Introduction
Between Imagined Communities and Communities of Practice:
Participation, Territory and the Making of Heritage

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Seeking a title for the present collection, two relatively recent coinages proved to aptly encapsulate the entanglement of heritage ideologies and practices addressed in the assembled papers. In its 19th century emergence, heritage making is profoundly linked to nation-building. Vestiges of culture, from language to cultural traditions, were harnessed, as evidence of the political coherence of a people, with collective creation and, hence, shared origin as its foundation (Hafstein 2004). Benedict Anderson (1983) coined the concept of “imagined communities” in his expanded consideration of nation making instruments, also encompassing post-colonial situations. Utilizing the heritage matrix has become one means of emphasizing a national, partial or even transnational imagined community, maintaining the potential political thrust of heritage making even when administered by UNESCO, the United Nations organization so profoundly entrusted with a mission to contribute to world peace. Community of practice, in turn, is a concept introduced in learning theory (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). Using it, Etienne Wenger sought to express that individuals from diverse backgrounds and interests could, nonetheless, work together productively on joint goals. We saw the applicability of this concept evident throughout the heritage complex and beyond: Actors interested in garnering a heritage title may cooperate with experts and politicians to generate a nomination dossier; decision making bodies from the regional to the national and international level bring together individuals of diverse persua-
sion, yet they form a community of practice in their administrative and negotiation work. On the ground, individuals devoted to maintaining, restoring or reviving a cultural tradition may form a community of practice, not necessarily sharing ethnic identities, but cooperating for the sake of shared political or economic interests. Indeed, the cooperation of scholars from different intellectual traditions and disciplines in this volume constitutes an attempt at a community of practice as well, gaining mutual awareness if not necessarily succeeding in overcoming their disciplinary formation.

The different political ideologies underpinning the concepts of imagined community and communities of practice pinpoint the profound shift in the ways heritage is currently being reconceptualized. While the valorization of supposedly authentic origins historically defined the conceptual and political foundations of the heritage apparatus and provided the basis for conceiving the manifold and patchy population of a nation state as a community, we witness today the elaboration of a different paradigm by international heritage policy makers. Conceptualized as “living” and as a tool for so-called “sustainable” development, heritage becomes a project to be developed by communities of practice. The definition of a “heritage community” introduced by the Council of Europe provides clear evidence of this shift: “people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations” (Council of Europe 2005). In this scenario, communities are not only considered the “bearers” of heritage, but they are also supposed to be actively involved in its transmission. Hence, participation and community have become core concepts of heritage making. The new role assigned to heritage communities of practice does not actually undermine the powerful political idea of imagined communities. This is particularly evident within the framework of UNESCO heritage apparatuses. States are the constituent units of the United Nations and continue to use heritage to promote their national unity, even though everyone is aware that each state contains diverse ethnicities and invariably also individuals who, by birth and enculturation, unite within themselves more than one (ethnic, religious, etc.) allegiance. Whether or not it is territorially bound, community rests on actors constituting it and participating in its maintenance and dynamic continuation. In this introduction, we briefly trace the entrance of participation and community in the heritage regime and then succinctly introduce the papers within the logic of the four segments of the volume.

1 How Communities Entered the UNESCO Heritage Apparatus

When UNESCO adopted the “Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore” in 1989, a new concept was articulated in the context of international cultural policy (Kurin 2001). The understanding of cultural heritage
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proposed no longer focused only on material or natural heritage, such as cathedrals, castles, landscapes or biodiversity, it extended to what ethnologists and folklorists call folklore – traditional, popular or expressive culture. This shift was based on revised and increasingly permeable academic concepts of culture, and on growing political and societal interest in traditional culture: the immaterial realm was gradually interpreted as an important social and economic resource (cf. Ciarcia 2006; Hafstein 2007). Covered by the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the materiality of the built environment, as well as landscapes, can be protected through various conservation practices. The new focus on what would later be called intangible cultural heritage, however, required new protective and, hence, discursive strategies: How should one – symbolically as well as legally – protect popular culture which is and should remain dynamic? Who should be responsible for the maintenance of collectively generated and executed practices generally lacking in clearly circumscribed ownership? The 1989 recommendation charged actors and custodians from scientific realms, such as ethnologists, folklorists and museum experts, with the documentation or inventarization of cultural expressions. While this strategy inserts different levels of reflexivity and/or alienation among practitioners of tradition, it safeguards, at best, representations of culture, but not the practices themselves.

Scholars participating in the drafting of this recommendation are likely to be held responsible for the strong link made between cultural identity and the safeguarding of tradition. Indeed, scholarly participation in this endeavor was probably occasioned by the concern for cultural communities affected by colonial, post-colonial and capitalist transformations (e.g. Honko 1982, 1990). Cultural scholarship has long recognized the constructed nature of ethnic and national identity (Barth 1969; Honko 2013), and emphasized that, just because such cultural identity is imagined, it is no less powerful in fashioning communal bulwarks (Anderson 1989; Banks 1996; Eriksen 2002).

Scholarship has continued to document and analyze not only productive cultural identity formations, but also and especially the often problematic and even frightening collusion of culture and identity (e.g. Gingrich and Banks 2006). What has been transferred successfully into the UNESCO policy making realm is, however, largely and logically the productive version of cultural identity.1 Safeguarding measures can address the specter of threatened or vanishing cultural practices and forestall the imminent danger of “damaged” cultural identity. The mercurial, idiosyncratic processes of identification experienced by individuals in a mobile, globalized and uncertain world, however, as theorized, for instance, in anthropology (e.g.

1 At the time of writing this introduction, we are witnessing the vehement destruction of sites of ancient cultural monuments by an organization calling itself the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. In its abbreviation, ISIS, it references vestiges of one of the many cultural pasts that fighters adhering to this group seek to destroy in order to create space for an exclusive religious identity. The very foregrounding and honoring of diverse heritages fostered by UNESCO result in these and earlier such instances in aggressive annihilation.
Baumann and Gingrich 2004; Appadurai 2013), cultural studies (Hall and Du Gay 1996) and philosophy (Taylor 1989; Bauman 2000), find little space in this framework.

The constructed, if cherished, nexus between tradition, community and identity received further scaffolding when, fourteen years after the UNESCO recommendation, UNESCO adopted the “Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage” (cf. Blake 2009). The conceptual shift from folklore to the new key concept “intangible cultural heritage” (ICH) forged a connection between the static monumental artifacts addressed by the 1972 World Heritage Convention and immaterial, knowledge-based traditional practices; latently, this constituted an acknowledgment that the monumental was also the product of knowledge, skill and practice of the cultural past. In defining ICH as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills that provide communities “with a sense of identity and continuity” (UNESCO 2003, art. 2.2; our emphasis), the 2003 Convention acknowledges the constructed nature of identity resulting from a subjective process of identification. This entails a more profound shift whereby the key actors in heritage legitimation are no longer the scientific heritage agents through their authenticating authority, but the communities that identify themselves with particular cultural elements. Communities are, therefore, supposed to have a key role in recognizing such traditions as “heritage” and in safeguarding them. The participation of communities is, therefore, regarded as necessary for nominating their cultural expressions to international UNESCO ICH lists. The “Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage” accordingly foresaw that: “The community, group and/or individuals concerned participated in the preparation of the request and will be involved in the implementation of the proposed activities, and in their evaluation and follow-up as broadly as possible.”

Negotiations involved in bringing forth these operational guidelines strove to empower indigenous groups, community performers or local artisans, and to strengthen their role vis-à-vis state and regional governments. Indeed, some such actors who have vigorously fought to receive this kind of opportunity to act on their own behalf may experience shades of empowerment through intangible heritage nomination procedures. However, various case studies also document how forms of governance engendered by the nomination regime bring forth culture as a consumer good alongside venerated, identity-fostering heritage (cf. e.g. Kuutma 2009; Labadi and Long 2010; Tauschek 2013: 139–161).

The inherent ambivalence of the participatory paradigm has been extensively explored. On the one hand, the taking over of bureaucratic paternalism by civil society has encouraged debate and activism as a counter-hegemonic approach toward radical social transformation. On the other hand, the “political decapitation” (Leal 2007) of participation will eventually create communities as enterprises claim-
ing and managing collective intellectual property rights over traditional knowledge and complying with neoliberal models (Yúdice 2004: 6–7). Individual actors and communities may have good reasons to bolster their cultural identity by increasing its salability. George Yúdice (2004) has traced, at times, productive intertwining of ideological and market logics in the commoditization of cultural forms (cf. Coombe 1998). Michael Brown in his, by now, classic *Who Owns Native Culture* (2003) further examined key cases where juridical, economic and cultural interests over cultural property took shape and indicated the paths along which different types of cultural property regimes could and would emerge. In a mixture of critique of capitalism and acknowledgment of indigenous craftiness, John and Jean Comaroff have similarly shown how groups harness their ethnic connection for economic gain differently (2009).

Numerous critical analyses, climaxing in Cooke and Kothari’s “Participation: The new tyranny?” (2001), have demonstrated that the participatory paradigm, inspired by the emancipatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire and based on the Marxist-oriented Participatory Action Research, has been re-politicized in the service of a neoliberal agenda as a self-help technology. It legitimizes marketization and state retrenchment, thus, unintentionally becoming a key ingredient of what Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello call “the new spirit of capitalism” (2007), where the “empowerment” of communities eventually domesticates their potential for radical political opposition, contributing to the commodification and depoliticization of the cultural field.

Emphasis on participation is a characteristic element of the intangible heritage paradigm. It has since also gained in importance in the World Heritage Convention, and European instruments in the field of heritage protection promote the same participatory principles. The participatory approach, whose conundrums are investigated in this volume only with regard to the heritage field, is actually a key feature in global governance. With emphasis on social justice and the empowerment of historically marginalized groups, the participatory ideal was transferred into the domain of heritage management from the broader development field, where it emerged at the end of the 1970s. It has been progressively adopted by international development agencies, such as the World Bank, the FAO and UNICEF (Oakley 1991), becoming a buzzword of the agendas of international organizations that increasingly seek to involve citizens as “accountable experts” in the design of environmental, medical, agricultural or city-planning projects (Müller 2013).

The centrality of participation is evident in the increasing pressure of local communities and groups, often with the support of non-governmental organizations and at different organizational levels within the United Nations’ apparatus. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) made observation and participation of indigenous and community representatives possible in its committee work on cultural property, including traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions and genetics; WIPO works with an indigenous caucus that acculturates
newcomers to the negotiation culture within this UN organization (Groth 2012: 47, 50, 57). Similarly and earlier, indigenous and ethnic groups within the International Labor Organization (ILO) found opportunities to let their concerns be heard, and the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) acknowledges the need for such community voices to be heard and considered in the same manner. However, as Irène Bellier points out with reference to indigenous organizations involved in the elaboration of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, the participatory model provides them with new instruments, such as the right to consultation, and with a voice in decision making processes, while transforming indigenous leaders into “convenient interlocutors,” thus limiting their potential for contestation (Bellier 2013). Noyes observed a similar contradiction in the realm of heritage policies in the Catalan Berga (2006).

The initiative on the part of indigenous or community actors to participate in global forums, concerned in one way or another with “culture” in quotation marks (Carneiro da Cunha 2009), in pursuit of seeing their burning questions addressed has been somewhat successful. Their major underlying goals concern issues in the realm of territory and human rights, and different United Nations sub-organizations grant different kinds of opportunities to pursue these issues, among which cultural rights have become a productive option. It is, nonetheless, States Parties who have decision making power and, in the case of heritage conventions negotiated within UNESCO, community participation has been turned into a normed and normalizing concept for nomination processes as well as for the cultural goods being nominated.

2 The Aims of the Vigoni Conferences

The starting point for three international and interdisciplinary conferences held at Villa Vigoni in 2010, 2011 and 2012 was the circulation of the concepts of community and participation, their entanglement with notions of territoriality, and different political and social fields concerned with matters of cultural heritage. How and by whom were these concepts interpreted and re-interpreted, and what effects did they bring forth in their implementation? What impact, rhetorically and practically, was wielded by these terms, and what kinds of discursive formations did they bring forth? How do actors from local to national levels interpret this new component of the heritage regime, and how do actors within heritage-granting national and international bodies work it into their cultural and political agency? Which new relationships and networks unfold within the negotiation processes between different representatives of communities and those actors who think and act within UNESCO’s “professional heritage enterprise” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 55). What is the role of experts and expertise, indeed, what counts as expertise and when is scientific knowledge expertise and when is it partisan, supportive matter in the nomination process of the future (in)tangible heritage of humankind? How do
bureaucratic institutions in the context of international and national cultural policy translate the imperative of participation into concrete practices? Are there new forms of constraint in the production of heritage?

The trilateral Vigoni workshops sought to address excerpts from this plethora of questions – questions which, as all critical heritage scholarship will concede, continue to multiply. At the inception of the workshops, the organizers planned to investigate the increasing complexity of the heritage field as a consequence of the mounting influence of UNESCO on national policies and local modes of conceiving “heritage.” Several issues were to be addressed:

1) the relationship between territory and heritage with regard to the application of UNESCO heritage conventions, and
2) the new roles given by UNESCO to the different players of the heritage field and the various forms of interaction and negotiation enabled by UNESCO: communities and experts (both from the academic and administrative field).

Traversing one and two, participants also focused on the bureaucratic apparatus that translates heritage standards established at the international level into existing national heritage institutions. Investigating the bureaucracy of heritage making in different heritage regimes allowed us to seize the “creative frictions” (Tsing 2005) emerging in the process of translation of an international standard into diverse national legislative and institutional apparatuses.

This present collection draws from all three conferences, culling those papers most conducive to questioning the concepts of “participation” and “community” in the intangible heritage convention and unfolding further practical and theoretical issues entailed in implementing heritage conventions in general, from the innermost level of heritage decision making, including its legal interpretation, to their broader social, cultural and political meaning and impact, and to the role that scholarly expertise plays within the fray.

Community Conundrums

Positions regarding UNESCO’s embrace of the participatory paradigm differ, much as positions across scholarly fields differ regarding heritage making as a cultural practice. Ellen Hertz writes poignantly both as a witness and participant in the Swiss introduction and implementation of the intangible heritage convention. She probes, with acknowledged discomfort, what can be meant by the “bottom” of a “bottom-up” approach embraced by the UNESCO decision making bodies. Outlining the conflicting goals of empowering communities or groups as idealized in UNESCO-speak, and noting the additional power bestowed upon what can only be regarded as top-down bodies of experts, Hertz traces the many confusions and ambiguities that arise in the implementation and administration of the intangible
heritage convention. Heritage administration, in her tracing, under the guise of empowering entirely new political entities, leads to a new encounter with citizens and citizen rights.

Hertz proceeds empirically, while suggesting that there is also need for a normatively oriented query. This is taken up in Stefan Groth’s contribution. He shares Hertz’s concerns, but approaches them from a different line of reasoning. In identifying a mismatch between collective rights, cultural heritage and legal philosophy in constitutional states, he locates one of the analytic difficulties in working with collective identities which, in turn, are foundational in heritage processes. Another tension lies in the desire to support and empower disadvantaged groups without, however, wishing to work with essentialist conceptions of culture. Focusing on subjective rights and dynamic social relations, Groth emphasizes individual choice – rather than collective identity – as crucial for the maintenance of (perhaps shared) cultural practices. This leads him to propose a reframing of heritage debates in terms of “recognition” – as used by Axel Honneth (1994) – which would reorient the analysis of claims for culture in the present.

But who is really claiming culture by using UNESCO’s conventions? Michael di Giovine underscores a paradox at this point. His contribution starts by recalling the efficacy of UNESCO’s heritage initiatives as a political project. Stepping outside of the intricacies of heritage governance at different levels of agency discussed and theorized in other contributions to this volume, di Giovine probes the extent to which UNESCO’s conventions, declarations and associated programs succeed in reaching the organization’s ultimate goal – world peace. He regards the revisions toward implementing increasingly participatory policies achieved as indicative of what he terms “the paradox of the World Heritage Program:” While having to rely on States Parties to acknowledge and ratify its conventions, UNESCO circumvents states by calling directly for individual participation. A further, though complex, step toward solidifying such a participatory ethic would be, in di Giovine’s assessment, an open and productive acknowledgement of tourism and the role of individual tourists in embracing material and immaterial heritage as a shared responsibility.

Community, Participation and Territory from a Legal Perspective

The critical approaches of disciplines working and arguing ethnographically are only one discursive contribution in heritage implementation. The Vigoni program sought explicitly to analyze the participation paradigm within heritage making from an interdisciplinary perspective. In such an arrangement, interpretive perspectives confront the more normative approaches, which are, generally, also those drawn on by state and local bureaucracies in the implementation of heritage conventions. Legal expertise is, after all, what a polity draws on to explain and, in the process, contribute to the development and implementation of guidelines for any new legislation. Within the Vigoni conferences, we sought to understand the inner, discipli-
nary logics of each approach through discussion. Legal and anthropological scholarship follow quite different formal and rhetorical traditions in writing, even more so than in speaking. The implementation of international conventions is strongly patterned by the linguistic and formal habits of the legal tradition, not least because States Parties are generally represented by delegates with legal training. A normative perspective focuses on the degree to which heritage is endangered, whether its protection is necessary and which ways and tools (juridical, administrative and technical) are needed for the protection of such heritage. Critical – and this often means anthropologically informed – perspectives regard heritage as a political construction and point to the performative power of heritage policies. In analyzing the difficult relationship between heritage law and heritage studies, Lucas Lixinski (2015) makes a distinction between orthodox and heterodox approaches to law and heritage. He underscores the synergies between heterodox heritage studies and heterodox heritage law. While, Lixinski argues, orthodox approaches in both fields tend to rely on the “goodness” of heritage, heterodox approaches consider heritage as a means through which identity is negotiated and power relations are established. From this vantage point, heritage protection has less to do with the danger of losing heritage, but more to do with the political uses of heritage selection. A “fair” dialogue between the two disciplines is only beginning (Calafat, Fossier, and Thévenin 2014), and to integrate anthropological and legal expertise would require additional work that would allow critical claims to be articulated in legal language and, thus, perhaps have an impact on heritage institutions and policies. This might happen with regard to the three notions on which the Vigoni workshops focused: territoriality, participation and community.

Territoriality is addressed by Benedetta Ubertazzi’s contribution. Drawing on cases argued at an Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention Committee Meeting, she illustrates the difficulties entailed in interpreting the prescriptive formulations in heritage conventions. The language of the Convention and the subsequent operational guidelines propose strictures concerning who may nominate a cultural tradition with regard to territoriality. Though UNESCO has been encouraging multi-state nominations, the formal strictures with regard to territory are such that too many practical hurdles stand in the way. Furthermore, the committee itself resorts to decisions in its deliberations which, from a legal perspective, are not always lawful.

Sabrina Urbinati shows the increasing importance of the idea of participation of communities in international law, while underscoring that “participation” takes different forms: in the adoption of decisions and measures, in the elaboration of international instruments, in the implementation of the latter or in the sharing of benefits resulting from the implementation of an international instrument. In the process, she sheds light on the juridical notion of community. She points out that the existence of communities is a question of fact in the legal perspective; it is not a question of law. Social scientists, however, following a constructivist approach,
consider communities as the result of policy intervention, such as those aiming at the safeguarding of intangible heritage, which involve the identification and definition of a “heritage community.”

Finally, Lauso Zagato takes on the concept of “heritage community” as introduced by the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (known as Faro Convention) of the Council of Europe. He argues that the idea of a heritage community, namely “people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations” (Council of Europe 2005, art. 2), is central to the right to cultural heritage, namely a right of involvement in heritage making. A rapprochement between UNESCO’s intangible heritage convention and the Faro convention would allow an understanding of the notion of “communities and groups” present in the UNESCO convention as “heritage community,” thus strengthening the participatory potential of the UNESCO convention.

*Cultural Values and Community Involvement beyond UNESCO*

Several contributions in the volume focus on questions of community participation outside UNESCO’s authorized heritage discourse (cf. Smith 2006). Cyril Isnart, in his case study on Catholic heritage construction in Rhodes, argues that heritage serves to produce a coherent religious community discursively. Alternative heritage discourses have the function here to make a religious minority outside the official cultural policy graspable. Similarly, Monika Salzbrunn interprets the production of local heritage as a strategic tool. In her example of the village Saint-Louis Sainte-Marthe in Paris, she shows how different local actors react to transformations in the urban infrastructure through and within festive events. Here, residents built specific communities of interest – what Erving Goffman would name “focused gatherings” (1963) – in order to protect buildings in their immediate neighborhood from bigger urban de- and reconstruction plans. Salzbrunn casts this claim for tangible and intangible heritage as a reaction to a local crisis – a model which may be found within and without the UNESCO heritage regime.

Jean Louis Tornatore, Noël Barb and Marina Chauliac recount their experience with the Ballons des Vosges Regional Nature Park. They suggested that the Park administrators use the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention as a tool for public action so as to involve the local population in the process of nominating and assigning heritage value. The process of “participation” of “communities” itself, rather than the concrete results of this process, is the most interesting part of the experience. The authors describe the complex process of deliberation through a citizens’ jury system and underline how their role as social scientists in this context shifted from that of content specialists with documentary expertise to that of guides with participatory expertise aiming at strengthening the authority of social actors involved in the participatory process. The heritage elements identified by such a shared expertise engaged the inhabitants, public officers, political actors and
heritage experts. It can be regarded as a resource in facing local needs for environmental protection and economic development. Participation appears here to be the result of a complex apparatus requiring consistent support in order to be performed. Just as “community” does not appear to be “natural,” “participation” does not appear to be self-implementable. Without such a complex apparatus and effort in promoting participation, participatory heritage policies produce few results, as also demonstrated in the Swiss case analyzed by Ellen Hertz.

Regina F. Bendix, in her contribution, seeks to integrate the heritage complex, including the facets of “community” and “participation,” into the broader history and range of the supporting and sponsoring of culture. She places heritage support alongside age-old practices of patronage, and investigates the power of individual as well as programmatic sponsorship to bring forth, maintain, protect and preserve culture. Patrons share a practice, but hardly form a community; their impact on which aesthetic forms and practices are valued and receive recognition has been formidable throughout recorded history. The heritage regime, argues Bendix, constitutes a relatively recent factor in the valorization of cultural forms and adds to the shifts in seemingly established canons of what is “worthy” culture.

Reflections on Heritage Experts and Decision Makers

The field of heritage making overlaps with anthropological expertise, a truism that surfaces repeatedly in many of the contributions to this volume. Anthropologists and ethnologists are part both of the heritage regime and heritage communities in their role as researchers and expert advisors, as well as through their production of heritage scholarship, which, in one way or another, becomes part of the heritage assemblage. Nicolas Adell recounts his experience as an “academic consultant” in the drafting of the nomination of “Compagnonnage, network for on-the-job transmission of knowledge and identities,” inscribed on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010. He argues that the need to demonstrate the “participation” of the “community” paradoxically encourages top-down processes. The French Ministry of Culture regards it as important that the mediations between different actors (national civil servants, academics and “heritage bearers”) be highlighted. The representations of compagnonnage produced in those meetings are oversimplified in order to fit the nomination mould. The actual and sincere engagement of “heritage bearers” in the nomination process, however, entails a high degree of conflict and disagreement among diverse points of view. Demonstrating the “participation” of “community” becomes, thus, a rhetorical exercise requiring simplification in order for a “community” to speak with one voice.

Chiara Bortolotto has been an observer at the meetings of UNESCO’s Intangible Heritage Committee for a number of years. In her article, she interweaves critical insights of the decision making processes witnessed as well as of her own role as both an involved and an observing anthropologist. Anthropologists, as cultural experts, often find themselves as go-betweens among different groups of ac-
tors and institutions involved in heritage making, and Bortolotto addresses the methodological and ethical issues this raises. Being both an agent in and an observer of the processes of heritage policy implementation, she foregrounds here – as does Hertz latently in her contribution – the additional dimensions of “participation” which are not captured in UNESCO’s operational guidelines.

Christoph Brumann draws on his participant observation of the statutory meetings of the World Heritage bureaucracy. From this vantage point, the growing call for empowering communities, indigenous or otherwise, in the World Heritage arena remains an empty claim. In fact, even in the rare situations where site communities access the UNESCO intergovernmental forum, they play mainly a decorative role. Only state delegates (diplomats and state-selected heritage experts) have a voice in the debate with their peers. This debate, in turn, demonstrates how securing one another’s sovereignty is each States Party’s primary concern. Brumann argues that, ultimately, the most powerful community of practice is the one composed of the state representatives attending World Heritage committee meetings: It is the only community that really has an influence on international decision making.

The volume concludes with Markus Tauschek’s suggestion to empirically observe and analyze the shaping of community in the heritage field through the instruments and vocabulary of the actor-network theory. Drawing on excerpts from three cases involving Belgian components, he finds that “community” comes about and succeeds or fails through different modes of assembling and discursively representing that which is to be turned into heritage. Working through such a Latourian lens, Tauschek also sees an opportunity to overcome the generally constructivist critical heritage approach and to integrate the agency of scholars themselves within the heritage assemblage.

Christoph Brumann differentiated between heritage believers, heritage atheists and heritage agnostics in an earlier article (2014), and the Vigoni meetings brought together representatives of these different groups. Several papers in this volume are examples of academic engagement in heritage making and in heritage policy making, and provide evidence of a scholarly, multidisciplinary “will to improve” (Li 2007). The tension between personal convictions, local and professional engagement as experts, and scientific analysis are not easy for some authors to bridge. The contributions of this volume also constitute further extensions of the UNESCO heritage assemblage. The materials discussed and presented here through case studies, theoretical reflections or legal considerations may serve as evidence for the necessity of interdisciplinary dialogue. However, they also affirm, perhaps with particular poignancy given the highly political and politicized field of heritage, the enormous challenge of engaged research. It is a challenge, as Bortolotto states in concluding her paper, that is good to think about, and it is a challenge reaching far beyond the heritage field.
References


