

Carlos Fortuna - Heritage, Tourism and Emotion

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We live in a time of manifest uncertainty, where any attempt to describe the world has become truly complex - and it can be expected that we may find it difficult to define what heritage is or is not.

We value things in accordance with our own value systems, and in this way we transfer a variety of meanings onto objects, places and practices.

The attribution of meaning then is linked both to the specific nature of the heritage items in question – what they may have been or used for - and the differing interpretations given by different role players today:

Experts will judge according to academic, technical and scientific principles, while the public at large spontaneously value what they deem to be historically relevant to their particular community.

So the definition of cultural heritage would be the outcome of a process whereby these differing meanings are negotiated – and an important tool in this negotiation, is to look at the emotion that is generated by preserving the heritage, and what is it that creates that emotion: The *antiquity* of things and places has the ability to foster a feeling of a shared past, a closeness to a real or imagined community that was marked by a well-balanced coexistence of resources and nature; this feeling proves to be both reassuring and moving when compared to our messy present.

The emotions people feel depend on the specific ways in which they are connected to their respective communities, and their sense of collective participation in those communities.

Originality and rarity are qualities that are appreciated in today's repetitive, copycat consumer culture.

Continuity, sequence and finality render a feeling of stability and the ability to see a project through its full completion - as opposed to the feeling of guilt over an unfinished work, in itself a sign of present disorder and of a compromised, ever-postponed future.

Authenticity: Real artifacts, no matter how trivial, will trigger emotion and memory of that person or community who happened to make use of it.

Beauty.

The emotional effect of all these qualities in heritage objects can be profound: 1896 Pierre de Coubertin recorded in his journal the "overwhelming sensations" elicited in him by the ruins of Olympia – and how the modern Olympic Games saw the light.

It has been noted that the drive towards the conservation of heritage seems to intensify in times of crisis; the reason is that in our current consumer culture, it is the so-called traditional objects, places and **sociocultural practices that conserve us, not the other way** around.

Ignorance about our heritage creates feelings of indifference and the community needs to be taught on the history and the heritage: without such an education collective memory seems to cease to exist.

What people need, is hope: In 2010 when 33 miners were rescued in the Atacama Desert in Chile after 69 days in a mine, the whole world celebrated the joy, the relief, the community solidarity and the human resilience. That is the type of narrative that today's society, faced with all kinds of challenges and seemingly insoluble crises, needs to pass on to the future as a token of what can be done.

In conclusion heritage is always a selection and a choice, it is based on the value that is attributed through negotiation - by parties who show the ability and readiness to both acknowledge and embrace the cultural goods of others with whom we share this existence of ours in the troubled world of contemporary culture.