

Local Heritages of Cosmopolitan Significance: How the Study of World Heritage Situates the 'Ownership' of Architecture

CHRISTOPHER KOZIOL
University of Colorado, Denver

The discussion of globalization often heard among architects revolves around a desire for new markets and receptive clients. The wish, or fantasy, is that "new lands," especially those prospering from natural resource exploitation (e.g., the Persian Gulf) or rapid industrialization (e.g., China and Southeast Asia) will welcome the creative spirit and technical prowess of the global practitioner. While "back home" government is often expected to protect properly licensed practitioners, abroad the task is changed to liberalize trade (in professional architectural practice) so as not to be encumbered by *foreign* laws. In schools of architecture, students covet studio projects set in places like Shanghai and Jeddah (especially those with travel to these exotic lands).

While breathless enthusiasm frequently fuels periods of expansion, it also pushes aside that which does not adhere to the anticipated future. In this respect it becomes convenient to steer clear of local controversies. However, when the *local* becomes recognized as important and significant by others beyond its borders, there arises a need to examine the current track of global architectural practice; to ask whether these practitioners are more than technically prepared, but also ethically aware. There are *international* agreements to understand; *transnational* migrations to fathom; and moreover a change in architecture from the parochially nationalist to the *cosmopolitan*. And this is not about style. It is about heritage, a vital and contentious topic in the contemporary world.

One glib interpretation of globalization has it that national states and multi-national corporations are dancing their way through to some new economic order. In this view architects prefer state protection when it favors their interests and global capitalism when it opens up new markets. However, it is a vision absent of the accumulated experiences of places and their inhabitants, and one bereft of any moral compass. Social theorist, Ulrich Beck has recently argued for a view more nuanced with detail and human awareness. He turns to a word first explored in eighteenth century philosophers and finds a new use for it. "Cosmopolitanization means *internal* globalization, globalization *from within* the national societies. This transforms everyday consciousness and identities significantly. Issues of global concern are becoming part of the everyday local experiences and the 'moral life-worlds' of the people."¹ With this perspective, policy controversies and the battle for open markets take on different meanings. Architectural heritage becomes more than regulatory burden or design restriction.

Architects have long protected their professional privileges by enlisting the regulatory powers of the State.² While there has sometimes been resistance from external forces, and even internal dissent, the benefits of trade restriction has become a staple, institutionalized as licensure, in the United States of America and in many other countries. The sovereignty of the modern-nation state has served the architect as businessperson well. Even inter-national agreements regarding practice have been orderly if

not always seamless. The concepts of reciprocity and collaboration have allowed for the emergence of first national and increasingly multi-national practices.

However, the “rules of the game” that so often govern new construction, are often much more contentious as regards the treatment and development strategies applied to heritage resources, including architectural works. Architects are generally, if superficially, familiar with the nineteenth century debate between John Ruskin and Emmanuel Viollet-Le-Duc and their followers.³ However, what is considered by many designers to be a “philosophical” debate (more appropriately, ideological difference) can also be viewed as a transformation of aesthetic preference into legally enforceable means of control. Within the sovereign borders of England, France, or the United States, the project level and even policy level debates as to “what should be done” were, and are, often heated, but they do not rise to the level of bringing into question the role and structure of modern international diplomacy and the international conventions of nation-states. When such controversies cross borders, they sometimes do.

Before continuing with an examination of the role of architects, it is necessary to realize, and to discuss, the role of archaeology in the recognition and management of heritage. Of specific interest is the connection to nationalism and imperialism that arose alongside the “protection” of cultural artifacts.⁴ Dating at least to eighteenth-century antiquarian expeditions of western Europeans to the eastern Mediterranean, a “science of man” has been enlisted in the service of specific versions of cultural and historic significance. For the purposes of the argument here, the efforts of contemporary conservation architects need to be viewed in this light.

So it is in this context of state-sanctioned architectural professionalism, the ideology of heritage, and the projection of colonial and imperial power via the “science of man” that we examine several contemporary instances of heritage recognition in a globalized world. ‘Heritage,’ although an elusive term in many circles, can be characterized as a socially and institutionally constructed unity, as for example in the United Nations official designation “World Heritage Site.” While ‘history’ connotes a documented past, often substantiated by systematic inquiry and evidence, ‘heritage’ is much more unwieldy; complicated by mythology, folklore, politics, and a host

of other ‘pushes and pulls.’ However, under the broad common banner of ‘heritage’ we collectively expand (and discriminate) further. Within ‘cultural heritage,’ commonality is sometimes downplayed in favor of representations characterizing heritage as a multiplicity of emergent and idiosyncratic expressions of social differentiation, at other times it is about unities.

In 1972 United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) promulgated an international treaty called the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. At the time cultural heritage was said to refer to monuments, groups of buildings and properties with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value. However, since 1972 the lines have become increasingly blurred. Specifically, ‘cultural heritage’ has subsequently emerged as an inclusive and open concept. UNESCO itself now notes that “at one time [cultural heritage] referred exclusively to the monumental remains of cultures, [now] heritage as a concept has gradually come to include new categories such as the intangible, ethnographic, or industrial heritage.” UNESCO not only recognizes this condition, but offers it up as evidence “that closer attention is now being paid to humankind, the dramatic arts, languages and traditional music, as well as to the informational, spiritual and philosophical systems upon which creations are based.”⁵ This insight is made normative through the *Declaration on the Responsibilities of Present Generations Towards Future Generations* adopted by UNESCO in 1997. Specifically linking cultural heritage and future generations is *Article 7 - Cultural diversity and cultural heritage*

With due respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the present generations should take care to preserve the cultural diversity of humankind. The present generations have the responsibility to identify, protect and safeguard the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and to transmit this common heritage to future generations.⁶

The changing institutional landscape of heritage policy and management is not merely a matter of a shifting lexicon. While the modern nation-state remains a major force in heritage conservation, both within borders (e.g., national preservation policy & law) and across borders (e.g., World Heritage Convention), preservationists and architects alike, are currently working in a more *globalized* context than they were even a decade ago. Starting with the

theoretical perspective of German social thinker Ulrich Beck, I argue that the very role of nation-state based policies and accords are being supplemented (and in some ways subverted) by new forms of agreement that come not solely from the interests of the states, but from 'elsewhere', as in sub-national governments (e.g., cities, regions), multi-national corporations and citizen-based initiatives.

SITUATING THE GLOBAL

While the *global* seems the convenient opposite to the *local*, a whole literature has developed around definitions and nuance.⁷ Hence, rather than begin with binary oppositions, it is more useful to situate several terms as they have developed in use, and contextually relate them to issues of heritage conservation. These terms are: *international*, *transnational*, and *cosmopolitan*. I discuss them here as distinct practices, hence, as *-isms*. Internationalism will be familiar to all who are aware of issues of global governance. Transnationalism is both interesting and increasingly important in a world of migrants. However, my focus here is on the concept of cosmopolitanism and the challenge and possibility of the perspective for architects and preservationists practicing globally. Heritage conservation can benefit from an awareness of the differences between these tendencies, particularly as they relate to questions of the control and 'ownership' of the architectural heritage.

Internationalism captures the idea of relationships between nation-states. Although there is the possibility of individuals acting as agents, they are primarily bound by their national identities, and in some cases, as a representative their nation. Within the context of heritage conservation this perspective is most fully embodied by the structure of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Founded as an advisory body to the World Heritage Commission of UNESCO, this grouping of "state parties" and "scientific committees" acts as both a network of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and as professional council of experts. In practice, the meetings of individuals, in their capacities as individuals, and not as governmental representatives, often consists of the presentation or representation where the exchange is simply a matter of, "Here, in my country, we do it this way."

The connotation of *transnationalism* is somewhat different. Once primarily the result of various diasporas and migrations, these generators have been supplemented by the portability and ready migration of capital, a phenomenon increasingly referred to as globalization. So as people and capital become increasingly mobile; with such sometimes going on behind the backs of the nation-states. This is often experienced in heritage field through sites of "ethnic" heritage, where immigrant or settler communities bridged their "home" culture with that of their host nation. We see this phenomenon in both colonial societies (e.g., in Asia, Africa, and South America) and in the "settler societies" such as Australia, Canada and the United States.

Cosmopolitanism is both an old concept, and ideal, dating back at least to the political philosophy of Immanuel Kant, and by some accounts to the ancient Greeks. Cosmopolitanism stands in distinction and contrast to nationalisms. As such, the ideal of cosmopolitanism has been to consciously avert and oppose the excesses of nationalisms. As related to the architectural heritage this has sometimes been expressed through the language of Classicism, as well as the abstractions of early twentieth-century modernism.⁸ Cosmopolitanism has sought an often times illusive higher ground. However, unlike those have sought design refuge in universal styles, I will contend that the ideals of cosmopolitanism, as it relates the architectural heritage, will come through a culturally and politically aware practice.

THREE CASE STUDIES

Three case studies are used here to illustrate the relevant points. They are: 1) controversies in the location and design of two bridges in Germany (on the Elbe River in Dresden and in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley) and their differing outcomes in international (World Heritage Commission) review; 2) the rise of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) like the World Monuments Fund, and multiple interests of Western national governments at Angkor Wat in Cambodia; and 3) the 'sovereign' control of heritage sites by the Indian Pueblos of Taos and Acoma in New Mexico.

Bridges And Cultural Landscapes In Germany

Proposals in recent years for the construction of two major river crossings in Germany have had differ-



Figure 1. Construction of Dresden Bridge



Figure 2. Location of Dresden Bridge

ent outcomes in terms of World heritage status. The Waldschlösschen Bridge over the Elbe in the city of Dresden resulted in the removal of the Dresden Elbe Valley from the World Heritage List in 2009. The valley had just been added to the list in 2004, but was considered “threatened” by 2006.⁹ The World Heritage Commission determined that a truss bridge (over 600 m. including approaches) was intrusive to the point of deteriorating the visual and hence character of the valley.

Another bridge was proposed in 2008 to cross the Rhine River in rural Rhineland-Palatinate. Similarly, the status of the Upper Middle Rhine Valley as a World Heritage Site, designated in 2002, was also brought before the World Heritage Commission. However, unlike the bridge over the Elbe, a subtle design, and the results of a commissioned visual analysis convinced the Commission to not delist this bridge.¹⁰ These differing outcomes not just about design ability, but also about cultural sensitivity and bureaucratic prowess.



Figure 3. Middle Rhine Bridge

Competing To Help In Angkor Wat

Some World Heritage Sites stand out in the popular imagination from the others. In countries like



Figure 4. Angkor Wat Complex

France and Italy, where the Western heritage hegemony has created no shortage of designated sites, the intensity of controversy regarding any one of them might be fierce. However, there are other instances where the entire national economy rests on the treatment of a single heritage site. Such is the case as with Peru’s Machu Picchu and Cambodia’s Angkor Wat. Significant for the discussion here is the attention of foreign heritage conservationists, development aid agencies, and NGOs in conserving and protecting such sites. Angkor Wat accounts for over a two-thirds-million tourist visits, and is likely the destination for at least half of all foreign tourists to Cambodia. The restoration of various parts of the site are being supported by German,

Japanese, French, Australian, Indian, and American governmental and NGO organizations. Coordinated by APSARA (Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap) these efforts sometimes demand regulation of assistance as well as management of tourism.¹¹ Meanwhile, the ticketing and tourism franchise for the site is leased by the Cambodian government to a Cambodian-based multi-national private corporation, the Sokimex Group.¹²

SACRED AND COMMERCIAL SPACE ON THE NEW MEXICAN PUEBLOS

Sky City of the Pueblo of Acoma, and the Taos Pueblo together epitomize the divided spaces of the puebloan Indians of the American southwest. Recognized by the United States federal government as being sovereign nations, these pueblos have greater control over their lands than do sub-national jurisdictions. One of the most prominent



Figure 5. Taos Pueblo in 1941

manifestations of this has been the development of casino gaming on tribal lands. Revenue from this activity has both supported tribal governments and increased tourism and the need for local infrastructure. As a result these communities have developed one set of partnerships with casino and hotel developers and another set with heritage conservationists. The Taos Pueblo is both a National Historic Landmark and a World Heritage Site.¹³ The Sky City of Acoma is managed by the government of the Pueblo, with a collaborative agreement for joint marketing and conservation assistance with

the National Trust for Historic Preservation.¹⁴ However, the tension, between casino based tourism and cultural tourism continues.¹⁵

COSMOPOLITAN SIGNIFICANCE CONSIDERED

Although cosmopolitanism has a lineage going back at least to Kant in the eighteenth-century, several years ago contemporary philosopher Martha Nussbaum revitalized the debate on the topic with a critique of the role of nationalism (dressed as patriotism) in contemporary education.¹⁶ Proposing a more cosmopolitan perspective she stirred a debate on how wide a circle of inclusion need be drawn in the current world. Political philosophers further explored the term in its relation to rights of citizens within and between nation-states. From a more sociological and political perspective Ulrich Beck has taken the argument in a slightly different direction. He maintains that the nation-state centered politics and policy associated with nineteenth century modernity has lost influence in the face of economic globalization. In contrast, Beck argues that both transnational cooperation and sub-national identity movements (often place-based) are transforming politics.

National states present a threat to the inner complexity, the multiple loyalties, the social flows and fluids that the age of globalisation has caused to slosh across their borders. And conversely, the national states can't help but see such blurring of borders as a threat to their existence. Cosmopolitan states, by contrast, emphasise the necessity of solidarity with foreigners both inside and outside national borders.¹⁷

In this light, we might ask how well-prepared are global practitioners in understanding what is significant about cultural landscape of "global importance"? How does one design a bridge that protects what is cherished, and simultaneously, what is regulated by international convention? Being able to do so is important to contemporary global practice. Might it not be a wonderful insight for a global practitioner to not just pursue opportunities in glamorous sites of global heritage preservation? What lies in the next valley over from Machu Picchu, what remnants of Khmer culture other than Angkor Wat are in need of protection? How does one develop casinos alongside sacred sites, or does one?

These are all questions for current and future generations of global practitioners, but they are not always the questions we are asking in our schools. Provoca-

tive readings in contemporary political philosophy and sociology are no assurance that architects will be better suited for conventional practice, but I would contend, they can stimulate a questioning that make for a richer career and better outcomes.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Beck, "The Cosmopolitan Society and Its Enemies," 17.
- 2 Cuff, *Architecture; Saint, The Image of the Architect; Woods, From Craft to Profession*.
- 3 Starn, "Authenticity and Historic Preservation."
- 4 Athanassopoulos, "An 'Ancient' Landscape"; Browning and Hitchens, *The Elgin Marbles*; Clark, *Archaeological Perspectives on the Transmission and Transformation of Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean*; Fowler, "Uses of the Past"; Leone et al., "Toward a Critical Archaeology [and Comments and Reply]"; Silberman, "From Masada to the Little Bighorn"; Trigger, "Alternative Archaeologies."
- 5 "Cultural Heritage: UNESCO Culture Sector."
- 6 UNESCO, "Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations: UNESCO."
- 7 Cox, *Spaces of Globalization*; Easterling, *Enduring Innocence*; Ong and Collier, *Global Assemblages*.
- 8 Colquhoun, *Modernity and the Classical Tradition*.
- 9 "UNESCO Tells City No Bridge Will Do"; "'Dresden Will Survive' UNESCO's Decision."
- 10 "Bridge Plan Threatens Mythic Rhine Valley Site"; "UNESCO World Heritage Centre - Decision - 34COM 7B.87."
- 11 "APSARA - APSARA Authority"; "Angkor - UNESCO World Heritage Centre."
- 12 "SOKIMEX GROUP : Cambodia."
- 13 "Pueblo de Taos - UNESCO World Heritage Centre"; "About Taos Pueblo - New Mexico Native American Indians."
- 14 "History of Acoma Pueblo & Guided Tours: Sky City Cultural Center"; "New Mexico's Acoma Sky City Becomes 28th National Trust Historic Site."
- 15 Markowitz, "Cultural Tourism."
- 16 Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism."
- 17 Beck, "The Fight for a Cosmopolitan Future."

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