

Heritage, Conflict and Reconstructions: From Reconstructing Monuments to Reconstructing Societies

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In conflict and post-conflict contexts, heritage sites and objects are often considered as things that should be preserved, restored and even reconstructed for the benefit of future generations and for the purpose of restoring communities' shared sense of belonging as well as supporting healing and conflict resolution. On the contrary, this paper argues that if we—the cultural heritage community, i.e. cultural heritage professionals, academics and organisations—are really concerned about future generations and intend to employ culture and heritage in rebuilding post-conflict societies in a positive way, then what is urgently needed today is to extend our focus from the visible effect of conflict to the invisible one; to focus on culture in its totality and in its complexity; and to shift our focus from heritage sites and objects to people, and from the past to the future. That is, our efforts in conflict and post-conflict contexts should be less about preserving heritage sites, objects and monuments; and more about 'preserving', reconstructing and creating the 'possibilities for better futures' (Andraos 2015, secs. 1:12-1:23). In other words, what is urgently needed today is to investigate creative heritage practices that tackle issues that matter to people who are experiencing or have experienced conflicts and to support them in building better futures. In so doing, the paper argues that the utilization of heritage by grassroots 'civil society' groups in Syria offer examples of creative heritage practices that are truly concerned about future generations and can support the rebuilding of post-conflict societies in a positive way.

The paper commences by introducing its theoretical framework and the ICOMOS University Forum workshop where the main argument of this paper was presented by the author. Next, it introduces the larger PhD research project of which this paper forms a part. Subsequently, the paper discusses how the cultural relief activities of Olive Branch, one of the 'civil society' groups in Syria, is arguably an example of heritage practice that is socially innovative, people-centered, and future-oriented.

My argument can be situated within an emerging literature that defines heritage as more than just inherited things but as a cultural process (Harvey 2001) and a discursive construction (Smith 2006), and where approaches to heritage in conflict and post-conflict contexts have diversified. Today, theoretical approaches have broadened to include politics of memory, international aid, human rights and the social roles of heritage (for example see Giblin 2015; Kreps 2014; Winter 2014b; Higuera 2013; Viejo-Rose 2013; Blake 2011; Ashworth 2008; Starzmann 2008; Silverman and Ruggles 2008a; Meskell and Scheermeyer 2008; Ahmed and El-Khateeb 2012). Additionally, heritage-conflict literature now investigates how destruction and loss are part of heritage (Holtorf 2006; see also Harrison 2013); how conflicts can generate new cultural heritage (Fibiger 2015; Sørensen and Viejo-Rose 2015); and how heritage should be less about preservation and more about embracing loss or

change and the subsequent production of alternative forms of knowledge as well as finding creative and empowering ways to adapt (Harvey and Perry 2015; Holtorf 2006).

While the above theoretical orientations and arguments offer inspiring approaches to the questions of heritage in conflict and post-conflict contexts, the situation on the ground is still dominated by conventional heritage preservation practices, which have been largely ineffective in providing sustainable solutions or rebuilding post-conflict societies (Lababidi and Qassar 2016; Al Quntar and Daniels 2016; Gornik 2015; Meskell 2015, 2010). In the case of Syria, for example, the majority of cultural heritage efforts since 2011 have been focused on and shaped around the preservation of iconic tangible heritage; particularly by focusing on the issues of documentation, awareness raising and training of cultural heritage professionals (see (Leckie, Cunliffe, and Varoutsikos 2017; Perini and Cunliffe 2015, 2014b, 2014a) for an overview of these efforts). Fortunately, efforts to bridge this gap do exist. In March 2017, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and Kyushu University in Japan organised an international workshop with the aim to stimulate dialogues between academics and heritage experts and to contribute to developing new policies regarding reconstructions in post-traumatic situations. The workshop, entitled 'A Contemporary Provocation: Reconstructions as Tools of Future-Making', was organised under three themes: "1) from Nara to Nara+20: where is authenticity now?", "2) creating heritage-making futures?", and "3) conservation as management."

This paper is a developed version of the argument discussed by the author in relation to the second theme of the mentioned workshop. The paper reflects on a number of the arguments that took place during the workshop. In particular, it builds on Erica Avrami's argument that loss and destruction can provide opportunities for new kinds of heritage-making through creative processes. The paper also considers that heritage is a renewable resource and that people's individual and collective psychological and behavioural tendencies are shaped by their heritage, and that their heritage is also shaped by them, as discussed by Cornelius Holtorf and Ciarán Benson respectively during the workshop. Furthermore, the paper reflects on the arguments that heritage conservation should be understood as management of change to assert continuity; and that it should assume a social role that addresses the transmission of messages and interpretation of information and ideas, as discussed by Loughlin Kealy and Nino Sulfaro respectively during the workshop. The paper also reflects on Holtorf's argument that heritage conservation should consider that the future holds not only risks that we need to manage but also opportunities that we need to capture in order to make the ideal of heritage preservation sustainable.

The larger PhD research project on which my paper is based investigates alternative approaches to the questions of heritage and culture in conflict and post-conflict contexts by focusing on people and their normative cultural practices of everyday life rather than on heritage sites and objects, and on the present and future rather than on the past (Aljawabra forthcoming). The research project is focused on Syria and it came first as a reaction—both to the grave events taking place in Syria and to the heritage community's responses to them—from a Syrian researcher, the author, who left Syria by the end of 2013 (30 months after the start of the uprising/conflict). The research project, however, is not meant to infer that the case study of Syria is a unique case that requires a special response. Rather, the intention is to use the events taking place in Syria to investigate, discuss and develop new approaches to the questions of heritage and culture in conflict and post-conflict contexts

rather than falling back into conventional and arguably counterproductive approaches. In particular, the research project investigates what constitutes heritage for the people of Syria at this moment in time: what does heritage do in the society? who are the cultural actors in this context? How is heritage being lost, changed or transformed? What might be the future benefits of heritage and how can we utilise it? In so doing, the study employs a qualitative framework through a 'particular' (Abu-Lughod 2005), 'situated' (Haraway 1988) and 'reflexive' (Kraidy 1999) ethnographic research strategy that—openly and reflexively—discusses the research project's knowledge production context. This research suggests two key findings that should be kept in mind before moving on to investigate how new creative heritage practices in conflict contexts might look/be developed. The first is related to the understanding and role of heritage in the society and the second is related to how this understanding is being changed and by whom.

The first finding is that what constitutes heritage for the people of Syria at this moment in time is the shared beliefs, values and traditions that shape the attitudes, behaviour and habits of people. In other words, the concept of heritage is mainly understood as knowledge, as a cultural process, and a cultural product imagined and articulated within everyday socio-cultural and religious practices. This is not about emphasizing a "local" concept of heritage against a "global" one. Rather, this is in line with what Ciarán Benson discussed during the Paris workshop, an evolutionary 'psychological and cultural' heritage of human beings. Heritage-from-below studies has illustrated similar results in various contexts (see for example Robertson 2016; Schofield 2015, 2014; Harrison 2010; Robertson 2008). What is more important in relation to the context of study is that this form of heritage is highly emotional and is always understood as something that can explain as well as guide people's lives (Faris 1986) by their utilisation of it to shape the present and future. This form of heritage has been a crucial theme in modern Arab thought where the a central question is that of cultural authenticity [*al-asala althaqafia*], in other words how to maintain an 'authentic' connection with the past for all aspects of life while working to catch up with the 'developed world' (for further discussion of this in English Language see (Browsers 2015; Aljabri and Abdel Nour 2011; Kassab 2010; Lahoud 2005; Abu-Rabi' 2004; Salvatore 1995; Boullata 1990; Faris 1986). The second key finding is that today, the heritage community is not the only strategic cultural player in Syria but there are, at least, two other main groups of players who also claim to be working for the benefit of future generations: the first is the newly emerged extremist religious groups (ERGs) and the second is the 'civil society' groups (CSGs). Each one of these main groups encompasses a numerous number of sub groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda from the ERGs; and the non-governmental organisations of Olive Branch and Action for Hope from the CSGs.

Investigating the practices of all the cultural players in Syria today is beyond the space of this paper. What this paper will do instead is to examine how Olive Branch (OB) approach and use heritage to improve people's quality of life and to outline what we can learn from OB in this regard. Prior to this, the below section will outline the ERGs' cultural heritage related practices as they constitute both the context in which the CSGs' practices should be understood; and the challenges that we need to respond to in order to positively contribute to rebuilding the society and enhancing peace.

The ERGs are often discussed in relation to the destruction and looting of ancient objects, monuments and archaeological sites (Isakhan and González Zarandona 2017; Smith et al. 2016; Aminateddoleh 2016; De Cesari 2015; Harmanşah 2015). However, what is usually

overlooked is their extensive ideological re-construction and manipulation of the everyday socio-cultural and religious practices as well as cultural expressions and art forms such as poetry, music, hymns [anashid], dance, dress codes and visual culture (for further discussion of this aspect see e.g. Hegghammer 2017; Salazar 2017; Kendall and Khan 2016). These ideological re-construction and manipulation processes are related to collective identity, feelings, emotions and the production of cultural meanings. Also, these processes function at the same level of how heritage is understood, practiced and experienced by people. The results of these processes are various products such as poems, songs, images, and films; and practices that usually involve the performance and consumption of these products, such as the singing of a song, the performing of a ritual, or the wearing of certain clothes (Hegghammer 2015). These are the elements of what Hegghammer (2015) refers to as “jihadi’s culture”, which is produced by ERGs to appear as part of an authentic mainstream local culture through the manipulation of its elements that has some historical precedent. For example, Kendall’s (2016) analysis of ERGs’ manipulation process of poetry in Yemen shows how an illusion of authenticity and an aura of legitimacy is created around their poetry by enabling the primary Arab audience to make connections based on deeply rooted and emotional cultural sensibilities and knowledge (Kendall 2016). Moreover, two more aspects multiply the impact of ‘jihadi culture’ on conflict-affected communities. The first is that the content of ‘jihadi culture’ products is created to attract conflict-affected people. For example, one of the critical recurring theme in jihadi poetry, anashid and films focuses on the human pain and suffering of the innocents, the occupied and the oppressed, particularly Muslims, and how this is ignored by non-Muslims (Lahoud 2017; Pieslak 2017; Kendall 2016). This makes ‘jihadi culture’ very appealing in conflict contexts where human suffering is an everyday reality for the whole society. The second reason is that the heritage manipulation processes of the ERGs’ are part of their comprehensive governance system that includes departments for: religious education, security, sharia courts, humanitarian and relief, infrastructure and public services, media channels including printed magazines and billboards, and even natural resources management (Caris and Reynolds 2014). That is, the construction of ‘jihadi culture’ is not just part of advocacy projects designed and implemented to persuade conflict-affected communities, but it can also be part of ERGs’ coercive policies of public order that people have to adopt as part of their survival strategy.

In short, ERGs work to normalize their concepts in the worldview of the conflict-affected communities and to package, reinforce and convey specific cultural meanings to them. By this, ERGs seek to change how conflict-affected communities think, feel, act and interact with others. ERGs provide people with practical and spiritual means to cope with the conflict and to build a new specific identity, an extremist one. By this, they seek to transform people from victims in conflict context to heroes (Lund 2013, 10) who don’t fear death but hope for the best place in heaven; and from passive audiences to active producers of the group’s defined future. The ERGs’ heritage manipulation process is a future-oriented practice that is linked with the production and distribution of hope for a better future (both the short-term one in the World and the long-term one in the hereafter). This side of the ERGs’ heritage practice is what has been overlooked in the more conventional discussions of, and responses to, conflict and post-conflict heritage. Yet, working within similar parameters of the culture of everyday life, CSGs may represent examples of how to respond to the challenges imposed by ERGs heritage practices as will be demonstrated below.

‘Civil Society’ Groups (CSGs)

Conflict tends to give rise to a revived civil society as a reaction to the fundamental limitations it poses (Kaldor 2003). The case in Syria is no exception. The majority of CSGs in Syria emerged first as activists and community groups committed to non-violent political activism. As violence began to intensify across the country, they turned to focus on providing necessary services and humanitarian aid activities supported by individual donations. Later, a number of these initiatives developed into nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) where in addition to individual donations they began to receive support from various international NGOs and donors¹. The practices of CSGs include diverse sets of programmes and activities that utilize culture and heritage as an instrument and resource to provide cultural relief programs that meet the cultural, social and psychological needs and aspirations of the affected communities. These practices first emerged to address the needs and aspirations of local communities that were not covered by humanitarian or heritage agencies, as the case study of the Olive Branch will show.

Olive Branch (OB) is a Syrian ‘civil society’ group that was established in November 2012 as a small project in Daraa city in the southern part of Syria. The project was initiated by few activists from the city with a budget of \$200 collected from individual donations. The activists’ first project was focused on providing education for children in the areas that are out of government control. In later projects, the activists combined educational and entertainment activities and extended their focus to the whole local community. Two years later, OB was registered in Turkey as a non-governmental organisation that focuses on education, human development, and capacity building and considers that “human beings are the real capital, means and target” (OB 2016) of their activities, which seeks to build a peaceful society. As explained by OB managers, the registration as NGO was mainly needed to manage the financial issues in a professional way after a quick expansion in the funds received. Today, OB consists of around 900 staff members and volunteers inside and outside Syria. Its organisational chart is typical for an NGO; the top management consists of Board of Directors, General Assembly and Executive Director; and under them are number of projects’ departments. By transforming to a nongovernmental organisation, OB expanded its sources of funding to include various international donors and NGOs—such as Save the Children and the Norwegian Refugee Council—and consequently, expanded its programmes and activities. By the end of 2017, OB was managing eighteen small centres in different towns in the southern part of Syria, publishing a monthly printed children’s magazine and operating number of mobile centres hosted in buses in order to reach distant communities. These centres are called “*ألفافية زيتون غصن مراكز*” [Olive Branch Cultural Centres] and they offer various cultural and educational programs that target their local communities with a special focus on children. OB’s staff in every center are usually members of the local community. Also, OB provides those members, who may have

¹ While fully aware that the emergence, distribution, practices and politics of foreign aid are all critical topics that have been discussed in other conflict contexts (for example see De Cesari and Herzfeld 2015; Winter 2014; Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2002) and have to be investigated in relation to the studied context; this paper intends to focus on investigating the practices of these groups and on how/what we can learn from them to ‘improve’ our conventional heritage practices and responses in conflict contexts.

previous experience in conducting education and cultural activities, with the necessary training to implement its cultural and educational programmes and activities. In short, all OB's activities and programmes are planned, managed and conducted by, with and for the local communities.

OB cultural centres offer education for children between 5 and 13 years old. During the early stages, OB used the curriculum of the official Syrian Education system but they omitted certain curriculum subjects, such as the National education subject and parts of the history one, because they consider them biased and reflect the views of the Syrian Government. Later, OB, in collaboration with other organisations, developed a new curriculum for its civil education programmes. For OB, civil education can change the future of Syria's children by providing them with the necessary skills to improve their life and build better futures. The civil education approach of OB seeks to protect children from being mobilized / recruited by extremist religious groups. Yet, in doing so OB's civil education does not dismiss Islam and Islamic traditions but acknowledges them as one of the central aspects of historical continuity in the Syrian culture and the everyday life of people. For example, Figure 1 below shows two pages from OB's qaws quzah [rainbow] magazine. The page to the left introduce the holy month of Ramadan and the Islamic traditions associated with it. The page to the right is a short story that introduces children to the meanings of different colours and how people choose their clothes to represent themselves.



Figure 1: two pages from OB's qaws quzah [rainbow] magazine. © OB Accessed 21 October 2017

In addition to education, OB centres offer various cultural programs such as children's

theatre shows, poetry and music performances, painting workshops, psychological support sessions and sport activities. These activities are mainly focused on children, but they are usually conducted in public spaces and involve the participation of parents and relatives, figures 2 & 3. The content of these activities is usually based on shared common knowledge such as popular songs, poetry and dances. For example, figure 4 shows one of the activities that introduce children to traditional professions, clothes and practices. The focus of this activity is on agricultural practices, which has a key position in local heritage and memory. Figure 5 shows an example of performing the traditional practice of storytelling.



Figure 2: Local communities participating in OB activities. © OB. Accessed 21 October 2017.



Figure 3: children performing poetry and songs to an audience during two OB cultural activities. © OB Accessed 21 October 2017.



Figure 4: one of the activities that introduces kids to traditional professions, clothes and practices. © OB Accessed 21 October 2017



Figure 5: storytelling activities performed at an OB mobile cultural center. © OB Accessed 21 October 2017.

In addition to the above-mentioned non-religious related traditions of poetry, music and dance performances, OB also arranges activities to celebrate socio-religious rituals and

festivals such as Eid Aladha, Ramadan and Eid Alfitr. An example of this is one of the activities conducted in OB's bus / mobile cultural center during Ramadan (the holy month for Muslims) where children conduct a show about the traditions of Misaharaty², which they had not experienced during the conflict. Similar to the above-mentioned example in OB's educational magazine, this example shows how OB activities address both socio-religious and non-religious traditions. Both the cultural activities and the socio-religious rituals and celebrations emphasise the attitudes, behaviour and habits that reject violence, re-connect children and the audience with traditions of tolerance and remind them of the importance of education, knowledge and critical thinking. The above example of the utilization of socio-religious rituals and festivals reflects a deep understanding of the role and position of Islamic traditions in local societies, so they are not left to be manipulated by ERGs to advocate extremist actions. What is also important about OB's activities is that they do not only utilize common knowledge and traditions, but they also encourage participants and audiences to reconsider them, so they can appropriate and build on them to overcome the challenges of everyday life. Examples of this approach can be observed in the "who am I?" activity, which, encourages children to think about their own personal identity and to express and discuss it with the group so they get to know each other and to shape their collective identity accordingly. Another example is observed in the "we try-we discover" activity, which seeks to develop children's problem-solving skills by encouraging them to search for and try different solutions for simple everyday life issues.

Of note is the fact that OB utilizes cultural heritage sites and monuments to conduct certain activities. For example, figure 6 shows the utilization of Bosra World Heritage Site as a space to conduct a performance where children performed traditional songs, poetry and dances with the attendance of local communities. Another way of utilizing heritage sites is related to the stories associated with them. Figure 7 below shows an activity that included a visit to what is locally known as the 'Gate of Peace' [Triumphal Arch] in the old city of Bosra where the activity's facilitators utilize the stories associated with the site to emphasis the traditions of tolerance and promote the values of peace. Other examples of activities conducted at heritage sites include painting workshops, mobile phone film festival and awareness raising campaigns about the importance and values of these sites, figure 8. By this, OB's activities links heritage sites to local heritage and collective identity after decades of them being linked to the nationalistic narrative, which is now contested.

² An Islamic tradition associated with the holy month of Ramadan where a person volunteers to walk in residential areas while beating a drum and singing religious songs during the night to wake people up to eat their *sohor* (a meal eaten before the beginning of the fast) before morning prayers.

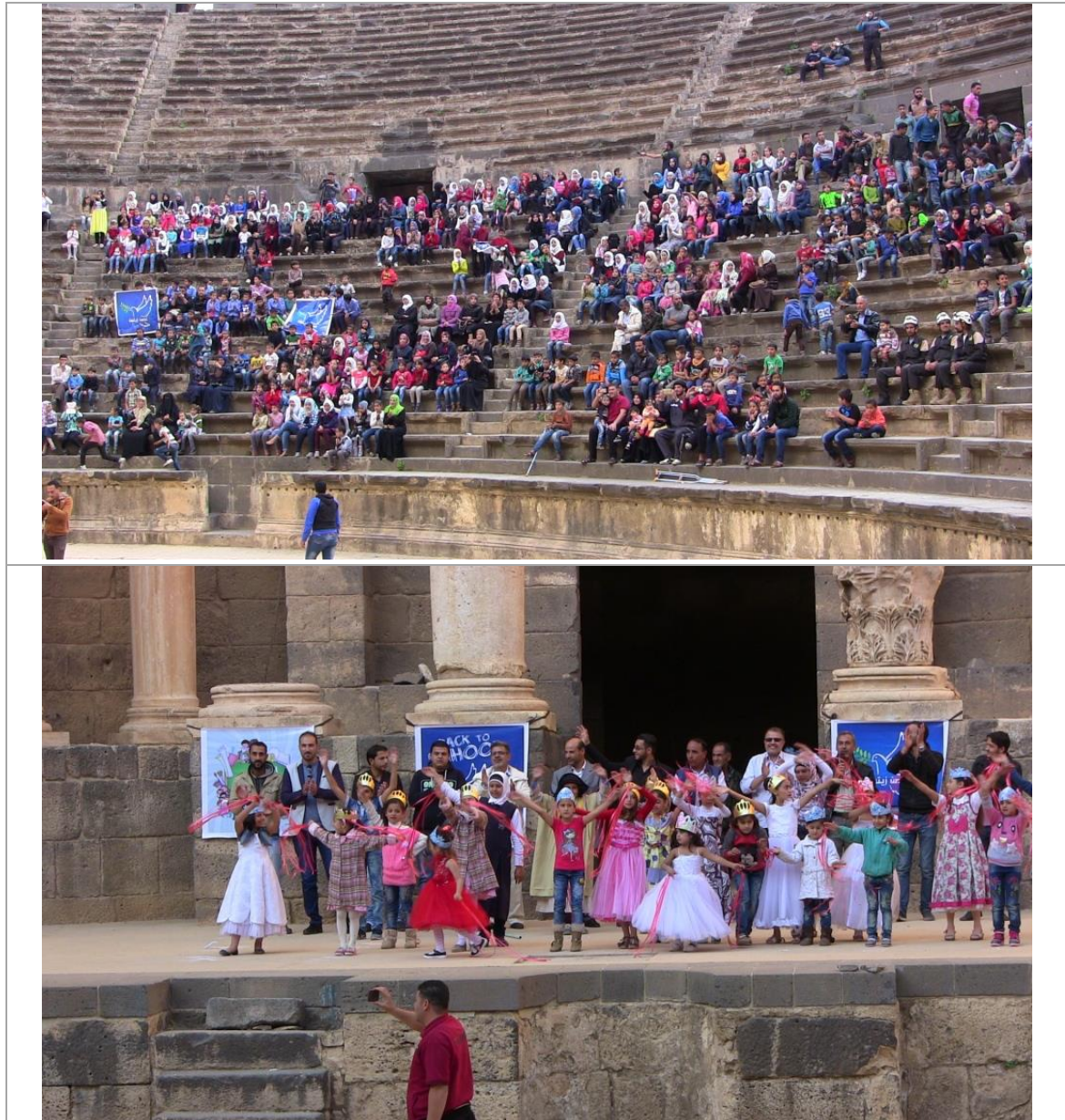


Figure 6: A show performed at Bosra World Heritage Site as part of the “Back to School” campaign where children performed traditional songs, poetry and dances. © OB Accessed 21 October 2017



Figure 7: A group of children on a site visit with the activity facilitator to the old city of Bousra. © OB Accessed 21 October 2017



Figure 8: a group of children shaping, with their bodies, the sentence “with knowledge we build” as part of awareness raising campaign that was carried out at Bosra World Heritage Site. © OB Accessed 21 October 2017

Additionally, OB’s cultural centres offer capacity building workshops that seek to support local skills and knowledge, and help conflict-affected communities to transform them into income generating activities, so they can improve the quality of their life. These workshops are usually focused on what is popular in conflict-affected communities such as traditional food industries and handicrafts; and what is needed such as first aid and computer skills. Moreover, OB’s cultural centres organize informal cultural events that take the form of inclusive public talks and seminars, figure 9. Usually, these events utilize the emotionally charged oral practice of poetry performance to celebrate and reconnect people with the values and traditions that they value and are proud of. By this, these events acknowledge the past, provide a space for discussing and imagining a common future and emphasizes the civil character of the society.



Figure 9: Poetry performance event organized by OB cultural center. © OB Accessed 21 October 2017.

In short, OB responds to local communities' needs and aspirations by providing them with various cultural relief activities that are accessible with regards to language and content, are people-centered, community-oriented, participatory, flexible and informal. In implementing these activities, heritage is utilized as an instrument and resource to be used in the process of improving the local communities' quality of life and to support them to build better futures. In this process, the focus is placed on the lessons that can be learned from heritage, the stories that can be told about it, and the ways of benefiting from it to make a living and to resolve conflicts. Substantially, this utilization of heritage is in line with the local communities' understanding of it (a process associated with beliefs, values and traditions that shape the attitudes, behaviour and habits of people). For OB, the risk that threatens this heritage is the ideological re-construction and manipulation processes conducted by ERGs. In order to manage this risk, OB emphasises a selected set of beliefs, values and traditions to be 'preserved' in order to stimulate positive socio-cultural changes and de-emphasises others in order to resist negative changes. This act of curating is therefore a fundamental technique in creatively preserving a past to assemble a future. In fact, all heritage practices of categorization, curation, conservation and utilization of the past (as outlined by (Harrison 2013)) can be observed in OB's cultural relief activities. Thus, the OB activities can be considered as heritage practices residing in a past-future relation. However, what should be kept in mind here is that the main goal of the care for heritage in OB's practices is not about preserving tangible or intangible heritage nor about communicating stories to a passive audience, rather, it is to creatively preserve the conditions under which what we might call socio-cultural heritage exists and operates while also taking into consideration that heritage,

like culture at large, is itself being transformed by conflict.

OB heritage practices help people to rethink what they have learnt before and to learn anew; to express their thoughts and feelings in order to confront the past and present creatively and directly; and to transform their skills and traditions to income generating sources. They link heritage and culture at large—on the individual and community levels—to the truly future orientated fields of economics and ‘development’ and generates new forms of governance, when the activists’ groups evolve into NGOs. OB’s heritage practices provide people with means to cope with the conflict; to build new identities; to regain control over and ownership of their everyday life; and to become active players rather than just victims in conflict situations. They allow people to participate in transforming conflict by transforming perceptions of self and others and to restore dignity, confidence and faith in local capacities. In Appadurai’s (2004) words, OB’s activities provide people with the ‘capacities to aspire’ (Appadurai 2004, 64) which are key required resources for people to change their life and consequently to reconstruct their society. By this, they increase the conflict-affected communities’ horizons of hope and opportunities to build better futures. Thus, the heritage practice here—and the concept of heritage at large—is reconfigured to encompass engagements with the future by “repatriating” (Appadurai 2004, 67) aspirations and hopes to the domain heritage—and culture—instead of managing it as a ‘matter of pastness’ (Appadurai 2004, 60). In short, although OB—like the majority of NGOs around the world (for example see (Fisher 1997; Hulme and Edwards 1997)—may be criticised for being dependent on and accountable to its foreign donors who may influence the activities and direction of the organization according to their own interests; OB’s activities till today are arguably creative heritage practices that are people-centered, socially innovative and future-oriented.

Discussion

Thus, while the heritage community’s efforts in relation to Syria have been primarily focused on the top-level effect of conflict: the visible, direct and material; the efforts of both the ERGs and CSGs are more comprehensive and they include significant focus on the invisible and immaterial effect of the conflict. Both the ERGs and CSGs employ people-centered, socially innovative and future oriented strategies that seek to reconstruct people, their societies and their heritage as an undivided whole. The ERGs and CSGs efforts are designed around people’s needs, aspirations and everyday socio-cultural and religious practices; and they are in line with how heritage is understood, practiced and experienced by people. Yet, there are significant differences between the ERGs cultural heritage related practices and the CSGs ones. For CSGs, the care for heritage is a process-oriented approach that allows for a creative, reflexive and critical engagement with the past. Also, it seeks to increase the conflict-affected communities’ horizons of hope and opportunities in assembling their own better futures by providing people with the key required resources to change their life, i.e the ‘capacities to aspire’ as (Appadurai 2004, 64) calls them. In the opposite, for ERGs the care for heritage is a process that seeks to assemble a specific future that mirrors their own imposed, exclusive and ideological interpretation of the past. Thus, for ERGs the future is strictly defined (that is, to establish an ‘Islamic’ state and a society ruled by the ‘sharia’ law as believed to exist during the time of Prophet Muhammad and the great Medieval Islamic empires). To assemble this future, ERGs employ coercive and persuading strategies to

mobilize people and transform them into extremists in the service of the group's goal. Moreover, while ERGs' consider (certain) heritage sites and objects as things that should be destroyed for various reasons such as being symbols of national states (De Cesari 2015); the CSGs emphasise the importance of linking heritage sites and objects to people's new collective identity under formation during the conflict.

Arguably, the heritage practices of both ERGs and CSGs represent versions of the 'conservation as management of change' paradigm discussed by Loughlin Kealy during the ICOMOS workshop. They function as a mechanism to manage socio-cultural changes and transformations by creatively 'preserving', re-creating and utilizing selected shared beliefs, values and traditions in order to create 'new', yet authentic, ways of imagining and realizing individual and collective identities/futures. In creating these 'authentic' identities/futures, the power and efficacy of the ERGs and CSGs heritage practices is derived from their ability to empower and engage the local community as producers rather than passive audiences or observers; and from their ability to cite and draw upon commonly understood beliefs, values and traditions. Therefore, the CSGs' practices should not be evaluated only according to their ability to restore contested symbols, synthesize a national narrative or protect ancient monuments, objects and archaeological sites. Rather, their success should be measured in regard to their impact on the social, cultural, economic and political transformations and in regard to the progressive improvements they bring to the psychological well-being of the conflict affected communities. Like this, the impact of ERGs practices should not be discussed only in relation to the destruction and looting of heritage sites, objects and monuments; but, it should also include the impact on people's everyday socio-cultural and religious practices as well as cultural expressions and products such as poetry, music, hymns [anashid], dance, dress codes and visual culture.

Conclusions

The heritage practices of both ERGs and CSGs invite us to shift our focus from discussing the reconstruction of heritage sites, objects and monuments to discussing the reconstruction of societies and their heritage as an undivided whole. That is, to relocate our analytical attention on the role that heritage plays in the society and the creative ways in which people make use of and experience it. Heritage practices, in conflict and post-conflict contexts, ought to be people-centered, socially innovative and future oriented processes that move beyond the visible and tangible towards the invisible, intangible and the experimental in order to provide a 'space' for critical, open-ended and creative practices. These practices should not take for granted that the preserved legacy of the past is a positive thing that needs to be saved. Rather, they suggest a dialogic relationship between heritage and conflict that seeks to critically question, build on and reconstruct—from within—the beliefs, values and traditions of the past in a creative and participatory way. By this, our heritage practices can positively contribute to the re-building of the society by participating in managing the transformation process to post-conflict society.

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