

Cultural villages as a source for science, education, fun, and identity building

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THE MANIFESTO addresses important questions and topics regarding the concept of 'heritage', its realizations and side effects. We agree on most of the propositions from a common sense point of view. However, we have to question its scientific basis. Such a manifesto should be based on systematic research, on meta-analysis, and initiate research. Regarding the methodology a clear distinction has to be made between (a) observed facts and data, (b) their interpretation, and (c) the derived consequences, e.g., recommendations. In case of 'heritage', scientific evaluation methods should be used.

From our point of view targeting the concept of 'heritage' might be too narrow. Instead, the broader concept of 'culture' should be addressed in its many facets: e.g., scientific conceptualizations of culture, how and why which cultural artifacts should be preserved? Beyond heritages, a long tradition in preserving cultural assets exists, e.g., in Asia and Europe, like private collections, museums, libraries, archives, restoring of buildings, area rehabilitation. Heritages are only one type in the context of other measures for preserving culture. Because connecting the different types of preservation is very demanding it should be supported by using modern Information Technology (IT). Also, the reasons for preserving cultural artifacts are manifold. Four of them have been addressed in the title of this commentary.

The facets of preservation are part of the goal of 'meaning-making', e.g., clarifying scientific hypothesis about cultural development and evolution, better understanding the current cultural, religious, political differences, and conflicts, and for comprehending oral history respectively. An isolated view on certain cultural assets cannot elicit 'meaning'; the context in its different aspects has to be taken into account. Further, culture is a dynamic system undergoing changes while at the same time promoting some continuity.

Excellent examples of presenting cultural assets in their context can be seen in *cultural villages*, e.g., in Korea and Malaysia. They are excellent with respect to the above mentioned aspects, and they provide meaning-making. Cultural villages can give an insight into the indigenous cultural values possibly still relevant in the respective cultures while socio-cultural changes abound.

Accordingly, analyzing, comparing, evaluating and possibly generalizing the concept of cultural villages in different Asian and European countries should help to reduce ethnocentrism, and underline the need for scientifically based cultural heritages. This could be the basis for better understanding of indigenous cultures and for global recommendations aiming to save, document and present their great options for human mankind.

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