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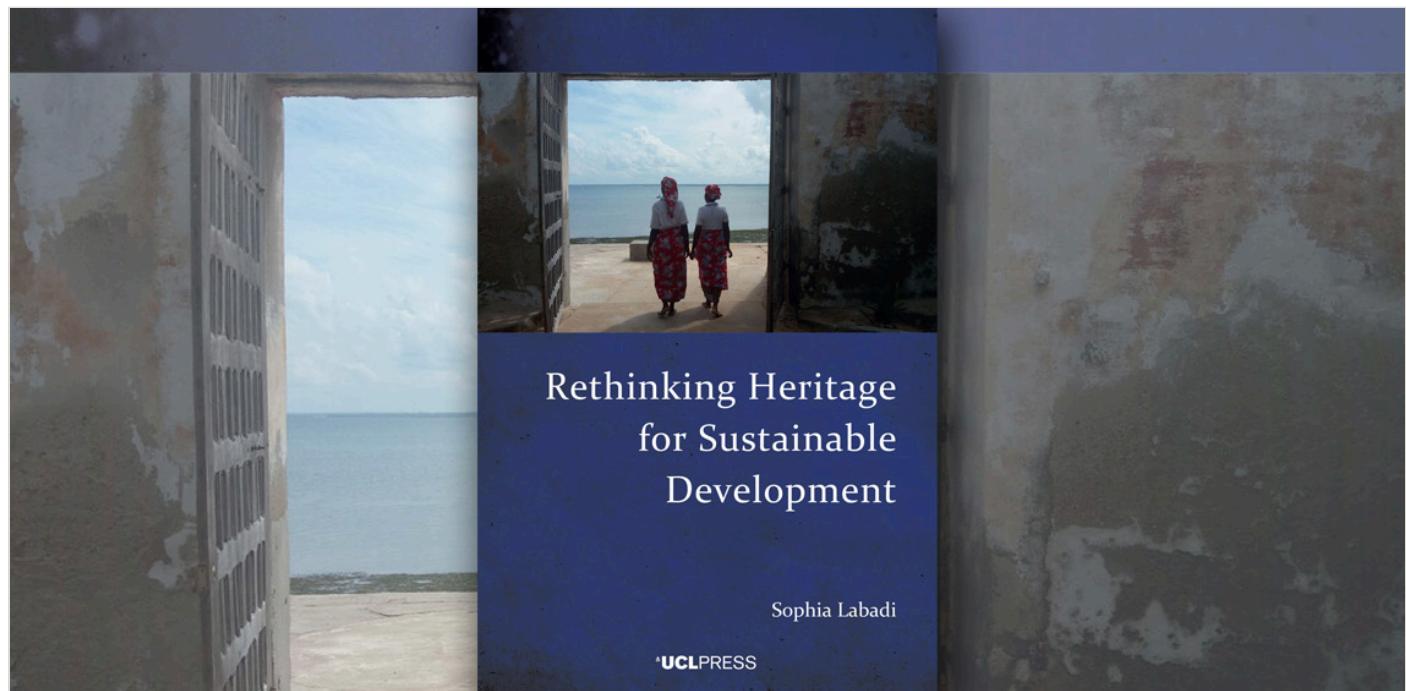
Book Review: Rethinking Heritage for Sustainable Development by Sophia Labadi

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The concept of heritage has long been associated with the preservation and commemoration of our collective cultural legacy. In the context of development, however, heritage takes on a multifaceted role, encompassing not only the preservation of historical artefacts and traditions but also their active integration into processes that drive socioeconomic progress.

“ Heritage preservation often relies on sustainable environmental practices to safeguard the physical and cultural attributes of heritage sites. By recognizing the importance of ecological balance, heritage managers can promote sustainable land management, responsible tourism, and community engagement...

Recognizing the dynamic relationship between heritage and development is crucial for societies seeking to strike a balance between honouring their past and forging a prosperous future. Labadi (2022) delves into the intricate interplay between heritage and development, elucidating the significance of safeguarding cultural heritage while fostering sustainable growth and social well-being. The book aims to explore the various dimensions of heritage in development, spanning cultural, economic, environmental, and social aspects, and to shed light on the potential benefits and challenges associated with leveraging heritage for developmental purposes.

Labadi offers a comprehensive insight into the integration of heritage into development endeavours, which entails navigating a complex landscape characterized by the coexistence of diverse perspectives, interests, and priorities. On one hand, heritage serves as a powerful tool for identity formation, community cohesion, and cultural expression, offering a sense of belonging and continuity across

generations. On the other hand, development pursuits often prioritize economic advancement, infrastructure development, and urbanization, which can inadvertently result in the erosion or neglect of cultural heritage. She does an excellent job of looking at the international approaches, breaking them down from 1970, when climate change and sustainability was drawn to the academic world's attention with the 1977 examination of the subject (Supran and Oreskes 2017) sponsored and conducted by Exxon Mobil. The subsequent discussion by UNESCO considered how a bottom-up approach needed to be set in place to implement development projects with local communities (UNESCO 1977, 72).

Labadi's chapter on international methods from 2000 onwards is especially relevant to any researcher of this topic. Since the turn of the millennium, there has been an increased emphasis on integrating heritage conservation into sustainable development frameworks. International organizations, governments, and local communities have recognized that heritage plays a vital role in fostering social cohesion, economic prosperity, and environmental stewardship. Numerous international policy frameworks have emerged, aligning heritage preservation with sustainable development.

Notably, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has played a central role in promoting the nexus between heritage and sustainable development. UNESCO's World Heritage Convention and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have served as guiding frameworks for integrating heritage preservation into broader

development agendas. Recognizing the importance of local communities in heritage preservation and sustainable development, international approaches have increasingly emphasized community engagement and empowerment. Through participatory approaches, local communities are involved in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and ensuring the sustainability of heritage initiatives.

Her insights on the Mozambique case (Labadi 174) were incredibly interesting, taken not just from an objective standpoint but from her own experiences with artefacts in this area, and the trade of ivory and wood carvings with local crafts people. She describes the personal interactions and then goes on to describe how the trade of ivory was counteracted by the policy of both the Mozambique government (CITES - the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species), and by the main point of demand, China, with their ban on the sale of ivory as of 2017 (Bielicki 2019).

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the intrinsic value of heritage as a catalyst for sustainable development. Labadi's chapter on poverty reduction and gender equality (Labadi 104, 135) is especially interesting as it views the subject from the lens of sustainable development and heritage conservation - not just from the view of international organizations and national governments - and also the local communities which have increasingly embraced a holistic approach to development: one that integrates heritage conservation, cultural tourism, and community engagement.

This paradigm shift acknowledges the potential of heritage to contribute to socioeconomic development, including poverty reduction, job creation, environmental sustainability, and social empowerment. Harnessing the potential of heritage in development is, however, not without its challenges. Conflicts may arise between different stakeholders who hold divergent views on how heritage should be managed and utilized. Striking a balance between preservation and adaptive reuse of heritage sites, ensuring equitable distribution of benefits, and addressing the needs and aspirations of local communities are complex tasks that require careful planning, policy frameworks, and participatory processes, all of which she excellently shows.

The environmental sustainability chapter (Labadi 164) shows a masterful show of knowledge on the interconnections between cultural heritage, natural heritage, and landscapes. Environmental and heritage preservation are vital components of the global agenda for sustainable development. While environmental sustainability focuses on the responsible management of natural resources, heritage preservation aims to protect and celebrate cultural and historical legacies. These two domains are interconnected, and their integrated pursuit holds immense potential for ensuring a harmonious coexistence between human activities and the environment. This chapter presents an academic analysis of the relationship

between environmental sustainability and heritage, exploring the synergies, challenges, and opportunities that arise from their mutual integration.

Heritage preservation often relies on sustainable environmental practices to safeguard the physical and cultural attributes of heritage sites. By recognizing the importance of ecological balance, heritage managers can promote sustainable land management, responsible tourism, and community engagement, as shown in the “Limits on heritage for sustainable development?” section of this chapter. These efforts not only enhance the conservation of heritage sites but also contribute to broader environmental sustainability goals by fostering environmental stewardship among local communities and visitors. Moreover, the impact of globalisation, climate change, and technological advancements poses both threats and opportunities for heritage in the development context. The growing interconnectedness of the world necessitates the need for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, while rapid urbanization and the digital revolution call for innovative approaches to heritage conservation and interpretation.

To fully comprehend the potential of heritage in development, interdisciplinary research drawing from fields such as cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, economics, urban planning, and environmental sciences, is essential. It is through such interdisciplinary collaboration that policymakers, practitioners, and academics can formulate evidence-based strategies and best practices to leverage heritage as a driver of inclusive and sustainable development. These are the takeaways of this comprehensive and excellent look at recontextualising and rethinking heritage and sustainable development’s interconnected role as the world steps forward into a new tomorrow.

Book information:

Sophia Labadi. 2022. *Rethinking Heritage for Sustainable Development*. London: UCL Press

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