

ABSTRACTS SELECTED

HERITAGE, (POST) CONFLICT AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

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An attempt to redefine cultural heritage concepts in the Arab world: the moral function as a new paradigm.

Cultural heritage is not a top priority subject in discussions that preoccupy Arab Societies during this current period of disturbing historical changes in the region. On the contrary, the massive destruction of highly significant places in local or national history, flourishing illicit traffic and vandalism of historical properties in the form of varied invocations in many Arab countries, are matters that necessitate adequate action. However, proposed responses are currently limited to a call for strict application of national or international norms which prove to be inadequate to the gravity of the situation. Our intervention will focus on rethinking this debate, namely by questioning the definitions of cultural property and their relevance to the context of Arab Countries. I realize that the main approach is particularly limited to physical perception. Our analysis of notions qualifying the cultural properties of the Region demonstrate that cultural heritage is intrinsically related to a function of equal importance to historical, scientific or artistic interest. This is what I call the «moral function» of cultural heritage. It is important to note that the dominant legal culture in the West as in many Arab Countries dissociate the “legal” and the “moral”. Hence, the fact of taking this notion in Arab legislation concerning heritage (as well as regional action in international cases) could seem efficient in the resolution of problematic issues, in times of peace as in times of conflict, such as the dilemma of poverty/ protecting archeological heritage against illicit trafficking, conception of an economic model as an alternative to overexploiting cultural resources; adapting awareness campaigns to local culture and prevention of vandalism in the name of religion.

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