

During the last several decades, UNESCO's approach to culture has changed significantly, reflecting the changing political and socio-economic conditions of the time. Although there is still much work to be done in order to fully integrate, 'culture,' into international policies that deal with development, we can clearly see that, ever since the 1950s, UNESCO has placed great importance in the idea of, 'global cooperation.' This idea can be traced through all of the major conventions and documents that have been adopted by UNESCO thus far.

The main focus of this paper will be on UNESCO's key, cultural conventions, many of which recognize that culture has become an important issue in the global dialogue. These international documents acknowledge that, for reasons pertaining to both the vulnerability and to the universal value of culture, there is a need for a collective effort towards its protection. Furthermore, because culture is a social construct and cannot be the product of a single individual, the vitality and safeguarding thereof is the duty of society, and society is predicated upon the idea of cooperation.

The first of the cultural conventions that was created by UNESCO – the Universal Copyright Convention of 1952 – is based upon ideas to be found in the earlier Berne Convention, which dealt with economic facets pertaining to the publishing of authors' works. In fact, the Universal Copyright Convention does not create any new law of copyright, but harmonises the existing national systems. UNESCO's approach in this direction was straightforwardly juridical and aimed at protecting the authors' own rights for publishing literary, artistic, dramatic and musical works. In other words, the goal was to create a legal framework of cooperation between the contracting parties that ensured just rules for an international market - for intellectual and/or artistic property, but not especially for the protection of culture itself. Thus, the concept of intangible cultural heritage needed to be developed, as did a convention that focused on its preservation and its safeguarding.

A more comprehensive approach to the understanding of culture can be discerned in the Hague Convention, which was adopted in 1954. The convention was engendered in the aftermath of the Second World War, during which opposing forces aimed at the obliteration of

the collective memories of other nations; it also led to the assimilation of cultural identities and the widespread destruction of tangible, cultural heritage. This convention was preceded by several documents that dealt with the protection of cultural property in the context of war, but the Hague Convention introduced the idea of the inherent worth of cultural property and the necessity of its safe-keeping and integrity, which needed to be taken up as a cooperative effort – thus, the notion of global responsibility was raised. This Convention was the first humanistic approach to culture, which can easily be seen when we compare it to the previous convention, which dealt only with economics and markets.

The Second World War was also rife with the plunder of cultural artefacts. In time, this led to the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which put in place a legal framework for the purchasing of cultural properties, and monitored global trade. Although the purpose of the Illicit Trade Convention was to protect tangible heritage from being looted, cultural objects continued and continue to be bought and sold over the black market. Here, NGOs have a great responsibility in governing trade and making sure museums and auction houses do not purchase or sell stolen property. The most important NGO, in this instance, is ICOM, whose main mission includes fighting the illicit traffic of cultural goods.

UNESCO's key convention of 1972 recognized natural sites for the first time, but its main objective was the upkeep of tangible heritage – buildings and monuments – that were deemed to have outstanding universal worth. This was, no doubt, influenced by The Venice Charter of 1964, which, for the first time, set up an international framework for the preservation, conservation and restoration of ancient buildings. This has since been bettered by the Burra Charter; but both of these charters, by creating internationally agreed-upon codes of conduct, have created a global ethos in which the property of one nation has become the responsibility of all nations. However, one of the shortcomings of this convention is that UNESCO did not include intangible cultural heritage at this stage.

UNESCO broadened its understanding of culture by implementing the Underwater Heritage Convention of 2001. The underwater convention creates connections between various regions of the world and promotes unity through a shared heritage. The Underwater Convention might be understood as the point in which cultural heritage protection moved away from, 'land-based monuments,' yet no register or list was created that defined which sites are, or should be, protected.

Within a few years, a new type of recognition was given to the promotion of diversity and meta-cultures, which led to the adoption of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, in 2003. Then, in 2005, UNESCO adopted the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which has its roots in the 1966 UNESCO Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation, the first article of which states that, "each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved," adding that, "every people has the right and duty to develop its culture". This convention aims at the identification and promotion of cultural goods and services, as well as the transfer of cultural expressions. This, then, is the most up-to-date point in UNESCO's broadened understanding of culture. It must be understood in terms of an intercultural dialogue, which aims at protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions at both domestic and international levels.

However, these conventions should not be regarded as the only tools for regulating and managing cultural heritage at an international level. Within the field of cooperation, we can identify various ideas that have been developed in additional proposals, declarations and charters, created by both UNESCO and its advisory bodies in recent years. For instance, the increasing interest in the topic of sustainability has led to a common effort towards improving the quality of human existence in various ways: by raising awareness in local communities and increasing their involvement in the governance and supervision of local sites, and by constructing a common, legal framework for resolving issues pertaining to the preservation, conservation and maintenance of cultural entities.

International cooperation is also clearly evident in the concepts and management of, 'cultural landscapes,' and, 'cultural routes,' both of which necessitate physical and intercultural communication. Both the serial and the transnational World Heritage nominations are a new way of organising international management, and they are also a more sustainable and inclusive way to distribute the responsibilities and profits of different state parties, in a more credible way.

At the same time, it is necessary to mention that UNESCO's efforts are concentrated on mitigating the problems that ensue from the frantic contemporary pace of globalization, specifically the trends of standardisation and the uniformity of cultures; these problems are usually discussed under the headings of the, 'Dominant Heritage Discourse,' 'Cultural Industries,' 'cultural hegemony,' and 'intergroup hostility'. In recent history, we have begun to witness the emergence of various GOs, IGOs and NGOs, which work together and focus on promoting heritage, celebrating cultural diversity, and building both a peaceful and

economically viable environment for future generations. Perhaps one of the reasons for the emergence of these organisations is the idea of decentralising the management structure of heritage and culture – a very natural trend if one considers the complexity and interdisciplinary character of constructs like: ‘sustainable development’, ‘community involvement’, ‘cultural routes’, ‘cultural landscapes’, etc. ICCROM and ICOMOS appear to be two of the leading organizations that deal with such ideas. These organisations were founded in order to conduct research, develop conservational theories, produce guidelines, legal documents and professional codes, to promote the international exchange of scientific information and to raise awareness via the dissemination of knowledge among non-professionals. Nowadays, both of these NGOs have a specific focus on areas in the Asia Pacific and in Latin America.

One of the initiatives that serve as a good example for both international cooperation and the inclusive approach to heritage protection and maintenance is the case of the ancient trading routes, known as the Silk Roads. This trans-boundary nomination was brought into existence by the active cooperation of different state parties – Afghanistan, the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Republic of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

These cultural routes reveal the interconnections between almost all of the elements that are relevant to heritage – the tangible artefacts themselves; the cultural processes; the intangible heritage, which includes traditions, customs, and religious and ideological views; the people themselves – their history, and much, much more. Cultural routes usually include numerous historical and cultural properties that are not considered World Heritage, but, because of their association with the cultural route, can be brought to the attention of various stakeholders, enabling their preservation and use. Cultural routes are also, it seems, prevalently related to the intangible aspect of heritage, especially with regard to the forms of communication and levels of influence that occur between the different cultural groups that are connected through those trading routes. This may result in a more holistic and integral conservation, which gives equal weight to all of these tangible and intangible elements.