



What Future for Cultural Heritage? Perceptions, Problematics, and Potential
16-21 March 2019

Co-Chairs

George Abungu, CEO, Okello Abungu Heritage Consultants, former Director-General, National Museums of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya

Vishakha Desai, Senior Advisor for Global Affairs to the President, Columbia University; Vice-Chair, Committee on Global Thought; Senior Research Scholar in Global Studies, School of International and Public Affairs; President Emerita, Asia Society, New York, United States

Overview

In a volatile world where people fear for an uncertain future, cultural heritage can seem irrelevant or a luxury for the few. Looking forward, however, individuals and societies will have ever-greater need to connect meaningfully to roots and place if we are to foster identity, confidence and cohesion in our diverse cultures and civilizations.

Today's global landscape is characterized by profound shifts, from human displacement linked to conflict, poverty and climate change to the unprecedented speed of change driven by transformative new technologies. Against this complex backdrop, links to the past and to place are becoming more tenuous and contested, and threats to cultural heritage - both tangible and intangible - are extremely difficult to counter, both socially and politically. It is a critical moment to ask what cultural heritage actually means to different people and regions, especially in the digital era, and why it is more important than ever to preserve, enhance and share cultural heritage through all available means.

Salzburg Global's *Culture, Arts and Society* series harnesses the transformative power of the arts to shape a better world. Through future-focused programs and projects, it raises the profile of culture and the arts in policy agendas, catalyzes exchange across disciplines and sectors, and sustains a unique creative community across continents. This 2019 program will bring together creative thinkers and groundbreaking practitioners from around the world to reflect on and critique current approaches to cultural heritage, and to explore new frontiers in heritage innovation and collaboration.

Key Themes and Questions

The program will be structured along a continuum of inquiry:

Perceptions of the Past

The first area of inquiry will have a philosophical focus, considering both positive and negative associations of cultural heritage. Participants will contrast its positive potential to create a sense of identity, reinforce social cohesion, and advance reconciliation with its negative potential to trigger conflict, perpetuate or reinforce symbols of oppression, and recreate trauma. Taking indigenous, decolonized, non-nationalistic, and non-Western interpretations into full account, they will explore whose culture and whose heritage is the focus of discourse, and how and why the language we use to talk about cultural heritage is changing.

Specific questions will relate to shifting perceptions of cultural heritage in recent decades, including new concepts of tangible and intangible heritage. At a time when, for example, Syrian heritage is not only manifested in Palmyra but in refugee camps and the diaspora, how do we relate and connect living material and immaterial heritage? How do we memorialize and who can or should do the remembering? How do we move away from nationalistic perceptions of heritage ownership to concepts of shared heritage? Is “ownership” of cultural heritage even the right word, or are stewardship or custodianship more appropriate concepts? In societies striving to be inclusive and equitable, how can we move toward more expansive approaches to/notions of cultural heritage?

Problematics of the Present

This second area of inquiry will have a more pragmatic focus and address ways to tackle the manifold threats to cultural heritage. Looking outwards, these include: unsustainable tourism and “destination thinking” in heritage; the impacts of climate change on tangible and intangible heritage; the destruction of cultural heritage through conflict; the illicit trafficking of cultural objects; the dislocation from roots and history linked to population displacement and rapid urbanization; and the impact of accelerating globalization on a shared sense of identity and belonging. What practical approaches and innovations are already being taken to counter these threats? What obstacles are preventing success? How can collaboration be expanded to overcome these challenges and connect new generations to their cultural heritage?

Looking inwards, does the cultural sector itself create blockages to the successful preservation of heritage? What silos and hierarchies exist within the cultural heritage sector across disciplines, organizations, or geographic regions, and how can these be dismantled for greater effectiveness? How could the cultural heritage sector better communicate with other sectors for mutual benefit, especially in the fields of education, urban development, and tourism?

Potential for the Future

This third area of inquiry aims to develop a visionary and transformative agenda for the cultural heritage field, supported by new advocacy tools for a range of target audiences. Participants will seek to better articulate why heritage matters to people today and in the future, and how we can unlock the amazing potential of cultural heritage. What innovative strategies can connect more

people from all walks of life, especially new urban generations, to cultural heritage? How can we counter historical amnesia and imaginatively engage across generations? What community-based approaches have been applied with success?

What innovative potential does digitization have for making cultural heritage come alive in groundbreaking new ways? What opportunities do digital technologies already make possible and what will become possible in coming decades? How can we better implement new technological possibilities to enhance community engagement, integration, inclusiveness, and co-creation? How can advocacy work around heritage be improved? What do these developments imply for the training and education and training of next generation of cultural heritage professionals?

Participant Profile

The 2019 program will convene an international interdisciplinary group of forty practitioners and thinkers to address the strategic questions around cultural heritage outlined above. Practitioners from the cultural heritage sector will include museum, library, and archive professionals, as well as representatives of cultural ministries and heritage associations. They will be joined by a cross-cutting mix of technology innovators and social entrepreneurs, civil society leaders, historians and researchers, policymakers, anthropologists and cultural philanthropists.

Program Format

The highly interactive program will be structured around an inspiring mix of presentations, curated conversations, informal interaction, knowledge exchange, and practical group work. The process seeks to combine theory, policy and practice across sectoral silos, opening up new perspectives and intensive learning opportunities. Participants will explore cross-cutting questions during plenary sessions, featuring presentations and discussions led by groundbreaking practitioners. They will also be able to work intensively in three focus groups that meet several times during the program to deliberate on the three main strands described above: Perceptions of the Past; Problematics of the Present; Potential for the Future.

Taking advantage of local resources and the historical setting of the meeting, the program will also feature a panel on cultural heritage in Salzburg. Participants will meet with local cultural leaders to discuss the city as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and be able to reflect on Salzburg Global's own stewardship of its headquarters at Schloss Leopoldskron, former home to the Prince Archbishops of Salzburg and then to Max Reinhardt, co-founder of the world-famous Salzburg Festival.

Program Goals and Outcomes:

- To facilitate dialogue, exchange and new forms of networking and collaboration
- To develop strategies for raising greater awareness of the unique and often poorly-understood role of cultural heritage
- To share learning from Salzburg Global through dynamic reporting (blogs, newsletters, substantive report) with a broad, international group of stakeholders, and with the help of a media partner

- To jointly draft and widely disseminate a Salzburg Global Statement on the problematics and potential of cultural heritage in the 21st Century, building/expanding on the *2009 Salzburg Declaration on the Conservation and Preservation of Cultural Heritage*
- To inspire, incubate, and catalyze several creative and unorthodox/unconventional cultural heritage projects and networks, across generations, regions, disciplines, and sectors.

Why Salzburg Global Seminar?

Salzburg Global Seminar is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1947 to challenge current and future leaders to shape a better world. Our multi-year programs and partnerships aim to bridge divides, expand collaboration and transform systems. Over 36,000 Fellows from 170 countries have come together through our work, many now in senior leadership positions.

We design, develop, and implement global programs that convene outstanding talent across generations, cultures, and sectors; foster lasting networks and partnerships for creative, just, and sustainable change; and inspire new thinking and action that connects local innovators and global resources. Our historic headquarters at Schloss Leopoldskron in Salzburg, Austria – now also an award-winning hotel – provides an inspiring setting for privacy, trust, and openness.

The 2019 program on cultural heritage will build on Salzburg Global Seminar’s international track record of cutting-edge programs across boundaries, including:

- [*Conflict Transformation through Culture: Peace-Building and the Arts*](#)
- The annual [*Salzburg Global Forum for Young Cultural Innovators*](#)
- [*Connecting to Collections: Making the Case for the Conservation and Preservation of our Cultural Heritage*](#)
- [*Libraries and Museums in an Era of Participatory Culture*](#)
- [*Museums in the 21st Century*](#)
- [*Achieving the Freer Circulation of Cultural Artifacts*](#)
- [*Holocaust and Genocide Prevention Series*](#)
- *Contested Histories in Public Places*

Salzburg Global’s multi-scale and interdisciplinary work is supported by a professional communications department, in-house publication capability, innovative use of social media and strategic communications, and a vibrant network of engaged Fellows and partner institutions on every continent.

CULTURAL HERITAGE & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

No sustainability without cultural heritage

Vision 2039

Mainstreaming cultural heritage in sustainable development and sustainable development in cultural heritage

Guiding principles

- Holistic/ all inclusive approach to CH: Tangible-intangible-culture-nature; CH for all
- Cultural heritage is dynamic
- CH is a container/vessel of multiple values: Economic values, ethical values of CH (dignity, identity), enabler of peace and social cohesion, overall well-being, environmental protection
- CH is a driver and enabler of all aspects of sustainable development.

Strategies

- Engaging with/ building alliances with/ gathering support of different audiences (political-policy/decision-makers, industries, academics, professionals, general public)
- Integrating CH into development and planning processes
- Harnessing CH contributions to address urbanization, climate change, disaster risk, social cohesion
- Empowering communities, creating alternative ways of creating livelihoods
- Building capacity- education, curricula, institutional-groups-individual, other sectors – development studies, applied disciplines, grassroots-practical
- Strengthening the CH sector (communication, advocacy, fundraising, data coordination)
- Fostering youth, inter-generational dialogue, transmission/ exchange of knowledge/experience, continuity
- Harnessing digital technologies
- Improving evidence-based reporting, monitoring, best practices
- Diversifying funding sources and improving resourcing for CH
- Advocating to strengthen CH role in next cycle of UN SD Agenda