Debating Access to Internationally Acclaimed Rock Art Sites: Has the 'Future Generation' Been Born?

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ABSTRACT

Rock art is one of the most attractive heritage resources. Yet, some of these sites are either closed from the public or were never officially opened in the first place. Based on them being inaccessible to the public, various replicas have been built to allow tourists to still see their images. While these sites are inaccessible to the general public, they are not spared from natural and human induced damage. Informed by the three issues I discuss in this paper, namely: (1) the idea of selecting identified heritage resources as being important, (2) critiquing the concept of managing heritage resources for future generations, and (3) debating the question of who are we managing rock art for, I conclude that rock art should not be closed to the public. Such an approach promotes a view that such valuable spaces are preserved only for the privileged few.

KEYWORDS

Rock art; authenticity; integrity; lascaux; uKhahlamba Drakensberg; Chauvet; Altamira

Introduction

Tens of thousands of rock art sites, painted or engraved and containing a variety of motifs, have been recorded from many locations around the world. Rock art, found in a variety of locations such as rock shelters, rock boulders, and deep caves, is one of the most attractive and recognisable heritage resources we have across various parts of the globe. Some rock art locations are more famous than others. For instance, sites such as the Chauvet Cave near Vallon-Pont-d'Arc in the Ardèche region of southern France, Lascaux Cave in the Dordogne valley in France, Cave of Altamira (Sistine Chapel of Palaeolithic Art or the Pinnacle of Palaeolithic Work Art) in Cantabria near Santander in Spain (Saiz-Jimenez et al. 2011), Valcamonica in the Lombardy plain in Italy (Anati 2008; Marretta 2011, 2011; Lopes 2016), and selected locations within the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park in South Africa (i.e. Game Pass Shelter, Eland Cave, Didima Gorge, etc.) are more famous for the paintings and engravings that 'decorate' the caves and shelters in these locations (see Vinnicombe 1976; Mazel 2009). Determined by these variety of locations from which rock art was made, its accessibility by members of the public is equally varied. In some countries, rock art is a lot more easily accessible. For instance, in the case of South Africa, most painted rock art sites are found in shelters in the mountains which are more or less easily accessed by the public. This is unlike the location of rock art in France, where paintings and

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engravings are found in deep caves which can easily be closed off from the public. The success of various countries in managing rock art has been equally varied. The major challenge is bringing about a balance between conservation and access for the public. With this challenge in mind, I address three issues in this paper. First, I discuss the idea of selecting identified heritage resources as being important. Second, I critique the concept of managing heritage resources for future generations. Third, I debate the question of who we managing rock art for.

Managing Heritage Resources: The Selective Approach

In this section, I critically engage in a discussion of three main issues: (1) exclusion of other voices in what is managed, (2) the reality that what is left for us by past generations may not be what we want nor what we consider to be of significance, and (3) the tendency to focus more on future generations, thus excluding current living generations in the heritage discourse. The intention of this discussion is to highlight that what we have used as a framework to manage heritage resources is problematic and must be challenged because we are left with the reality of not accessing and enjoying heritage resources in the name of preserving it for future generations. I will use the rock art case studies to illustrate this argument.

Exclusion of Other Voices in What Is Managed

As argued by L. Smith (2006), the heritagisation process is not representative of a general society. Instead, only the dominant voices are considered in the decision-making process over what is important and what is not. Such voices are generally those of politicians, archaeologists, museum, heritage specialists (L. Smith 2006, 12) or men who by their 'cultural right' are leaders of their communities (see Schmidt 2017). For instance, where politicians are concerned, their voices always become supreme. The 'silencing' of the liberation history of other political parties in South Africa is a classic example of this. As a result, decisions of what is preserved are always academically or politically informed, for it is those with power who decide what is kept for the future and why (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996, 2007; Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2005). According to Manetsi (2017, 30), 'the state privileges a dominant and selective historical past that might not necessarily serve the diverse cultural representation of the people of South Africa.'

We can, therefore, argue that decisions over what is considered important are not objectively made. Instead, they are highly subjective and are a reflection of power by those in charge. This is what L. Smith (2006) called the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD). One could argue that an opposite of AHD is a process through which all voices are considered in the decision-making processes. However, I am beginning to think that this is not ever possible, even with all the calls for a bottom-up approach to heritage management (see Ndlovu 2005, 2016). My aim is therefore not to question the existence of the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) in terms of what is decided upon as heritage resources worthy to conserve, nor is it to argue for an opposite of AHD. This is because I cannot imagine an equitable society anywhere in the world. We must accept as human beings that we are not all going to have equal power in decision-making processes, even when the so-called consultative processes are undertaken. The same principles apply in

heritage management because even when we consider progressive forms of archaeological approaches such as community archaeology, public archaeology, etc., there are limitations to how the voices of the people have been considered (see Ndlovu 2019).

What Is Left for Us by Past Generations?

As indicated earlier, what is left for us by past generations is always decided upon on the basis of power. Our fascination with the past must thus be understood within this power dynamic through which decisions over which aspects of the past are preserved are made. Whatever is considered important within a specific location must thus always be understood within a prevailing political context. It is further important to note that what may be considered important today may not always remain so. So, does the concept of managing heritage resources for future generations still have value? I want to use the case of South Africa to illustrate how the changing political landscape can have a direct impact over what is considered important.

With its long history of heritage management, South Africa's heritage authorities mainly focused on the management of colonially linked heritage resources. These heritage resources therefore belonged to the minorities to the exclusion of heritage materials of the majority (Ndlovu 2011a, 2011b). With the majority now having the political power, I would argue that heritage resources deemed significant in the colonial and apartheid eras are now beginning to lose their perceived significance. While the minority still see the same heritage resources as important to them, this is not what the majority population considers to be of much value for them. The watershed moment was the ushering of the so-called 'democratic' era in South Africa. At the time, the African National Congress-led government did not call for the destruction of these colonially defined heritage resources as had happened in other countries following political transitions. Instead, new heritage resources were to be added to the landscape to increase the representation of South Africans whose heritage was previously excluded (see Marschall 2019). The call by the Rhodes Must Fall movement (origin 2015) for the transformation of South Africa's heritage landscape must thus be understood within this changing views of what is significant at any given moment. It would seem, therefore, that what the past generations may have been preserving for my generation is not appreciated by us as something representative of South African heritage. Thus, changing political landscape will always determine changes in what is seen as significant. To what extent, therefore, should we be spending a lot of funding to preserve heritage that future generations may not attach much value to? I am not asking this question to argue that heritage management is not significant. In contrast, I raise the issue to highlight that we cannot significantly spend on preserving heritage that is not accessible to the public. It is therefore vital that the current generation must be given access to heritage around them, rather than purely promoting a view of managing heritage resources for future generations. After all, the future generations might have other ideas about what heritage is significant to them.

Giving Current Generations a Greater Voice

As mentioned earlier, the general argument that is always used to support conservation efforts is that we are managing heritage for future generations. According to the Venice

Charter (ICOMOS 1964), 'It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their authenticity.' Not only must we hand these heritage resources to future generations, but we must also pay attention to the condition of such heritage at the unidentified 'point of handover'. This is what has generally been defined as authenticity and integrity. I will return to this point later.

The identity of such future generations is never defined with any certainty. Furthermore, we never stop and consider ourselves to be the future generations other earlier people have been referring to in the past. For instance, it has been over five decades that Lascaux in southern France was closed to the public because of concerns over its long-term conservation. I would argue that we are the third generation since Lascaux was closed in 1963. Which generation are we waiting for then? Are we not the future generation they had in mind when they closed the famous cave? If not, when will this future generation be born to reign over this significant international heritage? We never seem to stop and engage ourselves in a debate of this nature. Saying we are managing rock art for future generations has become a 'throw away' statement which we do not actively engage in an informed discussion about. It is simply accepted as an understood reality that we have an obligation to the future generations. But what about the current generations? What voice do they have? This whole concept of managing heritage resources for future generations needs to be debated because I consider it to be an unrealistic ideology that is deeply Eurocentric in its formulation. Heritage resources must first be of value to the living generation, otherwise I see no point in giving much power to a poorly defined future generation at the expense of those living today. As illustrated above, that generation may not even attach much value to the heritage we are preserving for them.

What say should a current generation have over how we actually make use of heritage resources? The reality is that they do not. I argue that this is because of a Eurocentric approach to heritage management. Within this European context, heritage is about 'fossilising the past' rather than having heritage as part of the daily lived experience. In the latter context, people interact with heritage in ways that may be deemed detrimental in the Western sense. This brings me to the issue of who are we managing rock art for. Considering that a large budget is still set aside annually to manage rock art sites around the world that are not accessible to the same public paying for their conservation through tax, who are we managing these rock art sites for? For a future generation? But which one? As indicated earlier, Lascaux was closed to the public in 1963. Yet, the French tax is still being used to continuously exclude French citizens and those from elsewhere in the management of the site only accessible to the few specialists who are considered as experts in the continued existence of the site.

Within this context of managing heritage resources for future generations, authenticity and integrity are important elements. We thus do not just hand over to them what we consider to be of value, these must be authentic and have integrity. But what does this mean in actual practice?

Dealing with Authenticity and Integrity

As a society, we attach a variety of values to heritage resources. The core of these values are defined by what has come to be known as authenticity and integrity. There are a number of factors that provide a context within which these values must be understood.

We generally consider these factors to be important in defining something from the 'past' as heritage. Such factors range from physical condition, monumentality, rarity, artistic merit, age, etc. (see Benjamin 1968; Joy 2002; Jones 2010; Latour and Lowe 2011, 283; Jeffrey et al. 2015; Duval et al. 2019). As mentioned by Holtorf (2013), ageing, patina, and material decay are important in ascribing value to heritage resources, thus giving the particular resource authenticity because of its 'pastness'. Authenticity is, therefore, a significant concept in the field of heritage management (Su 2018, 919). It is an important attribute in confirming heritage significance (Simon and Röhrs 2018). Even the World Heritage Convention (https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/) requires that before sites can be considered to be having universal significance, they must 'meet the test of authenticity in design, materials, workmanship, and setting' (see Jones 2010; Labadi 2010). I thus consider authenticity and integrity to be the 'playground of professionals and heritage managers' from which decisions over what is given heritage significance are made. It is these powerful agencies who define the approaches applied in heritage management (see Ndlovu 2016). Considering the balance of power, the main question therefore is to what extent can authenticity and integrity be challenged when ascribing significance to a particular heritage resource?

It would seem that the idea of authenticity and integrity is founded on the basis of credible and truthful representation. According to UNESCO, a site is deemed authentic if various attributes including: form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions, techniques and management systems, location and setting, language and other forms of intangible heritage, as well as spirit and feeling are 'credibly' expressed. Thus, what we see today and define as of heritage value must pass the significant test of credibility and truthfulness before the stamp of approval is granted. But who defines the scope of credibility and truthfulness? Once again, this speaks to the issue of power. Not all stakeholders, even in a consultative process, have the same power in decision-making. This view of credibility and truthfulness, institutionalised by legislative documents such as the Venice Charter of 1964 and the Nara Document of 1994, is also confirmed by Di Giuseppantonio Di Franco, Galeazzi, and Vassallo (2018). Inequality is also deeply engrained in the definition of authenticity and integrity (Ndlovu 2017). Authenticity and integrity are, therefore, a highly contingent notion which is informed by perceptions and emotions we attach to heritage resources. Considering that credibility and truthfulness is biased, determined by the voices with power, can authenticity and integrity ever be convincingly attached to a given heritage resource? I argue that it cannot (see also Jones 2009, 2010; Jones and Yarrow 2013). What we have come to define as authenticity and integrity is simply indicative of the dominant ideology given to us by those with power, defining heritage from Eurocentric viewpoints. Thus, and as Duval et al. (2019) show, the role of authenticity in the definition of heritage is not as evident as it might seem. There are many controversies attached to the understanding of these terms.

Besides the element of power, my view is that for any heritage resource to pass the test of authenticity and integrity, there must be a benchmark which should be used to judge credibility and truthfulness. In other words, there must be an original against which we define authenticity and integrity. In the context of rock art, what would such a benchmark be? The reality is that confirming authenticity and integrity in rock art is difficult, if not impossible. If we use the period at which a particular rock art site was discovered as a benchmark, then what about potential changes that may have happened between the

time when the art was made and its discovery? Famous rock art sites around the world have been closed off to preserve their authenticity and integrity. Yet, the reality is that even when these sites are kept away from the public, this has not delayed or even stopped them from travelling along their 'path to extinction'. These sites are still facing the threat against natural and human factors. Conservationists would like us to believe that they have slowed the decay process, but the reality is that this is an ongoing process. While this is happening, only the selected few get to appreciate these wonderful sites that have captured the attention of many rock art enthusiasts around the world. This leads me to a set of questions: Which authenticity and truthfulness is being managed here? For whom? For when?

What this discussion illustrates is that it is difficult to manage the physical authenticity and integrity of rock art sites. It could be argued, therefore, that it is not fair to have these sites closed from public access when their physical authenticity and integrity, even at the point of discovery, cannot be guaranteed. My argument would thus be that we cannot even provide any form of guarantee of authenticity and integrity to the future generations we often think of.

As an alternative approach of dealing with the demand for access to rock art sites, it has become a general trend that replicas are created to cater for the ever-growing thirst for rock art. Replicas are made 'in order to allow people to be able to continue to experience and appreciate their world heritage' (LaFortune 2018). According to Jones (2015), these second-hand cave experiences are by their very nature prejudicing the so-called primitive art: 'No one accepts a substitute for Rembrandt because his touch is considered unique, his genius singular.' Amongst the most known rock art replicas are Lascaux 2, Lascaux 4, Chauvet-Pont d'Arc Cave, and Cave of Altamira in Spain. Revisiting the concepts of authenticity and integrity, I would argue that in theory, these concepts are better suited when considering digital heritage practices. This view is informed by the understanding that in such instances, one has the existing benchmark against which to judge the replicated imagery. Whether the replication process is successfully done or not is another challenge. This comes down to implementation.

If authenticity and integrity can best be attained with replicas of rock art such as Lascaux, Altamira, and so on, how then can we continue to keep people away from enjoying access to these famous rock art sites? Should their permanent disappearance from mankind not happen when they can still be enjoyed by the general masses rather than the selected few? To engage in this discussion further, I now wish to consider the various rock art sites that have been closed from the public. I focus on three such locations in South Africa (uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park), France (Lascaux and Chauvet-Pont d'Arc Cave), and Spain (Altamira).

Ukhahlamba Drakensberg Park (uDP) Rock Art

South Africa is one of the most richly painted and engraved countries in Southern Africa. One of these painted regions is the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park (uDP), which also serves as a significant landmark between South Africa and Lesotho. Over 500 rock art sites have been recorded within the uDP. The significance of these sites and the natural factors led to the mountain range being inscribed onto the World Heritage List in 2000, as the 24th mixed cultural and natural heritage property (https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/985/).

Therefore, the area is attractive for its natural beauty and the many rock art images within shelters and rock overhangs. The authority responsible for the management of this World Heritage Site is Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNW, see http://www.kznwildlife.com/). Cultural resources within this World Heritage Site are managed by the provincial authority for heritage resources, KwaZulu-Natal Amafa and Research Institute (hereafter Amafa, see https://www.heritagekzn.co.za/).

Out of all the sites that have been recorded within uDP, only 22 are officially open to visitors. These sites were chosen by EKZNW and Amafa on the basis of a number of factors, ranging from their accessibility, the state of conservation of the paintings, and their carrying capacity (Duval and Smith 2013). Some of these opened sites (i.e. Good Hope Shelter), however, are no longer visited by tourists because of their state of preservation. This clearly illustrates that the decision to declare some sites as closed and others as open is not practical, especially when these sites are easily accessible and have been known for many years, especially by hikers.

Besides having this list of sites opened to the public, there have been three tourism developments aimed at improving tourist numbers to rock art sites (B. W. Smith 2006; Mazel 2008, 2009, 2012; Ndlovu 2009, 2016). These are Main Caves (1998, see http://ringingrocks.wits.ac.za/locations/public_rock_art_sites/kwazulu-natal/main_caves_i/), Kamberg Rock Art Centre (2002, see https://www.zulu.org.za/archive/kamberg-rock-art-centre-F58177), and Didima Rock Art Centre (2003, see https://didima.info/Accommodation/didima-camp-rock-art-centre.html). Even with these developments, rock art tourism in the uDP has not succeeded. Tourist numbers at rock art sites are still very low. According to Duval and Smith (2013), this is caused by a poor relationship between key stakeholders and lack of marketing efforts. As a result, the economic potential of uDP rock art has been very low (see Duval and Gauchon 2013, 139). This is evidenced by the long periods of having no visitors coming into some of these majestic rock art locations. 'At one of the finest sites in the UDP, Game Pass Shelter, there were 159 days in 2009 when no tourist visited the site' (Duval and Gauchon 2013, 148). A decade later, the situation has not changed much.

For the purposes of this paper, I want to specifically focus on the Didima Rock Art Centre. The centre was named after the most densely painted region within the uDP (Pager 1971; Mazel 2009). I recall debates we had over the name, with some of us arguing that it does not make sense to use Didima when visitors will not be allowed to visit the famous Didima Gorge. Not only the name, but the logo of Didima Camp at the Cathedral Peak Nature Reserve is an image of a panel from the famous Eland Cave which is located just outside the Didima Gorge.

Instead of allowing rock art enthusiasts who were prepared to take the long walk to the gorge, the decision was made to 'open' sites that are much closer to the Didima Rock Art Centre. None of these rock art sites are aesthetically comparable to those found within the Didima Gorge, nor do they even generate any form of excitement to visitors taken to them. So, what this means is that visitors are officially not allowed to visit some of the best preserved and aesthetically pleasing rock art sites within the uDP. That noted, I do know of a number of instances when I still managed the Didima Rock Art Centre where visitors were prepared to privately make deals with tour guides at Didima Camp to take them to the Didima Gorge at whatever cost. These tourists were very knowledgeable of rock art and had read about it widely. Even though rock art sites in the uDP cannot be locked away in the same way as the French caves, the decision not to allow tourists to visit some of the

best rock art sites in the uDP makes one wonder what purpose is served by the decision to 'close' these aesthetically pleasing rock art sites from the public.

Altamira

This Palaeolithic-era cave, discovered in 1868, was initially considered inauthentic by researchers (see Jones and Elliott 2019). It was only in 1902 that a French-led study confirmed its prehistoric origins. The Cave has since been nicknamed the 'Sistine Chapel of European Rock Art' because of its impressive large paintings, use of shapes, and three-dimensional effects (Dans and González 2018). Altamira, which was first opened for public visitation in 1917, was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985. Cultural heritage is recognised as one of the most significant and fastest growing components of tourism in the twenty-first century (Timothy and Boyd 2006). When a site is listed as a WHS, its international visibility is heightened, becoming a determining factor for the increased number of visitors and a greater touristic appeal of the area (Drost 1996). The Altamira cave has been closed and reopened on various occasions during the last four decades.

Over time, Altamira became a famous destination. In the early 1970s, the site was attracting about 174,000 visitors a year. This high number of visitors led to scientists expressing significant concerns because of the body heat and expelled breath of visitors which collectively raised the CO2 inside the cave. As a reaction against these concerns, the cave was closed for five years between 1977 and 1982. When the site was reopened in 1982, the number of visitors allowed was significantly decreased from over 170,000 a decade earlier to only 11,300 visitors per year. This was a significant drop to preserve the authenticity and integrity of the site. As a result of this decision to significantly drop the number of visitors allowed to the site annually, tourists had to wait for up to three years to get an opportunity to visit the site.

Despite these conservative measures, the whole debate on whether the site should be opened or closed to the public has never been resolved and is thus still ongoing. This led to the second temporary closure of the cave in 2002. This decision was influenced by the appearance of green mould on the paintings, similar to that found in the prehistoric Lascaux Cave in France. This damage was attributed to body heat, artificial lighting, and humidity fluctuations in the cave due to the presence of visitors. A year before this second closure, in 2001, the Altamira Complex was officially opened to the public. The Altamira Complex is a set of heritage assets and institutions, comprising the National Museum, Altamira Research Centre (see http://www.culturaydeporte.gob.es/mnaltamira/home.html), the original painted Cave, and the Neocueva (Neo-cave). The latter is 'a precise, scientifically accurate three-dimensional reproduction of the original cave' (Danz and Gonzalez 2018, 180).

The Altamira complex currently attracts an average of 250,000 visitors a year (Dans and González 2018; see also Greffe 2004). The construction of this complex, therefore, allowed the region to increase the number of visitors once again. This means that the tourism market has yet again been allowed to flourish even with limited access to the cave which was temporarily closed again to the public in 2012. This closure was out of concern for the impact visitors were having on the prehistoric paintings in the cave. The Altamira Cave was reopened in 2014 under a strict regime of controlled experimental visits, which

means general members of the public are not allowed to visit the significant site. This leaves the famous cave accessible only to a privileged few, in the name of managing it for future generations.

Lascaux

This famous cave is located near the village of Montignac, Dordogne, in southwestern France. It was discovered on 12 September 1940 when a dog named Robot (owned by Marcel Ravidat) went astray and 'fell' into the cave (Leroi-Gourhan 1982; Delluc and Delluc 1984; Mauriac 2011; Geneste and Mauriac 2014). This incidence led four teenagers (Marcel Ravidat, Jacques Marsal, Georges Agnel, and Simon Coencas) to the entrance of the cave a few days later. The authenticity of Lascaux as a site of historical significance was confirmed by the Abbe Henri Breuil, accompanied by Denis Peyrony, Jean Bouyssonie, and Dr Cheynier, on 21 September 1940. Since its discovery, the many depictions painted at Lascaux have been recorded and grouped into various scenes that have come to be known as the Hall of the Bulls, the Passageway, the Shaft, the Nave, the Apse, and the Chamber of Felines. In total, there are about 6000 motifs represented in the cave. These are comprised of animals, human figures, and abstract signs.

It took eight years before the cave could be officially opened for public visitation, and this first occurred on 14 July 1948. Seven years later, the first evidence of damage from the 1200 visitors per day was noticed. This high number of daily visitors began badly damaging the paintings because of carbon dioxide, heat, humidity, and other contaminants. The site was thus closed to the public to prevent it from further decay. Since 1963, over five decades later, the site has remained closed, even after the restoration of the paintings to their original state and the introduction of a daily monitoring system (Bahn 2008). This closure, on 20 March 1963, was ordered by the then Minister of Cultural Affairs, André Malraux. The site was inscribed onto the World Heritage List in 1979 (https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/85/).

About two decades after the decision to close the cave, Lascaux II was created about 200 metres away from the original cave. This project, which began in the early 1970s, was led by the former owner of the famous site, M. de la Rochefoucauld. While Lascaux II has been visited by thousands over the years, this project was never finished because of financial difficulties. Even though the Lascaux II replica was based on two scenes (Great Hall of the Bulls and the Painted Gallery), it represented about 80% of the painted images from Lascaux (Delluc and Delluc 1984; Leresche 2019). Beyond Lascaux II, there have been other replicas of the famous Lascaux produced over the years. For instance, Lascaux III is an international travelling exhibition launched in 2012. It has travelled to various parts of the world, to help expose a greater number of people to this famous Lascaux cave. Five replicas from the Nave and the Shaft are in use in this world famous 'mobile museum'. Since December 2016, visitors can now visit yet another location (Lascaux IV) which represents the most compete replica of Lascaux (James 2017; Leresche 2019). Besides Lascaux II, the international travelling exhibition of Lascaux III, and the technologically advanced Lascaux IV, tourists can also visit other locations within the Dordogne region to learn more about the famous Lascaux imagery. For instance, visitors can see a greater range of paintings from Lascaux at the Centre of Prehistoric Art and Le Parc du Thot. All

these locations speak of a very strong Lascaux brand which has been maximally taken advantage of as tourism continues to flourish within Dordogne.

Even though Lascaux is no longer accessible to the greater population in the guise of protecting it for future generations, further damage is still occurring. This is a result of interventions made by authorities to conserve the site. For instance, the installation of a new air conditioning system in 2001 which was meant to regulate temperature and humidity led to further challenges: an infestation of Fusarium solani, a white mould, began spreading rapidly across the cave ceiling and walls (Dupont et al. 2007). Another fungus has been spreading, resulting in grey and black blemishes inside the cave. This fungal problem is ongoing and has led to the establishment of an International Scientific Committee for Lascaux (Bastian, Alabouvette, and Saiz-Jimenez 2009). As these paintings are exposed to ongoing threats, visitors cannot appreciate imagery from this site closed to the public over five decades ago.

Chauvet-pont-d'arc Cave

The Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave, which is 'home' to some of the best preserved Palaeolithic rock art in Europe, is located in southern France, near Vallon-Pont-d'Arc (Chauvet, Brunel Deschamps, and Hillaire 1996). Besides these well-preserved paintings, other traces of human evidence and fossilised remains, prints, and markings from different animals, some of which have since become extinct, were uncovered. This rock art site, with paintings dated between 30,000 and 33,000 years ago, was discovered on 18 December 1994 by three speleologists Eliette Brunel-Deschamps, Christian Hillaire, and Jean-Marie Chauvet (Geneste and Bardisa 2014). The name of the cave was defined by a controversy that lasted over many years.

Research on the Chauvet Cave Rock Art began in 1998, under the leadership of Jean Clottes. Paintings inside the cave, which was inscribed onto the World Heritage List in 2014 (see Duval and Gauchon 2013; https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1426/), include at least 13 animal species. These range from horses, aurochs, mammoths, cave lions, bears, etc. (Duval et al. 2019). What is exceptional about this cave is that it largely contains animals that are either rarely or never depicted elsewhere. In particular, the cave depictions of predatory animals such as lions, panthers, bears, owls, rhinos, and hyenas. There are only two human figures (thought to be representing a female figure and a male sorcerer), both found at the very end of the farthest gallery within the cave.

These paintings, in their original geographical setting, have never been enjoyed by the general public. Learning from the tragic destruction of the Altamira and Lascaux caves as a result of human-induced damage, the Chauvet cave was never opened to the public since its discovery (Amirou 2000, 100). As shown earlier, Altamira and Lascaux caves, had previously been opened for public visitation, leading to significant damage. Even though these famous rock art sites are now closed to the public, destruction of Lascaux rock art is still taking place long after the site was closed to the public on 20 March 1963.

Following the same trend implemented at Altamira and Lascaux caves, the 'unequalled' replica of Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave was opened to the general public on 25 April 2015. This replica is located two kilometres away from the actual cave (Duval et al. 2019). The

construction of this replica, which took many years to complete, has since allowed the public to 'appreciate' these paintings from Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc Cave.

Discussion

There are two points I wish to explore here. First, the conceptualisation of heritage in Eurocentric and African approaches. Second, consideration of access to heritage sites as a human right.

Conceptualisation of Heritage

The concept of heritage in Africa and the West is different. I would argue that in the African context, what some may define as heritage resources are generally interacted with for the duration of their significance. Such interaction does not necessarily put emphasis on the physical appearance but on the intangible relevance of the heritage resource in question (see Ndlovu 2009). When the given heritage resource is no longer valuable, it is allowed to degenerate. This is not the same as in a European context, where the general emphasis is on the physical appearance of the heritage resource in question (Ndlovu 2009). In the context of rock art, I would argue that the intangible aspects are defined by the spiritual potency that was managed by the performance of ritual ceremonies at the sites (see Lewis-Williams 1981). While these ritual activities are no longer descriptive of European rock art, they are still actively being undertaken in parts of Africa (Ndlovu 2009). In the former, rock art is fossilised, with the main aim being to preserve it at all costs. Even if it means allowing no one at these sites. Fossilisation requires that we keep 'things intact', by safeguarding them for future generations. Yet, they still get destroyed even behind the steel gates and air-controlled atmospheres we have created inside these caves. It has been much easier, considering that rock art was largely made in caves, to limit or prevent access to European rock art sites and thus promote this fossilisation approach. For the latter, rock art is found in boulders, rock overhangs, and shelters which are not easily locked away from the public. As a result, the fossilisation of rock art as a conservation method has failed.

Human Rights in Heritage Studies

Previously, heritage professionals generally considered the protection of cultural heritage as 'either a technical or a management matter – a matter of applying the best or latest scientific solution or the appropriate management strategy to preserve or restore an artefact, monument or site' (Logan 2008, 439). Even then, the political dimension has always defined heritage management because heritage is always constructed to benefit some people while affecting others negatively (see also Logan 2007).

The concepts of cultural diversity, cultural heritage, and human rights have often been studied separately from one another. As Logan (2012) says, 'This has been a limited approach given that the concepts developed alongside each other and are inextricably linked.' In addition, Meskell (2010) has argued that 'UNESCO's numerous conventions concerning heritage, whether tangible, intangible, culturally diverse or otherwise, do not constitute a coherent statement on human rights in my view.' To what extent is this

responsible for the very few sites inscribed on the basis of their value in preserving the rights of humanity? Amongst the few are Robben Island (link with Nelson Mandela and the fight against apartheid), Goree Island in Senegal (link with slavery). Yet, there are no sites commemorating the end of colonialism and very few related to genocides and massacres (i.e. Auschwitz-Birkenau and Hiroshima's Genbaku Dome). It would seem, therefore, that highly emotive sites are generally not inscribed onto the World Heritage List, with the majority representative of natural and cultural beauty. Noting this deficiency, I wish to consider the relevance of universal human rights in the context of managing cultural heritage. The main question here is: should access and enjoyment of cultural heritage be fundamentally considered as a cultural right that is currently missing in heritage circles? I believe so.

According to Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/), 'everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.' To ensure the effective implementation of this legal prescript, UNESCO has four ways to propose access to and participation in culture. These are (i) countering the destruction of cultural heritage, (ii) working with the International Criminal Court, (iii) supporting artistic freedom, and (iv) fostering equal participation and access to heritage.

When human rights are discussed in the context of cultural heritage, references are generally made to conflicts during which heritage resources are destroyed (see Vrdoljak 2014). This has led to UNESCO partnering with security and humanitarian organisations to deal with the military threat on heritage sites. Through such efforts, UNESCO and the International Criminal Court collaborated to successfully convict Ahmed Al-Faqi Al-Mahdi for the role he had in the destruction of the mausoleums of Timbuktu (Casaly 2016; Wierczyńska and Jakubowski 2017). I will develop this further in the context of rock art sites (uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, Altamira, Lascaux, and Chauvet) discussed above.

In the case of South Africa's uDP, a large number of aesthetically pleasing rock art sites are 'closed' to the public. Similarly, Altamira Cave, Lascaux, and Chauvet are decorated with beautiful rock art, yet they are all closed off and the public cannot access them. This is all in the name of preserving these paintings and engravings from human and natural factors. Such a stringent decision, some have argued, is informed by lessons from the damage that occurred in the past when some of these sites were opened for public visits. While these sites are being preserved, the question is for who are such activities undertaken? The general argument would be these activities are undertaken for future generations. Using the case study of Lascaux, it has been five decades since the site was closed to the public. In my view, this represents three generations since the decision was made. Which generation, therefore, are we managing this historically important rock art site? The same question would apply to other rock art sites that are closed to the public. It is important to consider here that all these rock art sites have been recorded over the years, based on which some of the replicas have been made. How is destroying sites through conservation efforts different from blocking people from accessing those sites? Indeed, we may never be able to recreate the rock art in their original geographical setting, yet, this and managing the art for future generations should not be used to 'block' access to these amazingly attractive rock art panels. Replicas do not necessarily provide the same experience as visiting an original site.

Of an even greater concern is the fact that some rock art sites, while still open to the public, are accepting less and less people per day. It could be, therefore, that these rock art sites suffer the same fate as those that have been closed to the public. For example, only 50 people can buy tickets to access Font-de-Gaume in the south of France. Each person must be at the site to receive a ticket, as no visitor could purchase on behalf of someone else. The number of tickets that can be sold daily has been dropping over the years. It is also no longer possible to purchase tickets online. There is a huge demand for tickets to access this rock art site because it is the location in the region where one can see polychrome paintings. One could argue, therefore, that it is the best thing after Lascaux. More importantly, visitors are able to access a real cave, and not a replica, to see such polychrome paintings. Is it a matter of time before it is also completely closed to the public to preserve it for future generations?

Conclusion

Rock art is one of the heritage resources that have attracted much attention from tourists over the years. These images have a significant appeal, besides the religious significance that has now been attached to them. Yet, and as I have illustrated in this paper, the more famous rock art sites become, the greater is the threat that they will be closed to the public. This is because of efforts by conservation authorities to safeguard the authenticity and integrity of such internally acclaimed rock art sites. Even though such efforts are undertaken under the guise of preserving images for future generations, the identity of such is never identified. Besides, these rock art sites are still getting damaged by natural factors as well as human-induced efforts that are meant to preserve them. My view, therefore, is that while we still have these rock art sites at our disposal, the public should be allowed access to them under controlled procedures. This is not the same as the current approach which is to completely close access to the public. After all, I cannot promote the use of government funds gathered through taxes and other means to prevent people from accessing valuable heritage sites. This is all done in the name of preserving valuable rock art for the unidentified future generations. In the process, authenticity and integrity are safeguarded. However, as we have seen with other heritage resources, what past generations have bequeathed to us is not necessarily that which we take pride in. Based on the current approach of preventing public access to some of the highly known rock art sites, one could argue that rock art is being managed only for the few who have the privilege of accessing these rock art sites for conservation purposes.

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