

The magic list of global status

UNESCO, World Heritage and the agendas of states

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The fate of good intentions: UNESCO, nation-states and the globalising of heritage

In a world populated by global signifiers, paradigms and buzz words, 'heritage' (with locally equivalent terms in non-English-speaking countries) stands out as conspicuous in its normative resonance, particularly when linked to the expressions 'cultural heritage', 'natural heritage' or 'world heritage'. These terms stand for an array of normative as well as commercialised values attaching to the preservation, restoration and display of history, culture and nature. For various purposes, heritage in its multifarious guises is endorsed simultaneously by a global bureaucratic apparatus (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO), a global tourist industry, and national governments. In the 1960s and 1970s 'heritage' was the catchcry for strident campaigns to save the endangered material and natural world from depredation, culminating at the global level in UNESCO's adoption of the World Heritage Convention in 1972. As David Lowenthal (1998) has evocatively shown, the contemporary cult of heritage was a result of the successes of these movements, and the term is fully institutionalised and commercialised as a condensed label for the valorised past – or, as one critic has defined it: 'a mode of cultural production that gives the endangered or outmoded a second life as an exhibition of itself' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 168). Such is the iconic status of the heritage trope that although 'heritage' and its associated assumptions have been subject to continued interrogation and refinement, most professionals and academics who critique its application and definitions ultimately rely on the term, whether because there is no adequate alternative, or because they have a key stake in the term's preservation as a carrier for their own alternative models (see, e.g., Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996; Smith 2006).

Although UNESCO was neither the originator nor sole custodian of the leitmotif 'heritage' and its associated ideas, none could dispute that it is today the indisputable global-level instrument which mobilises resources, reproduces dominant arguments and rationales, establishes program agendas and policies, and dispenses status surrounding the conservation and preservation of the thing called 'heritage'. For at least a decade UNESCO's leadership, assemblies and associated organisations

have pronounced that its expanding cultural programs aim towards mitigating the destructive effects of 'globalisation', particularly the cultural globalisation represented by the commodifying and homogenising culture industries of capitalism. The rhetoric of UNESCO's key texts (its conventions and declarations) position the organisation outside the threatening globalising processes of the world ('bad' globalisation), but UNESCO itself is a prime expression of a countervailing form of beneficent (or 'good') globalisation, as expressed in its advocacy of world-wide protection of cultures and their valued tangible and 'intangible' past by means of protocols, declarations of universal principles and, most crucially, the compilation of inventories. Moreover, 'World Heritage', which UNESCO promotes and numerous cultural and tourism industries rely on, has emerged from the process of globalisation: 'World Heritage, like world's fairs and museums, are [*sic*] part of a world system, within which the world is to be convened, a world image projected, and a world economy activated' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006: 163).

To many, stating that UNESCO is a global instrument may seem trite and unremarkable. The heritage movement that has become channelled and appropriated by UNESCO reflects a long history of internationalism, with its origins in late-eighteenth-century romanticism, enlightenment universalism, and a missionary zeal among intellectuals aiming for human betterment by cooperating across national boundaries. This was consolidated in the post-World War Two period by a widely shared determination to overcome the destructive forces of racism, exploitation and international strife, represented by the formation of the United Nations and its agencies, including UNESCO. It is thus understandable that UNESCO's supporters are offended or perplexed when the institution's programs are critiqued, since this implies a flaw in their undoubtedly good intentions for the world and the fuzzy but evocative founding rubric of UNESCO: 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'. My point here is that despite the laudable universalist ideals of many dedicated intellectuals and practitioners involved in UNESCO's array of heritage conservation programs today, the globalised and institutionalised heritage system has not overcome nation-state-based power structures and nationalist agendas, but has rather enhanced them, and this severely compromises the ideal of forging a countervailing meta-national zeitgeist evoked by the term 'World Heritage'. As Michael Herzfeld has recently remarked with specific reference to UNESCO and cultural heritage programs: 'while global mobilization may in some respects be an attempt to supersede nationalism, it can also foment it', a point made by other critics as well (Herzfeld 2008: 146). The most conspicuous recent example of this has been the nationalist-infused confrontation between Thailand and Cambodia, which exploded in early 2008 following the nomination of the Preah Vihear temple site to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

This chapter addresses the influence of UNESCO's global reach and functions, not by pointing to a Foucauldian-style dominance at the level of 'discourses' of heritage or the imposition of a world cultural regime, as some critics have done, but rather by drawing attention to the organisation's authorising role in assigning 'World Heritage' as a status, one that is crystallised in the instrumental-symbolic function



Figure 1.1 Demonstrators of the People's Alliance for Democracy demand the prosecution of the Thai cabinet for endorsing Cambodian nomination of Preah Vihear temple as a World Heritage site, July 2008 (Photo courtesy Bangkok Post)

of the World Heritage List and its generally unintended and uncontrollable consequences. UNESCO's influence with respect to heritage signification lies far less in its institutional powers, which are relatively weak in formal legal terms. Thus, though the World Heritage Convention is nominally binding on member state signatories, the obligations on states concerning conservation do not override domestic laws or states' sovereignty, and effectively amount to 'non-binding political or moral ideals' (Atherton and Atherton 1995: 637–38). UNESCO's power in the sphere of heritage resides in the application of normative pressure and the harnessing of symbolic capital for a variety of constituencies, including professional bodies as well as (sometimes competing) elites in member states. Viewed from this more anthropological perspective, UNESCO's principal function in the global and cultural arena, which it has been central in constructing, is to establish and perpetuate the technical and symbolic legitimacy of its ever-growing list of 'World Heritage' sites and, most recently, the so-called 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity', assembled in 2008. Simultaneously, these lists also act as status-conferring artefacts in the competition between nation states for global status and for their own internal purposes.

In this chapter I argue that one recent claim that the so-called 'Authorized Heritage Discourse' (for which UNESCO is the principal global-level purveyor) is



Figure 1.2 Cambodian soldiers patrolling at the Preah Vihear temple site as border tensions with Thailand escalate, July 2008 (Photo courtesy *The Nation*)

Eurocentric and crypto-imperialist is both redundant and a conceptual red herring: it misrecognises the real locus of power and exploitation in the global heritage game, which is the nation-state and not any dominant global institutional structure or discourse of heritage classification. My main point is that UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage program is as much, and probably more, a creature of its member states and their agendas as it is an instrument of UNESCO's specialists, intellectual apologists and affiliated professional bodies of conservation specialists. This state of affairs stems largely from the structure of the organisation and its treaty-style conventions, which mirror the parent UN body in making States Parties the key actors, thus leaving all key processes at a country level in the hands of national elites. That is not to say that the technical-normative and administrative systems presided over by UNESCO are not significant – they perform critical functions in allowing various actors to co-exist and maintain legitimacy through overseeing processes and authorising buzz words. However, they are not the key instrument that perpetuates marginalisation and dominance in the sphere of ideology and cultural symbolisation. I argue in this chapter that the World Heritage List (and other lists) has a simultaneous technical and normative function – that is, it both endorses technical processes of conservation, interpretation and management, and confers global recognition of sites. In the process UNESCO's professionals and consultants who work in this field reproduce their own status, identity and legitimacy in the technical order of conservation work. We might describe core administrators and their intellectual buttresses (following Turner 2002) as 'virtuous cosmopolitans' on the

world stage who perpetuate the necessary myth that the world can be united by universal respect and amity through promoting heritage conservation – epitomised in the central legal-normative affirmation of the World Heritage Convention that there is a 'common heritage of mankind' requiring protection and promotion (Turtinen 2000: 10). On the level of normative values, the internationalist goals of key UNESCO personnel and affiliates to promote unity in diversity are indeed worthy, but the reality is messier and driven by parochialism and pragmatism at the level of member states.

UNESCO's member states use the nomination process and promotion of world heritage sites for their own domestic agendas of cultural hegemony and state nationalism (besides the well-recognised function of generating tourism income). It is this last mentioned process that exposes the most critical weakness in the global heritage system, highlighting the reality that nation-states have harnessed global systems more than been eclipsed by them. Certainly, many working in UNESCO's conservation programs are aware of the contradictions between cosmopolitan ideals and nation-state-driven realities. The relentless competition for global cultural and political capital between nations on the world stage is conspicuously expressed in competitions for the Nobel Prize and over venues for the Olympic Games (Lovell 2006). It is also revealed in the uses of UNESCO's World Heritage List and its new list of 'intangible heritage', where the thirst for the 'global accolade' among nation-states over the past decade has led to a veritable explosion of World Heritage listed sites (Smith 2002). This all suggests that Ulrich Beck's hope that his favoured 'new game' of interacting trans-national networks may supersede the 'old game' of competing nation-states is a vain expectation (Beck 2005: 3–4). I highlight in a number of examples in this chapter that world heritage sites have various uses for nation-states, and UNESCO's universalist project has been successfully appropriated for extremely pragmatic purposes. Despite this, the heritage system that is sustained by UNESCO persists because of the critical symbolic functions it serves for its key actors.

UNESCO and globalisation, the good and the bad

Perhaps one of the most remarkable characteristics of the rhetoric of UNESCO's key texts and pronouncements is the strategic use of the contrasting value-laden terms 'global' and 'globalisation', central binary tropes against and through which these texts establish the legitimate goals of the organisation's numerous programs. 'Globalisation' in popular usage is almost universally portrayed as a negative, invasive and destructive process, an accepted abbreviation for a demonic '[neo-liberal] globalisation' – the expansion of world capitalism at the expense of the weak nations of the South and their vulnerable peoples. Similarly, the use of the term in UNESCO's pronouncements summons the frightening prospects of a new world order (or disorder) where formerly distinctive ways of life – rhetorically condensed in the rights-laden term 'cultural diversity' – are no longer tenable. The texts of UNESCO's leadership and supporters, like those of its parent body, the United Nations, distinguish the benevolent global scope of the organisation and its allied 'international

community' from the threatening processes of globalisation. Koïchiro Matsuura, UNESCO's Director-General, stated in the conclusion to a speech in France:

In response to the globalisation of the economy, the international community must be resolute in promoting universality in the most profound sense of the word: a type of universality which both challenges all models and acknowledges and respects the contribution of all peoples to universal civilization. UNESCO sees globalisation as extending far beyond economic issues. It disrupts life styles and behaviour patterns, and overturns habits of decision-making and governance and forms of artistic expression. The challenge that it poses for UNESCO is that of perceiving all the complexity of its ramifications, so that in an interdisciplinary and intercultural spirit we can devise strategies and policies to ensure that it works for the benefit of all, particularly those who are at present excluded from it.

(Matsuura 2000: 404)

It is not surprising that country-based UNESCO commissions echoed the same view, which reflected in turn the rhetoric of the United Nations leadership: global effort was needed to contest bad forms of globalisation (see, e.g., UNESCO Task Force 1999; Boutros-Ghali 1995). In its expanding sphere of 'cultural' programs, UNESCO's stated role was now to act as a champion of 'diversity' *against* 'globalisation'. UNESCO's legitimacy in the contemporary world now became predicated on its role as a defender of the world's 'cultures' against globalisation as a destroyer of distinct identities. In affirming universal 'cultural rights', together with the codification, listing and management entailed by this imperative, a global span of organisation and management has been deemed essential to UNESCO's aims (UNESCO 2000: 81–82). This highlights a relatively new ideological rationale for UNESCO: it reflects the new salience of 'culture' which now surrounds a host of hotly debated issues in a post-Cold War world order, a period which has been marked by the disintegration of states, the rise of ethnic conflicts and religious fundamentalisms, the dissolution of borders, rapid population dispersal, and the apparent commodification and homogenisation of cultures symbolised by the spectre of 'McWorld'.

In the 1990s, 'peacemaking' and the promotion of global 'justice' became the leitmotifs of UNESCO under its director-general Federico Mayor, with 'culture' in a wide variety of modes being evoked as both a vehicle (a 'culture of peace') and an end (cultural rights and diversity) for creating a peaceful and tolerant world order (UNESCO 1995; Mayor and Tanguiane 1997: esp Ch. 1). The salvationist imperatives connoted by the epithet 'global' represent a longer tradition of internationalism among intellectuals, and the 'global' prefix might be seen as simply an elaboration or re-badging of older terms that evoke the universal span of humanitarian effort in a spectrum of causes, from the abolition of slavery to the preservation of monuments (see, e.g., Iriye 2001; Lowenthal 1998). It is hardly surprising, then, that many staff in UNESCO's cultural heritage bureaucracy and specialists in ICOMOS see their

organisation standing outside the homogenising globalisation process: this is essentially because they understand 'globalisation' to refer to capitalist market-driven homogenisation and cultural commodification (Askew and Logan 2002). In this they reflect the wider discursive environment of academic and intellectual debate where 'bad' globalisation is denounced and distinguished from beneficial and 'responsible' (good) forms of institutionally-guided globalisation, or seen to require resistance through 'global emancipatory politics' or 'globalisation from below' (see, e.g., Appadurai 2002: 1–21; Bourdieu 1998: 29–44; Holton 1998: 186–204; Woods 2002).

UNESCO, like its partner specialised agencies of the UN, is indisputably part of the multi-faceted phenomenon of globalisation – it is defined both by aims of universalism and operates its programs on a global scale. Some sociologists have gone so far as to propose that the UN and its principled declarations reflect an emergent 'world culture' – this is a sloppy use of the much over-used 'culture' word, used here to refer to a set of shared normative values (Drori 2005). UNESCO might be situated within global integration processes by means of Ulrich Beck's multi-dimensional view of 'globality', a term he coins to characterise the ways that 'we are living in a world society, in the sense that the notion of closed spaces has become illusory'. Beck argues that within this globality there are various logics of globalisation that should be recognised as relatively autonomous, including: ecology, culture, economics, politics and civil society. Such globality is irreversible because of a number of realities that include not only the global networking of finance operations, world trade and markets and the stream of images from the global culture industries, but also the universal demand for human rights and 'the emergence of a post national, polycentric framework of world politics, including transnational actors such as corporations, the United Nations and Non-government Organizations' (Beck 2000: 10–11). Beck, like others, locates the operations of organisations such as UNESCO within the overall condition of global interconnection, transnational governance and movements. In short, this organisation, together with many others, is viewed as part of an evolving world process where transnational organisation and governance through legal and regulatory mechanisms are both necessary and inevitable (Drori et al. 2006; Held 1991).

The prominent anthropologist Ulf Hannerz describes the profusion of international organisations making their presence felt in obscure local places throughout the developing world as 'a veritable carnival of acronyms', expressing a 'metaculture of modernity' layered across places in the world (Hannerz 1996: 53–54). Organisational and juridical/regulatory forms of globality situate the growing activities and claims to influence of the UN agencies in the world. But just as significant – as suggested by Hannerz's portrayal of their role in 'the global ecumene of modernity' – are the moral and symbolic dimensions of the UN's and particularly UNESCO's claims to 'speak for' the world, and their role in generating the iconic language and symbols that stand for universal normative values, or, as Hannerz describes them, 'metacultural commitments' (Hannerz 1996: 53–54). The question that follows this, of course, is: what are the implications and effects of UNESCO's

undeniably global role, its status, and its programs for promoting, classifying and listing the world's 'heritage'?

Critiques and commentaries: UNESCO's 'globalisation' of heritage

UNESCO, its programs and procedures for 'World Heritage', together with the paradigms that these programs reflect, have come in for some scrutiny in recent years by conservation practitioners, academics and others. It is worth considering some of these commentaries and how they explore the relation between UNESCO, the constitution of 'heritage' and global power.

In an essay entitled 'Globalising Heritage', published in 2001, William S. Logan considers the extent to which UNESCO's role might be seen to mirror that of global organisations such as the post-World War Two Bretton Woods institutions, imposing global policies from the developed 'centre' of the world onto the developing 'periphery' societies. Closely affiliated with UNESCO's conservation work as a consultant, Logan takes seriously its global mission of preservation, but he is concerned nevertheless to consider whether UNESCO's global heritage system has imposed forms of homogeneous 'cultural globalisation' onto the non-Western world in terms of preservation practices and interpretation. Writing of UNESCO's key professional advisory groups on conservation, ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) and ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), Logan notes that

these organizations continue to play a powerful role on the global scene, laying down international standards for professional practice – 'world's best practice' – in the cultural heritage field as well as influencing thinking in those fields in less direct ways. In these respects UNESCO and its associated bodies may be said to be attempting to impose a common stamp on cultures across the world and their policies creating a logic of global cultural uniformity.

(Logan 2001: 52)

He lists a number of specific ways that this organisational matrix has influenced conservation, including:

(1) Improving international practice.

For example,
 establishing of codes of international best practice for cultural heritage professionals (such as the ICOMOS Venice Charter 1964);
 imposing common conservation methodology and management plan requirements (for example: designation of World Heritage sites; provision of advice to museums on design, collections policy, interpretation techniques, etc.);

providing training programs and international seminars;
 providing support groups for professionals and communities.

(2) Promoting particular sets of heritage values and conservation practices.

For example,
 the development of international programs designed to encourage Member States to undertake selected conservation actions (e.g., annual Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards);
 the provision of advisory input into national policies on cultural heritage places, museums, folklife protection, and education and training, including through the funding of foreign consultants.

(3) Establishing common management practices in World Heritage sites.

For example,
 the funding of consultants to assist Developing Countries prepare World Heritage nominations according to the World Heritage Committee's 'Operational Guidelines';
 assistance in the preparation of cultural heritage management plans for World Heritage sites (such as for Wat Phou in Laos);
 the monitoring of those plans and policing of World Heritage sites using the World Heritage in Danger mechanism.

(Logan 2001: 52–53)

This would appear to be uniformity of a highly technical order, though these processes have clear substantive implications in matters such as classification and interpretation of sites. Yet Logan is ultimately unconvinced that these measures constitute a significant level of homogenisation imposed from 'the centre', largely because, as he demonstrates, UNESCO has progressively assimilated alternative approaches that have emerged from 'the periphery'. In particular he cites the advent of 'The Nara Document on Authenticity' in 1994, a document issued under the names of both UNESCO and ICOMOS, which affirmed that conservation practice needs to reflect the cultural values of particular societies. It affirmed that variant conservation practices were acceptable and indeed essential – they needed to reflect, for example, the values placed on symbolism in East Asia, which demanded continued reconstruction of religious monuments as opposed to purist preservation that was the norm in Europe. Logan also cites the progressive acceptance of 'intangible heritage' as a further example of the accommodation of alternative heritage forms into UNESCO's global lexicon.

In short, as Logan points out, 'it is no longer acceptable to provide a single, simple answer to the question of how do we identify and save heritage' (Logan 2001: 57). This, he highlights, is the result of the considerable accommodations made by UNESCO to demands to expand alternative modes of heritage. It is clear that Logan welcomes these trends, and in so doing he concludes that rather than imposing uniformity, UNESCO has actively accommodated change from 'the

periphery'. In keeping with his commitment to UNESCO, Logan's principal concern remains technical – that is, how the proliferation of types of authorised 'heritage' around the world is challenging the capacity of organisations and professionals to effectively protect and manage this Pandora's Box. Logan briefly acknowledges the political uses of heritage listing among nation-states, but does not dwell on it, since, as mentioned, he is both committed to the necessity of UNESCO's global conservation management project, and pragmatic about how politics intrudes into all these processes. As for the proliferation of new forms of heritage that have emerged under UNESCO's stewardship over the past two decades, he is less ready to consider how they might reflect UNESCO's principal contemporary role as the distributor of symbolic prizes to competing nations in the global status game.

Logan's conclusion about UNESCO's progressive accommodation of heritage diversity implicitly responds to the somewhat out-of-date judgement made a few years earlier (1996) by J. Tunbridge and G. Ashworth that UNESCO and ICOMOS 'have not hitherto operated in a globally unbiased fashion appropriate to even-handed representation of the heritage of mankind' (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996: 275). The concern of these scholars was to chart the emergence and multifarious applications of the epithet 'heritage' in the late twentieth century, and to discuss the dangerous consequences of this process in terms of economic exploitation (especially tourism and commodification), distortion and trivialisation, and ideological manipulation by political elites. Though succeeding in delineating and describing the many uses of heritage and its 'dissonance', Tunbridge and Ashworth are ambivalent and uncertain when they come to address the 'global' dimension. Identifying UNESCO and its affiliated professional associations as the principal actors in global heritage affairs, on a positive note they suggest that these agencies may facilitate 'international heritage reconciliation' involving restitution of property damaged or stolen in wars (hardly successful in Afghanistan or Iraq). On the other hand, with reference to the expansion of World Heritage Site listing into the Third World, they make the pessimistic point that 'there is a tendency for World Heritage Sites to be used as instruments of national aggrandisement by the more and less developed countries alike, potentially adding to international heritage tensions' (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996: 276). This latter point is certainly prescient, and though their discussion of UNESCO and the global heritage bureaucracy is minimal, Tunbridge and Ashworth succeed in identifying the power of states in the production and manipulation of heritage as a major challenge to the ideal of fostering world amity through global heritage conservation programs.

Jan Turtinen, in common with Logan, has argued that UNESCO is a powerful actor in a global matrix of world organisations, reflecting the propositions of some scholars that a 'World Polity' or 'World Society' is a key feature of the contemporary era (Boli and Thomas 1999; Drori et al. 2006). Turtinen goes further, arguing that UNESCO not only operates as part of an organisational structure, but is 'a powerful producer of culture, and a highly influential actor, capable of defining and framing conditions, problems, and solutions, and thus framing the interests and desired actions of others, especially those of the world's nation-states'

(Turtinen 2000: 5). This argument rests on a number of assumptions, principal among which is the assumption that the procedures and technical criteria embedded in the official determinations of the 'World Heritage' status of various sites have a substantive role in producing uniformity in the meaning of 'heritage' across the globe. The other key assumption is that the bureaucratic units within UNESCO possess the power not simply to mobilise a wide range of groups (such as internationally-recognised specialists and national-level institutions) towards the technical objectives of material conservation and restoration, but that they also actively shape the meanings of particular historic sites through a representational process. Turtinen's model of this process is predicated on the view that UNESCO is both a power 'centre' and capable of producing a hegemonic model of cultural significance. He argues that, as a globalising project, 'World Heritage' involves global standardising and regulating processes and measures. The advent and application of the World Heritage category generated a paradoxical relation 'between the globally dispersed and diverse phenomena and the idea that they, in spite of all disparities, had something in common, and were constitutive parts of a distinct, universal and categorical entity, that is, "the World Heritage of humankind"' (Turtinen 2000: 6). Many would argue in response that 'World Heritage' is simply a pan-national category that recognises and celebrates remarkable human creations, helps mobilise resources for their protection, and then presents these phenomena to a wider world to celebrate and admire – nothing sinister, but well intentioned and benevolent. What, after all, should be problematic, exclusionary, or suppressive about the selection criteria that are applied by UNESCO's World Heritage Centre in evaluating cultural and natural sites? (See World Heritage: The Criteria for Selection at end of chapter).

Drawing on the arguments of a number of social theorists, Turtinen proposes that World Heritage is 'a cosmopolitan political project', one which aims to create a new political as well as imagined community (i.e. 'humankind'). It is a project which is idealistic and reformatory in aims, but also 'highly pragmatic, contradictory, and sometimes hypocritical in practice'. What does this mean? In concrete terms it means that globalisation forges new relationships between the local and the global spheres: that is to say, 'World Heritage' is a type of universalising grammar of rationalist modernity that changes local perceptions and realities. 'World Heritage', in summary, is a translocal and transnational project, and the categorisation and selection that is inherent to this discourse has the effect of mapping the world and selecting sites for conservation priorities in terms of immutable categories such as 'civilisation', 'culture', and 'tradition', which are indeed key paradigms reflected in UNESCO's pronouncements and conventions. It is certainly clear that essentialised concepts have been generated by UNESCO in association with the concept of 'universal value', but whether these universalising terms have really transformed perceptions at national and local levels is less evident. We should also recognise that professionals and academics have opposed the reifications and simplifications that UNESCO has produced, conspicuously in connection with the notion of 'culture' (Wright 1998; Arizpe 1998). There is no doubt, however, that the concept of 'universal value' has been critical in supporting the apparatus of World Heritage and

its list-making project. Turtinen rightly identifies specialist groups – the ‘righteous providers of scientific knowledge’ – as the producers and authorising agents of this idea. The creation of the World Heritage system requires classification and standardisation, as embodied in the nomination process, which involves comparison between sites to rate their value on a hierarchy through the application of a ‘global grammar’ whereby dispersed local sites ‘can be reinterpreted and reorganized as a heritage of humankind ... allowing the sites to become local sites in a global framework and perspective, and to take on new meaning through that framework and perspective’ (Turtinen 2000: 14). But is there anything seriously wrongheaded or insidious about this process, as is implied? That is: are local meanings leached out or distorted in the process of being elevated to a global list? Does the list perpetuate an uneven hierarchy of importance among nations?

No-one could deny that the World Heritage list represents a view that not all sites are equally valuable. The concept of ‘outstanding universal value’ requires selection and evaluation on the basis that some things are more important than others. Yet the criteria for selection have in fact been subject to debate and change, and since the late 1980s UNESCO’s heritage bureaucracy responded to pressures from UNESCO’s assembly to widen the number of listed sites and make the list more representative of its member states. In 2005, Christina Cameron, a conservation professional with long involvement in UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee, noted that there had been a change in the definition and application of the principle of ‘outstanding universal value’ from listing ‘the best of the best’ (‘iconic’ or unique sites) to listing ‘representative of the best’, the latter being a reflection of the necessity for comparison due to the surge in the number of nominated sites of similar character. As early as the 1980s, she notes, the World Heritage Committee was expressing concerns about the meaning of ‘outstanding universal value’, as nominations poured in from States Parties that had signed UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention. In 1992 there were major concerns expressed among UNESCO’s conservation specialists that a burgeoning number of new World Heritage sites were falling below the benchmark of ‘outstanding universal value’ (Cameron 2005: 2–3). Against the specialists’ concerns to ‘maintain standards’ was a countervailing pressure to widen the geographic span of the list, and it was this pressure (combined with soul-searching among UNESCO’s specialists) that led to the adoption in 1994 of a ‘Global Strategy’. This mandated broad and ‘dynamic’ categories of universal application designed to accommodate diverse and complex sites, including cultural landscapes, industrial sites, modern architecture, and inhabited settlements. This Global Strategy, with its newly flexible frame of ‘universal value’, opened a Pandora’s Box, expanding the range of acceptable sites, with their significance determined, in formal terms at least, by the principle of ‘representativity’ (Cameron 2005: 5).

It was in the 1990s that an increasing number of hybrid sites from Southeast Asia began to be listed, places marked by the impress of European colonialism as much as indigenous histories (for example Luang Prabang in Laos, listed in 1995; Vigan in the Philippines, 1999). Though the professionals continued to affirm the importance of rigour and selectivity, they were essentially fighting a rearguard battle in

protecting the exclusiveness and professional sanctity of the list. The irony has been that the conservation purists of UNESCO have been cursed by the very success of the World Heritage program. Turtinen acknowledges the enthusiasm of nation-states in embracing World Heritage for their own purposes, but does not fully admit to the flexibility of UNESCO as an organisation. Though he is right in identifying the specialists and their bureaucratic processes as a source of power, he fails to acknowledge the limits to this power. There are two main reasons for this: 1) for the specialists the list is essentially viewed as a technical instrument that functions to ensure conservation and preservation (ideally, at least), and though they may classify the significance and meanings of sites on a scale of ‘heritage values’, they are not fully in control of the multiple meanings of sites at the national and sub-national level, and 2) UNESCO is not simply a bureaucratic agency: it is, through its assemblies and committees, a forum of states, and bureaucrats and specialists have to respond to them, and change accordingly. So, if we can view UNESCO as a ‘centre’, it is essentially a ‘soft centre’, and a malleable one at that (Askew 2003). One of Turtinen’s points still remains valid, however: that ‘World Heritage’ has established a terrain, or field of competition among states, and UNESCO’s lists have become indispensable to nations’ global visibility and status.

Among critics of World Heritage and its global ramifications are those who might be dubbed advocates of ‘insurgent heritage’; that is, they aim to critically deconstruct the whole notion of ‘heritage’ and critique its global authorising agents (UNESCO in particular) as purveyors of a power regime. Of these, Laurajane Smith is perhaps the most forceful, though she draws on the earlier arguments of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, an anthropologist of folklore, museums and heritage tourism (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995, 1998). The basic argument is that ‘heritage’ is not found, but made. Thus, Stonehenge or the Sydney Opera House are not *inherently* valuable: what makes them valuable are present-day cultural processes. The question of who has the power to define the meaning of the past and the selective construction of the past to support power regimes has been long discussed in the academy and by the burgeoning number of scholars in ‘heritage studies’, notably influenced by Eric Hobsbawm and his ‘invention of tradition’ thesis (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), and by David Lowenthal in his acclaimed book *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985). Smith argues that ‘the idea of heritage is used to construct, reconstruct and negotiate a range of identities and social and cultural values and meanings in the present’ (Smith 2006: 3). Heritage is a ‘discourse’ that acts to make dynamic phenomena inert. The ‘Authorized Heritage Discourse’ (AHD) promotes the view that heritage is innately valuable, representing all that is good and valuable about the past. In common with other critics, Smith sets up a straw man by portraying this AHD as being based on a Western elitist idea of universal cultural values, one which marginalises alternative and ‘subaltern’ heritage, embedded in ideas that privilege monumentality and preservation for various purposes, including the construction of national identities (Smith 2006: 11–12). She identifies UNESCO and ICOMOS as the key global agents that have institutionalised this dominant heritage discourse and perpetuated it through technical and policy processes. In managing

and interpreting heritage sites, these agents actively shape meanings, she argues, because dynamic meaning-making processes are defined out of sites, whose values are seen as immutable and materialised.

Smith is right in identifying UNESCO's fetish for classification, but I suggest that she exaggerates its effects, in particular by underestimating the persistence of nation-states' uses of heritage sites at the expense of UNESCO's universalising illusions. As with Turtinen, Smith's monolithic model of UNESCO's discursive power downplays the importance of its changing uses of significance criteria and the democratisation of the World Heritage List over the last two decades. She certainly acknowledges changes in the span and character of specialists' conservation declarations and principles, but this is not enough for her. This is because her ideological viewpoint is founded on her professional cultural advocacy work as an archaeologist with indigenous people in Australia, whose views of the past and of place are at variance with established modes of treating and 'managing' heritage. She is happy to essentialise the so-called AHD (which she alternatively names as the 'Western AHD'), but hardly seems conscious of her own reification of 'community'. In treating the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (1979) and its substantial revision in 1999 to accommodate people in the decision-making process and acknowledging their links to places, she complains that the charter fetishised 'place' while also reproducing the authority of expertise and paying only lip service to her preferred 'community values'. Allegedly, then, the revised Burra Charter re-affirmed the AHD without changing it.

Similarly, although Smith acknowledges the widening of UNESCO's heritage lexicon in the advent of 'intangible heritage' from the late 1990s, she argues that it did not go far enough, and served to reproduce the idea of hierarchy in selecting 'masterpieces'. She notes, as others have done, that there is a critical contradiction in UNESCO's proclamations to protect and preserve selected intangible heritage, since change is the essence of UNESCO's definition of intangible heritage as 'living culture'. Though she admits that UNESCO's recognition and institutionalisation of 'intangible heritage' marks a trend of change in the AHD, she claims that there has been no fundamental shift in the underlying power of the 'Western AHD', largely because UNESCO and ICOMOS are the principal controllers (Smith 2006: 106–14). Smith's uncompromising conclusion about the alleged persistence of the Authorised (Eurocentric) Heritage Discourse is based on a simplistic portrayal of transformations that have taken place – her postcolonial myth of European dominance is belied by the dominance of non-Western practices listed as intangible heritage, as well as the transformation of the World Heritage List itself and the influence of non-Westerners in key positions in its bureaucracy. I am not being an apologist for UNESCO here, simply affirming that substantive changes have occurred. The problems with UNESCO are its bureaucratic processes and its fetishism for list making, and all changes are channelled through these frames. All this being said, arguments by self-appointed representatives of the 'subaltern voice', such as Smith, misread the character and extent of UNESCO's power, since it is with the nation-states that the capacity for innovation and oppression ultimately lies. Notably, the rise of

intangible heritage partnered UNESCO's proclamations about cultural rights and cultural diversity. Though UNESCO's global heritage apparatus has continually responded to the pressures of its critics, to the insurgents this is never enough to meet their ideals of a 'global cultural commons', presumably free of a rationalising and meddling bureaucracy and presumptuous conservation specialists. The radical solution that lurks beneath the complaints of insurgent heritage advocates is to do away with the heritage apparatus altogether, although this is surely impossible given its global embeddedness.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has rightly highlighted the centrality of the conservation 'List' as the essential artifact of the global heritage project (2004: 57). Contention over global heritage essentially converges on UNESCO's lists – how they are made, and who controls them. We may struggle against this product of the global bureaucracy's rationalist 'iron cage' all we like, but UNESCO and its lists have irreversibly established the terrain and stakes of the contests. The only alternative is to opt out of the global heritage game entirely, and not even heritage insurgents are prepared to do this.

Localities, states and World Heritage sites: preserving the appearance of harmony

Despite the rapid proliferation of World Heritage sites, particularly over the last decade, few academic studies have explored the various processes, negotiations and conflicts surrounding their emergence, management and meaning. Jan Turtinen, as noted already, interprets UNESCO's World Heritage program as a significant project of globalisation, one that involves the mapping and categorisation of places on a world scale according to a 'global grammar' by means of which UNESCO and its professional affiliates objectify the past (Turtinen 2000: 4–6). Turtinen's interpretation is a potentially illuminating framework for understanding UNESCO as an organisation that generates cosmopolitan representations of 'World Heritage'. But the persuasiveness of this interpretation is limited by the lack of any detailed delineation of how this discursive construction is deployed, specifically at the level of particular World Heritage sites. His outline of the nomination and World Heritage listing of Sweden's port city of Karlskrona in 1998 demonstrates little of the alleged hegemonising force of UNESCO's 'cosmopolitan project'. Rather, it highlights how both localities and national governments enthusiastically use the World Heritage List to enhance national status and encourage tourism for the highly pragmatic purpose of generating income (Turtinen 2000: 1–2). In light of this point, it would appear that the ideological project of World Heritage – if UNESCO's programs can be justifiably described as such, which I doubt – is not driven by 'new and powerful actors' as claimed by Turtinen; rather the key actors are old agents with new agendas, namely particular national governments and local conservation lobbies. Indeed, his key example highlights how the World Heritage List has become a resource for Western governments, who aim to use conservation and place marketing to help resuscitate marginal urban and regional economies through tourism. In Karlskrona

there seems to be little dissent among local residents about the 'objectification' of their city's past. The successful nomination by the UK of the City of Liverpool for World Heritage Site listing (inscribed in 2004) is a further example of heritage classifications being used as a status symbol for purposes of economic regeneration. Turtinen's provocative thesis is ultimately unsuccessful because he fails to show convincingly how the legitimising texts and procedures of UNESCO find any opposition – indeed the evident *lack* of opposition to World Heritage discourse is the question demanding inquiry! His own evidence in fact suggests that 'World Heritage' may simply be a re-badging of those monuments and sites already objectified and commodified at the national or sub-national level for very practical and opportunistic ends.

By contrast, James Hevia makes a compelling case for identifying UNESCO as a complicit agent in the cultural homogenisation process in China, *not* by an active process of management or imposition as such, but by virtue of the aestheticised and depoliticised criteria used to determine eligibility and 'World Heritage' significance under the terms of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. In his discussion of the World Heritage site in Chengde, Hevia shows how the Manchu Dynasty palace and temple complex – containing a miniature replica of the Potala of Lhasa (listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 1995) – has been utilised by the Chinese state as a symbol of the harmonious integration by the Han Chinese majority of the Tibetan minority peoples. He highlights the Chinese state's agenda regarding the representation of Tibetan culture as follows:

State curatorship of museum representation serves to transform stubborn difference into colorful multiculturalism, idealizing and depoliticizing the collective expressions of 'minority' groups. The effect is to make any resistance based on material interests or territorial claims invisible within the terms of a discourse on culture, which, whether one is in Beijing, an American University, Disneyworld's Epcot Center, or UNESCO headquarters, seems easy to think of as distinct from social structure, law, and state institutions.

(Hevia 2001: 221)

Hevia argues that the Chinese state's discourse on 'culture' in its domestic conservation programs helps defuse more hard-edged political dissent regarding Tibet's incorporation (surrounding, for example, the state's intervention in the choice of incarnate Tibetan Buddhist lamas). He goes on to demonstrate that the cultural universalism and depoliticised aestheticism embedded in UNESCO's World Heritage site criteria serve to allow the Chinese state not only to succeed in nominating problematic sites such as the Chengde palace complex, but also allow it to capitalise on the prestige conferred by the World Heritage List. Citing passages from the successful nomination document that stress the 'perfect harmony' of materials and symbols in the Chengde site, he argues persuasively that the international vocabulary of cultural and artistic essences authorised by UNESCO and its specialists have played into the hands of an oppressive state with its own representational agendas.

Sites such as the complex at Chengde 'place Tibet firmly within the borders of the PRC' (Hevia 2001: 224). UNESCO has, it appears, avoided any comment on this process of symbolic incorporation of minority groups in China.

In his critical account of the movement for the preservation of the medina (old city) of the Moroccan capital of Fez, Geoff Porter outlines how this preservation campaign drew its strength from an officially-endorsed nostalgia linked to a national narrative that excluded key groups in the population of the spaces of the old city. In 1980, the Moroccan Ministry of the Interior followed up an earlier petition (presented in 1976) to UNESCO for the World Heritage listing of the medina, stressing that its proposed conservation plan aimed not simply to protect and restore buildings, but to reinvigorate the site as 'an ensemble of the social, economic, cultural and religious life that made the particular genius of the medina' (Porter 2001: 124). The case presented was calculated to encompass those key objectives that UNESCO's officials and experts would interpret as a worthy objective of heritage conservation. On a technical level, the nomination was recognised as acceptable because it met three of the criteria stipulated under UNESCO's operational guidelines for implementing the World Heritage Convention: Criterion 3 for sites bearing exceptional testimony to a 'cultural tradition'; Criterion 5 for sites that are outstanding examples of human settlement or land-use; and Criterion 6 for sites that are associated with events or 'living traditions'. Notably, the conservation scheme was used by Moroccan authorities to justify the relocation of 50,000 inhabitants from the medina, a measure which Porter argues was linked directly to an effort to exclude rural immigrants who were deemed by the elite to compromise the urbane Arabic legacies of the old city (embodied particularly in the educational role of the medina's main mosque and student quarter). As Porter notes, the World Heritage Convention 'does not allow for the authentication of heritage not endorsed by the representatives of an internationally recognized state' (Porter 2001: 130). It is not surprising that national-level practices of physical and cultural exclusion enacted in Fez went unrecognised by UNESCO: this is because the states have authoritative voices in claiming the grounds of cultural significance, and the role of UNESCO and its technical affiliate ICOMOS is specifically to assess the nominations in terms of the formal taxonomies of significance framed in the Convention and its operational procedures. Porter argues that the relocation of residents of rural origin out of the medina was not simply an exercise in 'urban redevelopment' (as claimed by the Fez planning authorities) but a symbolic practice of denying the historical role of these rural residents in contributing to Fez's lifeways and history (Porter 2001: 131–32).

Perhaps the greatest irony in the process of determining and representing Fez's historic significance is revealed in the fact that the bibliography of studies submitted to support the World Heritage nomination was dominated by French colonial evaluations and orientalist scholarship. According to one prominent Moroccan intellectual, Abdallah Hammoudhi (echoing Edward Said's thesis), the effect of such colonial science has been to produce static and essentialist concepts, 'bringing to a standstill what has been a changing social landscape' (Porter 2001: 142). Appropriated by

postcolonial nation-states, these colonialist categories help to justify projects of symbolic domination.

The case of Fez also shows how states, through conservation projects, can harness the support of UNESCO and UN-associated agencies such as the World Bank to generate development funding. Thus, the Moroccan government received US\$27.6 million for restoring the medina of Fez. The prominent development anthropologist Robert Hackenberg has argued that cultural heritage sites should be utilised more fully as development projects, and should be funded in order to serve 'local community' needs, particularly in relation to employment and income generation. Interestingly, however, he pays no attention to the ways that heritage conservation projects can be employed by state authorities to symbolically exclude different groups, as noted in the case of Fez, which he actually cites as a successful example of 'development' (Hackenberg 2002).

One of the few studies that considers the dynamics of national-level conservation policy and its connection to the contemporary state's twin concerns with tourist-generated income and constructing national narratives is Maurizio Peleggi's account of state-sponsored conservation efforts in Thailand (Peleggi 2002). Like other students of the politics of heritage conservation in Thailand (Askew 1996), Peleggi links the expanding efforts of Thai state agencies to conserve and restore monuments and sites from the late 1970s to an ideological project of defining 'Thainess' through framing an authorised version of Thailand's national history. In addition, the packaging of Thailand's identity for tourism promotion has been a nationally important official objective, reinforcing the economic imperative for preservation. According to Peleggi, UNESCO's bestowal of World Heritage site status on the historical parks of the old cities of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya in 1991 was important to the Thai government largely because this enhanced tourist-oriented packaging of Thailand's culture and history. Through being validated as a place of world cultural significance by UNESCO, Thailand's image could be re-configured away from its dominant association with sex-tourism and towards respectability (Peleggi 2002: 61). But when viewed from the perspective of the politics of conservation in Thailand, UNESCO appears as just one of the actors authorising and shaping representations of the past, and a minor one at that. The major forces of resistance to a hegemonic rendering of Thailand's past (cohering around key intellectuals and maverick academics championing various communities) have rallied not against UNESCO, but against a number of key state agencies which they accuse of privileging elitist and static interpretations of history – such as the Department of Fine Arts and the Rattanakosin Conservation Committee, which has implemented a plan for the renovation of the old city centre (Askew 2002).

Another major theme highlighted in the few published studies on World Heritage sites is that of the dynamism surrounding religious sites. Thus, James Hevia has noted that the restoration of the Buddhist temples at Chengde has attracted pilgrims and re-activated some popular folk devotional practices, including offerings to deities, the planting of prayer flags, and the piling of inscribed stones as memorials to pilgrimage. Popular religious practices can reinvigorate and attach

meanings to sites in ways that elude official prescriptions of meaning and interpretation (Hevia 2001: 235). This theme of the dynamism of religious sites and their multiple interpretations is also stressed by the anthropologist Sherry Errington (1993) in relation to the Javanese Mahayana Buddhist monument of Borobudur (classified as a World Heritage Site in 1991), but in this case she emphasises how Suharto's New Order Indonesian state attempted to limit people's ritual and imaginative 'framing' of the monument.

The theme of variant meanings is taken further by Bruce Owens in his study of the Buddhist sacred site of Swayambhu, in Nepal. The hilltop stupa of Swayambhu and its surrounding area is located in one of the designated preservation zones located within the Kathmandu Valley, and classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1979. Owens' study is directed not to a direct evaluation of UNESCO's role, but to the dynamism of the site itself, as revealed in the building of a path and wall surrounding the stupa. What he shows is that different ethnic groups and their sponsoring organisations are constructing sections of the monumental path and wall in order to express devotion and identity. There is not one 'local' community involved in this process, but numerous groups, some of which are not locally resident. In the context of Nepal's political changes, he interprets this process as one of ethnic competition for symbolic status. He draws on the anthropologist Margaret Rodman's proposal that particular places need to be seen as 'multivocal': that is, interpreted variously by different social actors (Owens 2002: 281–82). He notes that the continuing status of Swayambhu as a World Heritage zone is important to the Nepalese government, but the role of UNESCO in managing the site is actually minimal. Despite the development of a Conservation Master Plan (in 1989), and the formal requirements for sponsors of building activity to gain the approval of the Nepal Archaeology Department before construction, the actual outcomes are considerably varied and depart from design submissions (*ibid.*).

Owens concludes that Swayambhu is 'increasingly becoming a place of many places'. An overseeing organisation, the Federation of Swayambhu Management and Conservation, comprises a variety of interested groups with different and sometimes competing goals. He notes:

The many different parties interested in Swayambhu's fate, both within and outside the Federation, have differences of opinion about what is to be preserved and for whom. Some favour the traditionally innovative practice of transforming sacred monuments through devotional activity (now possible on a new scale and accessible to many), and others privilege the monuments themselves. Some resent governmental and international interference with local initiatives and standards, whereas others decry the effects of local practices on a heritage they view as belonging to the world.

(Owens 2002: 301)

Owens' study outlines a complex drama being played out around Swayambhu. In this context UNESCO plays a symbolic role that is important to the government of

Nepal, but not particularly significant to the key groups that are re-shaping the site itself. Moreover, the conservation plans enacted under the rubric of UNESCO's World Heritage site requirements seem to be ineffective in the task of managing new constructions around the stupa, and the state agency charged with monitoring the site appears to be limited in its authority. One might ask here: should UNESCO celebrate this as expressing 'cultural diversity', or condemn it as bad conservation management? In this particular case, we can also note that there is no single 'community' acting as a constituency to interpret the meaning of the Swayambhu site; rather, there are many groups.

The magic list and the agendas of states

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the above discussion. First is that the existing studies of World Heritage sites show that at the ground level UNESCO's direct presence in local life is generally limited, and its management stipulations are mediated through national and regional bureaucracies. Second, UNESCO's authorisation of World Heritage status for particular sites is most often the end product of a longer history of conservation projects generated at national and regional levels, and these are animated by varied agendas, some of which clearly involve the physical and symbolic exclusion of certain groups. Third, it is clear that many of the conflicts over the meaning of the past occur outside the purview of UNESCO's World Heritage program, and thus a search for conflicts focusing only on World Heritage listed sites may not in fact capture the full range of confrontations taking place. For example, Michael Herzfeld has studied the complex negotiations over local and national meaning of monuments and artefacts in the Cretan town of Rethemnos. UNESCO appears to have played no effective part in this process of revaluing and representing the past (Herzfeld 1991). In Thailand, the establishment of the historic parks of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya has had little significant impact on the ways of life of local inhabitants, largely because these ancient cities are no longer key centres of population. It is rather in the old centre of Bangkok (Rattanakosin Island) where state conservation policies are having the greatest negative impact on communities.

These controversial internal issues and struggles do not enter the purview of UNESCO's deliberating and policy-making bodies, and in turn this helps reinforce the assumption in UNESCO's key legitimising texts that cultural heritage promotion is a benevolent and neutral process – that World Heritage sites are the uncontested icons of each country's individual 'culture' and 'tradition'. The critical organisational level at which heritage policies and discourses are framed is still the national level, and the practical and symbolic consequences are fought over between people and their own bureaucracies. It is a major irony that, while major world development agencies are incorporating bottom-up programs of community development and resources management (with UNESCO championing these efforts and affirming the role of 'culture' in just about everything), there is no genuinely bottom-up heritage identification process allowed for in the World Heritage listing process. 'Heritage' and the attribution of its meaning need authorisation by

nation-states. Notably, the program for 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity', announced in 1998 as a significant broadening of the heritage concept towards including marginal groups (later consolidated in the 'Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity', 2008), was reliant upon approval from national authorities. UNESCO's program for highlighting these 'masterpieces' relied once more on adding another icon list to circulate among states for status competition. Clearly, no potentially subversive 'histories' will ever emerge through a state-centred nomination process, notwithstanding UNESCO's inclusive rhetoric that accompanied the publicity for this new alternative list. Note the following caveat after UNESCO's enthusiastic invitation to NGOs and local communities to 'take the lead in identifying, preserving and drawing attention to their oral and intangible heritage':

The intangible heritage is vast in extent and concerns each individual, for everyone bears within him the heritage of his own community. The safeguarding of that heritage must be triggered by individual initiative and backed up by associations, by specialists and by institutions; only then will the national authorities take it into account. UNESCO is there to give assistance whenever requested to do so by the authorities of a Member State.

(UNESCO Masterpieces 1998)

As long as UNESCO deems States Parties to be the only authorised representatives of their countries' 'heritage values', the internal political agendas of these states – and the many localised conflicts emerging between these states and their people over the meaning and preservation of places – will remain invisible in the triumphant UNESCO texts that celebrate humanity's creativity, as viewed from the top of the world and the lofty heights of 'The List'.

The following interlinked propositions set out the ways that UNESCO's magic list of world heritage functions to dispense capital and resources in the global arena:

- 1 The World Heritage List is both a technical and iconic status-conferring artefact of global importance that acts to simultaneously legitimise and serve the distinctive interests of UNESCO, its experts, and its member nations.
- 2 At the global level of representation, the World Heritage List enhances UNESCO's legitimacy by virtue of its apparently representative, universal and depoliticised characteristics, celebrating the diversity of human creativity and culture.
- 3 The List derives one potent level of legitimacy from its apparently scientific scheme of classification (criteria of significance) and by virtue of the technical procedures employed to designate significance, develop sites and instigate plans to ensure particular standards of preservation.
- 4 The function of maintaining and governing entry to the List endows the specialists (ICOMOS etc.) with important legitimacy, confirming their role and

identity as specialised and qualified guardians of an object categorised as 'heritage'.

- 5 The List has iconic significance for UNESCO States Parties because it represents a desired status symbol. That is, the World Heritage listing of sites – despite performing functions of an ostensibly technical (conservation) and educational (display) nature consistent with UNESCO's universal and 'neutral' role – acts as a powerful signifier of hierarchy among nations, and generates competition for entry to the List.
- 6 The List also has resource significance for member states because the achievement of World Heritage status for a site attracts income through tourism. In certain cases, the preparation process preceding and following site listing may attract development aid and resources.
- 7 The 'universal' meanings ascribed to sites in the List have little influence on the ways that World Heritage sites are deployed by member states for their own domestic ideological or exclusionary purposes.

Conclusion

As a global organisation UNESCO is a multi-dimensional entity that defines and legitimises itself through activities that encompass deliberation, declaration and official classification, activities that engage the interests of a range of key actors who include: UNESCO bureaucrats; the political elites of nation-states; and intellectuals and 'specialists' (largely among the associated non-government organisations) who play a key role in promoting and implementing key programs. Focusing on UNESCO's 'World Heritage' program as an element of the organisation's cultural programs, I have argued that the global influence of UNESCO is registered not in any monolithic organisational capacity as such, or even in its capacity to enforce protocols and conventions, which is ultimately weak (Atherton and Atherton 1995; Maswood 2000), or in a hegemonising ideological role. Rather its key role in the global arena is to act as a generator of iconic symbols that serve to elaborate and organise an arena of status competition that centres on the multiple symbolic significance of its World Heritage List. This list is multi-valent in its operation, and I refer to it as 'magic' in an anthropological sense as a potent signifier to various actors: the 'List' and the host of procedures surrounding its maintenance serves both as a technical/bureaucratic instrument and a validator of heritage specialists' expertise; listed sites are a symbol of national status for governments; they are a tangible mechanism for drawing development aid for governments and tourism for private and/or state enterprises; the compilation and continuing elaboration of the World Heritage List and others (now including 'Intangible Heritage') validates the continuing activities of UNESCO as an arbiter of cultural status and inclusion – it is a harmony that obscures the forms of suppression and manipulation of symbols by its member states which pursue their own ideological agendas by appropriating globally-endowed status. Despite the best intentions of its advocates, as the umpire and accomplice in the global status game of heritage

listing, UNESCO is a complicit partner in nation-states' domestic projects of cultural reification and domination.

WORLD HERITAGE: The Criteria for Selection

To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of ten selection criteria. These criteria are explained in the **Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention** which, besides the text of the Convention, is the main working tool on World Heritage. The criteria are regularly revised by the Committee to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept itself.

Until the end of 2004, World Heritage sites were selected on the basis of six cultural and four natural criteria. With the adoption of the revised Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, only one set of ten criteria exists.

	Cultural criteria						Natural criteria			
Operational Guidelines 2002	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)
Operational Guidelines 2005	(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)	(viii)	(ix)	(vii)	(x)

Selection criteria:

- i to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;
- ii to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;
- iii to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;
- iv to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;
- v to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;
- vi to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria);

- vii to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- viii to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- ix to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- x to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation

The protection, management, authenticity and integrity of properties are also important considerations.

Since 1992 significant interactions between people and the natural environment have been recognized as cultural landscapes.

Creating the List: Criteria for Selection.
<<http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>>

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