Heritage studies and the privileging of theory

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Heritage studies is yet to have a debate about its theorisation at the global level. Many of the core ideas that shape the field are rooted in the contexts of Europe and the USA and geographically rolled out in normative ways. This paper argues it is important we embark on pluralising how heritage is studied and theoretically framed, in ways that better address the heterogeneous nature of heritage, for both the West and the non-West. The themes of modernity, cities and international cultural policy provide evidence of why we need to better position the academic study of heritage in relation to the rapid geo-political and geo-cultural shifts now taking place.

Keywords: heritage theory; conservation; Eurocentrism; globalisation; post-western

Introduction

Heritage studies is yet to have a debate about its theorisation at the global level. Today, much of the conceptual architecture of anglophone studies on heritage and heritage conservation relies on certain privileged histories and geographies. It is important we begin to seriously address the heterogeneous nature of heritage, for both the West and non-West, and explore the conceptualisation of multiple heritages. The impetus for this comes from the need to both address previous imbalances, and better position the academic study of heritage in relation to the rapid geo-political and geo-cultural shifts that are now taking place. This article builds on an earlier one that considered the ongoing development of critical heritage studies, which argued – drawing on Dirlik (2010) – that the field 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. In that paper, I attempted to lay out a number of reasons why the unfolding economic and social changes of today raise significant questions about the current trajectories of heritage research and thinking (Winter 2013). This paper aims to address such issues more directly by focusing on the issue of theory production and circulation, and the nature of empirical research. To address the latter, three linked but separate themes are identified: modernity; cities; and heritage governance and policy. Given the limited space here, these are offered primarily as examples that illustrate the broader points being made. As many further topics and threads bear upon and

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extend outwards from the authors and issues discussed here, it is hoped the paper stimulates further discussion and study.

Heritage: a history of Eurocentrism?

> All at once heritage is everywhere – in the news, in the movies, in the marketplace – in everything from galaxies to genes. (Lowenthal 1998, xiii)

> During the past two decades, heritage has become a feature of the contemporary cultural landscape in many countries. (Gillman 2010, 10)

Tracing the historical roots, or origins, of what we understand today as heritage and the associated field of conservation is fraught with problems. Indeed it is both very old and, it seems from the above opening lines of two books on the subject, very new. As Lowenthal (1998) reminds us, heritage – as it pertains to identity, transmission and the collective – is as old as humanity itself. *De Architectura*, the manual written by Vitrivius in the first century BC stated how the architect should have 'a wide knowledge of history' in order to understand the symbolic context of a building (Jokilehto 2002, 2). As Jokilehto notes, the concept of the memorial also appears in ancient Egyptian and Greek society, with recent scholarship revealing evidence of repair and veneration. Similarly, in making the links between narrative, ideology and identity, Gillman (2010, 98–137) explores at length how a sacred material culture of relics and images was implicated in the cultural shifts that occurred between Buddhism and Confucianism in mediaeval China. Many such examples demonstrating the deep history of heritage concepts could be cited.

Elsewhere however, key points of departure have been identified that historically locate heritage as a concept and set of practices that emerged in the West, as part of the wholesale changes of Western modernity. The premise of such claims rests upon a received understanding of certain historical processes and events. The birth of the museum and the first declaration of cultural property rights in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars via the 1815 Congress of Vienna are among the various examples presented to suggest that in post-enlightenment Europe, the preservationist ethos combined with ideas of collective patrimony to take on new and important forms. Much has been written about the complex and diverse uses history was put to in the formation of emergent nationalisms throughout Europe. Accounts of Greece and Sweden by Hamilakis (2007) and Hegardt and Källén (2011) respectively are among those that illustrate the diversity of experiences across the continent.

Nonetheless, within the broad corpus of knowledge on material culture, a sense of consensus has formed concerning the origins of the modern conservation movement. As books by Jokilehto (2002), Muñoz Viñas (2005), Stubbs (2009) and Glendinning (2013) testify, it is now widely argued that conservation – as both an ideal and a practice – emerged in the West, or more specifically Western Europe. In general harmony, these authors provide a narrative of modern conservation theory and its institutions that traces its roots back to seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe. Cities such as Rome, Venice or Paris are commonly cited as the places where the heritage conservation ethos took hold. It is argued that conceptual articulation would come much later however, via the writings of Eugène Viollet-Le-Duc in France and John Ruskin in England in the

mid-late nineteenth century (Viollet-Le-Duc 1990; Ruskin 2008). While Viollet-Le-Duc and Ruskin were not the first to extol the value of conservation or the philosophical foundations upon which a practice might be based, they have come to be regarded as the 'founding-fathers' of the modern conservation movement, such that their arguments have formed the core of the profession's guiding principles and discourse. Other canonical texts and commentaries include those by Camillo Boito, Cesare Brandi, Paul Phillipot amongst others (Stanley-Price, Talley, and Melucco Vaccaro 1996).

But in recent decades, a fast growing literature has also proclaimed that the emergence of the heritage concept needs to be read in relation to the social, economic and cultural changes that took place in Western societies in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Accordingly, Lowenthal states 'only in our time has heritage become a self-conscious creed, whose shrine and icons daily multiply and whose praise suffuses public discourse' (1998, 1). Likewise Harrison (2013, 1) opens his *Heritage: Critical approaches* with a chapter titled 'Heritage everywhere', introducing the reader to 'what we might term the abundance of heritage in our late-modern world, and its social, economic and political function in contemporary global societies'. The genealogy for such observations can be traced back to the debates started by the commentaries of Hewison (1987) and Wright (1985), who observed a 'heritage boom' through a lens of social and economic decline in the UK during the 1970s, critically pointing towards its conservatism and nostalgic politics. Hewison, in particular, condemned heritage as 'vulgar bogus history'. Some years later and somewhat more forgivingly, Urry (1990) addressed the rise of the heritage industry vis à vis late modern leisure consumption as part of his highly influential thesis, *The Tourist Gaze*. More broadly, those working from the analytical perspectives of geography and sociology did much to reveal how the representation and production of the past in the present operate as an arena of power, injustice, exclusion, hegemony and so forth. In the 1990s, a theoretical lexicon emerged critiquing the museumification and disneyfication of public life. At the same time, in both Europe and the USA heritage became a focal point for concerns about the gentrification and transformation of urban landscapes under the conditions of late capitalism (Zukin 1991; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). Not surprisingly, as the ever ageing populations of these regions continued to struggle with the legacy of major conflicts, questions of collective memory also came to the fore, whereby conceptions of commemoration and forgetting, together with the ways places and material culture act as sites of dissonance, became popular themes across the humanities and social sciences (Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000; Huyssen 2003; Ricoeur 2004; MacDonald 2008). Together, these lines of inquiry have all sat within a broad framework that reads the heritage cult, boom or obsession as a manifestation of the sociocultural changes associated with post-industrial, post-modern life and contemporary globalisation. Writing in 2001, Harvey rightfully expresses anxiety about the 'presentness' of this understanding of heritage, for its inadequate recognition of the deep history of heritage practices. He argues that a more rigorous historicisation of the links between past and present is required, one that both incorporates the political and economic revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, as identified by Nora (1989) and Hobsbawm (1992), as well as those examples from pre-modern Europe that reveal longstanding traditions of rituals and monumental architecture.

Clearly then, as the field of heritage studies has expanded and diversified its interests, certain conflations and historical slippages have taken hold, in part because of the increasingly different analytical themes being developed. But within these different readings of heritage's history, one theme remains remarkably consistent, that of the privileging of Europe. Such an observation may be read as a platitude, but the critical issue here is how this bears upon our theorisation of that amorphous entity we call heritage today, and the epistemological paradigms that orient fields like conservation. Indeed, many of the key texts in the field, including the ones cited above, have advanced conceptualisations of heritage, and its 'rise', in relation to the sociocultural shifts that have taken place in the West, and most notably Western Europe. Indeed as I re-read the opening chapters of *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, I was once again reminded that the historical paths and trajectories Lowenthal traces are essentially European, North American or Australasian. It is an historical account of heritage, which, while citing other regions of the world, is written through and from the point of view of the West. But by linking heritage to the wholesale socio-spatial transformations of modernity, it is presented in largely universalist terms, where localised inflections are subsumed in a narrative of totalising change. More recently, Harrison has gone further in suggesting that heritage is 'both a product and producer of Western modernity' (2013, 39). And if we return to David Harvey's highly instructive critique of the lack of historical depth in the ways heritage is conceptualised, we see that it is an account that seeks to draw us further back into a European past. Perhaps most distinct of all here though are the norms which orient the field of architectural conservation, whereby concepts of heritage remain inextricably tied to the body of knowledge that formed around the treatment of cathedrals, ruins and civic structures of Italy, France and Britain (Stubbs 2009; Glendinning 2013). To this day, the West is regarded as the sole originator of material culture conservation. It is an assumption that means all other forms of conservation, both old and modern, are viewed in relation to an original Western referent, a theme I pursue in more detail below in relation to cities.

This privileging of Europe in how we think about heritage, and I use that term broadly, – as a history of landmark moments, cultural shifts, turns towards a collective awakening, or periods of 'darkness' – is problematic in itself. Clearly, we need to pluralise the scope of this historicisation in ways that better reflect events and processes that occurred elsewhere in the world. But the key point I wish to take up here is that the importance of such tasks stems not just from the merits of re-thinking histories, but from the urgent need to develop analytical frameworks capable of interpreting the major global social and cultural shifts of today. The profound transformations brought about by the rapidly shifting global political and economic environment raise important questions about the future directions of how we think about heritage and construct its theoretical frames. If our conceptualisation of heritage is to be grounded in – and responsive to – some form of empirical reality, then the field needs to account for its relationship to today's regional and global transformations. Before moving on to discuss such issues in more detail, it is important to recognise why certain ideas and conceptual framings of heritage, such as those outlined above, have come to be privileged in the discussion of heritage at the international level, and to this end I wish to briefly point to some of the factors that contribute to a largely Eurocentric discourse.

First, Europe and the USA represent the centres of global academia today, such that the bulk of research and publishing is undertaken in the two regions, with the

hegemony of the English language heavily shaping knowledge dissemination. Crucially here, this means – as authors like Alatas (2006), Connell (2007) and others have argued – Europe and the USA remain the primary locations of theory generation. In suggesting we need to reflect upon the implications of this, it is worth clarifying that I am not advocating for a 'turn' to a canon of non-Western theory, an argument I am far from convinced by. Instead it is a position that stresses pluralisation and a theoretical approach to heritage that better addresses the socio-cultural pasts and futures for different regions of the world and recognises the need to de-centre Europe and the West in the way heritage is thought about and read as a series of interconnections between the human and non-human, past and present. Here texts on cultural heritage continue to exhibit the bias Mazrui refers to as *Euro-exclusivity*:

> the tendency to give disproportionate space in textbooks to the Western side of world history – such as five chapters on the history of Europe through medieval times, the Renaissance, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution, as compared with the one chapter on India and China combined across two millennia. (2009, xii)

Jokilehto's (2002) *A History of Architectural Conservation* provides a startling example of this problem, with less than 10% of the book given over to the world beyond Europe.[1]

The second factor I wish to highlight here pertains to post-enlightenment Europe's belief in the universalism of its knowledge domains. Much of the theory generated in the metropole, particularly that of the analytic tradition as I shall discuss shortly, has advanced without giving adequate reflection to its historic and cultural specificities. David Livingstone addresses such problems for the history of science, an arena of knowledge production that largely considers itself a-spatial and of holding universal validity. In *Putting Science in its Place*, he offers a geographical analysis to argue the pivotal role place and cultural context have played in the formation of ideas and theories. Such arguments are of real pertinence here given the prevalence of techno-scientific approaches in the heritage conservation profession today. But greater reflection about such issues is also required in the humanities and social sciences. Fields like archaeology are indicative here, where much of the debate surrounding theoretical trends only considers what happens in the Western academy, as we shall see.[2] In this regard, the theoretical debates that feed into and give vibrancy to heritage studies today tend to inherit a problem that has characterised numerous other fields, that of reading non-European, non-Western phenomena through the conceptual frameworks derived from empirical contexts closer to home.

The third contributory factor to theory generation centres on the writing of non-Western history by Western scholars. English language understandings of heritage today sit within a body of scholarship that emerged under conditions of exploration and colonialism, with all their attendant assumptions and ideologies of orientalism, civilisational hierarchies, primitivism and so forth. The West has long advanced the idea that other peoples and cultures have suffered from a heritage blindness. Both Lowenthal (1998) and Hamilakis (2007) recount how eighteenth-century classicism involved notions of barbarism being imputed onto not just the East, but also the Athenians, who were portrayed as unfit guardians of the glorious ruins of antiquity. Moreover, the acquisition of global culture by Western powers rested upon the idea

that only the West had an historical awareness of both its own cultural past and that of others. European hegemony, underpinned by notions of civilised progress, meant the collecting of material culture from around the world for the adornment of national museums in cities like London, Paris and Amsterdam both reflected and advanced the idea that 'Westerners alone cared about and were competent to cherish the globe's diverse cultures' (Lowenthal 1998, 242). Indeed I would suggest such ideas are often vestigial in the ways the global history of heritage and heritage conservation are narrated today, whereby a notion of 'first in Europe, then elsewhere' is a depiction that Chakrabarty argues leaves the rest of the world 'in the imaginary waiting-room of history' (2000, 8). In recognition of such legacies, Meskell has argued that the historical roots of archaeology, as it internationalised under conditions of European exploration and colonialism, need much greater scrutiny than they have been given to date:

> The past has been deployed by Western archaeologists to construct the non-West, to forge ourselves a cultural lineage and to carve out opposing identities. It has never been a neutral field of discourse. We should be aware that modern cartographies and mappings are recent inscriptions that did not have contiguous parallels in antiquity: these national constructions can also be the result of colonialist or imperialist imperatives. The grammar of colonial power centred on three key institutional concepts – the census, map and museum (Anderson 1991, 163), in which archaeological pasts are deeply embedded. As Said reminds us, these territories are not simply there to be discovered, analysed, and taxonomised as culturally– and geographically-bounded entities: they are man made and indeed men make their own history. (1998, 3)

Theorising heritage beyond the West

> Our struggle is … getting our own books published and distributed in the disciplinary metropoles, against the tide of a publishing industry centred in the global north, and a politics of language which privileges English-language publications. Our biggest struggle is with a colonial knowledge politics that casts the disciplinary metropoles as centres of up-to-dateness, new knowledge, expertise, and innovation. New ideas and forms of practice are bursting out all over, often not in the traditional centre of the discipline, often not under the heading of a post-processual archaeology, and often not in the academy. [This] is a story about a form of globalism which uncritically reproduces a colonial knowledge politics in which the direction of exchange is always from north to south, and in which the global south is either dependent outpost or field location. (Shepherd and Haber 2011, 105)

It is important we continue to recognise that the historical circumstances under which our core knowledge domains and institutions formed – art history/anthropology/the museum/archaeology – leave important legacies in the way in which we think about heritage at the global level today, both in academia and the various professions that work in this space. Ideas about heritage today sit upon, react to and build on, understandings and a body of knowledge that strongly privileges Europe in its geographical scope. Without doubt our understandings of various issues – the evolution of museums as civic institutions, the rise of archaeology as part of the revaluing of antiquities through modernity, the historical abuse of history by nation-states or the ties between popular forms of heritage- and leisure-based identities – are all considerably stronger in Europe and North America than they

are in certain other parts of the world. By implication however, this means that heritage studies has come to be built upon certain normative understandings of culture, cultural pasts and the socio-political dynamics that form the basis of heritage discourses and practices.

Given that such geographical imbalances and challenges are shared across a number of fields of scholarly enquiry, there are various commentaries and reflections that can provide helpful instruction. To that end, Dipesh Chakrabarty's incisive commentary on such issues is worth considering at length here. In his book *Provincializing Europe*, Chakrabarty addresses the universalism that came to be associated with Western political modernity. It is an account born out of his own physical mobility and a realisation that there was instability between 'an abstract idea and its concrete instantiation' (2000, xii). Early realisations that political modernity and ideas like democracy looked very different between Europe, India and Australia eventually led to the intellectual question of how to provincialise European thought, a task he describes as:

> To find out how and in what sense European ideas that were universal were also, at one and the same time, drawn from very particular intellectual and historical traditions that cannot claim any universal validity. It was to ask a question about how thought was related to place … To provincialize Europe then was to know how universalistic thought was always and already modified by particular histories, whether or not we could excavate such pasts fully. (Ibid. xiii–xiv)

To pursue this task Chakrabarty's critique focused on what he referred to as 'historicism', a mode of thinking that privileged the idea that certain concepts and strands of thought evolved over time, reaching their fullest expression under conditions of secular modernity. The immediate issue at stake was the hauntings of European thought in debates about modernity, and about citizenry, democracy and liberalism in India. Colonialism in the subcontinent had involved a preaching by Europeans of their Enlightenment humanism, ideas that were at once proclaimed as universal but denied in practice. As Chakrabarty suggests, the hegemony of Europe in the centuries leading up to the twentieth meant:

> It is impossible to think of anywhere in the world without invoking certain categories and concepts, the genealogies of which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe. Concepts such as citizenship, the state, civil society, public sphere, human rights, equality before the law, the individual, distinctions between public and private, the idea of the subject, democracy, popular sovereignty, social justice, scientific rationality, and so on all bear upon the burden of European thought and history. One simply cannot think of political modernity without these and other related concepts that found a climactic form in the course of the European Enlightenment and the nineteenth century. These concepts entail an unavoidable – and in a sense indispensable – universal and secular vision of the human. (Ibid. 4)

Following such lines of thought, we see that those societies outside Europe are inevitably bound up in struggle, as there is no easy way of transcending or dispensing such socially and intellectually pervasive concepts. Unlike the more radical postcolonial position that seeks to reclaim indigenous traditions through a wholesale rejection of Western thought, Chakrabarty starts from the understanding that this struggle is one that should be based on an understanding of both the indispensability of European thought, and its inevitable inadequacies for making sense of

non-Western political modernity. The challenge, he suggests, is how to best renew European thought 'from and for the margins' (Ibid. 16). To that end, he sees the greatest opportunity lies in utilising the insights of the hermeneutic tradition of the social sciences, which 'finds thought intimately tied to places and to particular forms of life' (Ibid. 18). It is a proposal that rests upon the distinction he offers between the hermeneutic and analytic traditions of Western social-science knowledge production, whereby the latter is understood as a process that pursues forms of social order and justice via the abstract universal. Fully acknowledging how such a distinction is broadly schematic at best, he considers it of help to identify how the hermeneutic opens up spaces of opportunity. Accordingly, he invokes Heidegger's notion of dwelling to consider Bengali political modernity as a particular way of being-in-the-world. Central to this subjectivity is a 'very particular relation to the past' (Ibid. 244). For the Indian, there is no easy way to reconcile unjust social practices – castes, sati, untouchability and religious conflict – that were justified as tradition or custom. Heidegger reminds us though given that humans cannot avoid being oriented towards their future, our pasts help us go forward in ways that help create more socially just worlds that avoid or transcend the mistakes of previous generations.

The key point to note here is Chakrabarty's position towards the metropole, one that is not so much defined by exclusion and resistance but by inclusion, negotiation and transcendence. As he notes, it is a question that is pertinent for not just India, 'the problem of getting beyond Eurocentric histories remains a shared problem across geographical boundaries' (Ibid. 17). It is a theme that has been taken up by others. Connell for example explores the legacy of metropolitan social science in relation to its disposition towards theoretical abstraction and its emergence within the core-periphery geographies of European empire. Frustrated by a general lack of awareness about such issues, she argues one of the enduring characteristics of social theory today is 'Its lack of interest in place, material context and specifically the land. Social science usually prefers context-free generalisation' (2007, 196). When it comes to accounts of globalisation, this is often compounded by a widespread refusal to see how today's global structures, flows of capital and so forth are shaped by earlier asymmetries, a problem she refers to as an 'intellectual amnesia' (2009, 53–72). The excellent volume *Globalising the Research Imagination* edited by Kenway and Fahey (2009) explores such issues at length. Through a series of interviews, the book reveals why the re-embedding of theory in cultural and geographical context is more important than ever, and the real insights researchers can gain from paying attention to the global politics of knowledge. In a similar vein, important theoretical innovation in this area has been made within the field of Latin American Cultural Studies, wherein a critical reading of the relations between tradition, modernity and the reproduction of associated hierarchies through today's global capitalism has been advanced by authors like Escobar (2004), "Castro Gómez" and Martin (2002), "Castro Gómez" (2007) and Dominguez (1992), amongst others. Working within this tradition, the excellent work by González-Ruiban (2009) highlights the need for greater reflexivity over the intellectual constructs of local and community that underpin current archaeological practice in Ethiopia and Brazil. Such forms of research are instructive for thinking about the future trajectories of heritage studies. Together they demonstrate the various ways in which the issues at stake have moved on from a discourse of invoking 'non-Western' or 'indigenous' perspectives as a way of countering the hegemony of Western rational-

ism.[3] Although critiques in this area undoubtedly remain prescient, and will continue to be so, they also indicate why we need to open up new points of focus – empirical, theoretical, methodological and linguistic – which better respond to those forms of heritage, past and future, that to date have not received the critical attention they deserve.

Pluralising the focus – three examples

The cultivation of new theoretical insights requires careful reflection about the focus and nature of empirical research. Naturally, previous work by others offers guidance here. In the case of Asia for example, contributions by Ashworth (2011), Askew (1996), Byrne (1995, 2012), Fong et al. (2012) and Peleggi (2012) are among those that demonstrate the critical importance of questioning how the very idea of heritage sits – linguistically, historically, philosophically and (im)materially – in particular sociocultural contexts. Interestingly, although these authors come from different disciplinary backgrounds, each have drawn upon the methodologies and points of focus more familiar to anthropology as a productive pathway for eliciting non-Western traditions of heritage governance, conservation and curatorial practice. In a similar vein, in the recent volume *Asian Heritage Management* Tom (2013) and Chapagain (2013) discuss 'The Hindu Philosophy of Conservation' and 'Heritage Conservation in the Buddhist Context' respectively. This journal, together with the *Journal of Social Archaeology* (see e.g. Meskell 2011), has also endeavoured to publish articles that pluralise the geographic and conceptual base of the heritage debate. And while various other authors and examples might be cited here, I would argue fundamentally important work still needs to be done in this direction, as the following discussion of three separate, but interrelated, themes highlights.

Modernity

The literature on the globalisation of modernism and modernist architecture provides a good example of a field that has too often examined non-Western contexts via universalist discourses and concepts. As a result, much of the analysis and debate has been oriented by questions of aesthetics, a trajectory that is now receiving much needed critical attention. It is widely proclaimed that the story of modernism is inherently bound up in the social transformations associated with modernity and modernisation which took place in Europe and the USA. But as Crinson (2012) and Lu (2011) note, a discourse of 'modernist' and 'international style' has been haphazardly and lazily used in trans-spatial and ahistorical ways, whereby decades of architectural production in various regions across the world are historically disembodied, analytically unburdened by their sociocultural contexts. If we are to better understand the global spread of architectural genres, Crinson suggests insights can be gained from more critical readings of internationalism and occidentalism. Accordingly, he states foregrounding the cultural and political dynamics by which architectural ideas were translated and appropriated in particular contexts:

> can unbalance and re-order the geometry of centre and periphery and cut the seeming bond between westernisation and modernisation. Such international values seem particularly required in our era. (Ibid. 44)

For Jiat Hwee Chang and William Lim, modernism has too often been seen as 'an independent aesthetic paradigm untouched by the socio-political conditions of its production', meaning we are now faced with the challenge of offering alternative accounts that address 'different historical and geopolitical contexts outside the West' (2012, 10). There are distinct parallels here in how we might think about analytically framing the different phenomena, practices and discourses that constitute heritage today. As I have argued elsewhere in an article on the Preah Vihear temple, in regions such as Asia forms of monumental heritage are primarily framed in aesthetic terms by a series of knowledge practices that privilege questions of style and design. But looking beyond the built environment, there are multiple benefits from including accounts that historicise other forms of heritage in terms of the links between history, tradition and non-Western modernities.

First, only by attending to the socio-political conditions of heritage production outside the West can we get at the details that make the local distinct and particular (Lu 2011). Second, a more plural understanding of the links between modernity and heritage helps 'provincialise' the analytical frameworks that exercise authority today. To elucidate this point as noted earlier, the greater part of studies on the ascendency of heritage in the twentieth century understands its rise in relation to a series of distinct analytical vantage points: the decline of industrial economies; part of the rejection of modernism's ideals; or the emergence of tertiary economies and the transition to post-industrial society. In this respect, it has been historically compartmentalised within debates around the trajectories and transitions of modernity to postmodernity, industrial to post-industrial capitalism. Such analytical frames are helpful, but ultimately of limited value, for understanding the dynamics of heritage discourses and practices in other parts of the world. Dubai, China, Nigeria, Qatar and Kazakhstan are among those countries where large parts of the economy have transitioned from the pre- to post-industrial in a few short years, such that notions of heritage have emerged, disappeared and re-stabilised in rapid and unexpected ways. Recent analyses of the Gulf by Elsheshtawy (2010) and Malkawi (2008) are insightful here. Similarly, in places like Laos, Myanmar and Chile relations between tradition, inherited pasts and modernity have taken on particular inflections under communist or closed economies. Of course, I readily acknowledge the field of heritage studies today benefits from a multitude of studies on non-Western contexts, including those conducted on the countries listed here. But there is a widespread tendency in academic discourse to frame the non-Western as regional studies. As a consequence, non-Western research is seen as not holding validity beyond the national or regional context, and invariably read through an analytical lens derived from the metropole.[4]

Cities

To turn to my second example, recent debates in urban theory are instructive in this regard. Robinson's (2006) volume *Ordinary Cities: between modernity and development* has been highly successful in unsettling the norms that underpin many of the ways urban environments around the world are discussed and analysed. Robinson critically challenges the geography of urban knowledge, wherein cities in the 'first world' are seen as models for generating theory and policy, and those in the 'third world' are treated as problems to be diagnosed and solved. She argues that our 'understandings of city-ness have come to rest on the (usually unstated) experiences

of a relatively small group of (mostly Western) cities (2002, 531). With the vast majority of interest dedicated to the emergence of world cities – New York, Paris, London or Tokyo – much less attention has been given to "ordinary cities", those urban environments all too often left off the map' (Paling 2013). Analyses of cities that do pertain to the latter category generally lack the authority and status to be generalised as theory. Robinson thus suggests all cities should be regarded as ordinary, with the overly static categories of 'developing world' or 'global city' dispensed with. This would enable an 'urban theory that draws inspiration from the complexity and diversity of city life, and from urban experiences and urban scholarship across a wide range of different kinds of cities' (Robinson 2006, 13). Others have echoed such themes. Both Roy (2011) and Edensor and Jayne (2012) have argued there should be a geographic shift in urban theory away from North America and Europe, towards the parts of the world where contemporary urbanisation is taking place.

I would suggest heritage studies needs to follow the same path. In a number of non-Western contexts – for reasons as diverse as major civil conflict to extremely rapid economic development – the use and abuse of heritage have now reached a level of intensity, pace and impact that has few parallels in Western Europe or North America. Yet too often the analysis of heritage privileges the West as the site of innovation, with regions outside commonly understood as either imitative, alternative, deviation or an extension of Western praxis. To return to the issue of heritage conservation, the theme of urban conservation has received considerable attention in recent years, and yet many of the core assumptions highlighted in this paper remain central to this literature. For example, publications by Larkham (1996), Orbasli (2000) and Rodwell (2007) are illustrative of a paradigm that foregrounds Europe, with signal cities such as Rome, Paris or Dubrovnik repeatedly cited both in accounts of the 'historic development' and 'state of the field' of urban conservation. While examples from other parts of the world might be cited, Europe is invariably referred to as the region of learned practice, where urban conservation knowledge is most consolidated, and where historic cities offer templates or exemplar cases. The widely cited monograph, *Conservation and Sustainability in Historic Cities*, by Denis Rodwell is illustrative of this geographical loading of conservation's past and present. The opening chapters not only trace the history of urban conservation as a process that emerged exclusively in Europe, but also suggest the region's cultural and religious traditions provide a body of knowledge that can be unproblematically applied across geographic and cultural boundaries today:

> Architectural conservation has evolved from the partly educational and inspirational, partly romantic and nostalgic preservation of individual buildings into a broad disciplines supported by a number of key international governmental and non-governmental organisations, the subject of numerous charters, conventions, declarations and manifestos. Concurrently, especially by embracing inhabited settlements such as historic areas of cities, it has confronted issues that extend substantially beyond those at its nucleus.

> Nevertheless, architectural conservation remains rooted in its essentially European, Christian and monumental origins, underscored by a curatorial approach that is dominated by academics, archaeologists, specialist professionals and crafts, and with a protective, legislative basis that is contingent upon architectural and historic interest. (2007, 6)

The future trajectories of cities around the world provide ample reasons why the need to pluralise our points of focus as well as engage with broader epistemological and ontological debates is becoming increasingly prescient. Over the coming decades, 95% of the world's urban population growth will occur outside Europe. In a fast growing region like East Asia, Tokyo and the Pearl River Delta and Shanghai-Suzhou regions are all expected to be home to more than 40 million residents within the decade (United Nations 2008). But as Edensor and Jayne (2012) remind us, we need to look beyond the mega-cities to understand the greatest level of change, with small-medium cities in the non-Western world experiencing the highest levels of population growth over the coming decades.

Heritage governance and policy

The global future of cities is just one of the reasons why a more detailed and balanced picture of the institutional landscape shaping international policy in the museum and heritage sectors is still required. Finally here, in the analysis of this sector, studies on UNESCO remain ever popular. While sustained attention can be justified on the back of the organisation's formative influence on introducing and shepherding cultural policy at the international level, it is also the case that UNESCO is all too often invoked as a metonym for a globalised arena of heritage governance. In the decades after World War II, the institutional landscape associated with heritage policy and governance continually diversified in large part following the broader trends of that amorphous entity known as 'global civil society', what Keane (2003) describes as the 'new cosmology' of the twentieth century:

> a dynamic non-governmental system of interconnected socio-economic institutions that straddle the whole earth … an unfinished project that consists of sometimes thick, sometimes thinly stretched networks, pyramids and hub-and-spoke clusters of institutions and actors who organise themselves across borders, with the deliberate aim of drawing the world together in new ways. (2003, 8)

One of the intriguing developments in this sector was the growth in regional-based organisations, and in particular the growth of non-Western alliances and bodies. The Aga Khan Trust For Culture is one of several non-Western agencies that has long been operating internationally, but whose influence is barely recognised in the English language literature on cultural heritage. The trust's cultural and geographic mandate is to work with and for communities of the Muslim faith. Although actively engaged in a number of Western European countries including the UK, Portugal and Switzerland, as well as in Canada and the USA, many of their long-running heritage projects have been housed within a larger organisational remit of social, cultural and economic empowerment in countries across Asia and Africa where Islam is a prevalent faith. As the umbrella institution, the Aga Khan Development Network (the Trust for Culture being one of its member organisations) is made up of agencies dedicated to health, education, economic development and the advancement of civil society. Today, the vast majority of the network's activities are financed through a highly advanced set of partnerships with national governments, private donors and a variety of non-governmental bodies. Presently, the Aga Khan conducts operations through collaborations with 35 governments and their aid agencies and around 20 organisations that might be best described as multi-lateral. Examples of this latter

group include the African and Asian Development Banks, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, World Health Organisation and International Atomic Energy Agency. A number of projects have also been co-sponsored by universities around the world, cultural sector institutions like the Smithsonian and through grants from the Ford, Gates and Shell foundations. Yet in discussions of international heritage policy, there are few studies that critically consider the role the Aga Khan has played in influencing policy-making at the national, regional or global scale.

Similarly, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, or ISESCO, has been in operation for more than three decades, and currently has a constituency of 50 member states. Much like its UN 'equivalent', the organisation works across a number of sectors, through a range of activities that aim to advance national capacities, build knowledge and research, and create productive networks across its member states. The area of culture and heritage has remained a priority area for the organisation, and is now regarded as a key mechanism for fostering inter-cultural and inter-civilisational dialogue and a respect for cultural diversity. ISESCO's 30-year anniversary in 2012 offered an opportunity to reflect upon its activities to date. As of May that year, the organisation had undertaken '3049 training sessions, workshops, specialised meetings, conferences and educational, scientific and cultural symposia', published '818 books and studies … in Arabic, English and French' and awarded '2908 scholarships to students from Member States and Muslim societies worldwide' (ISESCO 2012, 21). From among its many other activities, ISESCO has also established extensive programmes of scientific research, passed declarations which inform the national policies of member states, established numerous educational programmes and created a portfolio of initiatives for protecting Iraq's cultural heritage.

Given the long-standing critique of UNESCO for its in-built Eurocentrism, there is now a need for the cultivation of ethnographic style studies that consider more closely whether organisations like ISESCO produce 'Islam-centric' or occidental forms of cultural governance? It also seems we are entering a new geo-political era where alternative institutions and knowledges are addressing long-standing imbalances in the geographies of international cultural policy-making. It remains unclear, however, to what degree these global economic shifts are delivering non-Western cultural sector institutions the platform to influence cultural policy at the 'global' level. To put such questions in context, an English-language Google Scholar search with the terms 'ISESCO and heritage' returns fewer than 20 articles which mention the organisation, in a modest total of 304 results.[5] In contrast, a search on 'UNESCO and heritage' returns 108,000 results, with the number of articles appearing to stretch into the tens of thousands.

ISESCO and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture are examples of organisations that emerged under very different historical circumstances to those that formed in Europe or North America. In Europe, anxieties about heritage were institutionalised on the back of the destruction of two world wars, and in the USA the heritage paradigm was largely formed around the National Parks movement and the historic preservation of cities like New York (Mason 2009). Turning our attention to organisations in other parts of the world reveals how they have been concerned with very different issues, such as the links between culture and national sovereignty, discourses of civilisation vis à vis post-colonial identities, or the manifold challenges associated with development and 'modernisation'. Yet we know very little about how these historical legacies shape the activities and mandates of these

organisations today, or in turn how that creates particular dynamics in today's international heritage governance arena. To date the globalisation of heritage governance and stewardship has essentially been considered from a Western perspective, as Smith (2004, 2006) has noted. While organisations such as UNESCO, ICOM and ICOMOS have undoubtedly played a signal role in shaping this sector since the Second World War, this geographical imbalance in the analysis leaves us largely blind to what is going on in other parts of the world and the ways in which the cultural policy sector is changing at the global level in tandem with the economic shifts now underway.

Conclusion

As both heritage practice and theory evolve, questions around Eurocentrism continue to be more pointed. But it is a critique and argument that needs to be articulated carefully. The risks of essentialism remain ever present, and attempts to offer alternative, new or counter-directions involve considerable challenge. But if we are to better address the relationship between disciplinary knowledge and our contemporary political economy, then such pathways need to be pursued. The future of cities around the world is a helpful signpost to the various global changes, which, in all their complexities, bear down upon discussions of heritage. Recent debates in urban studies, as noted here, suggest there is much to be gained from analytical approaches that de-centre Europe as their interpretative point of reference. It also appears we need to respond to a new geo-political era where alternative institutions and knowledges will address previous imbalances in the geographies of international cultural policy-making.

Read together, the examples offered here strongly point towards the need for what Shepherd and Haber (2011, 113) refer to as 'a defence of the open' and 'a commitment to articulating a set of counter-practices, forms of practice that run against the grain of unexamined practices and received ideas'. Their arguments, as they pertain to archaeology, resonate with those of Robinson, Chakrabarty and Connell in the suggestion that both theory and practice are most vibrant when they engage with locality in meaningful ways, as a concept of complex entanglements. In support of such arguments, I have suggested here through a discussion of theory, methodology and the examples of modernity, cities and international heritage governance why our choice of research foci and analytical frameworks warrants closer, critical scrutiny. But I have also tried to emphasise that it this is not a task of dismantling or analytical deconstruction. Neither it is about missing the opportunities of conceptual pluralism available today by constructing theoretical dichotomies between the West and non-West. Rather it is about investigating those forms and concepts of heritage and heritage conservation which continue to be overlooked or theoretically subsumed, and eliciting their deep histories and complex futures with analytical acuity.

Notes

1. Such texts sit within a long tradition of comparative accounts of world architecture, many of which exhibit problematic imbalances and prejudices. For a notable example, see Bannister's Fletcher's (1954) 'tree of world architecture'.
2. In his concluding discussion on the future of archaeology theory, for example, Johnson (2010) includes a section dedicated to 'diversity and pluralism'. Interestingly, no men-

tion is given is to the deeply ingrained geographical biases of scholarship today, and what might be gained by incorporating non-Western epistemologies and methodology. Instead pluralisation pertains to the inclusion of non-canonical approaches in Europe and North America (2010, 231–233).

3. For an excellent critique of the narrative of indigenous research, see Shepherd and Haber (2011).
4. As studies by Crinson, Chang and others illustrate, questions of geographic and historic focus have a strong bearing on the value of interpretive theory, in their case interpreting the global spread of modern architecture. Indeed, I would argue that a universalist conception of heritage, even when conceived in its most critical form, risks reducing too much theoretical debate to the realm of aesthetics.
5. The total number of results for the search was 304, the vast majority of which were citations. Apart from the 20 or so published articles, the balance was made up of unpublished presentations, and pdf documents. Search conducted 25 October 2012.

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