Rethinking (In)tangible Heritage: Social Constructionism and Actor-Network Theory Approaches

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Abstract

The adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO in 2003 has illuminated not just the burgeoning role of public participation in the inventory, presentation and conservation of the ‘intangible’ aspect of cultural heritage but has also foregrounded the need to rethink the boundary between tangible and intangible heritage. Using empirical studies from Macao and Malaysia, this paper investigates the conceptual separation between tangible and intangible heritage, identifies the potential of and argues for a greater integration of conceptual insights from sociology and the social sciences, namely, social constructionism (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and Actor-Network Theory (Callon, 1991; Latour, 1988; Law, 1987), in Cultural Heritage Management (CHM). In particular, and drawing upon the social constructionism approach, this paper argues that emphasising the need to understand the constructed-ness of social and cultural relations, practices and performances potentially aids our identification of the ‘tangible’, lived-in and corporeal dimensions of intangible heritage, the ‘intangible’, symbolic and situatedness of tangible heritage and the complexity, constructed-ness and interactional in CHM. This paper also considers the insights of the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) in understanding the ‘fibrous’ and ‘capillary’ nature and the agency of heritage places, practices and objects in CHM. In doing so, this paper puts forth the argument that intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is not merely one category in CHM but a perspective potentially offering greater attention to the social constructed-ness and networked nature of CHM and an avenue to better integrate museums and their objects, conserved ‘local’ places and their peoples, rituals in/and their transitions and collective community and ‘national’ memories and their cultural politics.

Keywords: Intangible heritage, social constructionism, Actor-Network Theory, Macao and Malaysia

Introduction

The study of cultural heritage management (CHM) and cultural tourism (CT) is an interdisciplinary endeavour. While a constellation of internationally recognised charters and conventions, such as the Burra Charter, Venice Charter and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention has preceded the 2003 ICH Convention and currently serve to guide professional and operational work at heritage places (Lee et
signs are pointing to a need for a yet even more integrative theoretical mindset within the CHM (du Cros, Lee, Sauvigrain-McClelland, Chow, & Logan, 2007) and CT field (Jamal & Kim, 2005) that is increasingly receptive to approaches from various disciplines. Such arguments are put forth in recent works and cover a spread of key themes including contemporary theory of conservation (Vinas, 2005), co-creation of heritage-scapes (Chronis, 2005), post-colonialism and identities (Ong, 2007), politics of heritage (Ahmad, 2006; Winter, 2007) and democracy, public participation and integration (Turnpenny, 2004).

At a moment when, in many places, visitor numbers and demands for public participation are rapidly rising and countless crafts and traditions are stealthily but surely vanishing, the meanings and configurations of tangible and intangible heritage and their conservation and management are also undergoing flux (Baille & Chippindale, 2007; Ollier & Winter, 2006; Winter, 2007). In particular, at the 7th Annual Cambridge Heritage Seminar, 12 May 2006, questions were raised regarding the usefulness and pitfalls of the new 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the legitimacy of supranational organisations such as UNESCO in guiding and implementing a universalising definition of intangible heritage in a ethnically and culturally very diverse world via its array of operational guidelines and conventions (Andrews, Viejo-Rose, Baille, & Morris, 2007; Baille & Chippindale, 2007). My own work in training heritage guides and cultural tourism managers in Asia for UNESCO and UN-ESCAP has also revealed questions over a tendency to materialise the intangible when trainees and on-the-ground operations were exposed to ideas of placing cultural heritage into categorical boxes of ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’.

This paper considers these questions and seeks to add to emerging theorisations in CHM and CT by considering the potential of adopting perspectives from social constructionism and actor-network theory from sociology in our understandings of ICH. It seeks to prompt a rethink of the boundary between tangible and intangible heritage in two ways. First, this paper responds to Wijesuriya’s call for a new concept that can encapsulate the real alignment of the tangible aspect and intangible aspect of heritage. To do this, the author draws upon insights from the sociological perspective of social constructionism and aims to re-conceptualise tangible and intangible heritage not as discrete categories but as connected and interactional aspects of the heritage whole. Second, and drawing upon the novel but often-misunderstood perspective of Actor-Network Theory, this paper discusses the ways in which key human and non-human actants have transcended geographical scales (global-local) to bring about initiatives and transformations in heritage. In so doing, this paper calls for heritage managers to look beyond scalar dichotomies of global-local and to reach for a more fibrous and ‘rhizomic’ interpretation and management of heritage. Cases from Malaysia and Macao are presented to illustrate and support the theoretical arguments.

The paper is organised as follows. Following this introduction, the next section reviews the existing conventions, theories and practices in CHM and CT and seeks to identify the various meanings and conceptualisations of tangible and intangible heritage and their related practices and management implications. Following that, this paper reviews and applies the social constructionist perspective. Particular attention is paid to its novel application in studies of music and social movements (Futrell, Simi, & Gottschalk, 2006) and their use of ‘scenes’ as encapsulating tangible and intangible aspects of the social movement’s whole. To this end, this section argues that although insights and groundings of social constructionism is inherent in CHM’s current guidelines and conventions, the use of ‘scenes’ has the potential to better integrate heritage experience, encounters and entities. This is followed by an investigation of the scalar dimension of heritage management and an argument that heritage management can benefit from a greater attention to ‘actants’ (Law, 1992) and the rhizomic nature of heritage scenes. The paper concludes by sketching critical agendas for CHM and CT by foregrounding a fibrous and rhizomic form of public and stakeholder participation in the scenes of heritage beyond the binaries, hierarchies and ‘tyrannies’ of global-local.
Reviewing Heritage: Conventions, Concepts and Practice

The introduction of The Convention for the Safeguarding of The Intangible Cultural Heritage on 17 October 2003 (thereafter 2003 ICH Convention) and its recent developments in operationalisation has prompted scholarly and professional attention on the clarity and utility of the terms ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ heritage. Several academic and professional conferences and seminars in 2007 have taken this issue as the central theme for discussion (for example, The 7th Annual Cambridge Heritage Seminars and UNESCO Expert meeting in Hoi An) and several more lined up this year. It is observed that the discourse over the various conceptualisations of ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’ heritage amongst academics and practitioners has strengthened (Wijesuriya, 2007).

The debate occurs at the basic level of definition of ‘terms and themes’ and ‘scope of international conventions’ (Wijesuriya, 2007). For the former, disagreements centre on what constitutes intangible values, intangible heritage and the aspects of intangible heritage (Kato, 2006; Wijesuriya, 2007). Some claim all values are intangible while others see tangible heritage as only meaningful when we make sense of it via its intangible aspects. There are also issues regarding the conceptual and operational reach of the two existing UNESCO Conventions. Wijesuriya critically examines the two documents and found that:

It is implicit in the World Heritage Convention that it is concerned with the tangible heritage, whereas the new Convention (2003 ICH Convention) explicitly refers to intangible heritage. Both Conventions contain provisions concerning the other aspect of heritage, at least to a limited extent, which may seem paradoxical to those not familiar with the history of the two Conventions.

In the World Heritage Convention, intangible cultural heritage occupies some obligatory discussions as the nomination, inscription and protection of the ‘universally outstanding’ World Heritage, excludes the immaterial, mobile and transient.

The concept of cultural landscape is a promising one for seeing and appreciating the tangible and in-tangible aspects and components of heritage as one unified entity and has in December 1992 been adopted by World Heritage Committee. It also challenges the divide between natural and cultural heritage described in the World Heritage Convention (Jacques, 1995). As described by Sassoon (2006), cultural landscapes are also able to reflect the ‘values inherent in and surrounding documents and buildings, highlighting the way in which meanings are invested in places and things’ and these are contingent on ‘deep political and social processes’. The World Heritage Committee created three categories of cultural landscapes and integrated these into its operational guidelines (Rossler, 2000). As compared to the earlier uses of ‘cultural properties’ by UNESCO and ‘sites’ by ICOMOS, cultural landscapes is a more expansive and encompassing concept and could be said to be the first signs that these international heritage organisations are looking beyond the artefacts and the archaeological. Geographers (Sauer, 1925) have long argued for the use of landscapes for the study of social and cultural geography in response to the environmental determinism that plagued the discipline’s earlier works. In introducing the concept of cultural landscapes in 1992, UNESCO has drawn upon contributions of only the first strand of cultural geography and has failed to integrate later and more poststructural perspectives from ‘new’ cultural geographers. This, in my view, is an opportunity lost. Current debates and concerns of public participation in conserving and managing heritage, community’s aspirations in cultural tourism and the meanings of performances and places could have been better framed if UNESCO has tapped into major contributions to cultural landscape study by ‘new’ cultural geographers such as Tim Bunnell, James and Nancy Duncan and Brenda Yeoh. More recently, sociologist Winter (2006) draws upon Urry’s (2000) concept of ‘scapes’ and ‘flows’ to investigate the conservation and cultural tourism issues in Angkor World Heritage. However, though established as a category in UNESCO World Heritage inscription and having great conceptual utility, new inscriptions and nominations to World Heritage Committee rarely utilises this concept (Akagawa & Sirisrisak, 2008; Taylor & Altenburg, 2006). This
suggests the rather limited effectiveness of the concept in operation and/or a lack of commitment in practice.

A few initiatives prelude the formation of the 2003 ICH Convention. In 1973, the Bolivia government moved to protect intellectual property rights to their popular culture. Following that and in 1989, UNESCO initiated the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore. According to Schmitt (2008), this initiative is limited in its effectiveness. In the 1990s, the UNESCO section for Intangible Cultural Heritage created a collection of traditional music from all over the world. A UNESCO Redbook of Endangered Languages was also created by the Education section of UNESCO followed by several programmes and expert meetings on endangered languages through to 2003. The most important event that eventually led to the creation of the 2003 ICH Convention happened in 1998. In 1998, UNESCO started a programme called the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

The Masterpieces programme was subsequently discontinued as operationalisation of the 2003 ICH Convention progressed. Under the terms of the new convention, all existing Masterpieces are automatically re-categorised as entries on the new representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO, 2007). In the 2003 ICH Convention, intangible cultural heritage takes centre-stage and it is through the definition of intangible cultural heritage that UNESCO appears to be pursuing its vision of a community-based cultural tourism. Intangible cultural heritage means

...the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (Article 2, pg 2).

UNESCO has taken what can be said to be a very positive step in putting the community back in the heart of its conceptualisation of cultural heritage through such articulations (Ahmad, 2006). To this, the 2003 ICH Convention strongly spells out the need for cultural site managers to work closely with and in respect of communities. Specifically, the 2003 ICH Convention had called for ‘the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage’, increasing ‘respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned’, raising ‘awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof’ and providing ‘international cooperation and assistance’ (Article 1, pg 2). The 2003 ICH Convention has since generated massive professional interests with the second session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (3-7 September 2007) having a ‘very full agenda’ (UNESCO, 2007). One key output of the session consisted of a major draft of the Operational Directives necessitated by the Convention. It is likely that with the discussion scheduled in June 2008 that the approval and revisions to the full set of directives proposed by the Committee will materialise and that the Convention will go fully operational in ‘as early as 2009’.

So what now for professionals, professors and peoples concerned with heritage? Has UNESCO, through its two conventions, solved the tangible-intangible heritage puzzle (and other related questions) in concept and practice? The next section discusses these issues and related questions by foregrounding the social constructedness of heritage.
Scenes and Senses: The Social Constructedness of Heritage

If we accept that...intangible heritage is an equal category alongside the tangible, we lose the special defining character of the heritage as being concerned with physical remains – with stuff. One strong and well understood category (heritage as physical remains), of proven merit, is supplanted by one which is diffuse, unnecessary and analytically of no proven utility. (Baillie and Chippindale, 2007)

But intangible values can hardly be identified by tangible attributes; they can only be perceived in the mind and fully understood and appreciated by certain communities for whom a particular heritage has been transmitted from generation to generation. (Wijesuriya, 2007)

So what if the inclusion of intangible heritage dilutes the conceptual strength of the term ‘heritage’ (as associated with Baillie and Chippindale’s ‘stuff’) and if the intangible can never be identified, as Wijesuriya reminds us, with the tangible and physical? This paper argues that CHM and CT have always drawn upon the sociological perspective of social constructionism in its principles and guidelines and the way out of the conceptual maze presented in Baillie and Chippindale’s and Wijesuriya’s debate could lie in revisiting social constructionism. Beginning from the pioneering work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966), social constructionism champions the uncovering of myriad ways in which social actors and cultural groups participate in the creation of their perceived social reality. It entails the investigation of the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalised and made into tradition by humans. Using the case of religion, Berger and Luckmann (1966) show how social knowledge becomes real and takes on causative powers when people start believing in it and allow it to enter their everyday life and routine. In recognising that intangible cultural heritage is ‘transmitted from generation to generation’ and that it ‘is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment’ (2003 ICH Convention Article 2, pg 2), CHM professionals advising the drafting of the 2003 ICH Convention in general and UNESCO in particular, could be said to have understood the principles of social constructionism. So too can the components for the inclusion of concepts such as ‘Living Heritage’, ‘Masterpieces’ and ‘Cultural Landscape’.

Perhaps the way forward for CHM and CT in (in)tangible heritage management lies firstly in the circumventing of Baillie and Chippindale’s and Wijesuriya’s debate and to refocus our attention on what lies between the ‘stuff’ and ‘mind’ and secondly in the implementation of what Chronis (2006) terms a ‘heritage of the senses’. To the former, the social constructionism perspective implies that what becomes knowledge and tradition has to go through processes of inspiration and negotiation, between the object and the idea, between the stuff and the mind, before the meanings and significances (and the Statements of Significance) are crafted and forged. It is more useful then, I believe, that we focus our efforts in identifying the constellations of inspirations and negotiations in our conservation and management work, rather than stay fixated on inventorying the ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible’. For instance, the traditional art of wooden signboard making in Georgetown, Malaysia, could be better conserved if one directs attention to the motivations for learning the craft, the barriers to maintaining the craft and the ways in negotiating the contemporary challenges of apprenticeship in a fickle job market than say to focus efforts on keeping a list of tangible/material and intangible/immaterial heritage. To the latter, the symbolic interactionist branch of social constructionism (Barnes, 1991) reminds us that meaning is constituted by and through social interaction. By extension, such social interactions must have entailed a variety of senses. Yet, we see all too much conservation works done that paid profuse attention on the aesthetics and the visual, marginalising the voices, scents and texture of heritage. Using the case of a Byzantine exhibition in Thessaloniki, Greece, Chronis argues that collective remembering and heritage should always be an ‘embodied praxis’. While such arguments may not be most novel, maybe what is at fault is that we, heritage professionals, may not be practising what we think we know and what we think ought to be done often enough.

To better encapsulate the arguments that this paper posits, I borrow Futrell et al.’s (2006) elegant concept of ‘scene’ to reflect a better integration of
tangible and intangible components of heritage. Working on a study on the role of music in social movements, Futrell et al. conceptualise ‘music scenes’ as:

… the elements of a social movement’s culture that are explicitly organised around music and which participants regard as important as supporting movement ideals and activist identities. A movement’s music scene is an influential part of wider movement culture in which activists routinely enact and express movement ideals in settings organised around music…[music scenes] are interconnected sets of situations that members experience as a relative coherent whole – a scene – which is a part of the broader movement. A music scene is to be actively experienced, to be felt as particular cultural attitudes and emotions that draw participants into shared understandings of music, politics, lifestyle, and associated symbols. Understanding how a movement’s music scene operates not only requires knowledge of how it is organised, but also recognition of how participants feel about the occasions that make up the scene.

Thus, a movement music scene is not merely ‘an objective quality that exists in time and space’ (pg 276) but is also truly experiential, built on common beliefs about the nature, value, and authenticity of movement occasions that are music-oriented. Rather than to see heritage as tangible and intangible entities, properties and components, this paper contends that heritage is better conceptualised as ‘heritage-scenes’. After the initial stages of ‘inventory’, ‘legislation’, ‘increased professionalism’ and ‘stakeholder consultation’ (Lee, Du Cros, Di Stefano, & Logan, 2007), heritage professionals can move into ‘integration’ and ‘review’ stages by attending more to the heritage-scenes in their framework of heritage management. By heritage-scenes I refer to an amalgam of inspirations, interactions and negotiations between objects and ideas, stuff and mind and between the community which foment and forge the ritual, performance and objects and their various stakeholders. Heritage conservators should strive to identify the inspirations for conservation purposes while heritage interpreters should focus on communicating such inspirations in their interpretive planning and talk. Heritage managers should work with community leaders to identify the interactions in the heritage-scenes and seek to support the ideals and meanings tied to the folklores, plays and historic buildings while recognising the negotiations heritage asset owners and custodians have to undertake in the environment, economy and polity. A traditional coffee place in Georgetown, Malaysia, is a good example of how heritage can be conceptualised as a ‘heritage-scene’ (Figure 1). While it appears ordinary and rundown, it is a vibrant, multi-sensorial and inspiring scene where traditional methods of making Penang-style coffee lives on and is appreciated.

Although well-conceptualised and theorised in academia, this paper argues that the metaphor of scene works better than place, landscape and cultural landscapes in practice. Place suggests settlement. Landscape and cultural landscape infer the visual – that of traditional English paintings. In addition to better encapsulate tangible and intangible heritage, defining heritage as scenes also has the advantage of reflecting the multi-sensory, lived-in and embodied experience.
of heritage. It foregrounds the encounter without sideling or privileging either the ‘stuff’ or the ‘mind’. Both objects and ideas abound in scenes but scenes are not reducible to the stuff and/or the mind – it has something more! Scenes imply a liveliness, a series of play and possibly a set of difficult, painful or violent negotiations motivated by ethnocentrism, nationalism, identity politics, tourism ‘development’ and/or greed. It also has the potential to de-centre CHM and CT from its visual-centrism. CHM and CT experiences and assets can benefit their users more if they can engage with senses beyond the visual ones (A. Chronis, 2006; du Cros et al., 2007; Joy & Sherry, 2003; Seremetakis, 1994). Using the case of the Byzantine exhibition in Thessaloniki, Greece, Chronis illustrates how visitation at the exhibition can be a multi-sensory one. Using the case of the Museum of Macao, du Cros et al., have shown how many conservation works, particularly the great tendency towards adaptive reuse, have preserved empty facades for the visual consumption and experience of visitors in Macao. The interior, so crucial to a more embodied experience of the Monte Fortress (from which the new spaces of the Museum of Macao is derived) as the lynchpin of the Portuguese colonial defense system, is lost.

Social constructionism’s emphasis on collective creation of reality and traditions in societies is instructive for CHM and CT. On one hand, it helps to show the stuff, lived-in and corporeal dimensions of what can be strictly inventorised as ‘intangible’ heritage. While it could be foolhardy, as Wijesuriya asserts, to seek to identify intangible values with tangible attributes, social constructionism (and also Actor-Network improvisations) tells us that music, performance, rituals and practices necessarily require the enrolment of physical objects into its processes of reality-making and/or network/rhizome-creation (Latour, 1988). On the other, social constructionism can help foreground the intangible, symbolic and situatedness, and interactional aspects of the tangible. A traditional wooden signboard found in Georgetown, a Chinese-majority town in Peninsula Malaysia, for example, can be understood as having an intangible dimension when one looks beyond the stuff of things and redirect attention on the labour and craftsmanship that foments the object (Figure 2). The wooden signboard is also a cultural object only when a community views it collectively as symbolic of Chineseness and appreciates it for being situated not just within a part of the Chinese society but also as an emblem of working class toil and struggles within an overseas Chinese community. Including the intangible in our understanding of heritage then strengthens rather than dilutes the concept.

Spanish Writer, Portuguese Ships and a Macao Lighthouse: A Fibrous and Rhizomic Approach to Heritage

Spanish Writer, Portuguese Ships and a Macao Lighthouse: A Fibrous and Rhizomic Approach to Heritage

It might be much of an intellectual shortcut to say that the 2003 ICH is the result of popular Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo and his love for a square he often mentions in his novels but the perceptive and timely work of Schmitt (2008) revealed that it could have been an important and even deciding impulse. The square is the Jemaa el Fna Square in the old city of Marrakech and it is known for its ‘musicians, storytellers, acrobats, snake charmers and seers, and the many other actors’ who perform for a local and an increasingly tourist crowd. From the work of Schmit we understand the following. Plans to build a high-rise building that would obstruct the visual access, setting and heritage values of the square and an underground carpark that is likely to alter the sense of place set
Goytisolo racing. The Spanish writer knew he had to go beyond the local authorities to stop these plans and so he wrote to UNESCO. Goytisolo's call for the protection of Jemaa el Fna eventually took the form of an internal memorandum entitled 'Proposition de Juan Goytisolo'. Juan Goytisolo became a part of the team that formulated the conceptual instruments, suitable institutions, structures and procedures that eventually led to the drafting of the 2003 ICH Convention. In short, Schmitt (2008) tells us that 'a cosmopolitan intellectual succeeded in getting a local problem placed on the agenda of an international organisation'.

Schmitt’s account of the Spanish writer and his beloved square highlights two key things. One, it provided a contextual and personal account of how the convention came into force. Second, (although Schmitt did not make such claims) it illustrates how heritage protection can be seen, analysed and done in the ANT way. ANT is a much misunderstood perspective and warrants some explanation here. Firstly, network is not used the same way as the ‘double-click’ computer/internet connection metaphor. Rather, ANT theorists Bruno Latour, John Law, and Michel Callon had meant for network to reflect ‘transformations, transductions and translations’ and not transport without deformation. By actors, they had meant not just humans but also non-human objects and subjects. Ultimately, they had wanted to use the ANT perspective to offer social science a way to see beyond structure and agency and beyond top-down or bottom-up approaches. ANT offers a rhizomic way of seeing the social world. By this, the ANT theorists have drawn from the works of French philosopher Deleuze and had wanted to use the metaphor of rhizomes to signify a way of thinking about the social world that sees multiple worlds connected at nodes that spring out from the sides much like a ginger plant and other rhizome species.

The case of Goytisolo and Jemaa el Fna Square is instructive here. Many times, heritage guidelines, principles and documents have followed a local-national-regional-global framework. Readers with practical experiences at cultural places would attest to the argument that most times, it does not work this way. The case of Goytisolo defies all that taken-for-granted framework of local-national-regional-global. Goytisolo will not make sense if we see him in a local-global framework as he is at any one instance, located at multiple levels. Using an ANT language, we can say that Goytisolo is an actant who is able to enlist and enrol multiple allies quickly due to his possession and maintenance of durable networks: his international fame and following, his close ties with the then Director of UNESCO, his intimate knowledge of the square, his authoring of books that circulate and communicate images and ideas of Jemaa el Fna as a place to experience Orientalism, and so on. The square is also able to, through its high visibility in literature and tourism, enlist and enrol allies on its and of its own: conservation architects, heritage specialists, tourists, officers in UNESCO, performers and residents who lend to it support and assistance.

Let us now move from the Spanish writer to the nation neighbouring of his, but travelling back in time, to consider the case of Portuguese sailing ships and Portugal’s colonial power. In his insightful and interesting work, John Law (2001) reveals how, via an ANT perspective, we can argue that Portugal’s colonialism and the long-distance control of its shipping routes and far-flung colonies was highly dependent on the creation of a network of passive agents. By passive agents Law meant both human and non-human agents and entities: the rugged and nimble Portuguese vessel Carrack, disciplined sailors and soldiers, navigational tools such as the rutter and the astrolabe. It is also essential that the Portuguese Carracks travel within what Law calls the ‘envelope of undistorted communication and long-distance control’ (Law, 2001). Such arguments rightly de-centre the human-centredness of Portuguese maritime history and brings to fore the role material and non-human objects play in the making of human history. It also does away with the unnecessary pondering over whether Portuguese long distance control and travel should be classified as local, regional or global phenomenon. These are the exact aspects of an otherwise extremely rich and large corpus of ANT insights this paper is drawing from in its discussion.

So what exactly is the relevance for CHM and CT?
To see this, let us continue with the maritime context but fast-forward and travel back in time to the Portuguese-constructed Guia Lighthouse in a more contemporary Macao (Figure 3). The Guia Lighthouse is the oldest western-style lighthouse in the whole of China. Together with other components of The Historic Centre of Macao World Heritage, it testifies to what has been recorded as the longest and most sustained encounter between a western civilisation and an East Asian one. Controversy broke out in 2007 when plans were announced that a Beijing-backed development is taking place at the foot of the Guia Hill where the lighthouse stood and that eventual construction would bring the completed high-rise building to a height that would obstruct visual access and greatly diminish heritage values. The controversy generated a fierce debate and lively public participation never before seen in the territory. Upon the advice of heritage professionals, civil society groups organised around the culture and heritage banner submitted a letter to UNESCO calling for the halt to the construction. Beijing - the ‘State Party’ - responded by sending a letter to ask the Macao Special Administration Region Government to provide details about the matter. The Macao SAR government then flew a delegation to Beijing on 16 January. Led by the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Chu Sai On, the delegation discussed with the Central Government issues of urban planning, particularly the case of Guia Lighthouse. While it remained illegal for the SAR government to reverse the development plans around the lighthouse having approved it, the Macao government was pressured to reiterate its commitment to World Heritage and heritage. The immediate outcome of the meeting was a series of ‘new solution’ and the forthcoming establishment of a special preservation system to protect Macao’s historic district and specific laws to regulate relevant activities’ (Xinhua News Agency, 18 January 2008). A public consultation process was also initiated by the Macao Cultural Bureau on 1 March regarding revisions to the existing heritage laws. A long political process geared at improving cultural heritage protection in Macao spearheaded by the Cultural Bureau of Macao ensued towards the creation of the new heritage laws which was seen to render more protection to objects such as the Gaia lighthouse and prevent the recurrence of such a controversy. The new heritage laws were finally passed in 2013 (Macao Daily Times, 14 August 2013).

The lighthouse has functioned to guide John Law’s carracks and its Portuguese mariners and Chinese, Japanese and many other sailors and travellers to the shores of Macao. Since the rise of tourism in Macao, it has also guided many tourists, visitors and sightseers to its premise. Today, it has enlisted and enrolled a network of heritage campaigners and ‘protectors’, international experts, officials and a wide audience who follows the event and fomented new heritage legislations for Macao. Though the campaign did not achieve the aim of halting the development, it is still able to focus attention on and push for SAR government and Beijing to act. Although the new heritage
laws were and still are contested (Macau Daily Times, 23 April 2013), the initiation of public debate (rare in Macao) is a step in the right direction. This sequence of events is the work of a few agents and actants. In one of the most densely populated places in the world and where property developers enjoyed much political power, Macau heritage activists should continue to look beyond the city’s immediate governing bodies as they seek greater protection of their heritage assets, places and memories.

In the Guia Lighthouse case, campaign leader Un Wai-Tong resembles Juan Goyitisolo in his approach in calling for the safeguarding of his cherished but threatened heritage. Both Un and Goyitisolo had gone beyond the local in their heritage ‘crusades’. Their cases are instructive here. Heritage activists and managers alike have to move beyond their geographical localities in the short term and embrace a less geographically-fixed perspective. We have to view heritage issues as rhizomic ones and heritage scenes as rhizomes off-shooting from critical nodes in our worlds. They are not stacked on top of one another like a pile of cards with a heavy and powerful ‘global’ card sitting on the less important and less powerful ‘local’.

The lighthouse and Jemaa el Fna Square are active actants in these accounts and have effected crucial transformations in their heritage scenes. They are not passive material backdrops upon which struggles, negotiations and/or scientifically-based conservation interventions take place. Heritage, more so than other fields of social science, has to bring non-human agents back into the analysis. Non-human actants have to be placed on equal footings as human agents and actor and this paper argues that greater attention has to be paid onto the ways in which they bring about effects in social and physical worlds.

**Conclusion**

I have argued that revisiting the fundamentals of social constructionism and keeping faith with understanding and preserving the interactions and inspirations, and taking into account the specific negotiations, constitute the path out of the tangible-intangible puzzle. This paper has also proposed the use of scenes as a metaphor and concept that would unite physical, experiential and interactional in heritage. I have also argued that scenes work better than current concepts such as landscape, cultural landscapes and cultural property as it does not conjure ideas of a visual-centric appreciation and conservation of heritage and it does not suggest economic value as being predominant in our work in CHM and CT.

Specifically, I have argued that the metaphor of scene works better than place, landscape and cultural landscapes in practice. I have suggested that ‘place’ evokes notions of settlement and that cultural landscape, a recognised category in UNESCO’s processes, still infers largely the visual – that of the traditional English paintings. In addition to better capture tangible and intangible heritage, defining heritage as scenes, as I have argued, also has strengths in encapsulating the multi-sensory, lived-in and embodied experience of heritage. It highlights the heritage encounter without marginalising or privileging either the ‘stuff’ or the ‘mind’. I have shown that both objects and ideas are embedded in scenes but scenes are not reducible to one or the other. Scenes, as I have demonstrated, imply liveliness, a series of play and possibly a set of difficult, painful or violent negotiations motivated by a range of social and personal forces. I have also contended that scenes, as a concept, better allow us to engage with the multi-sensorial nature of heritage places. An engagement with senses beyond the visual helps heritage planners and users avoid the creation of empty facades out of heritage places. I have also shown that a social constructionist approach, with an emphasis on collective creation of reality and traditions in societies helps to show the stuff, the lived-in and the corporeal dimensions of what some prefer to strictly inventorised as ‘intangible’ heritage. While it could be foolhardy, as Wijesuriya (2007) asserts, to seek to identify intangible values with tangible attributes, social constructionism and also Actor-Network Theory tells us that music, performance, rituals and practices necessarily require the enrolment of physical objects into its processes of reality-making and/or network/rhizome-creation (Lataour, 1988). Social constructionism, as I have shown
using the case of the Chinese traditional wooden signboard carving in Malaysia’s Georgetown, can also aid in highlighting the intangible, symbolic and situatedness, and interactional of tangible – it can be understood as having an intangible dimension when one looks beyond the stuff of things and redirect attention on the labour and craftsmanship that foments the object. The wooden signboard is a cultural object only when a community views it collectively as symbolic of Chineseness and appreciates it for being situated not just within a part of the Chinese society but also as an emblem of the working class toil and struggles within an overseas Chinese community. Contrary to the critiques of Baillie and Chippindale (2007), including the intangible in our understanding of heritage then strengthens rather than dilutes the concept.

Turning to insights from ANT, I have argued that the actual formulation of the 2003 ICH Convention is in itself an illuminating example of the workings of actors and networks. The Spanish writer Goytisolo has, to a large extent, been able to transcend geographical scales and put on the table of the Director of UNESCO and in the agenda of UNESCO the urgent work of protecting what is said to be a ‘local’ heritage place infused with intangible heritage. I have also asserted that heritage work (by both activists and managers) should be seen in such a Goytisolosian way and that the Proposition de Juan Goytisolo should not be the first and only example. Using the case of the Guia Lighthouse in transforming heritage management in Macao, I made a call for more work in CHM and CT to attend to trans-scalar concerns and argued that efforts should be made to decentre heritage from its experts and its entrenched anthropocentrism. In this paper, I have argued that the lighthouse has performed to guide John Law’s carracks and its Portuguese mariners and Chinese, Japanese and many other sailors and travellers to then-colonial Macao. In contemporary Macao, it has also guided many tourists, visitors and sightseers to its premise and had enrolled and is still maintaining a network of heritage campaigners, experts, officials and a broader audience who followed the event and fomented, accepted or contested the new heritage legislations for Macao. In one of the most densely populated places in the world and where property developers enjoyed much political power, Macau heritage activists should continue to look beyond the city’s immediate governing bodies as they seek greater protection of their heritage assets, places and memories. We have to move beyond our geographical localities in the short term, embrace a less geographically-fixed perspective and to view heritage issues as rhizomic ones – heritage scenes as rhizomes off-shooting from critical nodes in our worlds. The ‘local’ is not necessarily less influential than the ‘global’. While seen by many residents as ‘local’ sites, the Guia lighthouse and Jemaa el Fna Square are active actants in these accounts and have effected crucial transformations in their heritage scenes via transnational connections. Furthermore, they are not mere material backdrops upon which struggles, negotiations and/or scientifically-based conservation interventions take place. Non-human actants have to be placed on more equal footings as human agents and actor in sociological analysis and this paper argues that greater attention has to be paid to look at the ways in which they bring about effects in social and physical worlds.

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