Community-based conservation: exploring rights-based approaches

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Background

• Longstanding practitioner / policy
• Evaluation
• SNIS project on Understanding rights and World Heritage
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Times of change?

Paradigm shift: changes in the air

• What heritage is considered important
• How values are identified
• How management is done
• How goals and objectives are set
• Who sets the goals
• Who benefits

• From single to multiple heritage values
• From government only to co-management
• From expert-goal setting to participatory
• Recognition of tradition
• Equitable benefit-sharing

People-Centred conservation: yes, but.. what’s in a community?

Politics of cultural landscapes

• Much progress in challenging divide between culture and nature
• Recognizing cultural landscapes, links between tangible and intangible, living heritage etc.
• New management models – e.g. cultural landscapes in the World Heritage convention
• Community-based conservation

• What about culture, community when they don’t fit the « united colours » of heritage conservation?
What then if we look at growing intersection between human rights and heritage conservation?

Rights are fine, but not a Heritage/conservation thing perse (at least not for my work)?

- A concern in both cultural and natural sites
- Heritage processes can be a powerful force and may infringe upon rights, but is also an opportunity to support their realization
- Recognizing our responsibility as conservation professionals

Heritage may intersect with a range of rights — recognized (or not) in international standards and jurisprudence

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. (1984)
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990)
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

We’re already doing it we just don’t (need to) call it human rights: yes or no?

- Yes: just a different language and way of framing questions of social justice, community involvement etc.
- No: inequalities persist, unless state-society relations are grounded in human rights

How well do we know whether or heritage concepts intersect with wider community concerns?

- Not very well
- Issues not always in the public space
- We discover it once trouble is there
- Japanese industrial heritage 2015
- Lesson learnt: ghosts in the closet
- How well do we know the social, political, historical implications/contexts of heritage?
- Does heritage conservation reinforce historical on-going injustices or become a vector of social change?
Knowledge fragmented, yet some rights challenges are common:
- Poverty and most vulnerable often pay the cost
- Loss of customary rights and access
- Exclusion from "official" community
- Stakeholders & rightsholders
- Lack of effective and equitable participation and consultation
- Certain groups particularly vulnerable: indigenous, peoples – need for specific approaches
- Neglect of rights: urgent challenge and lost opportunity to engage communities equitably

Heritage concepts are more than concepts
- Heritage linked to systems, practices, people and power
- May justify what is considered "heritage" and what is not
- Justify particular instruments
- Associated with particular forms of management action
- Empower/ disempower in particular ways
- Things done in the name of heritage

Example of World Heritage
- World Heritage "as a source of identity and dignity for local communities", Bokova 2012

What do human rights do that we are not already doing?
- Reference to common set of rules
- Sets standards.. Challenges of universality?
- Responsibility rather than option
- Differences between stakeholder rights and holders
- Responsibility of duty bearers (not just up to professionals choice)
- Raise individual and collective rights issues
- Procedural and substantive aspects

Starting point – the obvious
- How we think about and define heritage matters!
- Not merely a theoretical exercise, but implications for practice
- Heritage concepts are more than concepts
- Legal and institutional implications
- Heritage practice has social impact; may enhance or infringe upon range of human rights

What do we know?
- Heritage concepts vary throughout time and space
- Means something different to different people – may be contested
- Huge implications for who is considered relevant stake and rightsholders as well as forms of recognition and access
Values

- Which/Whose values are reflected?
- Whose aren’t?
- Role of expertise?
- Whose voices?
- Process of identifying values i.e. setting heritage priorities
- Hierarchy and level of values
- Attributes?
- Context?

Creating narratives

- Rights to participation
- What and whose voices are included?
- Rights to culture
- Rights to development

Heritage and rights implications

- Objects/places of heritage (artefacts, buildings, sites, landscapes) – Tangible heritage
- Practices of heritage (languages, music, community commemorations) Intangible heritage
- Past, present, future significance?

Using community-based conservation to contribute to wider social and rights issues in society

- How does...
- Heritage designation and management activities contribute to wider questions of how we deal with nature, culture, places, things?
- Address historical and contemporary inequalities?
- Enable peaceful, consultative and informed practice?
- Entrench inequalities, exclusion of minorities, dismiss women’s participation?
- Create new forms of social vulnerability or empowerment?

Who we work with and how?

Dare we challenge our institutions?

Democratising heritage and working with living dimension?