



FRAMEWORK CONVENTION
ON THE VALUE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE
FOR SOCIETY

LA CONVENTION-CADRE
SUR LA VALEUR DU PATRIMOINE CULTUREL
POUR LA SOCIÉTÉ



Heritage as a Tool for Community-Building

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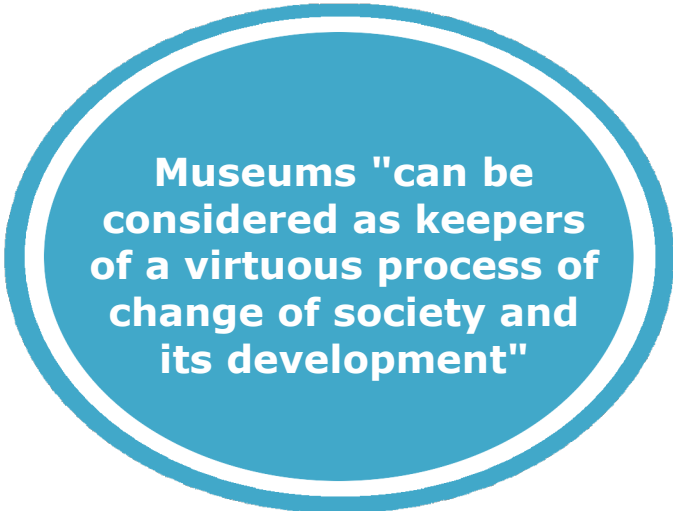
In the contemporary world the sense of belonging and identity of locations is acquiring a complex meaning that sometimes collides with a lack of memory. Nevertheless, the concepts of memory, identity and cultural heritage are related to each other (Pica, 2017). It means that when one argues about heritage cannot leave memory and identity out of consideration.

Assmann (1995) considers memory, culture, and the social group to be the three poles of his theory on cultural memory. Basically, it is based on texts, images, and rituals specific for each and every age and society. These are all elements of what one calls today the intangible cultural heritage that makes a society visible to itself and to others. And as Assmann argued "which past becomes evident in that heritage and which values emerge in its identificatory appropriation tells us much about the constitution and the tendencies of a society" (1995, 133).

The idea of plurality in the shaping of memory can be combined with the idea of development of a connective structure. Assmann identifies this as the link between the social and temporal

dimension; these two dimensions together give rise to a common space of experience, attempts and actions. The narrative and normative modalities of the connective structure establish the ground/base of belonging and identity, leading the individual back to a sense of community; therefore, the repetition (Wiederholung) and the actualisation (Vergegenwärtigung) give a shape to tradition. The concept of cultural memory, at the base of cultural identity, relates to an external dimension of human memory that is divided into four areas: mimetic memory (referring to action), memory of things (referring to objects), communicative memory (referring to language and communication) and cultural memory, which is the summa of the three previous areas. When a mimetic routine assumes the status of a "ritual", that is to say it acquires a meaningful value in addition to the functional one, it goes beyond the field of memory. Rites belong to cultural memory because they represent a form of transmission and actualization of cultural meaning. As well as objects when they remind one of a meaning and not only a practical purpose. Symbols, icons, and representations (i.e. commemorative stelae, funeral monuments,

temples, idols, and so on) transcend the horizon of memory and things, because they make explicit the temporal and identity index that are usually implicit (Assmann, 1997). This concept then becomes fundamental in the theories of social memory that are relevant in heritage narrative, too.



Museums "can be considered as keepers of a virtuous process of change of society and its development"

As regards museums as places of research, study and exhibition of artefacts and works of art, the heritage can be interpreted as the ideological and cultural symbol of a community (Rowland, 1993). It represents the collective and cultural memory keeping every single historical phase as a crucial moment for the understanding of the modern identity of a venue. As mentioned before, the landscape and also the shaping of the urban space implicates strong connections amongst aesthetics, knowledge, and instances of governance. Cultural policies are essential elements for preservation, conservation, and communication at any level and for any type of audience. Landscape and cultural heritage

should not be considered as separated components, rather as parts of the same articulated entirety. As a museum professional, I look at this institution as a crucial tool for understanding with a prominent role in terms of education and social inclusion. Museums, meant as "history-in-the-making", represent a privileged point of observation for the study, analysis and understanding of the cultural identity of which they are custodians and at the same time vehicle. They can be considered as keepers of a virtuous process of change of society and its development, due to their centuries-old influence in the perception and interpretation of societies and mankind. Museums have definitely contributed to the construction of the collective memory thanks to their strong cultural identity. Moreover, memory and identity are closely tied and from their continuous mutual exchange and enhancement one can experience a real growth in the sense of belonging (Connerton, 1989). The way one perceives, comprehends and interprets the surrounding world is also influenced by the environmental context; the cultural heritage housed in museums can contribute to the making of that complex process that is the development of personal and collective identity (Crane, 1997).

In conclusion, cultural heritage is a driving force for community-building and museum and heritage professionals - setting up a community of practice (Wenger, 1998) - can research and act on its impact at different levels such as occupation, education, and social inclusion to strengthen cohesion and sense of belonging.

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