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Rodrigo Christofolletti

# International Heritage

New Approaches, Old Concerns

 Springer

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*seagulls of Porto:*  
*epitome of a happy time...*

# Foreword: Towards New Chapters in International Heritage

Maria Leonor Botelho<sup>1</sup>  
CITCEM—FLUP<sup>2</sup>

Assets, actors, values, discourses and narratives are now key words in the field of Cultural Heritage, whether on a local, national or international scale. The most recent and striking events of the twenty-first century, such as health crises, climate change, natural disasters, war conflicts or tensions between states, force us to reflect on the impact and models of negotiation at international level in the field of Cultural Heritage. With UNESCO, and particularly since the 1960s, international cooperation has become more than an instrument, it has become a principle in international doctrine.

However, hegemonies, imbalances and conflicts between actors on an international scale have not ceased to emerge. It is therefore understood that the Convention for the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005) aims to establish a new legal framework for international cooperation, reaffirming the sovereign right of states to adopt cultural policies. Nonetheless, problems that are difficult to resolve continue to be identified, such as the illicit trafficking of cultural goods, the iconoclastic destruction of sites on the World Heritage List (and, of course, others that have not achieved this recognition) or discussions about the restitution of goods, whether decolonial or even linked to the Holocaust itself.

These issues, present in the twenty-first century, raise a number of questions: how can negotiations between sovereign states be mediated while recognising their cultural diversity? Is international doctrine, conceived in a given historical context,

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capable of responding to new challenges and a reality as different as the one we live in today? Is it legitimate to assume universal principles of action in an increasingly compartmentalised world? How can the supposed universality of Cultural Heritage be negotiated with multiple experiences, particularly in “times of alluded disorder”?

Understanding Cultural Heritage in the twenty-first century implies, more than ever, negotiation, regardless of the scale of recognition of the attributes and values of safeguarded properties. Patrimonialisation is increasingly seen as a “process of social and cultural construction resulting from the production of multiple representations by different social groups and the evolution of heritage values that makes it possible to highlight the role of communities” (Botelho & Albuquerque, 2020, 8).

Initially, this process materialised at national level, in a clear affirmation of a top-down representation of what National Monuments are. On a broader scale, we are all aware of how the 1960s were a turning point, embodying what Françoise Choay (2010) defined as the “triple expansion” of heritage (geographical, typological and chronological). It cannot be said enough how the 1972 Convention is, symbolically, politically and doctrinally, the corollary of a process of broadening the scale of recognition of national to world heritage.

Another layer of heritage institutionalisation is being affirmed, now recognised on a global scale. This opens the door to a new paradigm, that of negotiating discourses, policies and even actions on an international scale. In this context, we cannot fail to mention the Burra Charter (ICOMOS, 1999), which was a milestone in the introduction of the concept of cultural significance as a central point for heritage management, adding to the principle of negotiation between institutional players, that of negotiation for heritage values on their various scales. And this is why we also invoke the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Council of Europe, 2005) because it shifts the focus, until then centred on (material or immaterial) goods, to the “people [who] identify” values in goods that are now assumed to be “resources inherited from the past” (Article 2, Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 2005).

This is the fundamental motto of this book: the realisation that the prerogative of signalling what should be safeguarded for people has been transferred to them. It is therefore with natural satisfaction that we have to reflect on the work that is now being presented—*International Heritage: new approaches, old concerns*—which seeks to reflect on current issues (both emerging and urgent) and assert itself as a turning point in this field. Rodrigo Christofolletti sees it as both an arrival (a celebration and a reckoning, as he says) and a starting point. Focussing on the issues associated with International Heritage, it is a key work in the author’s consolidated scientific and pedagogical output which, by discussing themes that have been troubling him for several years, now presents old concerns with new perspectives, in other words, new approaches. This book was produced in the context of the post-doctoral mobility project that Rodrigo Christofolletti carried out at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto, hosted by the Interdisciplinary Centre “Culture, Space and Memory” (CITCEM), during the 2023/2024 academic year. I had the



privilege of supervising his mobility and the opportunity to follow the development of the discussions and reflections that are published here.

I share many of these concerns with Rodrigo Christofolletti, with whom I have worked for several years. I also believe that in this decade of the 2020s, in particular, we are living through a turning point in the field of international heritage. We are facing a unique moment that can perhaps only be compared to the landmark 1960s. It's no small wonder why the Venice Charter is still so celebrated, having just turned 60 in 2024. Aware today of the power of negotiation on the most diverse scales, and using the resources present in Cultural Diplomacy, aren't we facing the opportunity(s) to open a new chapter in the field of International Heritage by bringing new perspectives to old (but also new) concerns?

Porto, Portugal  
17 June 2024

Maria Leonor Botelho

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