

The Spillover Effect of Intangible Cultural Heritage

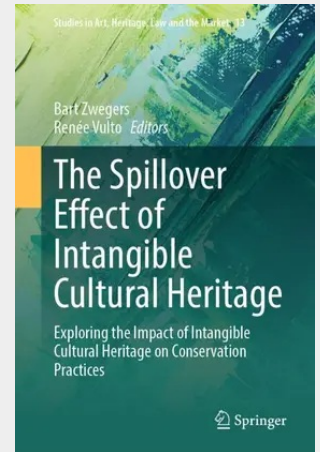
Exploring the Impact of Intangible Cultural Heritage on Conservation Practices

This edited volume examines the unforeseen effects of the notion of intangible heritage on conservation practices not only for urban contexts, but more generally for cultural practices. The notion of monumentality that UNESCO asserted focused on the material, tangible qualities of objects. It inevitably favoured European heritage sites and largely ignored forms of 'living' cultural heritage. This criticism not only came from scholars, but also from UNESCO member states from the Global South that addressed this omission and lobbied intensely for a more inclusive notion of World Heritage. One of the outcomes of these debates was the 2003 'Intangible Heritage Convention' – which was hoped to offer a remedy to the imbalanced global spread of World Heritage. Much academic research focuses on assessing whether or not the Convention indeed met its promises of broadening the heritage concept and ensuring a more even spread of World Heritage. Less attention has, however, been given to its unforeseen implications for contemporary heritage practices. By introducing less strict notions of authenticity, UNESCO and ICOMOS helped lay the conceptual grounds for many urban and industrial developments that it now resists. Urban planners, politicians and developers have used the notion of intangible cultural heritage to legitimize intrusive changes to historic urban landscapes or heritage sites. The introduction of the concept of intangible cultural heritage has thus not simply created 'just another list', but produced shifts in how we discuss, define and manage historic built environments in the 21st century.

The chapters address the history of the 'Intangible Heritage Convention', as well as its current uses in various contexts. The book includes both contributions that are theoretical in nature, as well as chapters that explore specific case studies. Key questions that the volume addresses include: How did the notion of heritage evolve to include cultural practices? What is the history of intangible heritage as concept and a practice? How did the notion of intangible heritage affect conservation philosophy and practice? How was the notion of intangible heritage criticized and by whom? How did the conservation philosophy evolve in relation to the notion of intangible heritage? And how do these issues influence views on and dealings with intangible heritage today?

The book brings together different disciplinary and cultural perspectives from different parts of the globe. Contributing authors are based in Southern Africa, Europe, South Asia and North America. The book's main audience includes academics interested in heritage and heritage practitioners.

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