Regional Heritage Dimensions vs. Management Boundaries

A comparative framework of European and Asian countries

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Abstract: Nowadays, two main biases dominate the World Heritage Site (WHS) management debate. While new tendencies within the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) suggest a dynamic multilayer approach, it remains compulsory for registration in the World Heritage (WH) list to define the “core” and “buffer” preservation zones of a listed site and to have a Management Plan applied to them. Inherited from European planning systems, management boundaries do usually collide with heritage dimensions and eco-cosmological systems, especially in Asia. In view of the lack of effective heritage management models, international experts have blamed, among others, Eurocentric views, the imposition of universal tools and, consequently, the generalised application of “buffer” zones. This research analyses the roots of these three problems through a review of: 1) the dimensions of heritage in each world region (East and West) and within UNESCO, 2) the effects of physical boundaries on the perception of heritage and the related application of WH “buffers”, 3) the integration of 1) and 2) through legal instruments. By comparing both East and West world regions, it is possible to conclude that even though the dichotomy of East-West has been overcome at theoretical levels, there are big gaps in the application of practical management tools. The limited practical use of WHS at the regional level appears as the main management incongruence. In addition, the conflicting definitions of “buffer zones” given by UNESCO suggest the need to both redefine this concept as a top-down defining instrument, and allow for more flexible site definition.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research problems

The strong influence of Eastern countries in the international World Heritage Site (WHS) preservation debate has led to the inclusion of new immaterial layers (such as intangible heritage, diversity, etc.) and to a growing relativism, which has brought an acceptance of diverse approaches to heritage and put an end to rigid Eurocentric methods that have prevailed during previous decades. Accordingly, the recommendations for WH management
has changed their normative character and become more general, universal (Veldpaus, Pereira Roders, & Colenbrander, 2013), and also vague.

At the same time, these ideas have had an equal impact in Western countries, which have embraced and rediscovered, within their own territories, social and intangible dimensions that have emerged from Asian approaches (Jokilehto, 1999). Therefore, in the past few decades, the concept of heritage has come to acknowledge indivisible connections between culture and nature at the regional scale in both Eastern and Western countries (e.g. cultural landscapes, sacred mountains, etc.). However, legal boundaries and the designation of control areas, which originated in European urban planning, are still used worldwide as the main tools for the protection and management of heritage. The application of these tools to more complex and diversified heritage paradigms has made clear the inefficacy of this unitary system and has brought up a debate on the general utility of “buffer zones”. Thus, academics have stated the urgent need to define and adapt alternative tools to suit Asian backgrounds (Byrne, 2004) and to be rooted in local traditional knowledge and expertise.

1.2 Objectives of the research

The objective of this paper is not to make an exhaustive historical analysis of the heritage protection tools, but to debate the conceptual and practical problems of heritage zoning in European and Asian countries, with a special focus on the rupture at regional, intangible and social levels.

The heritage management debate has normally focused on some preconceived ideas, such as: 1) Eurocentrism as opposed to Asian localism, 2) the use of universal tools as opposed to local, traditional tools, and 3) the use of World Heritage (WH) “buffers” or a preference for other tools.

This paper aims to clarify that even if the East-West dichotomy can be disregarded at theoretical levels today, the failure of heritage management models is not just the consequence of old cultural misconstructions but a problem rooted in the definition of management tools at global and national levels. To that end, the study compares theoretical approaches (academic and UNESCO’s) and seeks to understand the Eastern reaction to Western ideas. The final goal is to challenge the concept and utility of a “buffer” and to contribute to the debate with new comparative insights.

1.3 Research methodology

In this context, through literature review and analysis of UNESCO official documents, the research compares the following:

Firstly, the cultural limits of historical regions in Western and Eastern civilizations are reviewed and compared to the heritage ideas in the UNESCO theory.

Secondly, the analysis focuses on the idea of defining boundaries as a heritage management tool and its main deficiencies. Then, it studies how the definition of “buffer zones” has attempted to evolve and correct the gaps derived from simple boundary-like management.

Third, the connections of “buffers” with legal systems and their practical roles in WHS management are presented. Here, the study presents some representative examples, which aid the comprehension of the evolution of legal heritage management tools in both European and Asian countries and
the debate on boundary application strategies (refer to list of documents consulted in Figure 4).

In all, the paper makes a critical comparison of the two world regions, their mutual influence and the gaps in each model. Thus, it is possible to offer insights into the actual role of heritage zoning and the origin of the very diverse WH “buffer” application problems.

2. THE DIMENSIONS OF HERITAGE

2.1 Identification of heritage limits

According to Howard (2003), the idea of “heritage” is subjective and depends on the point of view and the attachment of the evaluator to certain attributes (their volition). Thus, it is not possible to put a physical or conceptual limit to the term “heritage”, as it represents a compilation of physical and social aspects rather than a complete universal idea per se. Nevertheless, contemporary heritage theory has commonly focused on the ideas that started emerging from XIX. One of the most decisive cultural constructions that emerged in that time and context was the idea of “monumental heritage”, which bore an iconic role strongly connected to national pride and propaganda (Harvey, 2001). Asian countries will inherit these European criteria during XIX-XX and will try to represent local heritage using similar models. However, this absolute identification of “heritage” with a material object clashes with intangible cosmological dimensions and with the subjective origin of the concept of “heritage” itself.

At the same time, “heritage” is defined as a process (Howard, 2003; Harvey, 2001; Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012) that evolves and changes in meaning and importance along with the society that identifies it. This process “moves through discovery or formation, inventory, designation, protection, renovation, commodification and, sometimes, destruction” and must be controlled by heritage managers (Howard, 2003).

The idea of “nature” is also considered in Europe to be a cultural product in contrast to the cultural grandeur of urban civilizations (Redclift, 2006). This creates a clear separation between the two terms, “nature” and “culture”, that does not match the strong mutual influence visible in such widespread cultures as Western Europe and Taoist Asia (Berque, 1995).

In opposition to this cultural differentiation, connections between humans and nature are commonly embedded in the daily act of perceiving and measuring the world through the human position and proportions of the human body. Turner (2009) refers to Da Vinci’s “Uomo Vitruviano” to depict individuals as bearers of a particular space, a “three-dimensional envelope or aura that a person carried with him”. Thus, boundaries defined by people are the reflection of a subjective and self-centered idea of the human being in connection with its surroundings.

This humanistic approach can equally be found in Asia. There, the ideal for the Indian city, as expressed in the mandala, is to embody “the complete integration of theomorphic and anthropomorphic ideas” (Turner, 2009). Similar examples can be found in feng shui-based urban design, where “cities were depicted with references to the gods, nature, the space and landmarks surrounding and defining its context” (Turner, 2009). These cosmological links were considered the true protection for cities and their inhabitants (Turner, 2009).
At the same time, in both world regions, these humanistic visions have coexisted with diverse instruments for social control and urban management based on strong physical segregation. The Greek “temenos” and the Asian forbidden cities were spaces isolated from daily life (Turner, 2009). In Japan as well, samurai neighbourhoods or conflictive urban areas (e.g. foreign settlements, pleasure quarters) were walled and separated from the rest of the city as a way for authorities to apply special control (Shelton, 2012). Both cultures present clear examples of distinct uses and social segregation, but, at the same time, these isolated areas are always a part of an urban whole in flux and indivisible from it (Turner, 2009).

At this point, it can be said that use and control limits coexist with essential human-nature links. However, the concept of “heritage” does not possess limits of its own, but only the ones given by the evaluator in contrasting the heritage object and the environment through the filter of their own human experience and dimensions. Thus, the diverse, intangible, and variable dimensions of heritage (human, cosmological, etc.) will not correspond with fixed boundaries, but rather with shifting permeable soft spaces.

2.2 UNESCO idea of heritage: exchanges between East-West

In the context of UNESCO, initially, theoretical frameworks were based mainly on XIX European heritage ideas (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012; Choay, 2001). The international heritage protection movement, originating after WWII, was boosted by a generalised special interest in creating an agreement on heritage preservation. This effort led to the creation of the UNESCO “Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage” in 1972.

Not surprisingly, the first official theoretical documents released afterwards were based on European expertise and focused on built-up areas. The main heritage types considered were “monuments”, “sites”, “groups of buildings”, etc. These categories are likely to always have a strong presence among WH sites and the concepts will be continuously refined, even today. Eastern countries on the other hand, focus on the recognition of their own different heritage dimensions. Early on, by the 60s, Australia and New Zealand started defending the intangible cultural connections of aboriginal communities as a fundamental part of their own national heritage (e.g. Burra Charter). Japan also took a leading role in shaping the idea of “Asianism” during the 80s and 90s (Akagawa, 2014).

As a result, the introduction of intangible dimensions in the WH debate signalled a turning point in the appreciation of values that had been forgotten in Europe (Jokilehto, 1999). Thus, the idea of authenticity and the recognition of relative native values will be internationally accepted for the first time in the Nara document. With this, authenticity is “no longer merely rooted in its material context as it was before, it now also includes the social, cultural, and economic processes linked to the specific context of the heritage” (Veldpaus, Pereira Roders, & Colenbrander, 2013). Consequently, many new heritage categories related to human-nature connections may appear (e.g. Landscapes, Cultural landscapes, etc.) and terminology may gradually be adapted to become more general and inclusive (Veldpaus, et al., 2013).

Other types of heritage that followed (e.g. Folklore, Intangible Heritage) officially recognised the importance of cultural heritage for indigenous communities, lifestyles connected to heritage sites and their evolving traditions. In this way, continuity will be recognised as vital protecting the...
original heritage, which will be linked to oral tradition and a “process of re-creation” (Burke & Smith, 2010).

Figure 1. Evolution of the concept of “heritage” within UNESCO
From the year 2000, and after the international recognition of values connected to Eastern backgrounds, each Asian country, with China at the head (e.g. Chinese principles), has been attempting to redefine the adopted concepts and terms and to create their own locally rooted protection manifestos (e.g. Indonesian Charter), questioning the suitability of generalised principles.

In the following years, other types of heritage have been recognised and will continue challenging the international definition of heritage and pushing the creation of new protection models adapted to bigger scales or dimensions (e.g. sacred mountains and cultural routes).

By the end of XXth, the growing extension of the heritage setting, the focus on community and functional-living values, and the consequent loss of physical definition of heritage, will become an intrinsic part of all the different heritage types defined within the WH context. Accordingly, traditionally physical typologies (e.g. monuments) that have dominated the European charters will be updated and connected to their regional and social contexts.

One of the most important changes in the 2010s was the recognition of heritage as a social process in evolution. Since then, WH documents have promoted holistic development connected to sustainability (Veldpaus, Pereira Roders, & Colenbrander, 2013). Thus, recently launched programs like the Living Heritage and the Historical Urban Landscape programs consider every heritage site as a part of the whole territory, which is seen as an evolving palimpsest of social relations and interactions with the physical space. Consequently, the latest UNESCO recommendations discard the old concept of heritage preservation and focus instead on protection by development.

In all, WH theory has gradually assimilated the relativism of heritage values and the difficulties in imposing dedicated management and limits to it.

However, even if the recognition of local values and relative authenticity puts an end to the divided Western-Eastern approaches, the UNESCO brand on its own is still a method of globalisation that attempts to unify the evaluation criteria (Choay, 2001). In addition, the growing number of WH sites “shows the inclination of nations to pursue western ideals of relating heritage to temporality and constructed identity” (Choay, 2001).

3. BOUNDARIES VS HERITAGE

3.1 Effects of physical boundaries on regional heritage

Even though the concept of “heritage” has come to define multiple intangible culture-nature connections, it can always be considered a spatial phenomenon connected to the place where these connections are developed (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2016). Norberg-Schulz defines “place” as a compound of sociocultural connections linked to the physical environment, however, traditionally, heritage management relies on the classic idea of place as a physically delimited area (Harvey, 2001).

Even so, the main requirements for top-down WH protection are: a “core zone” (elements that bear the heritage value), a “buffer zone” (generally a surrounding protection area), and a complementary Management Plan.

As detailed in Section 2.1, the designation of heritage and the definition of its boundaries is the product of an a priori judgement (Howard, 2003) in a particular moment (Harvey, 2001), and depends on the evaluator and the intentions of the classification. Thus, the action of drawing a boundary can emphasize this biased judgement and create several conflicts, producing a
separation of what is considered a bearer of certain important properties and what is not.

This separation is especially detrimental to culture-nature connections. Redclift (2006) criticises the negative impact of imposed political and administrative borders on sustainable human-nature relationships. Here, the replacement of traditional socially organised groups with alien zones that aim at regulating local activity results contradictorily in problems for area management (Redclift, 2006).

Despite the fact that these culture-nature relations are considered essential to the maintenance of heritage, in the latest UNESCO theoretical documents traditional zoning tools still represent the main definition of heritage and are its main protective method. These tools create a priori negative impacts on the sociocultural layers of the heritage region and damage traditional forms of control over nature and symbiosis with the environment. For that reason, Byrne (2004) has defended the use of local specific tools for heritage management in Asia. However, in Europe too, the use of closed boundaries to define complex cultural links is weak and likely ineffective.

3.2 UNESCO recommended zoning system

The problems related to zoning are not new within UNESCO. At this point, the research analyses the evolution of the concept of “core” and “buffer” in the successive Operational Guidelines (OG) from 1977 onwards (UNESCO, 1977) (1978) (1980) (1988) (2005) (2012) (2015) (2016) (see Figure. 2). In addition, other regional charters and official documents have been studied and opposed to the OG in order to identify conflictive definitions and adapted regional tools.

In the first versions of the OG, the “core” was intended as the sole definition and preservation of all of the heritage characteristics, while the “buffers” were only considered an optional protection tool (“only when appropriate”), located in the surroundings and the area of physical influence of the heritage site. Originally, the role of “buffers” was not clearly defined, being simply an adequate or necessary protection. Considering the physical definition of the WH areas, by the beginning of the 2000s, “buffers” were supposed to include immediate setting, views, and functionally important elements (World Heritage Centre, 2009). However, these categories represent very different scales that cannot be defined by the same type of zoning. At the same time, the OG at that time remarked that “buffers” were “not normally” part of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of a site. This left the implicit distinction between the two zones confusing to the point that, depending on the heritage site, some of the described elements could be found in both, or either, the “core” and/or in the “buffer”.

Around 1990 their restrictive character was defined and “buffer zones” came to represent an area where legal or customary restrictions on use and development could be applied (World Heritage Centre, 2009).
Figure 2. Evolution of the definition of “buffer” in UNESCO documents
By 2005, in an attempt to resolve the ambiguity, the definition became more rigid and the two terms were clearly divided. Thus, “core” came to bear the heritage attributes while “buffer” came to purely mean a protection zone.

In 2008 a decisive general meeting entitled "World Heritage and Buffer Zones" was held in Davos, Switzerland (World Heritage Centre, 2009) with the purpose of clarifying the meaning and position of “buffer zones” inside a broader integrated context. At that time the concept of heritage had already evolved and theories gave special attention to regional system management. Thus, heritage connections at the regional scale drew special attention and connected them, and the addition of broader management areas was proposed. At the same time, “buffers” conserved their protective character, but were to remain responsive to external and internal changes. Thus, their previous categorical character was brought under consideration.

In the same year, as a consequence of the Davos meeting, corrections were made to the OG. A new influence area, the “setting”, was presented. It was meant to represent essential connections of heritage on a broad scale. However, again, this definition created a conflict for the priority and value of these areas, as it was not clear if they were a part of the heritage itself.

Finally, the “setting” was not officially adopted as a third WH area, but the concept persisted and, recently, the legal character of “buffers” has been extended to include not only physical protection inside the zone but also territorial connections and socioeconomic sustainable growth. The latest versions of the OG also focus on Management ideals, and state that “buffers” must be considered one part of a complete integrated plan. Nevertheless, these ideas are not yet developed in detail, and the precise use of “buffers” inside the territorial model remains unclear.

3.3 Parallel ideas in the UNESCO national documents

In opposition to the general guidelines, the correct definition and use of “buffer zones” is of special concern to Eastern countries as it sometimes collides with traditional management models (Figure 2).

One of the main ideas about heritage management brought forth by Eastern documents was that of “indigenous guardianship”. This concept is strongly defended by New Zealand and Australian policies, which defend the value of heritage as defined by what it represents for the local community. Traditional guardianship and management is preferred to other tools as it encompasses changes in heritage and community needs. Additionally, the “setting” is considered important because it is integrated in local life.

Between 2000-2005, Asian national charters rapidly adapted ideas of holistic management that had been circulating in the West to their particular contexts (heritage for development, community dimensions, priority of intangible layers, changing tools, multiple zoning, etc.). The main disruption to global charters is possibly the Xi An Charter (China), which states that the “setting” constitutes an essential part of heritage and must be designed together with the “core” and “buffer” areas.

In order to face these differences and functional problems, the Historical Urban Landscape program (HUL) was launched internationally in 2008. It proposes a new multidimensional model encompassing both of the diverse Western and Eastern approaches, and is composed of four types of adaptive tools: community engagement, knowledge and planning, regulatory, and financial measures (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012). However, the role of the “core-buffer zones” is not specifically linked with the new model and some
new documents (e.g. Madrid Charter) still cite the definition of boundaries as an essential requisite for heritage protection.

3.4 Regional problems in “buffer” application

The main method that UNESCO uses to globally monitor conflicts in the application of “buffer zones” is Periodical Reporting, where each WHS evaluates the performance of its management systems. Through an analysis of the compilation of reporting documents for both the Europe and North America and Asia-Pacific WH zones, this chapter presents the main concerns and problems of both areas (Figure 3).

In Europe, during the first report period (2005) many sites without “buffer” zones were identified and evaluated as inadequate within general parameters. In Asia, the main concern after the first reporting period (2003) was the inability of “buffers” to withstand high development pressures. Conversely, state parties evaluated WH zoning as sufficient. During these years, problems related to “buffer zones” drew a lot of attention from the World Heritage management. One of the main concerns of the Davos expert meeting was that threats originating outside the defined WH areas might still adversely impact upon the essential character of heritage; therefore they encouraged the application of complementary measures (legal tools or management plans) at a larger scale (see Section 3.2).

After the important emphasis was put on WH zoning, by the second reporting period the lack of “buffer zones” in Europe had been quickly fixed and “buffers” were described as adequate (2012-15), with still some room for improvement. In general, there were available legal instruments connected to the zoning and heritage protection was considered positive by the countries involved.

In Asia (2012), however, many issues were raised. In a high number of cases the WH perimeters were perceived as requiring improvement. At the same time the regional symbiotic character of some Asian heritage suggested the possibility for renomination of some sites, which would require the identification of other scales and regional dimensions, and new boundaries. In general, the role and legal use of “buffers” is not clear and generates widespread confusion at both administrative and community levels. Thus, even if European countries were more positive, the most common features of the discussion in all cases would be the lack of community awareness, complex meaning, and the unclear role in management of the WH areas (Figure 3).

3.5 Chapter conclusions

1. According to the theoretical discussion, heritage boundaries can bring preservation and control, but also rupture human-nature connections, social relations, economic interests, and property rights. Thus, boundary-like management or control zones are insufficient to protect holistic historical systems that involve multiple social, spiritual and functional layers.
Figure 3. Problems identified through Periodic Reporting
2. The prevailing idea of WH “buffer” zones is linked to a punctual problem that can affect the value of the registered heritage. In practice it is a static control area, even if some trends have attempted to redefine it as a dynamically changing tool. At this point, it is difficult to understand not only which of the different heritage dimensions could be represented by this parameter, but also the role and importance of the area inside a holistic management model.

3. Even though “buffers” drew great attention in 2005, application gaps and the defence of two differentiated poles, European and Asian, derived in academic silence, are giving way to an obsolete definition of WH zones and related management problems.

4. THE MANAGEMENT OF WH “BUFFERS”

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the mutual influences of Western and Eastern countries were reflected in the international definitions of heritage and the standards applied to World Heritage Sites, however, these concepts are not always equally reflected in national legal systems. At the same time, WH “buffers”, due to their protective character, are directly connected to planning tools and are inevitably affected by these legal gaps.

4.1 Heritage dimensions in legal systems

During the end of XVIII-XIX, when the first contemporary cultural heritage history concepts emerged, rooted in European developments (Jokilehto, 2014), countries also started defining legal frameworks and bureaucracies for protecting their national heritage. At that time, the value of heritage was that of “record as a monument”, and thus, it was approached as an absolute object connected to “changelessness and timelessness” (Burke & Smith, 2010). Heritage is therefore connected to the idea of designation and the need to apply labels that classify objects as absolutely and permanently valuable. This classification is generally used as a way to enable legislation and management (Howard, 2003). It was therefore logical that a control-colonization society, such as those in the West (Redclift, 2006) with an absolute idea of heritage, tended to traditionally integrate heritage protection as a series of control areas within planning tools (Choay, 2001).

Eastern countries on the other hand, inherit the European legal and planning models. However, conflicts appear early when trying to insert their own cultural visions of heritage as defended in the legislation of local UNESCO charters.

In the case of Australia, aboriginal communities’ cultural attachments to nature have been defended from early on in the context of in WH sites (e.g. Burra Charter). However, in national legislation there is a clear division between historic buildings, connected to the colonial idea of cultural heritage, and natural parks, related to aboriginal heritage but recognized for its antiquity rather than its cultural value in the eyes of European settlers (Burke & Smith, 2010).

Similarly, modern Japanese legal systems emerged from westernised models imposed after WWII. The first bunkazai (heritage property) concept referred to artefacts, monuments, historical places and natural heritage (Akagawa, 2014). These ideas evolved rapidly and, by 1975, the law had assimilated intangible, traditional and folk heritage concepts (even before UNESCO). A few years later, massive development and demolition propelled
the consolidation of all categories under the same law (1980). In contrast, cultural landscapes were not integrated into Japanese laws until 2004 in response to UNESCO theory (Akagawa, 2014).

In 2008, the Historic Town Development Act prepared maintenance and improvement plans for historical environments, defending the preservation of buildings rooted in their context, but leaving landscape management and protection to local design guidelines of lesser authority (Akagawa, 2014). In this manner, Japanese law established special categories for intangible heritage and craft techniques, but did not give the same status to protection of landscape and social atmosphere.

These intangible dimensions are compensated by two methods of “government funding for revitalization programs related to heritage conservation” (Akagawa, 2014). The practice of machizukuri (community participatory urbanism) started in the 70s and has been linked with physical revitalization in ordinances and utilization of space since. Besides this, the furusato movement, at its peak between the 60s to the 90s, was based on the use of effective bottom up strategies inside an overall strategy for territorial branding. However, despite the apparent revitalization of rural tradition, projects involved different recreational activities (e.g. community festivals) that were exploited for tourism and disconnected from local lifestyles (Akagawa, 2014).

Finally, China began taking an active role in WH preservation, for example through registration of unprecedented mega sites, new sites, updated reporting, etc. (Zheng, 2014), after the destruction of heritage properties in the early 2000s brought on by a period of massive development (Shen & Chen, 2010). These efforts culminated in the 2005 Xi An ICOMOS scientific session, which produced a more complete concept of the “WH setting”, adapted to Chinese tradition, and which was already present in national laws (Zheng, 2014). Nevertheless, heritage protection in China was characterized by strong top-down control at the national level, giving priority to the idea of nation-owned heritage (Shen & Chen, 2010) and heritage as inheritance of local inhabitants and users.

4.2 Legal significance and emerging “buffer” roles

Even when WH boundaries seem to include all of the physical regional attributes, due to legal gaps and the lack of specific tools, the practical use of these zones is weak and very diverse from site to site.

Taking Italy as a European example, the concept of “territory as a museum” has had a strong influence on the definition of the WH sites, but it is yet to be formalised in heritage legislation. Thus, it is possible to spot diverse types of WH “buffer” use at a regional scale.

First, the “umbrella Eco-museum” model integrates the different regional stakeholders and managers inside a common management area under the idea of local slow development (Magliacani, 2015). In these cases, outer management boundaries correspond to big scale unitary WH zones (e.g. Val d’Orcia cultural landscape).

Second, in many cases “buffers” do not correspond with any management areas. This is the case in the city of Ferrara and its Po delta where the very detailed WH boundaries do not match management boundaries. In this case, the city area acts as an independent pole, and regional bottom-up projects are carried out with the help of NPO, social enterprise, etc. (Zamarbide Urdaniz, Alba Victoria, 2014).
Third, in the case of the Rhaetian Railway, many different sets of near and far views are an essential part of heritage and, accordingly, different levels of protection with their corresponding areas are defined instead of the one “core” and one “buffer” standard model (in registration reports).

On the other hand, Asian “buffers” are still lagging behind in the physical definition of WH at the territorial scale and represent old heritage protection models to a large extent (Zamarbide Urdaniz, Alba Victoria, & Satoh, 2017). According to Jigyasu (2014), one of the main generalised threats in Asia is urbanization. Consequently, these classic control “buffers” were to work to some extent as a first protection measure, but not even this fundamental requirement is met.

In the case of Japan, the concept of “buffer zones” is not elaborated legally and they do not have a direct connection with legal protection (e.g. Law for the Protection of Cultural Property). Instead, various laws regulating areas for purposes other than the conservation of their cultural value are used (Kono, 2006).

In contrast, Vietnam has strict, top-down control over heritage for national monuments that match WH boundaries. In the WH site of “Hue Monuments” this system protects the architecture of the Royal Tombs; however, the imposed boundaries, and related use restrictions, affect the traditional feng shui of tomb water systems and traditional community water management. These cosmological links could be identified as a regional cultural landscape, and yet actual heritage control puts regional heritage at high risk from development (Zamarbide Urdaniz, Alba Victoria, 2014).

4.3 Chapter conclusion

In summary, the majority of legal instruments, even related to natural protection, have their roots in European models and monumental ideas of heritage. Each country has attempted to develop more independent heritage definitions, but at the same time neither culture-nature links nor social dimensions, defended in local WH charters, are present in legal models.

Concerning practical applications, “buffer zones” should at the very least be a reflection of top-down protection laws, even if limited. However, in many cases they have no connection with legal tools, leaving real management to unrelated local planning tools.

Finally, WH holistic management concepts (like HUL) have not been included in these tools, and the holistic preservation of development “requires a change of policy mostly at the local level” (Velpaus et al., 2013).

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presented a comparative critique of the actual heritage dimensions and protection models in both Western and Eastern countries. As a result, the the main conflicting ideas were confuted with respect to the following arguments:

1. Euro-centrism vs localism

The influence of Eastern approaches led to a revalorisation of the regional dimensions of heritage in European countries. Currently, the opposing positions are coming closer at theoretical levels, however, even though Europe has used Eastern ideals to expand its understanding of heritage, it remains focused on its own methods and cultural roots. Simultaneously, Western ideals
have already been assimilated in Eastern contexts, but have been adapted and complemented by local values (e.g. local charters).

2. Universal tools vs local tools

Administrative systems, inherited from XIX models and are based on urban zoning, prevail in heritage protection systems worldwide. Thus, zoning and boundaries are still valuable tools for top-down physical control. On the other hand, even though national WH charters have been adapted to local approaches in both Eastern and Western countries, social heritage layers, landscape protection, and so on, do not normally have legal equivalents. Other complementary tools (e.g. regional management areas, bottom-up community reactivation strategies, agricultural enhancement projects, etc.) do not benefit from the same priorities as national heritage preservation laws (e.g. national monuments) and require the support of other independent groups (e.g. NPO, social enterprise, etc.). Moreover, the local capacity to transform ideals into new creative tools is still limited.

3. WH buffers vs no buffers

Contrary to the evolution of the concept of heritage, the idea of the “buffer” has not been elaborated at the national level, remaining general. In addition, the definition of “buffer” itself presents several contradictions and unclear points:
- Taken as a simple protection tool, “buffer” zones are not working, as in many cases they are not connected to legal restrictions.
- Multiple dimensions cannot fit in the one “core zone”, one “buffer-zone” system. Regional planning tools, for example, make use of multiple zoning areas instead, which can be dedicated to purposes other than heritage protection.
- The basic protection role of “buffers” constrains holistic nature-culture visions and puts creative actions on a secondary level.

At this point, the “buffer” is used to allow for a universal reference tool, but in its application falls back into undetermined local planning tools.

In summary, it can be discerned that heritage management problems do not especially lie in the collision between European and Asian ideas, but in the definition of tools, assimilation of heritage dimensions in legal systems, and the misuse or lack of other creative tools in both world regions.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are two main poles in heritage preservation. Described by Lowenthal (1979), they are the inclination to preserve and the recognition of change, and both are reflected in both the UNESCO theory and in heritage practice. However, “buffer zones” have maintained a simplistic barrier-like character.

At the same time, there is more technology and a greater capacity to identify and manage heritage than ever before (Harvey, 2001; Veldpaus, Pereira Roders, & Colenbrander, 2013).

In the past few decades, Europe has been exporting heritage protection notions, models, and techniques to the world. Nowadays, the old institutionalised methodologies have proven themselves obsolete and must be reviewed (Mithal, 2012). Even if previous practices constitute a valuable reference for the physical protection of heritage, and can help to promote awareness, heritage protection must now look for complementary tools that can guarantee the survival of complex cosmologies. It is thus an opportunity for Asian countries to focus on modern technology and develop unique methodologies adapted to their particular sociocultural backgrounds.
This suggests the need to define different meanings and practical roles for the concept of “buffers”, both normative - those connected to physical boundaries - and creative buffers related to changing human needs and cultural attachments. These multiple “buffers” could serve as more practical and adaptable reference tools, and could put an end to the generalised confusion in WH preservation worldwide.

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APPENDIX

REFERENCE CODES TO UNESCO CHARTERS
In this paper:

54. TH: The Hague Convention (1954)
56. REC ARCH Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations (1956)
62. LAN S Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites (1962)
64. BU C Burra Charter (1964)/ 99. BU C Burra Charter (1999 version)
72. WHC World Heritage Convention (1972)
72. REC NAT Recommendation Concerning the Protection at National Level of the Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)
75. EU ARCH European Charter of the Architectural Heritage (1975)
75. AMST Amsterdam Declaration (1975)
82. FLO HG Florence Charter on Historic Gardens (1982)
82. DESCH Charter for the Preservation of Quebec’s Heritage (1982) (Deschambault Declaration)
85. ARCH EU Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe (1985)
87. BZ First Brazilian Seminar about the Preservation and Revitalization of Historic Centres (1987)
87. WAS Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas (1987) (Washington Charter)
87. NZ CH Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value NZ (1987, update 1992) (New Zealand Charter)
89. REC FK Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (1989)
90. ARCH M International Charter for Archaeological Heritage Management (1991)
91. REC 20 Recommendation on the protection of the 20th-century Architectural Heritage (1991)
94. NA DA Nara Document on Authenticity (1994)
95. REC NoR Recommendation No.R (95)9 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the integrated Conservation of Cultural Landscape Areas as part of Landscape Policies (1995)

97. INT Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage (1997)
99. BVH Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage (1999)
99. TOU International Cultural Tourism Charter: Managing Tourism at Places of Heritage Significance (1999)
00. UND Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2000)
00. EU LC European Convention on Landscape (2000)
00. CH P China Principles (2000)
01. AP SM Thematic Expert Meeting on Asia-Pacific Sacred Mountains (2001)
01. UDCD Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)
03. INDO Indonesian Charter (2003)
04. HOI Hoi An protocols (2004)
05. FARO Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (2005) (Faro Convention)
05. VIEN Vienna Memorandum (2005)
05. XI AN Xi An Declaration on the Conservation of the Setting of Heritage Structures, Sites and Areas (2005)
05. OP G Operational Guidelines (update) (2005)
05. YAM Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage (2005)
08. QUEB Quebec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of Place (2008)
08. CR ICOMOS Charter on Cultural Routes (2008)
10. LIMA Lima Declaration for Disaster Risk Management of Cultural Heritage (2010)
11. MAD Approaches for the Conservation of 20th Century Architectural Heritage (2011)
11. HUL (Madrid document)
14. FLO UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011)

Other UNESCO related sources:
Davos meeting on buffer zones: http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/473/
Hiroshima meeting on buffer zones: http://www.law.kyushu-u.ac.jp/programsinenglish/hiroshima/papers.htm

Figure 4. List of abbreviations used in Figures 1 and 2