

Position Paper Heritage and Identity
LDE Centre for Global Heritage and Development
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Collective and personal identities alike strengthen narratives that encompass claims about belonging, rights, or ownership. Such claims take shape with reference to imaginations of the past. What is perceived as heritage, both tangible and intangible, can therefore have great impact on processes of social inclusion as well as exclusion. Heritage and Identity touches upon the processes by which heritage is being defined, in the present and the past, and across a great variety of policy contexts. Here, one point of departure is the Faro Convention (2005), which emphasizes the importance of heritage from the perspective of human rights and democracy, highlighting its relevance in terms of societies, communities and people. This is evident where it states that “cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time” (Council of Europe, 2005). This approach to heritage also resonates in the policy documents of national as well as international bodies. Policy documents issued by UNESCO, OECD and UNCTAD (focussing on respectively culture; economic cooperation and development; and trade and development), all highlight the importance of cultural heritage in both local and global contexts.

The Heritage and Identity group focuses on three themes: (1) Sustainability; (2) Ownership and (3) Materiality.

1. Querying *sustainability* from the perspective of heritage, demands exploration of the relationship between tradition and innovation. The Sustainable Development Goals acknowledge the societal impact of heritage related practices on society in several of the objectives. These involve its relevance in terms of governance, the relevance of space in relation to people, conservation and adaptive re-use, well-being and tourism. But how can more sustainable societies be connected to, and be anchored in a past? Heritage calls upon sustainability in various capacities. These range from the degree to which heritage related objects, places and practices can be and should be sustained, to the capacities in which that what is considered heritage can contribute to sustainable societies. The processes through which heritage comes to be constituted, or at other occasions is abandoned or even destroyed, demands exploration, ranging from participatory heritage practices to processes of governance. This connects to the various threats menacing the sustainability of heritage, such as natural disasters, pollution and congestion. From the perspective of heritage and identity, sustainability can be considered as transversal in relation to the themes *ownership* and *materiality*. As a matter of fact, the term has an encompassing meaning that extends beyond the environment and includes economy and society.
2. The group focuses on interpretations and exploration of what *ownership* might constitute, as a key concept defining the relation between people and what is regarded heritage. This involves notions such as appropriation, claim making, custodianship, authenticity, recognition and identification and how these are interpreted in given contexts. In this sense, ownership relates to both shared as well as contested heritage, and the possible challenges, tensions and societal conflicts that such heritage can pose. Debates relating to the restitution of heritage, looting, colonialism, and the black lives matter movement, have made the need for a critical reflection on past and present heritage practices even more evident. Such debates call for the reconfiguration of societal categories within which heritage can be located, thus having a bearing on encompassing notions of citizenship.

3. Heritage often has a material dimension, relating to objects, places or landscapes. Material things play a specific role and are central to 'heritisation' and its social and political implications. *Materiality* also refers to technology, and its use to record and disseminate heritage; the role of museums as well as of private collectors; digitisation; the role of craft for heritage preservation, but also in itself for the preservation of intangible heritage. Comprehending the agency and materiality of objects, but also of architecture, city and landscapes allows for the exploration of linkages between what is considered heritage, as well as the kind of relevance attributed to it in societal contexts.

The three themes specified above demand research conducted from various disciplinary perspectives to be brought together and cross referenced. The emphasis given to policy permits the interception of emerging issues at the international, national and local level.

Plan of action

The Heritage and Identity group wants to create traction, across the many disciplines which the LDE framework encompasses, with respect to the themes laid out above. Two instruments are important in strengthening a multidisciplinary research community around these themes and to stimulate future research into Heritage and Identity. First, the organisation of regular research meetings. This will allow members of the group to present their work, and will also allow for networking with respect to, for example, new funding opportunities. Secondly, the group will engage in activities that extend the CGHD network in order to expand the network of researchers across the universities of Leiden, Rotterdam and Delft.

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