around the future of heritage studies.

Notes

1. See http://criticalasianstudies.org/assets/files/bcas/v01n01.pdf [Accessed 20 July 2012].
2. An elaboration of the premise of critical thinking is beyond the scope of this paper. For a more detailed discussion see the Introduction to this special issue and http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/410 [Accessed 20 July 2012].
3. See http://www.businessinsider.com/countries-with-the-fastest-growing-gdp-in-the-world-2011-10#jordan-12.

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4. Source: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2008.htm [Accessed 10 July 2012].
5. For extended and advised definitions of terms 'global south', 'developing economies' etc., see Rigg (2007).
6. Mega cities like Shanghai epitomise this trend. It grew from eight million inhabitants in 1990 to over 16 million in 2010. Economic liberalisation has meant the city has doubled its population in just two decades, and it is predicted more than 22 million people will make Shanghai their home in 2020 (UN-Habitat 2008, pp. 13–15).
7. At a time of rapid urbanisation, industrialisation and imperial conquest, new advances in technology were regarded by many as the key to social emancipation, both within Europe and beyond. Scientific knowledge, working within a wider milieu of European Orientalism, would also directly feed into the growing belief that the progress and forms of social betterment now being delivered by modernity were of universal value.
8. For more detailed discussion of this theme and intellectual coupling of science and Orientalism, and its implications on non-European heritage governance, see Winter and Daly (2012).
9. For further details of ISCs see http://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/committees/scientific-committees/list-and-goals-of-isc [Accessed 10 July 2012].
10. Muñoz Viñas's (2005) account of conservation represents the 'expert' only approach to conservation, a perspective that has been criticised for being elitist and deliberately technocratic. The book raises many intriguing questions in relation to the themes discussed here, and is worthy of a more sustained analysis than is possible within the limited space available here.
11. See for example: 'Masters Course in Critical and Strategic Conservation', Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, http://www.gsd.harvard.edu/#/academic-programs/master-in-design-studies/critical-and-strategic-conservation.html and 'Masters in Cultural Heritage Studies' http://www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/studying/masters/degrees/ma_cultural_heritage [Accessed 20 July 2012].

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