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Heritage and scale IV: towards a global heritage

Introduction

The concept of a common heritage of humanity has a universal appeal and seems to fit naturally with the development of global and other supranational institutions since World War II. The potential of such a common heritage lies primarily in its reinforcement of concepts of human equality, common destiny, shared stewardship of the earth, optimal use of scarce natural and cultural resources, and the consequent imperative of peaceful coexistence. It is an explicit challenge to chauvinistic extremism in the glorification of national heritages which have too often been harnessed to wider policies of national aggrandizement as an accessory to conflict and destruction. This continues to manifest itself (as in the former Yugoslavia) but its historical apogee was in Nazi Germany. It is thus appropriate that the global organization founded in the context of Nazi defeat, the United Nations – through its agency, UNESCO – should come to champion the concept of global heritage as an important adjunct to its development of other institutions fostering international security. This chapter begins with a discussion of the global management of heritage and examines the reasons why the continental heritage initiatives discussed in Chapter 10 should be consonant with and implicitly supportive of it. We analyse the case for a global heritage, before turning to a consideration of its limits and indeed its contestation. Finally, two case studies are used to discuss the problems and prospects of global heritage.

The assertion of the global claim

There is, as the preceding comments imply, a strongly felt need to believe in the existence of a world heritage as the common property of all peoples. Indeed the globalization of culture, economy and politics is an idea that is both more potent and has a longer history than many contemporary

commentators allow. Moreover, it is notable that even when political or economic history has been portrayed in the context of the nation-state, culture has been described dominantly in terms of international movements, styles and trends (Graham and Nash 1999). Thus a widespread conviction exists that the wealth of millennia of human artistic productivity is the responsibility of the whole human community and should be freely available for the enrichment of all now and in perpetuity; equally, all should contribute to its protection and support. These global claims to heritage are reflected in the existence of international associations, pressure groups and intergovernmental organizations charged with designating, maintaining and promoting global heritage. UNESCO, for example, has extended its responsibilities to include both the preservation and stimulation of many aspects of culture, including conserved heritage, and also the means whereby such heritage is transmitted. Together with its subsidiary organizations such as ICOMOS, it has produced ideal codes of practice, issued conventions on the protection of cultural property in times of war or disorder, and attempted to establish a body of international law about ownership of cultural properties and international trade in them. This global claim is sustained by three main arguments.

First, in terms of heritage production, political frontiers have been and remain highly permeable to aesthetic ideas and cultural movements. Even ethnic, social and linguistic divisions have offered fewer barriers to cultural than to most human activities. The nature of artistic expression itself, as well as the processes by which it is created, seem to favour a global approach. The hypothesis that artists, in whatever field, demonstrate a higher than average internationalism in their receptivity to ideas, functional networks and even personal migration behaviour, would be difficult to test statistically but seems to be supported by empirical evidence. Moreover, while the musical works of Tchaikovsky, Dvorak or Elgar, for example, may have originated in Russia, Bohemia and England, and certainly have been used in support of national or regional political identities, they are globally performed and appreciated both for their intrinsic worth and for the interest of their identity associations. Similarly, much of the conserved built environment is on free, permanent display, and needs no linguistic translation or expert interpretation. Thus it is directly intelligible to the consumer regardless of social or political allegiances (even though this may colour its meaning). Baroque architecture is fundamentally Baroque whether it is located in Kraków or Munich, Quito or Québec.

As explained in Chapter 9, conservationists have also tended to adopt standard approaches to heritage – the so-called 'heritagization' process, encouraged by the interchange of techniques, philosophies and 'best practice' examples. International financial and project development corporations use internationally trained personnel who interact through global networks. This reduces investment risks by reusing ideas and programmes that have proved successful elsewhere, and encourages the selection of the same design details

such as materials, street furniture or signage, processes which both reflect an existing internationalism and also stimulate it further by producing – as with waterfront developments – a recognizable international heritage style.

Second, we can turn to the question of responsibility and action for heritage. The severe flooding in the Adriatic in 1966, which threatened the continued existence of the lagoon city of Venice, elicited a remarkable response (*see* Chapter 6). World concern about the future of 'its' heritage, even among people who themselves had not visited the city, was expressed in cash donations, offers of technical assistance and even volunteer labour. More than thirty years on, it can be concluded that this outpouring of global concern to 'Save Venice' had less direct impact than was then apparent. The protection of the heritage city would require such extensive control over the water in its surrounding lagoon that other functions of the region, especially navigation and industrial development, would suffer. Local economic concerns and political priorities were thus accorded primacy over international heritage priorities. In practice 'world heritage' is not protected by any world government but by sovereign national governments, and is managed by the local not the international community.

The particular example of Venice has been repeated both in that city itself and elsewhere, most notably in the simultaneous flooding of Florence by the River Arno, which destroyed or damaged a high proportion of the Renaissance art in the Uffizi Gallery. Even after the institution of the world heritage mechanisms discussed below, the Serb shelling of Dubrovnik in 1991 demonstrated that world concern over heritage is not readily translated into effective rescue action. This situation is manifested everywhere as international sentiment, and global financial and technical resources, may still prove all but powerless in the face of quite different local concerns. However, the world community continues to press its heritage claim, albeit sometimes quixotically given its jurisdictional weakness.

Finally, the global claim to heritage can be asserted from the perspective of the consumer. Visitors to museums, monuments, heritage sites and cities, and in addition the many more latent visitors who consume books and films about them, are demonstrating an active or optional claim upon them. If heritage is only definable (*see* Chapter 1) by and in the terms of the inheritor, then logically it is these consumers who are demonstrating the most compelling argument for inheritance. It can be argued that the inexorable growth of foreign tourism, and the importance of culture, heritage and art to that industry, is the most powerful expression of the existence of a common global heritage as the property of all peoples. Every international tourist is asserting the existence of a world heritage and the right of a global accessibility to it, as well as more mundanely selecting the content of that heritage and contributing to its support. This close symbiosis between heritage and tourism is not new. The desire to conserve and the desire to visit have always mutually stimulated the history of the heritage conservation movement in an inextricable relationship of cause and effect. Thus the eighteenth-century 'Grand Tour' of Northern Europeans 'discovered' and consequently preserved the heritage of the classical Mediterranean world, which in turn became the main attraction for further visits.

The contestation of the global claim

Thus there is a strong case for asserting a global claim to heritage but it is not an uncontested one. Consideration of specific world heritage initiatives must be deferred until we have examined the several grounds for that contestation.

The problem of ownership

Any concept of a world heritage is challenged by the competition with other, more immediate, national and local scales of identity and meaning, which have been far more successful in colonizing the past than has the global. Faced with quite different national and local economic priorities, government procrastination and the sovereignty of the nation-state over 'its heritage', international sympathy, expertise and financial resources may be largely powerless to do more than renovate a few buildings. Moreover, in economic terms, heritage products can be regarded as 'superior goods', the consumption of which increases more than proportionately with income. Thus a concern for heritage does not develop unless other more pressing material needs have been met. A global heritage can only exist in a significant form when it is globally valued to the same extent, and that will not occur until the unlikely event of consumption priorities being similar throughout the world. Thus equality of valuation of heritage presupposes other more fundamental equities such as those of economic welfare. Consequently, given the extent of contemporary global inequalities, global heritage, including that located in regions in which heritage is not accorded a high priority, is in practice defined by the citizens of the wealthier regions rather than by indigenous peoples.

Apart from variations in economic well-being, the simple proposition that local inhabitants value heritage differently from outsiders means that fundamental distinctions exist between global and local claims on the past. Although conflict between these claims on heritage is by no means inevitable, the potential for such discord always exists. It is usually focused on the contestation of heritage between tourism and its role in the shaping of identities. Tourists are characteristically in search of 'their' heritage, those past associations in a particular place that they can recognize as relating to them, and which can be incorporated into their existing heritage constructs. They are not seeking the heritage of the indigenous population, defined as the pasts required by local identity needs. These are largely irrelevant to tourists and possibly even hostile – as, for example, in postcolonial contexts. Consequently, global heritage and its expression in global tourism conflicts with the views

that the primacy of the local ownership of heritage is axiomatic, and that local authenticity and identity should take precedence over global recognition and identity. As in many museums, this localization of heritage elicits policies of local empowerment, which are seen as ripostes to the previous policies of the 'colonization' of local cultures (*see* Chapter 8). In this perspective, heritage is returned to local people and housed, cared for and interpreted by them. For example, the U'Mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay, B.C., Canada, contains ceremonial 'potlatch' artefacts, which have been returned by national and provincial governments to the control of the local indigenous people. Ultimately, and this problem has arisen, such local communities could also dispose of heritage as being 'theirs to destroy', not 'ours to conserve'.

Consequently, it would seem that the globalization of heritage is to be resisted if heritage, and specifically that of the conserved built environment, is to be consciously used as an instrument for asserting the unique identities of places. We have noted, however, that global and local heritage perspectives are not inevitably in conflict. There may be consensus that the locally unique is of global stature and possesses a global market, the satisfaction of which confers significant economic advantages to the locality. Again, as in the case of some colonized local cultures – for example, that of the Australian Aborigines – a site or artefact may be interpreted as a specific occurrence of a world-wide revision of heritage meaning, which the global heritage claim may be persuaded to accept.

Nevertheless, a concept of *Mundus Nostra* as a global parallel to the idea of *Europa Nostra* (coined in 1963 in reference to a European conservation trust) will not just come into existence. Rather it must be created, and there should be no illusions about the difficulty of that task. As encapsulated in the concept of dissonance, all heritage by being someone's, must disinherit someone else. Thus a world heritage cannot be a mere summation of local and national heritages but becomes a denial of them, unless the other scales are adjusted to accept global values. If tourism is everywhere the enemy of authenticity and cultural identity (Turner and Ash 1976; Urry 1990), then it is part of a heritage problem and not a legitimate instrument for asserting the existence of a global heritage. Heritage is simply an assertion of ownership of the past and until that ownership can be collectivized on a world scale, rather than nationalized, localized or individualized, then heritage will more usually be a cause of national and local conflict than of global reconciliation.

The inherent limits of the global claim

Despite the potential of a common heritage in the harmonization of human and environmental relationships, and the steps taken internationally to promote it, further obstacles exist to its realization. Perhaps the most fundamental is the elastic nature and ever-expanding portfolio of heritage, characteristics often driven by economic priorities. These do not negate the possibility of a critical core of universally significant heritage, but certainly complicate its recognition. Furthermore, the innate dissonance of heritage between nations, produced by their rival interpretations of heritage, may actually be growing, given the resurgence of nationalist and ethnic identities and the continuation of mutual heritage destruction (Johnson 1995b). The Blue Shield initiative organized by ICOMOS is designed to deal with natural and human disasters to heritage sites and to ward off the particularly negative threat of war. In view, however, of the tempting military target presented by someone else's globally significant heritage, it is premature to envisage its success (Bumbaru 1992). Even the Member States of the EU have yet to harmonize discordant visions of, and education about, their inherited pasts.

The definition and recognition of global heritage poses a further set of difficulties. First, different cultures have divergent ideas as to how old, or how symbolic, the fabric of built heritage must be in order to be of world class. Second, the recognition of world heritage can lead, paradoxically, to its nationalistic appropriation by the possessor state for reasons both of political legitimation and economic gain. Third, the principle of respect for the sovereignty of nation-states endures. UNESCO is an intergovernmental forum and its instruments provide the world community with no independent means of intervention into the physical management, accessibility provision, political presentation or economic use of recognized global heritage. Nevertheless, especially where religion is involved, some states – as exemplified by Israel over the case of Jerusalem – have been reticent in according their heritage global stature in order to avoid world scrutiny or claim. National sovereignty can thus limit global heritage recognition, while division and transfers of sovereignty, both between and within federal states, create further difficulties.

The formal recognition of global heritage

Although few, if any, of the problems detailed above are insuperable, they do currently place serious limits on the rational development of global heritage. The genesis of international heritage action can be traced to the growing awareness of technological impacts on environment during the 1960s (Pocock 1997). UNESCO led three major and internationally publicized rescue initiatives: the relocation of the Nubian sculptures to escape the Nile waters rising behind Egypt's Aswan Dam – a national economic priority; restoration of Florence after the 1966 floods; and efforts to combat the recurrent winter flooding of Venice (UNESCO 1970). By the 1970s, growing environmental concern was expressed in the UN's Environment Programme, UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Programme and in a global discourse on national parks. These initiatives all favoured a world convention, leading to the 1972 UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage. This set up a non-governmental World Heritage Committee (WHC), charged with producing a World Heritage List

of properties of 'outstanding universal value' from nominations brought forward by individual states, which had ratified the Convention and had, ostensibly at least, ensured the legal and management protection of the properties concerned. Cultural sites were to be assessed by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) and natural sites by IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources). Pocock (1997) discusses the criteria for this dichotomy, the artificiality of which was quickly apparent and later more fully recognized. The WHC was also mandated: to produce a List of World Heritage in Danger in order to facilitate emergency assistance; to administer a World Heritage Fund in part to help needy signatory states protect their World Heritage Sites; and later to monitor the conservation of designated properties. The emergency role has recently been supplemented by World Monuments Watch, an annual list of the world's 100 most endangered cultural and historic sites, selected with respect to their wider significance (Heritage Canada 1996).

During their first twenty years, these mechanisms produced a steady growth of sites with a newly institutionalized global heritage profile and prestige. In 1994, however, a report to the WHC argued that designated world cultural heritage was biased in favour of Europe, historic towns, religious buildings and Christianity and against prehistory, the twentieth century, vernacular artefacts, and living traditional cultures. Pocock (1997) also notes that the material emphasis of recognized cultural heritage discriminated against essentially non-material societies. Thus sites in New Zealand and Australia such as Ayers Rock, hitherto designated as natural, have been reinterpreted to recognize their cultural landscape significance to, and actively involve, the Aboriginal peoples. Currently, a more general effort seeks to boost the World Heritage representation of relatively non-material cultures, most notably in Africa. Apart from these moves to redress imbalances, the numerical growth of sites has also prompted a shift of emphasis from uniqueness of heritage to its wider representativeness. Considering both global balance and numerical growth of sites, the WHC has requested the more advanced countries to slow down their rate of nomination (Pocock 1997).

Recent contention has focused upon the operational criteria of heritage artefacts and their authenticity, and the inconsistencies in interpretation, which have contributed to an imbalance problem. For example, rigid notions of the arbitrary concept of heritage authenticity (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1990) long precluded recognition of ancient Japanese temples subject to periodic rebuilding. Conversely, the central square of old Warsaw has been recognized despite its post-1945 reconstruction. Such inconsistencies have led the WHC to broaden its vision in keeping with evolving conservation theory and political reality, thereby accepting cultural relativism and decentralized regional decision-making. The management of cultural resources has expanded progressively beyond monuments alone to include industrial archaeology, modern architecture and much else. These trends are opposed, however, by (largely Eurocentric) critics, who argue that the

equity of distribution between countries, continents and power blocks is overriding considerations of the 'intrinsic' value of a candidate World Heritage Site.

Contradictions persist in the application of the World Heritage Convention between state sovereignty and international interests, preservation and the increase of tourism and broadening the representation of the World Heritage List while maintaining its credibility. Nevertheless, the List continues to grow. This could undoubtedly be interpreted as an unseemly, even cynical, jockeying for comparative advantage in national prestige and tourism revenue, which often involves expedient political compromises. Given this, however, the World Heritage List has given a profile and a momentum to the idea of global heritage where none existed thirty years ago. Global declarations and mechanisms have provided standards to encourage best practice and access to a world reserve of technical and professional expertise. Furthermore, an ongoing debate is engaging with the meaning and potential achievements of world heritage.

As of 1997, 469 World Heritage Sites had been listed by UNESCO. These cover an immense diversity of natural and cultural phenomena. They range in scale and type from the Great Barrier Reef in Queensland, Australia, to the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland and Ironbridge Gorge, the hearth of early industry in Shropshire, England. San'a in Yemen and Fès El Bali in Morocco are among the first designated Third World cities, recognized for the integrity but vulnerability of their walled *medinas* (*see* Chapter 9). Canadian World Heritage Sites, which may fulfil a developmental role in remote locations, include: archaeological sites such as the Viking remains at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland; wilderness national parks including Gros Morne, Newfoundland and Banff in the Rocky Mountains; and urban examples ranging from Québec City (see below) to the much smaller Lunenburg in Nova Scotia.

World Heritage Sites: Robben Island and Québec City

Despite all the difficulties, contradictions and contestations, UNESCO's World Heritage Sites constitute the pinnacle of contemporary efforts to institutionalize the concept of a common global heritage for all the diverse manifestations of humanity and identity. This recognition endows the heritage artefact's home state with political and economic benefits without, however, an enforceable commensurate obligation to manage the Site in a manner consistent with the international interest. The designation can be withdrawn, but short of this politically very contentious step, it is effectively impossible to challenge development control, interpretation or obstacles to access to World Heritage Sites, be they physical or political. In order to explore these contradictions more fully, we use two case studies, Robben Island, South Africa and Québec City, Canada, both of which raise a set of significant questions concerning world heritage.

- What confers credible global significance on a heritage resource?
- Whose heritage, particularly how large a proportion of humanity, can it be considered to represent?
- How can it be conserved, managed and presented to sustain not only the resource itself, and any other scale interpretations placed upon it, but also its global significance?

Robben Island

As a contender for World Heritage Site status (1998), Robben Island, South Africa, illustrates the complexity of these questions. A windswept 474-hectare island in Table Bay, located 11 km off Cape Town, it has achieved world attention because of its use as a prison to incarcerate opponents of the former apartheid state (Figure 11.1). The particular signification, if not sacralization of Robben Island, derives from the eighteen-year imprisonment there of Nelson Mandela, leader of the African National Congress, first postapartheid South African president, and leading international statesman. His writings (Mandela 1994) and global stature as a champion of human rights have inevitably driven the agenda for consideration of the island's heritage significance.

The question 'what heritage?' is, however, very much more complex. The exploitation of the island's marine and other resources – notably seals and whales, previously lightly used by the Aboriginal Khoi population, began with Portuguese, English and Dutch explorers in the sixteenth century (Smith 1997). The subsequent Dutch settlement at the Cape (1652) led to quarrying on Robben Island for construction materials, and to its use as a 'pantry' for food supplies safe from depredation by the mainland native population. Centuries of further exploitation have transformed the natural environment, the present woodland consisting of exotic imports, which distort the original identity, but have provided a refuge for bird colonies. While this leads to dilemmas as to what constitutes 'natural' heritage, significant because the island includes a nature reserve and accommodates endangered species, it is the cultural heritage that is more important to the case for world heritage status. This latter is inseparable from European global imperial expansion. The early resource exploiters were followed mainly by the victims of banishment, who could be kept in conditions unseen by the outside world, and their keepers (Smith 1997). These victims included seventeenth-century rebels from the Dutch East Indies as well as Khosa chiefs imprisoned by the British following the Cape Colony frontier wars of the 1830s (Lester 1999a and b). To these early political prisoners were later added 'lunatics' and lepers. The most recent imperial heritage is provided by the remains of the World War II sea defences guarding the approaches to Cape Town. Since then, the maximum security prison, which held the opponents of apartheid, was constructed by 1964. The settlement structures of this history of banishment possess their own heritage attributes, colonial architecture, cemeteries and other elements

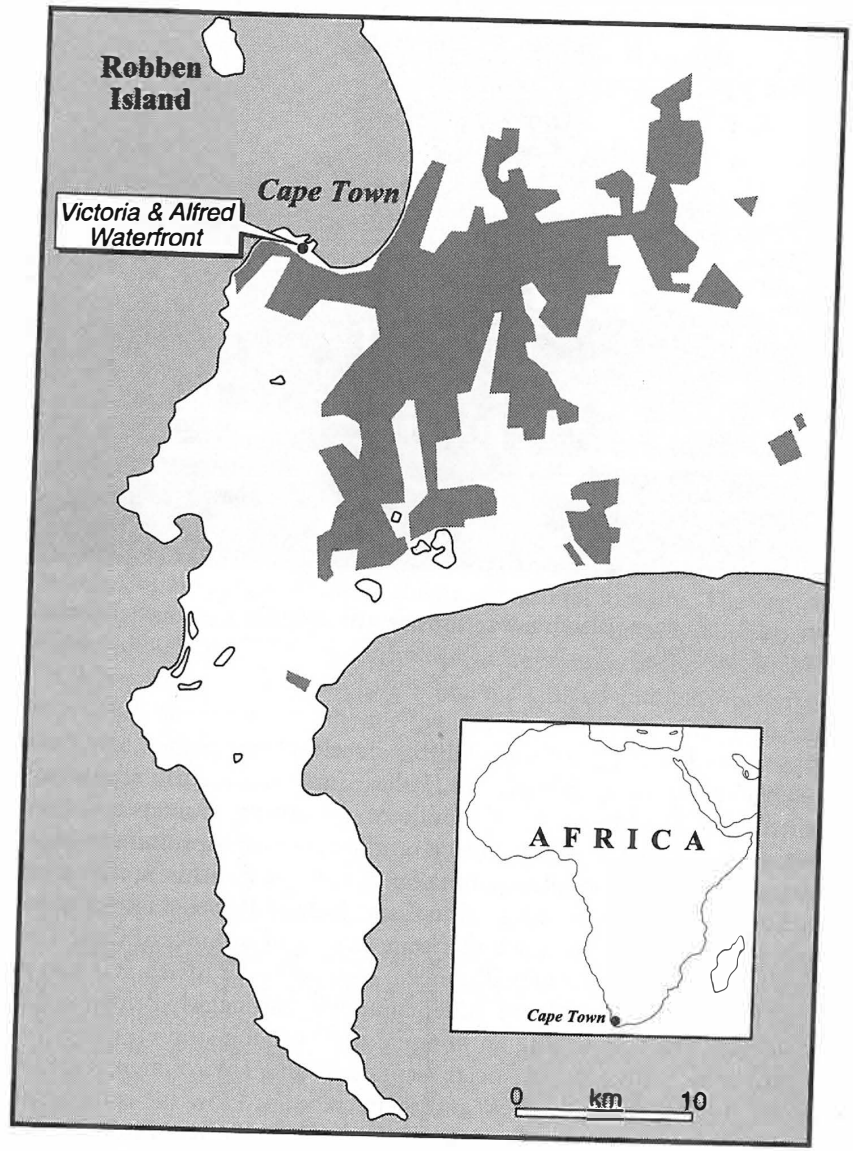

Figure 11.1 The location of Robben Island, South Africa

constituting a cohesive and intact resource undisturbed by Cape Town's redevelopment pressures (Figure 11.2).

The question, 'whose heritage?', is only partially implicit in the above. It is not difficult to show that Robben Island constitutes the heritage of all South Africans, whether directly implicated or not, and is centrally relevant to the present nation-building agenda. In substance and mythology, its historical

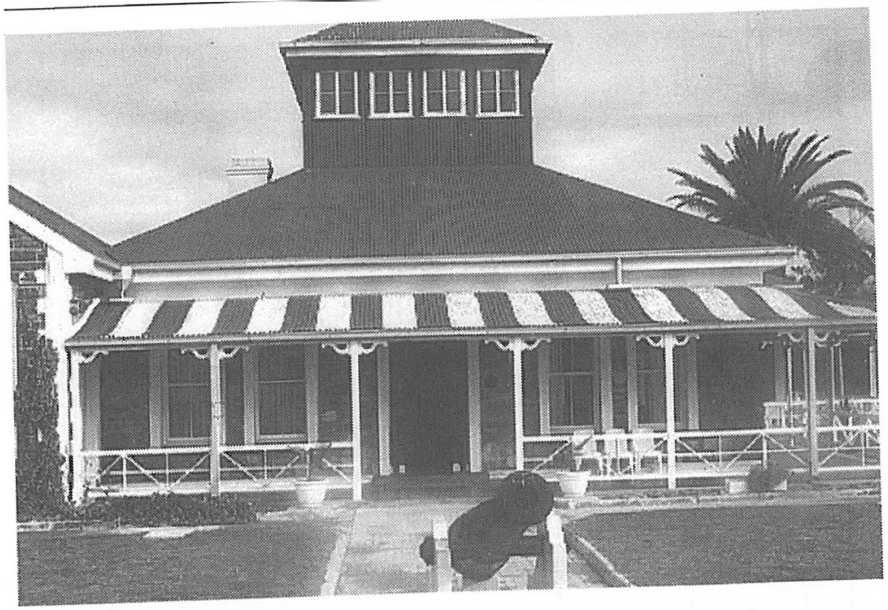

Figure 11.2 Robben Island: nineteenth-century colonial government buildings, restored in the 1990s

role both predates and meshes with the development of the Cape Colony through Dutch and British periods. It has since become the repository of apartheid and simultaneously symbolic of the whole country as a greater prison during that era. The presence on the island of a prominent Muslim shrine to an East Indian prince imprisoned there by the Dutch, also accords with South Africa's new multiculturalism. Indeed Robben Island is more clearly seen as a mirror of the larger state than as an adjunct of Cape Town, from which it was deliberately distanced. Beyond South Africa, it is also possible to link Robben Island with other countries, particularly Britain and The Netherlands, the Cape being an imperial provisioning stop en route to the east and thus a fulcrum in social, economic and environmental dealings between the 'mother countries' and their colonies. How far is its heritage theirs, and what does it say about them? The global identity of Robben Island is compounded by its strategic role in the defence of Cape Town during World War II, which left familiar heritage artefacts, albeit ones with sharply varying meaning among South Africans.

The question of how to conserve, manage and present Robben Island is problematical for South Africa. The debate is dominated by issues of physical maintenance and the ways in which the island is presented to South Africans and foreign visitors. There are three contending perspectives: environmental; tourist-commercial; and political. The first seeks restoration of a human–natural harmony from centuries of physical and symbolic abuse; the

second to capitalize on an oceanfront heritage windfall; and the third to use the resource as flagship heritage in the forging of national identity and, beyond this, international recognition. Strong controls on disturbance and removal favour the environmental over the commercial, but do not guarantee a sometimes fragile resource against attrition by the rapid growth in the South African tourism industry. Even though access from Cape Town is controlled by limited sailings, the trip from the city's Victoria and Alfred Waterfront has become a high-profile attraction in what is already the prime regional tourist-historic magnet (Worden 1996, 1997). World Heritage Site status will inevitably increase tourism, an economic bonus which postapartheid South Africa cannot afford to discourage. Beyond resource conservation and management looms the problem of how to present the heritage both nationally and internationally, while serving national reconciliation but also promoting global significance. The potential dissonance can be moderated by management, although the demands of national reconciliation require a delicacy of inclusion and interpretation yet to be refined, if all South African stakeholders are to live with the meaning of Robben Island and, following centuries of division, accept its collective interpretation as a prime heritage stepping-stone towards a shared national identity. The critical and essentially non-negotiable heritage focus, which, it is hoped, will address both national and global scales, concerns human rights and democratic values.

Robben Island is now interpreted in the official publicity material as a place of historic victory of the human spirit over the denial of civil rights, a denial which must now be demonstrably corrected in pursuit of a new primacy of the democratic principles and values which were nurtured there and which became the sustaining myth in the liberation struggle. Attending Robben Island's proclamation as a National Monument and Museum, on South Africa's Heritage Day 1997, President Mandela summarized the new heritage imperative thus:

> . . . we will together find a way to combine the many dimensions of the island, and . . . we will do so in a manner that recognizes above all its pre-eminent character as a symbol of the victory of the human spirit over political oppression; and of reconciliation over enforced division. In this way we will help strengthen the ethos of heritage as a binding force . . .
>
> (Mandela 1997, pp. 4–5)

A pivotal contribution to reconciliation lies in the interpretation of the Afrikaner apartheid warders not as perpetrators of oppression but as co-victims, marginalized in a hardship posting and kept in ignorance of the true nature of the liberation struggle until taught by the prisoners themselves. This teaching role, as educated prisoners taught each other and their warders, means that the island is now interpreted as an 'open university' and no less than the cradle of South African democracy (Mandela 1994; Figure 11.3).

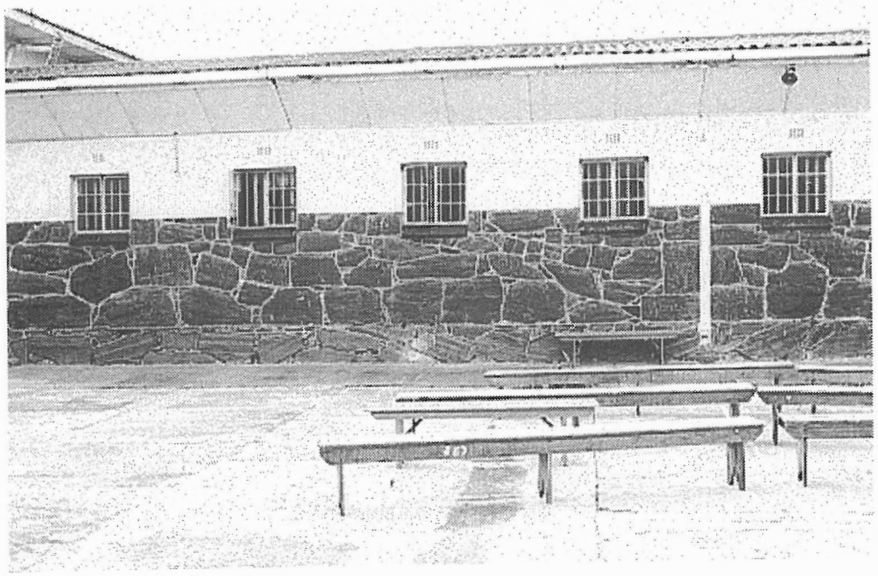

Figure 11.3 Robben Island: former prison courtyard, showing the windows of the cells which housed Nelson Mandela and his ANC colleagues

The concept of an ideal, such as human rights and democratic values, constituting the focus of a national (let alone world) heritage site may appear strange. To grasp the overriding political significance of such heritage in South Africa, it is necessary to understand the urgency and difficulty of nation-building in a multicultural society in which, uniquely, the former white rulers now constitute a proportion of fellow citizens equivalent to that of the black population in the United States (albeit generally much more economically powerful). It would be wrong, however, to regard this human rights heritage issue as a South African aberration. As the US analogy implies (*see* Chapter 5), many of the most advanced democracies are struggling with multicultural civic, as against ethnic, nation-building in which the protection of human rights has become critically important. The enshrinement of these values in heritage icons is a vital step in securing collective respect for them over time. The proposal to make Robben Island a World Heritage Site has thus significant resonances for the international community, increasingly so as more states grapple with the integration of exotic migrant minorities. In this regard it is highly significant that President Mandela's farewell visit to Canada (September 1998) gave priority to unveiling a plaque to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, at the Canadian Tribute to Human Rights in Ottawa. This political use of heritage reflects a larger global imperative, which gives credibility to the projection of Robben Island as a World Heritage Site, primarily in terms of a global shrine to the triumph of the human spirit in enduring oppression and to the ultimate victory of human rights.

Québec City

Québec City, declared a World Heritage Site in 1984, is a fundamentally different example of the challenges imposed by this designation. As a city with a population in excess of 650 000 and a provincial capital in an advanced western democracy, Québec contrasts markedly with an isolated rural periphery such as Robben Island. Its management problems have to do with urban development pressures and a potential divergence of official interpretation between its own provincial jurisdiction and the Canadian federal authority (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996).

The basis for Québec's designation as a World Heritage Site lies in its status as the only remaining walled city in North America, the product of a synthesis between different cultures, and the hearth of French civilization on the continent (Figure 11.4). The designated area includes the environs of the walled city, founded in 1608, which now forms a small part of the metropolis. Within this area, the walled *haute ville* stands on a bluff above the St Lawrence River, with the original settlement, the *basse ville,* by the waterfront below (Figure 11.5). The former developed as the main centre of administration and urban life, while the latter fulfilled its mercantile role.

Notwithstanding this defensible site, Québec fell to the British following the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759, an event which proved decisive to Canadian development in that it established British hegemony while absorbing a major francophone component in what became the province of Québec. As this population's linguistic and other cultural rights were later to be guaranteed, the pre-1759 French identity was not lost but rather increasingly modified by the British hegemony. This became more apparent in the *basse ville* as the mercantile function was reoriented to the needs of the British Empire and taken over by British entrepreneurs, while the waterfront and its structures were reshaped accordingly over time.

In the *haute ville*, the overlay of Britishness was more subtle as there was less displacement of function and identity. Moreover, the British minority often chose to redevelop in harmony with the existing French style. The most striking illustration of this is the Château Frontenac, built in the 1890s by railway interests of British origin as a tourism facility, but which has acquired a strategic, and ostensibly French, heritage identity dominating the skyline of the *haute ville*. The original city walls were reconstructed by the British with an eye to US aggression, and were furthermore preserved in the late nineteenth century at the behest of the British Governor-General of that time (Figure 11.6). Once anchored defensively by the Citadel fortress, their later aesthetic value was extended by the construction of Dufferin Terrace, above the St Lawrence, during the British period, when the port of Québec became a gateway of access for diverse immigrant populations, many of whom remained in the city. Following the Great Famine of the 1840s, they included a substantial Irish component who, for religious and class reasons, largely assimilated with the French population. Some cultural diversification

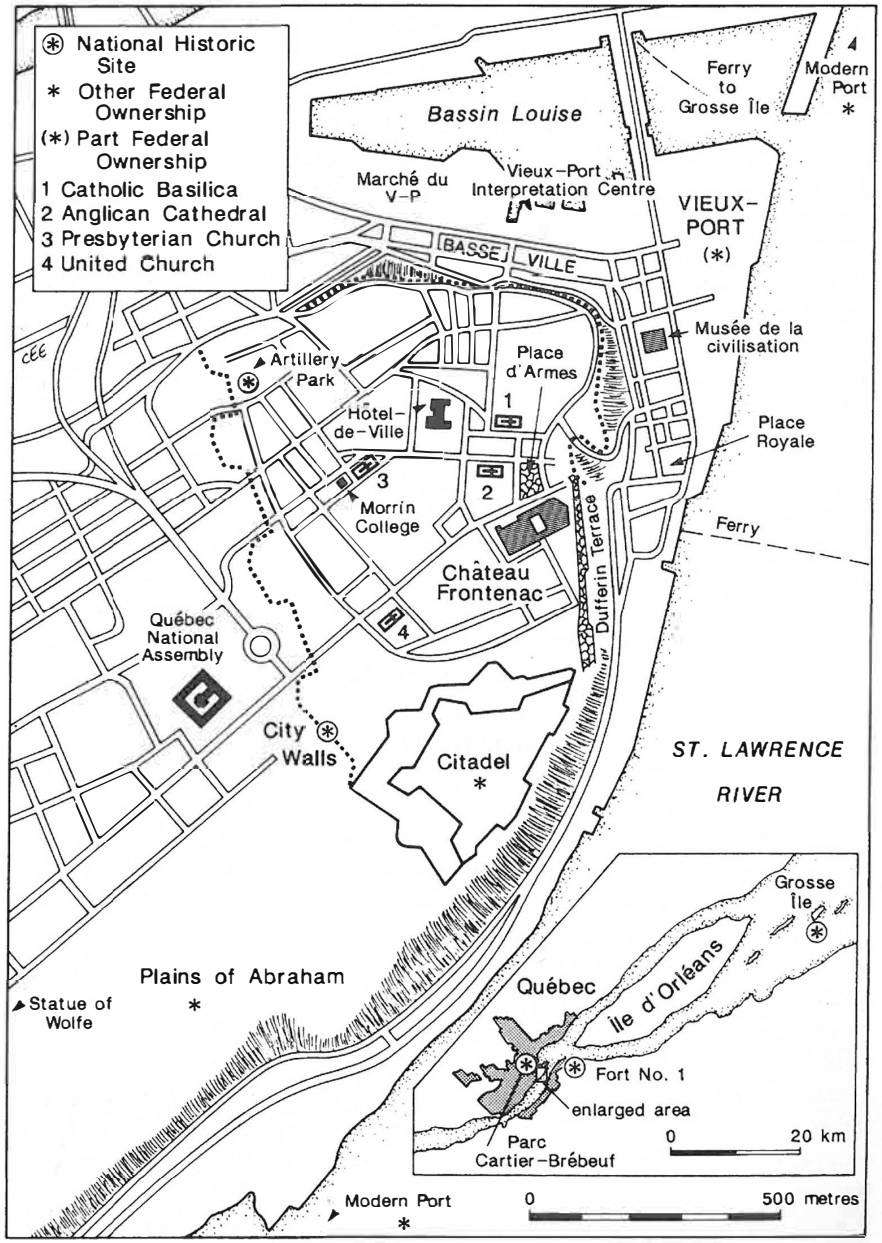

Figure 11.4 Québec City

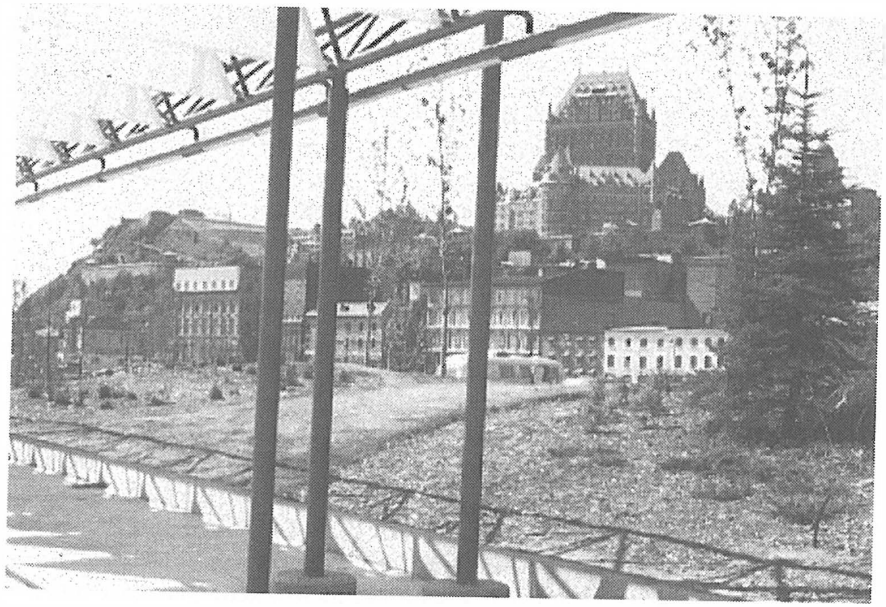

Figure 11.5 Québec City: the *basse ville* with the *haute ville* above, showing the Citadel (left) and the Château Frontenac (right)

Figure 11.6 Québec City: the city wall with part of the *haute ville* to the left

continued in the twentieth century, although less so since Québec's gateway function has declined relative to Montréal, while the population of British descent fell sharply after 1950.

From this outline of the heritage resource, it is clear that the question of whose heritage must receive a composite answer. Unsurprisingly, the native American population is scarcely represented in the urban built environment, but has an underlying claim to heritage recognition. Recent immigrant minorities also have a modest claim. The essential dialogue, however, is between the French tradition, which has primacy in respect of most of the older buildings generally considered to be heritage landmarks (mostly religious and residential), and the British, which added much and repackaged the whole. This latter identity was often understated by continued reference to the pre-existing imagery. The battlefield of the Plains of Abraham is by definition shared, but highly susceptible to hypersensitive divergences of interpretation. In its finer detail, the streetscape iconography presents a confusion of contradictory heritage messages ranging primarily between high imperial British and recent French Québecois nationalist (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). That the population is now over 90 per cent francophone raises questions of the risk of disinheritance of the non-French in general and the British in particular.

The maintenance and presentation of Québec City's heritage is a very old issue, even by European standards. Concern for its conservation and tourism promotion was fostered during the Victorian period. The British role was inherited by the Canadian federal government in the late nineteenth century; in terms of major present-day heritage, this involved the military acquisition of the walls and the Citadel (which remains an official residence of the Canadian Governor-General) and the creation of a National Battlefields Commission to manage the Plains of Abraham. The national parks authority, now Parks Canada, acquired a major role in the late twentieth century as custodian of the federal presence and perspective in heritage issues, including direct control of several National Historic Sites (NHS). The federal perspective is a holistic interpretation of the city's heritage in keeping with its national, and now designated global, significance. This entails sustaining the British contribution along with that of smaller minorities, and the presentation of its message in both official languages, English and French. Recent initiatives have focused first upon the revitalization of the old port, in which an interpretation centre relates the diverse immigrant experiences of the British Imperial Period. Again, the Grosse Ile NHS in the St Lawrence chiefly commemorates the Irish immigrants who fled the Famine of the 1840s, but died of fever on the emigrant ships and were buried at this former quarantine centre.

The provincial perspective, however, potentially conflicts with this federal representation of heritage. The city is dependent on the provincial government of Québec, which has jurisdiction over the great majority of the land and thus the heritage resource. Provincial agencies protect heritage of different cultural origins and in practice much professional and considerable political co-operation exists between the levels of governance, which, together with the private sector, have a shared interest in the sustenance and integrated marketing of one of Canada's leading tourism attractions. However, French cultural hegemony within the province has created tensions of heritage identity and interpretation, which may ultimately compromise the city's world heritage status.

Since World War II, Québec has experienced a 'quiet revolution' in which its former dominantly rural Catholic introspection has been replaced by a secular, urbanizing society seeking a secure and distinct identity within or, if necessary, outside Canada. Federal efforts to accommodate this newly assertive nationalism have subsequently been compromised by nation-wide efforts to accommodate the wider multicultural diversity of Canada (*see* Chapter 5). Language is at the heart of Québecois *survivance*. Despite massive financial investment, the failure of the federal government's attempts to create national bilingualism led to a unilingual French policy in the province of Québec during the 1970s. This was applied to the streetscape, for example, in the form of signage control, meaning that a patina of French cultural identity was indiscriminately superimposed upon the built environment.

As the centre of provincial decision-making, Québec City has been at the heart of these processes, which have tended repeatedly to disadvantage non-French identities. In the 1960s, the battlefield statue of the ill-fated British victor of 1759, General James Wolfe, was blown up (although later rebuilt) and that of Queen Victoria became a museum piece. While no similar post-colonial identity removals have occurred, the province's restoration of Place Royale in the *basse ville* during the 1970s selectively recovered the early French identity from the British mercantile overlays, thereby reclaiming the first settlement nucleus at the cost of disinheritance of subsequent identities. The Québec Museum of Civilization, which was built nearby, fundamentally reinforced French associations through its initially unilingual presentation. These provincial initiatives have often been sharply discordant in architecture and message from the adjacent old port waterfront revitalization initiated by federal agencies. Meanwhile, the outmigration of the British population has rendered many of its institutions redundant, so that with no ill intent the heritage symbolism of Protestant churches, for example, has become diluted and marginalized. The election of expressly separatist provincial governments has given a sharper edge to French hegemonic tendencies, while the continuing threat of Québecois independence is destabilizing to any multi-scale reconciliation in heritage presentation, not least because this would remove all federal moderation. Should independence ever occur, it is difficult to see how Québec City could continue to be presented as a composite heritage, even given the will to do so, for this would challenge the fundamentally monocultural *raison d'être* of a sovereign Québecois state (Salée 1994). Furthermore, proponents of separation claim that it would produce a development boom for new embassies and other direct and

indirect trappings of statehood. Fulfilment of that aspiration could well revive the development-control threat to world heritage status that was noted in the 1980s (Dalibard 1988).

In this line of reasoning, the unveiling in 1997 of a statue of General Charles de Gaulle, overlooking the Plains of Abraham, on the thirtieth anniversary of his nationalistic proclamation, '*Vive le Québec libre!*', casts a clear shadow on the city's world heritage designation. Conversely, the subsequent unveiling of a monument to the Québec Conferences, held during World War II, spoke directly to this scale. However, the historically correct exclusion of Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King from the depiction of Roosevelt and Churchill led to widespread accusations in Canada that the real purpose of the monument was to slight the nation, which perceives itself as having found its global identity in the trials of that time. The imperative of the tourism economy, however, often constrains the excesses of dissonant heritage interpretation and might arguably keep Québec City 'globally honest' in the interest of prosperity. Certainly the unilingual French policy has harmed heritage comprehension by a predominantly English-speaking (largely US) tourism market, so much so that tourism authorities have been at pains to produce literature and audio-visual material to compensate for the illegibility of the streetscape. On the other hand, the 'French' quaintness of the city is likely to be accentuated by this illegibility in the minds of tourists, most of whom have little idea that this was once a bicultural environment. It is by no means clear, therefore, that tourism can prevent a move or a drift into French hegemonic nationalist identity that would belie the city's status of World Heritage Site.

Conclusion: from despair to hope?

These two very different examples illustrate the complexity of decision and contention that is likely to surround the determination of heritage at the scale of global aspiration and designation. Moreover, the discussion has emphasized how the international dimensions of heritage reinforce the tension between the other heritage scales which emerged in the preceding chapters. In particular, higher scales, like lower, are often dissonant with respect to the dominant national scale of heritage identity. This tension, however, may also exist multilaterally. As we explored in Chapters 4 and 5, the regional may very well confront the continental as well as the national, although equally the regional and continental may dovetail in mutual dissonance from the national that divides them.

In terms of the international scales of heritage, the continental and global are not necessarily in mutual consonance. In Chapter 10 we suggested that Europe has both a responsibility and an opportunity to reconcile its own continentalism, evolving, albeit with difficulty, into global heritage identities. But it cannot be assumed that a Eurocentric continental-global rationalization of heritage would be acceptable in other continents, whether its overtones are imperialistic or the reverse imperialism of the 1990s *mea culpa* over Europe's historical global role. For example, it is not difficult to envisage African or even North American dissonance over continental–global harmonizations of the heritage of slavery, which might emanate from any potential European vision. Again, the lingering tensions over Eurocentric definitional criteria for World Heritage Sites demonstrate the risks of seeking a consonance of continental and global heritage scales in terms which conform to European perspectives.

The concept of world heritage is particularly appropriate for the recognition of themes regarded as significant to humanity as a whole. However, these inevitably invite dissonance in ideological as well as scale terms, in respect both to their legitimacy and to their geography of commemoration. The themes of genocidal atrocity, slavery and human rights, which clearly contain the potential for amalgamation into a multi-site global megatheme, are closely and controversially implicated in existing, proposed or potential World Heritage Site designations. Particular sites can offer locations which might prove universally credible – as Robben Island could for human rights, Auschwitz for genocidal atrocity and Goree in Senegal for slavery. None of these places, however, can provide interpretative unanimity or locational monopoly. The geographical problems of commemoration include the ultimate aspatiality of any such theme and the multiple and competitive locations of its key events. Often by design, these latter are remote from the main population centres now intended to associate with and consume the heritage. The problems are illustrated by UNESCO's diffidence over South Africa's attempt (for domestic political and tourist-economic reasons) to exploit its international African 'Slave Route' initiative. Slavery was certainly practised in South Africa but its connection with the pivotal transatlantic slave trade is more emotive and expedient than historically accurate (Worden 1996).

This chapter has argued that heritage is closely linked to places and is used as a means of identification of people with spatial entities. It may appear that the questions about the 'correct' spatial scale, or ownership, are either unanswerable, or at best susceptible to too many conflicting answers. Indeed this is often the case but it should be stressed that heritage is mobile, highly flexible, reproducible and malleable in that it can be interpreted in many different ways for numerous and even conflicting purposes, sequentially or even simultaneously. There is usually no difficulty about the same building, for example, fulfilling the identification needs of different people or different scales. Globalism, nationalism, ethnocentrism and localism can in many cases be reconciled once the problems are recognized and mutual claims respected. Moreover, the technologies of conservation, reproduction and interpretation can bring objects and artefacts closer to those who wish to experience them, so that the distinction between reality and virtual reality is becoming less discernible.