

TO OVERCOME OR TO OVERTHROW THE HERITAGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DICHOTOMY?

Proposal for a renovation of the current heritage paradigm

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After World War II, the concept of development was introduced worldwide through the famous Marshall Plan in 1947. Many development projects were implemented around the world in order to reach what was so called the economic equality. For development stakeholders, heritage was considered as an obstacle and inferior to the idea of development. It was not until 1970 during the Intergovernmental Conference on institutional, administrative and financial aspects of cultural policies held in Venice that the dichotomy of heritage-development appeared. Cultural development was then considered as an essential element to reach a general development. But in spite of this statement, heritage stayed, in the eyes of development experts, marginalized, which drew heritage experts to be on the defensive. The case of the Abou Simbel temples was the most illustrative symbol of the relationship based on opposition between development stakeholders and heritage stakeholders. Simultaneously there was, however, a crescent tendency to exploit heritage through tourism which brought the idea that heritage could be protected but would also be exploited and even destroyed in the name of development. From that time on, what articulated Heritage and Development was an antagonism based on the opposition: protect/destroy.

Development programs implemented during the 1960's and 1970's did not fulfill the expectations, so during the 1980's and the 1990's, the concept of development went through a phase of adjustment. Conceptual, theoretical, lexical, and methodological changes were made in order to give a more human aspect to development. During these years, heritage gained a major legitimacy among development policies and programs. Different concepts emerged such as "cultural development", "development and culture", "culture and endogenous development" or "the cultural dimension of development". All these terms generated new debates and new *modi operanti*, however, they still were conceived according to the dichotomy Heritage and Development which implied that the modalities would obviously be multiple but that contradictions and limitations would also grow over time.

A major limitation has to do with the nature of a dichotomy itself. Using a dichotomy limits us to find complementarism between both areas, mainly for two reasons:

1. This dichotomy finds its roots in the occidental thought and this thought divides reality into specialties which strengthen separatism;
2. Because of this separatism, a hierarchy will inevitably be established between specialties generating a power struggle based on opposition rather than complementarism. One should remember that in the case of the Abou Simbel temples what started then wasn't a harmonious coexistence between heritage people and development stakeholders, but rather a power struggle within which domination predominated.

Today, there is no doubt that the current paradigm of development has found its limits and is in fact utopic. The health of Nations is in a worse state than 60 years ago. Only a minority of people received real benefits from Development policies. Poverty has increased and misery has even appeared now and the gap between rich and poor has never been so disgraceful. Today, for a great majority of the people on earth, the question is no longer to know whether there is a life after death but rather if there is a life before death. Besides this human crisis, we are also facing an environmental crisis because we have blindly exploited our mother earth. Why should we either overcome or even overthrow the dichotomy Development and Heritage today? To answer to the question, ethical reasons and a sense of humility should be a part of the dialogue. I will also expose two arguments.

My first argument has to do with the concept of time. The dichotomy between Heritage/Development is established according to a linear concept of time where, the past is situated before the present, and the present before the future. Based on this concept of time, the dominant heritage paradigm fossilizes the past and there is an endless search for renewal and improvement, mainly technological, in order to reach development in the future. This creates a lack of compatibility between both extremes and generates a deep division between past, present and future and magnifies incoherence in the dichotomy of Heritage/Development.

If one looks at heritage within a cyclic concept of time, one finds the very nature of heritage and all things on earth. Seasons are cycles; there is the cycle of a day; women have this cycle within their own body. The problem is that nowadays, the dominant project for society is against this cyclic time concept because the development paradigm is based on a linear time concept. Denying our very nature generates unconscious frustrations and problems in society. For example, peasants in France or India commit suicide at an increased rate. Why? because they are asked to produce and enhance quantity production and are forced to leave aside their knowledge to produce according to the seasons.

My second argument reinforces the first one. Different western authors apply the concept of “inverted filiation” to Heritage meaning that heritage is constructed according to a project for society and not the other way around*. It enhances the idea that we in fact give birth to our ancestors according to our future aspirations. According to the linear concept of time and because of so much technology today, the past is in a stage of overflow of memory and this memory is in a way useless for the future because material perfection, improvement, and renewal is what is desired for the future. And the only possible way to survive for Heritage is mainly to be subordinated by technology and economic aspects. In fact, Heritage either plays an instrumental role for the benefit of economic development (instrument to Development), Heritage is

sometimes an end in itself (opposition to Development), or independent (similar to Development). The danger is that in all these cases, development policies use heritage and don't include in their historical memory the cultural aspect of heritage but only the economic history of Heritage and consequently the mercantile value of heritage is what is conserved.

In a cyclic time frame, past, present and future don't exist, nor does the dichotomy Heritage/development. Time changes, but reproduces itself. Heritage doesn't need to be “conserved” or “managed” because it can only be transmitted through our consciousness, our commitment to construct, produce, and reproduce heritage in everyday life. In that sense, heritage is much more accessible and useful in the present day because it is more flexible, it can bring creativity and construct the principle of a “good life”.** Heritage becomes more dialectical, dynamic, alive, and we human beings reconnect ourselves with nature itself.

On these pictures, one can see two different ways to transmit heritage. On the left side, the Mayan archaeological site of Bonampak in Mexico is mainly transmitted according to the linear concept of time of the National Institute of Anthropology and History and massive numbers of tourists visit the site. On the right site, the Maya archaeological site of Qumarka'j in Guatemala is mainly transmitted according to the cyclical concept of time where, as one can see on this picture, Mayan priests are carrying out a ceremony according to the Maya cyclical calendar.



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