

DE **BIAS**

Detecting and Cur(at)ing Harmful Language in Cultural Heritage Collections



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Policy Models

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DE-BIAS and the EU framework

How to integrate DE-BIAS' values with European cultural policies

- Radical change of vision in Europe during the past decades
- Supported by official documents produced by different organisations and institutions such as declarations and charters on the one hand by an evolution, a continuous change of European cultural policies on the other hand
- Connected to a change of paradigm in terms of how we see culture and cultural heritage



Culture and cultural heritage

A change of paradigm

- In the past, tangible as well as intangible cultural heritage seen as something static and binary based on **opposites** and **juxtapositions**
- Cultural heritage collections often created by basing the choice of object to be exposed and how to expose it on this idea of opposites
 - Between mainly us Europeans and others, the rest of the world
 - Or between objects and contexts which were geographically closer to us and those which were considered too far away, too distant, again in a vision of otherness
- Nowadays, culture and cultural heritage are intended as something processual, changing according to the change of time and society
- Not binary anymore but, on the contrary, intended to be plural



Three decisive documents

The Declaration of Human Rights

- Published in 1947
- Its **article 27** states that everybody has the right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community
- **“Freely”** does not mean for free but means freely not only in economic terms but mainly in cultural terms
- This opens up quite a big window on the topic of access and participation



Three decisive documents

The Faro Convention

- Published by the Council of Europe in 2005
- States that the value associated to cultural heritage is not only the value per se, stated by the community of experts, but also the value attributed to cultural heritage by **local communities**
- Speaks not only of the right of the communities to state and underline different kinds of values, different voices, different perspectives, but also the need for local communities to take care of their own cultural heritage



Three decisive documents

European Agenda for Culture

- Published by the Commission in 2018
- Covers various important dimensions of culture and cultural heritage in additions to its economic and political dimensions
- States the importance of the **social dimension**
- Underlines that culture and cultural heritage can foster a new vision of Europe, new opportunities for all EU citizens to take part in cultural activities and to promote this sense of identity as European citizens



In parallel: Evolution of policy models

The Excellence model

- Starting point of all the other models
- Stems from the idea of a dominant elite which hands down culture to other members of the society following a very vertical path of transmission of knowledge
- Participation is very limited in this case
- Nonetheless, the model is still currently applied



In parallel: Evolution of policy models

The Access development model

- Developed in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s
- Focusses on the concept of **democratisation of culture**
- Aims at extending participation and access to culture promoted by cultural heritage institutions for very different groups of society
- Strongly embedded in cultural institutions' policies in Europe today but still presents one of its main weaknesses
 - Unidirectional nature
 - Sort of a missionary impulse at the basis of the idea that cultural institutions can provide access to a variety of groups within the society



In parallel: Evolution of policy models

The Socio-economic development model

- Developed in Europe during the 1980s and 1990s
- Based on the assumption that culture/cultural heritage can foster economic and social growth by intervening in **cultural regeneration processes**
- Seen, e.g., in the European programme of the **European Capital of Culture** and the use of culture and the arts in urban regeneration processes
- Main limit: often the most important aspects are not related to culture or cultural heritage but to social and economic objectives
 - Culture used as an instrumental tool to achieve other objectives and aims
- Still embedded into the idea of a capitalistic society based on **the idea of competition** but not considering contemporary movements such as the growth movement



In parallel: Evolution of policy models

The Cultural inclusion or democracy model

- Developed at the time of the Faro Convention
- Emphasis on the **engagement of individuals and communities** not only as audience but as actors and active stakeholders and creators of culture
- Very strongly related to the idea of legitimising people to express new visions, new ideas, new paradigms connected to cultural heritage and to attribute new values to this heritage at large as a body which includes both tangible and intangible assets



Application in the DE-BIAS project

- Philosophy at the basis of the DE-BIAS project directly linked to the cultural inclusion or democracy model: a new vision, a new understanding, a new knowledge about the words which describe cultural heritage collections
- Based on the idea that local communities or communities deeply rooted in a specific kind of heritage can detect biased terms, explore and propose new interpretations of these terms and of the description of the collections in a broader sense
- These communities are legitimised to do that because they are the main stakeholders of their own cultural heritage



Application in the DE-BIAS project

- Importance of **transferring competence and knowledge** to the people who work in cultural institutions
 - An approach based on the cultural inclusion or democracy model cannot happen if the institutions are not aware of the need to legitimise people and communities and if they do not have the tools to start these processes
 - Training and capacity building therefore a very important aspect to ensure that this model can be adopted
- Legitimation of local communities and the possibility for them to create new meanings, new visions, new points of view have to be paired with a strong capacity building process, which is reflected by the DE-BIAS project's additional focus on capacity building activities





Website

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