

## Cultural Heritage. Scenarios 2015-2017

edited by Simona Pinton and Lauso Zagato

Luisella Pavan-Woolfe

(Director, Venice Office of the Council of Europe)

The CoE Faro Convention proposes a broad and innovative concept of CH. This is defined as a “set of resources inherited from the past and recognised by communities as the continuously evolving reflection and expression of their values, beliefs and traditions”.

According to this perception, objects and places are not important in themselves from a CH perspective. They are important because of their meaning to people and the values they represent.

Venice, together with Marseille (France), Pilsen (Czech Republic) and Viscri (Romania), is one of the four ‘laboratories’ chosen by the CoE to test the implementation of the Faro Convention in Europe.

The city of Venice, Ca’ Foscari University, other local higher education institutions and numerous Venetian civil society associations have demonstrated a clear interest for the principles of the Convention and wholeheartedly embraced the approach.

Not by chance the Conference, which provided the inspiration for the present volume, took place in Venice in November 2015 at Ca’ Foscari University, livened by Simona Pinton and Lauso Zagato’s knowledge and enthusiasm for CH.

The stimulating and learned debates of the Conference are still topical, as recent developments in the CoE’s work on CH testify. These are *Strategy 21* and the *Blood Antiquities Convention*.

The CoE European Cultural Strategy for the twenty-first century, Strategy 21, builds on the pioneering work and the *acquis* of the CoE in the area of culture and heritage, and in particular on a number of treaties which, transposed into national legislation, have become reference texts for most European countries. These are:

- the European Cultural Convention (ETS no. 18), signed in Paris on 19 December 1954;
- the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (ETS no. 121), signed in Granada on 3 October 1985;
- the European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised) (ETS no. 143), signed in Valletta on 16 January 1992;
- the European Landscape Convention (ETS no. 176), signed in Florence on 20 October 2000;

- the Faro Convention (CETS no. 199), signed in Faro on 27 October 2005.

Launched by the Ministers of the forty-seventh CoE Member States in April 2017 in Limassol (Cyprus), Strategy 21 draws much of its inspiration from the Faro Convention, which introduced a paradigm change in the way we look at CH and at the democratic participation of citizens in the definition of heritage, in its management and enjoyment.

For a long time, the CoE has been focusing its activities in the field of heritage on democracy and human rights. The Granada and Valletta Conventions highlight issues dealing with preservation, restoration and protection of the architectural and archaeological heritage. At the same time they also look at heritage from a human rights perspective in so far as they promote public access to heritage sites and stress the importance of knowledge and education on the value of heritage.

However, the radical and almost revolutionary shift in conception came with the Faro Convention. The Faro Convention sees heritage as an essential element in the development of participatory democracy. As individuals and communities identify themselves in a place, its traditions and history, they feel compelled to look after it and be responsible for its management in a sustainable way. Thus, while previous conventions concerned with the issues of conservation and restoration, the Faro Convention focuses on people, citizens for whom CH should be preserved. In so doing, it helps public authorities and civil society to address some pressing societal questions. How do we combine social cohesion and cultural diversity? How can we enhance quality of life and the living environment? How do we develop democratic participation?

The focus on rights is absolutely central to this approach. The Faro Convention recognizes the rights relating to CH as inherent in the right to participate in cultural rights, as defined in UN and CoE texts. Everyone, alone or collectively, has the right to access CH and benefit from it. Everyone has the responsibility to respect the CH of others, as well as their own.

Strategy 21 relies heavily on the Faro Convention's approach and should be seen against the backdrop of changes that took place in the concept of heritage from the seventeenth century onwards. The rediscovery of values of antiquity during Renaissance and Enlightenment brought about the need to protect the objects of the past and transmit them to future generations. In the nineteenth century nation States turned to the past to acquire an identity of their own. National heritage policies then emerged to protect, conserve and restore the monuments of bygone days. And in the twentieth century, after the destruction of two world wars, emphasis and international efforts switched to how we should preserve and restore antique vestiges.

In the twenty-first century, the CoE, through the adoption of Strategy

21, sees CH in all its components, tangible and intangible, as a powerful factor for the refocusing of our societies on the basis of dialogue between cultures, respect for identities, appreciation of diversity and the sentiment of belonging to a community of values. CH is also regarded as a key factor in social and economic development and an invaluable resource in the areas of education, employment, tourism and sustainable development.

The new strategy redefines place and role of CH in Europe and provides guidelines to promote good governance and participation in heritage identification and management. It also helps to disseminate innovative approaches to improve quality of life and environment of European citizens. It sets challenges, recommends actions and highlights best practices to be followed by all actors and stakeholders – government, local authorities, and civil society.

One of the innovative aspects of the strategy is the practical text, defining how heritage can become today a resource for three key aims: social cohesion, economic development and increase of knowledge through lifelong learning. It is also the first time that recommended actions are illustrated by practical examples, provided by the countries themselves, which give an overview of how heritage management is carried out in Europe today.

Strategy 21 recognises the key role that CH can play in building democratic societies. It also highlights that heritage is at risk because of demographic changes, natural disasters, mass tourism, side effects of economic crisis, terrorism and various forms of international crimes. About the risks linked to destruction both in peace and war time and the trafficking of cultural assets and artefacts (which *Cultural Heritage. Scenarios 2015-2017* also explores), the CoE latest answer has been the Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property (the Blood Antiquities Convention).

The heinous tearing down of Palmyra in Syria and the dismantling of Nimrud in Iraq prompted the organization to address the issue of the vulnerability of historic sites and annihilation of humanity's heritage which threatens our democratic values, identity and memory.

Adopted in Nicosia in May 2017, the Blood Antiquities Convention is the first criminal law treaty to prevent and combat the illicit destruction of cultural property and its trafficking by strengthening criminal justice responses while facilitating co-operation on an international level.

CoE's response to new dangers regarding CH as well as the broad strategy that proposes to safeguard cultural heritage for present and future generations recognise that heritage is a nonrenewable common good, and that the society as a whole (the State as well as citizens and professionals) is responsible of its conservation, protection and enhancement.

