

AFTERWORD

This is not a Manifesto: Precipitating a Paradigm Shift in Cultural Management

Stelios Lekakis

In this volume, we set out to approach heritage as a commons, in an exploratory and comparative way, inspired by the processes and trends already taking place in Greece, and contrasting this with the pressing neoliberal agendas that have become established over the last decade across Europe. We have attempted to avoid drawing up a manifesto, such as often found in the last pages of many heritage publications but instead provide an introduction to a political horizon for heritage management, already advocated by a number of writers in different fields. We tried to do so by gathering argument from neighbouring fields of public resources, looking for interdisciplinary lessons to be adapted in the present for the future.

Commons – not as another grand narrative but as a summative practice, a political *modus operandi* – engages with goods, management processes and values, and allows us to step away from dichotomic discussions in private and government instrumentalities and move towards a mixture of modes and methods of democratic and polycentric governance systems. However, commons is mostly about people, in a plural, inclusive and enticing way; a symbol of human ideals and values, it re-examines on the ground concepts of exclusive identities, challenges established ideas on ideals and values and provides the

How to cite this book chapter:

Lekakis, S. 2020. This is not a Manifesto: Precipitating a Paradigm Shift in Cultural Management. In Lekakis, S. (ed.) *Cultural Heritage in the Realm of the Commons: Conversations on the Case of Greece*. Pp. 259–262. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/bcj.o>. License: CC-BY

foundations of instituent praxis for the here and now, assembling new worlds in the shell of the old.

Heritage commons

In attempting to ideologically challenge and politically treat heritage management through the lenses of the commons, a re-interpretation based on the social characteristics of heritage and current participatory/inclusive management tools, we set in motion a more systematic framework of discussion, a prolegomenon aimed at more sustained research and analysis.

In the framework of this new paradigm, heritage is envisaged as a cohesive mix of material and immaterial goods, surrounding communities and processes of governance and production, whether we emphasise on knowledge or services. Through this, a number of collateral issues are opened: material-wise, we are reminded that an ontological and anti-essentialist discussion is needed, exploring the ways in which the past is enclosed to heritage and its affordances. Valuation/valorisation processes and resource-based approaches in practice are part of this reconsideration along with the ethics of growth and the yoke of economism. The role of stakeholders and their right to heritage, aside from the normative documents' general prescriptions, must also be re-examined, in terms of structures of power and priorities of assigned values. Their identity is also crucial; how do we define the participant communities, how much we open up the schema to avoid confrontation but also represent diversity and how ready we are to engage with those unsettled, constantly becoming communities? The methodologies of participation are abundant; however, it must be asked whether they are political (in terms of intentions, agency and organisation), they deal with issues on the ground (e.g. speaking in front of others, enabling marginalized people, resolving conflict, extending effects beyond the timetable of a project) and they deliberate anything else other than a passive engagement circuit, another tick box in a cultural heritage project.

Given the volatile paradigm that emerges from this process, calls for self-governing institutional arrangements and bottom-up decision-making can be considered a starting point, stemming from fundamental qualities of the human condition: collaboration and sharing. Governance is a central pillar in this schema, but commoning allows us to re-orient heritage production towards use-value creation and distribution and also consider physical products and sophisticated services in non-extractive enterprises; examples of this could include simple establishments as a community-managed museum and a co-operative café located at a heritage site or more complex organisations as a workers' co-operative for restoration and heritage management projects. In this case, collectively owned market agents use their surplus to further social and environmental causes in a cycle of open input, participatory process, and

commons-oriented output that can allow for the accumulation of the commons instead of capital. On that front, a more coherent discussion of heritage commons' institutions is due.

Feeding back to the mainframe: Cultural Commons

Apart from the apparent contribution to the emerging field of heritage commons, this volume allows for some reflection on cultural commons that even though an incremental concept to the aspiring commons democracy, the surrounding narratives seem to suffer from broad, all-inclusive descriptions that overly resemble the economistic appropriation of culture in order to make it market-ready.

Thus, the case studies presented here point towards the need for a systematic discussion of cultural commons, through a number of vital steps which are necessary to take in the process. These are as follows:

Cultural centric discussion for cultural management: The terminology used in the discussion of cultural/heritage management has delved deep into the economic core that seemingly offers efficient and proof ready concepts. There is an apparent need for re-examination of the tools used and their functions in context. Even though managerial processes are not to be condemned, we should relate them to the resources/goods at hand and not apply them externally to the resources, revisiting important, basic, overlooked elements of their internal mechanics – i.e. their social features. A new cultural language for culture is needed, one that is both decisive, convincing and relevant to the qualities of the resources in question.

Locally based culture: There is a considerable advantage in discussing and experiencing culture in its context. Culture and especially heritage relate to the production of locality and bind communities to a place. They formulate identity and answer vital questions for the present and the future: who we are, who we are not and who we want to be in the future. Thus, we need to re-localise culture and explore the new roots in society, networked with the global processes that go further than identity and memory politics. This process is critical in the everyday commoning as explained in the cases of the Alexandrou Svolou Neighbourhood Initiative, OneLoveKitchen and Plato's Academy Kafeneio Initiatives, dealing with soft issues of *being and working together* commonly lost in theoretical appraisals or generic vaunted declarations for democracy and the future. This can be the tool for the re-enchanting of culture and heritage, appearing with new meanings and forms, tending to the main characteristic of cultural commons, as rising unexpectedly and with great potential. Currently, this emerges as a topical process for the diversification of the municipalist movements, infusing cultural content to the political agenda, providing solutions synchronised with the local conditions, spanning from bureaucratic activism

– as in the case of l'Asilo Filangieri – to claiming the municipal leadership as in Barcelona. It also presents a great opportunity for valid, meaningful and inspiring research in arts/heritage management.

Political praxis: However, apart from academic exercises on definitions or symbolic political gestures of occupation, heritage commons will be more viable if active involvement of all interested stakeholders is sought through meaningful and open participation schemata. And this needs a political background to make cultural commons as porous and volatile as they could be. Having priced the bare necessities and put people into debt to acquire them, neoliberal politics now push for the extraction of non-use values, commonly residing on cultural goods. There is a need to transform these goods into rights, acknowledging their social importance for the communities and avoiding hyper-revolutionary or over-ambitious narrative. And this can be done through collective action, focused to prefigure change in managing the public texture of culture and heritage.

As a result of this approach, commons can emerge as a possible and realistic strategy for culture and heritage, establishing connections with other goods and giving rise to commons ecologies, towards a multi-modal commons-centric transition, where participants are a polity in action tending to a new world already blossoming under our feet.

Bibliography

- Bauwens, M., Kostakis, V. & Pazaitis, A. (2019). *Peer to peer: The commons manifesto*. London, United Kingdom: Westminster University Press.
- Dardot, P. & Laval, C. (2019). *Common: On revolution in the 21st century*. London, United Kingdom: Bloomsbury Academic.