

THE TRANSMISSION AND RELATED PERCEPTION OF THE MESSAGE(S) AS A MAIN COMPONENT IN VALUING, PRESERVING AND USING THE CULTURAL HERITAGE REMAINS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE *QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE: THE OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE AND THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL IN THE CONTEXT OF PRESENT CHALLENGES*

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“I am not interested in a ‘European Heritage’, it seems a projection that doesn’t exist. I am interested in local, regional differences, I am interested in the history that led to these differences. May be I am not interested in relations between the USA and Italy, when they try to build the basis for recognizing a ‘EU Identity’ aimed to build a ‘EU allied’. This is why I feel the EU *artificial*, eventually (temporarily) functioning as an economic or strategic space, rather than a reality built by history”.

Federico is a nineteen year old guy, learned and studying at the University. His age means, also, that he can vote, and influence, to some extent, the future of his Country/territory from the political point of view.

If we compare his feeling with the ‘70s *Outstanding Universal Value* of the UNESCO 1972 Convention, or with the present *European Heritage Label* campaign, we’ll discover the fragility of these concepts, due to a large extent to their anachronism.

The *UNESCO Outstanding Universal Value* is defined in the Convention (as actualized in the Paragraph 49 of the *Operational Guidelines for Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, UNESCO, 2005), as the “*Cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity*”.

The *European Heritage Label*, which attribution is submitted to the criterium that the “*Candidate sites for the label must have a symbolic European value and must have played a significant role in the history and culture of Europe and/or the building of the Union*”, among those the fact that “*their place and role in the development and promotion of the common values that underpin European integration*”, shows all its limits since the beginning of the *selection* of the beneficiaries (2013), if it is true that at the same time (2014) critical studies and researches were started on this initiative (e.g.: see S. KAISER, *The European Heritage Label: a Critical Review of a New EU Policy*, thesis for the “Master of Arts in European Union Studies” at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA).

As Kaiser highlights, “The EHL will be a way to raise awareness of European values and culture, but this depends largely on the reception of the public”; “The EHL is a bureaucratic tool and process to accommodate the EU’s culturalpolitical goals, namely the building of a common heritage and identity. The EU’s discourse is authoritative in the sense that it spills over to and is adopted and reproduced by the candidate sites, since the qualification criteria require them to emphasize the European value and symbolism in order to be considered potential candidates. Sites (in other words, their managers)

are required to change their discourse on their heritage, to re-invent or at least reframe their heritage and by that, give the EU authority, if not ownership over their heritage”; “Especially in regards to UNESCO, it will be interesting to pursue how European countries deal with their heritage and how they want to frame it, since UNESCO stands for outstanding universal value and the EHL promotes a narrower, symbolic European value. Is the branding as a European heritage attractive and desirable for a site compared to the global appeal of UNESCO?”.

In effect, in a changing world, where fake news are trusted as true information, virtual reality perception and consequences are surpassing the real one, psychological and physical violence is becoming a spectacle, recognizing of differences means fear for ‘the other’, history is –again- becoming an unpleasant witness to be destroyed in order to affirm a ‘new status’, it seems difficult to maintain (both in the cases of UNESCO and the EU) a Eurocentric, old fashioned -after all colonialist- vision alive.

And it is.

If we assume an anthropological point of view, we are always, each other, ‘the other’. Also inside the ‘same culture’ we can distinguish a *dominant culture* (which becomes the official point of view of the history) and a *subaltern* one, which is *at its command* like in the Army, until the next (visible or invisible) revolution. Aliens are among us. Poverty is spreading, roots are changing place but not their logical, *tribal*, significance.

In this context, which significance can have letters like the one written by the Italian Minister of Culture Franceschini and the German Foreign Affairs representative Boehmer to the European High representative for Foreign Affairs and Security (an interesting connection for these two roles) about the launch of a first German-Italian task force for saving Cultural Heritage from disasters and terrorist attacks, especially where it is affirmed that *European Union, with its large set of tools to prevent crises, to stabilize social contexts and intervene by peacekeeping operations has the best position to do it at a global scale?*

Is Federico right? Can we ‘save’ culture (not the cultural remains but their message), by policing? If so, which meaning will represent the worldwide, common, *RECOGNITION* of an Outstanding Universal Value?

On the other hand, we should take in account that the spans of time in which a large territory had a sort of unification, with big differences among territories, (e.g. at the time of the Roman Empire) it was thanks an imperialist approach, and that, also in this context, the winning policies were those that were tolerant of local costumes.

Considering the above mentioned situation, we should work to build tools and instruments that let people to improve their critical perception capability. In fact, the reception or the refusing of a cultural element, in ancient times as well as nowadays, is strictly linked to its understanding and valuing in the context of the scale of importance that we put in place in our day by day life.

In this sense, the philosophy of HERITY and its HERITY Global Evaluation System for cultural assets, as a global tool, is aimed to enlarge skills and capabilities of both the managers –in order to better transmit the message(s) they want to convey through the Cultural Heritage they manage-, and the

general public –in order people to better understand the remains they visit and related context- to perceive, and eventually refuse, that message(s).

With regard to the *Value(s)* and related *Labels* attributed to Cultural Heritage HERITY works for:

1. helping the cultural growth of any individual;
2. favouring the freedom of thinking;
3. diffusing evaluation tools regarding the appreciation of the significance of a cultural remain, then supporting its preservation and use;
4. re-designing declarations like the UNESCO 1972 convention according to the new challenges we are fronting nowadays;
5. passing the concept of *Labels*, which perhaps has a taxonomic usefulness but is nothing else than a division tool, not a unifying one, simply moving the concept of 'the other' on a larger scale.

I understand that in some way this could seem a revolutionary, emotive approach, but it is not. Sentiments and affection are powerful tools for peacekeeping, conscious understanding a powerful support to our choices, also in the absence of *cultural definitions*: may be that Federico is no right at all, but he is the expression of his time: we cannot ignore this.