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ARTICLE

The thrive for a new heritage ethos in Peru?: The Qhapaq Ñan's policymaking and the ethics of community participation

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Abstract

This article examines the Qhapaq Ñan Project in Peru and its unprecedented mobilization of heritage policymaking to foster a participatory approach. The World Heritage listing of the *Qhapaq Ñan*, or Inca road system, catalyzed a new ethos in the Peruvian cultural heritage sector, reflected in a cohesive set of values and practices centered on community participation. This study analyzes the crafting of a participatory approach within Peruvian national heritage regulations despite legal, technical, and ideological constraints, following the rationales and processes that challenged traditional material-centered paradigms. It focuses on how heritage specialists reimagined their ethical commitments in conceptualizing and implementing this framework. It further demonstrates how participatory practices intersect with official regulations and informal practices within pre-existing technical and normative structures, integrating elements such as benefits, consultation, and collaboration. Therefore, the adoption of the Qhapaq Ñan's participatory approach is argued not merely as a passive compliance with intergovernmental policy recommendations but as an active assertion of ethical perspectives and practices by heritage specialists.

Keywords: policymaking; community participation; archaeological heritage practice; ethics; Qhapaq Ñan; Peru

Introduction: Policymaking in the arena of heritage and community participation

Heritage policymaking arenas reveal the intrinsic tensions arising from the juxtaposition of competing ethics and practical feasibility. This paper delves into the construction of a participatory approach within the public policy sphere of the Qhapaq Ñan Project in Peru. It centers on the ethical premises guiding heritage specialists in both the conceptualization and practical execution of this framework. The *Qhapaq Ñan*, the Andean pre-colonial system of roads dating back to the rule of the Incas in the 15th and 16th centuries,[1] attained recognition as a Peruvian National Cultural Heritage in the early 2000s. Subsequently, it garnered an inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2014 as a transnational

[1] *Qhapaq Ñan* is a Quechua term that stands for "great road," "main road," or "royal road," specifically from the language's variant in the Cusco region. Other regions, however, may use a different native language term for the same meaning: *Inca naani* (Quechua variant from Ancash) and *Inca thaki* (Aymara). The term Qhapaq Ñan was chosen because of the political and symbolic connotation of the native language from Cusco, the capital city of the Inca Empire.

property, uniting five Andean countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador). Against the backdrop of unprecedented leadership from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and its technocratic mobilization, participatory approaches emerged as a pivotal recommendation for engaging state parties in the development of the nomination dossier and management system.[2]

Over the past two decades, a community participation paradigm has increasingly permeated dominant material-oriented heritage policies worldwide.[3] Ideals of including the voices of local communities have not only attracted substantial scholarly attention but have also become a fundamental ethical concern within governance frameworks, aiming to address conflicts of rights, exclusion, and inequalities, often resulting from asymmetrical power dynamics in heritage preservation.[4] Such an effervescence on community participation is intersected by two waves of criticism: one at the core of its origin and positioning, and another that encompasses current debates in response to its implementation.

At first, the shift towards community participation is symptomatic of the rise of critical heritage scholarship.[5] For over two decades, critical scholars have exposed the hegemonic forces behind uses of the past that perpetuate unequal and exclusionary relationships towards non-specialized, local, or Indigenous groups. Moreover, discussions from the Global South have similarly offered strong critiques of heritagization, rooted in decolonial theory,[6]revealing the lingering effects of colonial domination, ideologies, and structures that alienate Indigenous heritage and contemporary communities.

It is not unusual for policy ideals to diverge from actual outcomes. As the global heritage discourse increasingly emphasizes an *imperative* of participatory approaches,[7] policymaking across diverse contexts has revealed nuanced and divergent political-economic consequences, contingent upon the varied interpretations and adaptations of "participation" into heritage regimes and localized interventions.[8] The Peruvian state's experience in creating a participatory policy within the context of the UNESCO World Heritage listing of the *Qhapaq Ñan* provides a compelling case study illustrating this complexity, leading to the second wave.

In recent years, a discernible surge in critical scholarship has expressed profound concerns about the instrumentalization of community participation by heritage policies. This is particularly prevalent given the alleged failure of the *participatory paradigm* to subvert in practice the power relations inherent to heritage, often exacerbating the marginalization of socio-economically disadvantaged and subaltern local communities.[9] The participatory policy implemented by the Qhapaq Ñan Project in Peru has sparked polarized debates within the academic fields of archaeology and heritage studies. Critical views asserted the limited or absent inclusion and consultation of local populations within the Qhapaq Ñan's policy, particularly in the context of Andean rural areas.[10] This critical perspective fueled intense debates during the formative years of the heritagization of the Qhapaq Ñan. Conversely, representatives of the Qhapaq Ñan Project in Peru, including public officers and researchers, discussed their perspectives encompassing the conceptualization, implementation, short-term outcomes, and perceived challenges of the participatory policy.[11] While such accounts

[2] Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo 2006, Rendon 2017, Sanz 2007.

[3] Adell et al. 2015, Alexandrino 2023, Castillo 2019, Chirikure et al. 2008, Cortéz-Vásquez et al. 2017, Human 2015, Sánchez-Carretero et al. 2019, Lähdesmäki et al. 2020, Labrador and Silberman 2018, Rodenberg et al. 2023.

[4] Cortéz-Vásquez et al. 2017, Ripp and Rodwell 2017, Sokka et al. 2021.

[5] Harrison, 2010, Smith 2006, Waterton and Smith 2010, Winter 2013.

[6] Curtoni and Chaparro 2007, Curtoni 2010, Londoño 2021, Orlandi 2022.

[7] Sánchez-Carretero et al. 2019.

[8] Chirikure et al. 2008, Human 2015, Di Giovine 2015.

[9] González et al. 2018, Cortés-Vásquez et al. 2017, Adell et al. 2015, Pastor-Pérez and Colomer 2024.

[10] Gnecco 2017, Jallade 2011, Rendón 2017.

[11] Ruiz 2018, Chuquipoma 2015, Chirinos and Borba, 2015, Marcone and Ruiz 2014, Marcone 2019, Chirinos et al. 2020.

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may be perceived as self-congratulatory policy discourses, they illuminated underlying tensions within policymaking, which are immanent to human relations and power dynamics within bureaucratic structures.

This article contributes to the ongoing debate by examining an aspect hitherto unexplored: the influence of heritage specialists' ethical concerns on the conceptualization and implementation of the participatory policy within the Qhapaq Ñan Project in Peru. It builds upon the premise that research on heritage institutions offers invaluable insights into heritage politics, ethics, and practice, notwithstanding their common portrayal as objects of criticism or as a monolithic group of experts operating within an authorized discourse.[12] While maintaining a critical perspective, this study traces how inclusive views towards community engagement enter traditional material-centered heritage paradigms under the aegis of a participatory policy. It does so by examining the factors, processes, and rationales involved in crafting a participatory approach within a national heritage regime originally constrained by legal, technical, and ideological dimensions.

The study adopted a qualitative methodology based on archival research, semi-structured interviews, and informal conversations to investigate both the contextualized policymaking process and the perspectives of heritage specialists involved in the Qhapaq Ñan Project – Sede Nacional,[13] particularly in projects and initiatives related to the World Heritage listing. These specialists either worked at or had prior experience with the technical secretariat based in the headquarters of the Ministry of Culture in Lima (former National Institute of Culture [INC]) or any of the five site-based or five segment-based projects in the regions of Ancash, Junin, Huanuco, Piura, and Puno.[14] Sixteen specialists were interviewed from a pool of over a hundred contracted by the program's National Bureau, representing various levels and functions of direction, coordination, administration, and research.

The selection focused on those holding decision-making roles, targeting the program's General Coordination, coordinators of internal units, directors of localized site-based or segment-based projects, and sociocultural specialists integrated into these project boards. The majority of the specialists were archaeologists, with the exception of 25 per cent who were from the fields of anthropology and cultural management.

Drawing upon the anthropology of bureaucracy, particularly the insights of Bierschenk and de Sardan[15] regarding the interplay between official regulations and informal practices, this research highlights the agency of specialists and explores how they adapted to a participatory heritage policy that required reconciling their ethical concerns with practical limitations within the existing legal and technical framework. This adaptation involved reimagining ethical commitments throughout the processes of codifying, conceptualizing, and implementing the participatory approach within the Peruvian heritage regime. The forms and shades of community participation reflect the "informal" practices, as they escape from categories typified in the Peruvian heritage legislation, following instead a blend of specialists' advocacies and interpretation of general management guidelines. To bring these actions to fruition, not only were guidelines necessary but they were needed to put them into practice and required a degree of self-driven initiative to implement them.

[12] Jones and Yarrow 2022.

[13] In administrative terms, the program is governed by two executive units in the regions of Lima and Cusco, the current Peruvian capital and ancient capital of the Incas respectively. The executive unit at Lima overlooked the management of all regions, while Cusco's executive unit exclusively dealt with its own jurisdictional matters as the density and demands of local heritage management are significantly higher than in other regions

[14] Interviews were conducted between March 2021 and July 2022.

[15] Bierschenk and de Sardan 2021.

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The study reveals that participatory practices predominantly manifested within pre-existing technical and normative structures, albeit with the integration of elements such as benefits, consultation, and collaboration. Notably, while heritage education initiatives were acknowledged as a form of participation, their omission from this analysis is due to their limited capacity to engage local communities in decision-making processes. Consequently, it argues against the portrayal of policymaking as a passive assimilation of intergovernmental policy recommendations; rather, it affirms that the Qhapaq Ñan's participatory approach took root as part of an active assertion of ethical viewpoints and practices by heritage specialists. This active engagement explains the surge of a new ethos within the Peruvian cultural heritage sector.

The Qhapaq Ñan: A product of heritage regimes in the new millennium

An ethics of community participation in the Peruvian heritage regime unfolded against the backdrop of the Qhapaq Ñan policy, the country's most ambitious national heritagization program. By the 2010s, this met the culture sector's gradual adoption of inclusive approaches to public archaeological heritage management, following some community-based programs in Lima city and along the north coast.[16] Cultural heritage policies historically privileged the pre-colonial past—namely, all history prior to the Spanish conquest in 1532—to establish an officially imprinted national identity. In 1982, the INC created the motto: "Peru, archaeological country".[17]

Archaeological heritage protection falls within the competences of the executive government agency responsible for national cultural heritage, INC (1970–2010) or the Ministry of Culture (MINCUL) 2011–present. Nevertheless, despite sustained efforts over decades, this duty often surpassed the public sector's realistic capacities to fully address the density of pre-colonial remains nationwide. Yet, two critical factors supported the viability of heritage programs. To cope with the intensification of development agendas in the second half of the twentieth century, heritage conservation programs in regions deemed strategic for cultural tourism (for example, the southern regions of Cusco and Puno) concentrated technical or financial assistance from international, and sometimes public intersectoral, cooperation programs.[18] In addition, the accession of Peru as a state party to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention in 1981 stands as a pivotal cornerstone in assessing the trajectory of Peruvian heritage conservation. Subsequent listings of archaeological monuments, starting with Machu Picchu, have not only solidified institutionalized technical norms but have also catalyzed the cultivation of a robust conservation-for-development ethos.[19] Right before the new millennium, heritage policies were fundamentally invested in monumental conservation and site-based management, until political and economic agendas redefined heritagization on a larger scale.

The emergence of a "heritage" in the scale and shape of the Qhapaq Ñan ties up to a particular climate in Peruvian politics at the dawn of the new millennium. By the end of 2000, the Peruvian state entered into a transitional government to restore its democratic regime and stability after two decades of social, political, and economic unrest derived from the context of the internal armed conflict (1980–2000).[20] Post-conflict episodes, as reiteratively shown by the Republican history of Peru, tend to motivate the retrieval of

[16] Alexandrino 2023b, Pozzi-Escot 2023, Delgado 2023.
[17] Instituto Nacional de Cultura (INC) 1982.
[18] Asensio and Pérez-Galán 2012, Rice 2018.
[19] Asensio and Pérez-Galán 2012, Herrera 2016, Rice 2018.
[20] Contreras and Cueto 2013.

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the pre-colonial past in the need to produce unifying national narratives.[21] The Incas have a special place in national and regional imagination, especially because of regular inputs from an archaeological production traditionally emphasizing monumental landscapes and architectural forms.[22] Infused with splendor, uncanny symbolism, and exotism, the remains of the Incas shore up early heritage conservation.[23] By contrast, other types of pre-colonial remains like the network of roads harnessed by the Inca had an intermittent scholarly attention as an expression of the grandeur of Inca politics.[24]

The network of roads, whose extension is estimated at 40,000 km, traverses the Andean Mountain chain and covers the territories of the modern states of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru: the latter concentrating almost 63 per cent of the total extension.[25] The roads interconnected the most important sacred landscapes, political and ceremonial centers, administrative settlements or facilities, and towns while animating the life of the *Tahuantinsuyu* territory in transversal and longitudinal directions. As an expression of organic planning and strategic centralist control, the network of roads converged at the center of control of the Inca polity: the city of Cusco.

Since the colonial era from the sixteenth century onwards, these material testimonies experienced transformative processes, sometimes meaning changes in logics of quotidian uses and transit, overlapping, or disappearing amidst the growth of modern transportation infrastructure. The functionality of pre-colonial roads in Andean rural contexts did not disappear at all since communities are active users following ancestral practices, ritual life, and agrarian activities.[26] Away from local foci, the historical value of roads also persisted over time in the minds and memories of intellectual groups: they rapidly found a place in contemporary political and scholarly circles to be reimagined as the Great Inca Road or the "Qhapaq Ñan" (Quechua for Great Road or Main Road). A system of roads rooted in the pre-colonial past not only spearheaded a novel concept of national heritage but, most importantly, provided the symbols of national unification and integration in a critical context. The successful ascent of this "heritage germ" in public policy arenas was significant because of the participation of two cultural and political authorities respectively: Peruvian archaeologist Luis Guillermo Lumbreras, by then director of the INC, and *cusqueño* transitional president, Valentin Paniagua.[27]

The Peruvian government founded the Qhapaq Ñan Project in 2001, as an unprecedented large-scale program geared towards "*research, identification, recording, conservation and enhancement of the network of roads existent in the Inca Empire within the national territory.*"[28] The prioritization of enhancement, as articulated in official documentation, underscored a strategic alignment with tourism-driven economic development objectives, particularly through the establishment of cultural tourism routes.[29] However, beyond its economic implications, the establishment of a program exclusively dedicated to the protection and conservation of the Qhapaq Ñan also reflects broader ethical imperatives inherent to the Peruvian archaeological practice. Archaeology has long served as a state's authorized steward of pre-colonial remains.[30] As archaeology assumed an increasingly prominent role within the Peruvian public heritage policy, regulatory frameworks were meticulously

[21] Seki 2010, Uribe 2023.
[22] Jallade 2011, Silverman 2002, Cox 2020.
[23] Rice 2018, Marcone 2011.
[24] Hyslop 1992, Raimondi 1876, Regal 1936.
[25] Lumbreras 2005.
[26] Martinez 2010, 51.
[27] Lumbreras et al. 2020, 11.
[28] Ministry of Education 2001a.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Asensio 2018.

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crafted to ensure the integrity of pre-colonial sites.[31] Central to these ethical considerations is the imperative to mitigate the ongoing threats of destruction, whether real, potential, or merely anticipated, thereby underscoring a commitment to material conservation in the interest of posterity.[32]

Beyond curating the past for present-day ideological or socioeconomic purposes, archaeological heritage management involves a series of highly demanding and costly technical procedures. Despite its large scale, the Qhapaq Ñan Project benefited from alleged favorable conditions that minimize common risks to policy continuity: Its legal foundational documents secured funding, allocating 30 per cent of Machu Picchu's revenue to the Qhapaq Ñan Project.[33] Although the World Heritage nomination received permanent institutional support, the program in general had intermittent administrative and budgetary autonomy and stability to foster research and conservation programs.

Because the Qhapaq Ñan Project was conceived as a state-led program to preserve an extensive archaeological heritage, its nature is therefore top-down. It initially prioritized archaeological heritage technical requirements in terms of material identification, recording, inventory, declaring, protection, conservation, and enhancement.[34] In the early stages of the project, four macro-regions North, Center, Center-South, and South were defined to systematize and optimize mandates on survey, recording, and inventory,[35] therefore leaving aside everyday actors.

The protection of archaeological heritage recourses to the national heritage legislation, yet legal regulations alone are not automatically effective in reality: archaeological remains must first be formally turned into properties of the Peruvian state after a long and meticulous process. The craft of the Qhapaq Ñan's heritage protection was beyond kilometers of roads: it also involved several associated archaeological sites, which were initially estimated at 3,800 sites.[36] The Peruvian heritage regime uses "Pre-colonial Archaeological Monuments" as an umbrella term to classify different types of legally protected archaeological areas, which also fall within the concept of "Peruvian Cultural Property."[37] While the Peruvian state is the owner and protector of all cultural properties from pre-colonial times,[38] they still need to be inventoried, delimited, and declared as National Cultural Heritage to be formally protected under the aegis of the Peruvian legislation and administration. Therefore, the Qhapaq Ñan's pre-colonial roads and sites required their physical spaces to go through the application of a series of technical and legal procedures to formalize their protection. Such procedures involve several fieldwork endeavors by

[31] Ministry of Education 2000.

[32] See DeSilvey and Harrison 2020, May 2020.

[33] Ministry of Education 2001b.

[34] The legal regime of cultural heritage in Peru consistently encouraged the identification, inventory, legal protection, conservation, restoration, research, and dissemination of National Heritage as a matter of public interest, as expressed in the National Cultural Heritage Law enforced in 2004.

[35] INC 2004.

[36] Ríos 2013.

[37] Article 1 of the Archaeological Research Regulation (RIA) approved through the Supreme Resolution N° 004-2000-ED on January 24, 2000, recognized "*Monumentos Arqueológicos Prehispánicos*" or Pre-colonial Archaeological Monuments (own translation) as a category of Peruvian Cultural Property (Ministry of Education, 2000). However, it is important to note that the Spanish term officially used here is "*Patrimonio Inmueble del Perú*" (Immovable Property of Peru), which refers to the condition of pre-colonial monuments as a state property legally and physically attached to a delimited space, thereby unable to be moved. The RIA classified pre-colonial archaeological monuments in Monumental Archaeological Zones, Archaeological Sites, Archaeological Reserve Zones, Isolated Archaeological Elements, and Archaeological Cultural Landscapes.

[38] Peruvian Republican Congress. 2004. Law N° 28296. National Cultural Heritage Law. https://www.congreso.gob.pe/Docs/comisiones2017/Comision_de_Cultura_y_Patrimonio/files/ley-28296-ley-general-patrimonio-cultural-nacion.pdf.

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professional archaeologists working for the public sector to determine an archaeological monument's extension and its boundaries and to record its features carefully and accurately. Not all archaeological sites are fully exposed on the surface; in some cases, test pits or small-scale excavations are needed to determine the extension of a site for its heritage declaration and delimitation. The duration of this process varies depending on the extension of each space.

The extensive scale of heritage protection afforded to the Qhapaq Ñan Project raised several critical considerations regarding the treatment of pre-colonial monuments within the Peruvian regulatory framework, especially because of the implications for the relationship between legally protected areas with local populations settled in or around them. Upon identification, declaration, and delimitation as National Cultural Heritage, archaeological monuments assume an untouchable status, rendering them the condition of "intangible" spaces. This designation strictly prohibits open access and use without the government's authorization, contingent upon a meticulous assessment of proposed interventions and their objectives. Furthermore, as legal custodian of pre-colonial monuments, the Peruvian state mandates their formal registration in the National Public Registries (SUNARP) to qualify for public funding earmarked for enhancement or conservation projects. Within the framework of *heritage-for-development* initiatives, this procedural requirement is deemed indispensable. Prior regularization of legal ownership is a prerequisite for approving any publicly funded projects aimed at enhancing or conserving archaeological monuments, sites, or zones. The rigorous technical and regulatory protocols involved in protecting pre-colonial monuments, coupled with bureaucratic and resource constraints, are predominantly reflective of a material-centered paradigm. Moreover, this factor frequently overwhelms the capabilities of the public sector and perpetuates a top-down approach that dismisses integrative work on the connections with local populations.

The establishment of the Qhapaq Ñan Project was certainly a strategic juncture for addressing an unprecedented and notably burdensome array of responsibilities, which traditional public heritage policies had previously struggled to effectively manage. This time, a state policy of significant scale received enhanced economic and regulatory support to create a heritage management framework aligned with the imperative of fulfilling a heritage-driven local socio-economic development. However, amid the lack of knowledge about "local" realities and the authoritarian practices responding to the legal protection of archaeological heritage, how would the Qhapaq Ñan Project address the hundreds of kilometers of territories involved in *heritage-for-development* management without falling into conflict with local populations? Perhaps echoing early critical reactions by some scholars,[39] the heritagization of the Qhapaq Ñan could potentially precipitate social tensions at the local level rather than benefits.

The World Heritage nomination factor

The creation of the Qhapaq Ñan Project not only impacted the renewal of cultural policy duties of the INC but also stronger aspirations to elevate the Andean region's international visibility and prestige through heritage diplomacy.[40] The Peruvian government included the Qhapaq Ñan in the Tentative List in 2002 and took the initiative to make the World Heritage listing endeavor a regional one. In the same year, representatives of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, and Peru met in the 1st Periodical Reporting of World Heritage of South America in Montevideo and convened to jointly work on the nomination of the Qhapaq Ñan

[39] Gnecco 2017, Jallade 2011, Losson 2017, Rendon 2017.
[40] Kania 2019, Winter 2015.

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to UNESCO's World Heritage list. A major driving force was represented by the politics of a transnational heritage to integrate and make visible the Andean states in the international arena. The Qhapaq Ñan evoking the ancient integration of Andean territories also symbolized a modern integration to build synergies for heritage preservation.[41]

The Qhapaq Ñan's visuality, symbolism, and avant-garde framing in the Andes did not pass unnoticed by international organizations, especially because of its potential to assimilate emerging concepts and approaches in heritage conservation in line with sustainability, safeguarding of biodiversity, and immaterial culture, all of them pointing out the key role of living cultures in heritage preservation.[42] In Peru, the involvement of international and intergovernmental institutions, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in heritage conservation, had long-time precedents in the Cusco region. The Qhapaq Ñan was not exempt from political tensions and competing views on the ideal international cooperation framework for its heritage status and management, especially in the face of the common interests of UNESCO, The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The Qhapaq Ñan's nomination to the World Heritage list was officially promoted by Peruvian authorities from INC and the foreign ministry. Yet, another project focused on the nature conservation potentials of the Inca Great Road was figured by Ricardo Espinosa ("*El Caminante*") with support from the IUCN and the IDB, although it did not materialize.[43]

In 2003, the World Heritage Centre officially joined the initiative to prepare the transnational nomination dossier of the Qhapaq Ñan, taking an unprecedented leadership role. The World Heritage listing of the Qhapaq Ñan represented a mutually beneficial opportunity for both the UNESCO World Heritage program and the Andean state parties involved. As struggles of World Heritage representativity and credibility against Eurocentric visions of heritage escalated, the inclusion of the Qhapaq Ñan would strengthen the presence of the Latin American region in the World Heritage list's categories, international decision-making spaces, and diplomatic relationships. Additionally, the Qhapaq Ñan's eligibility was timely, as the category of "Cultural Landscapes" was acquiring momentum in the World Heritage system,[44] while introducing a new model of international collaboration.

Upon the categorization of the Qhapaq Ñan as a Cultural Route and the progressive definition of the boundaries and extension of the nominated property,[45] the World Heritage Centre recommended the "participation" or "involvement" of local communities to be considered in the heritage management framework.[46] This concept aimed at overcoming an understanding of heritage protection as material remains dissociated from living cultures, but World Heritage guidelines had no specific definition or clear implementation methodologies. Therefore, the adoption of "participation" in conceptual and methodological terms was worked through different stages by the technical secretariats involved in the nomination.

[41] Sanz 2007.

[42] Council of Europe 2005, Albert et al. 2012.

[43] The proposal by Ricardo Espinosa (*El Caminante*) visualized the Qhapaq Ñan as a route capable of integrating natural protected areas of the Andes to preserve biodiversity. He recognized the potential to homologate the Inca Roads with similar routes around the world: "to give it an automatic and immediate entrance to the exclusive world of the world's greatest routes such as the Silk Roads, Compostela or the recent Maya Route" (Espinosa 2002).

[44] Ishizawa and Westrik 2021.

[45] According to the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, "nominated property" refers to a technically delimited and legally protected physical space that contains the attributes to be evaluated for World Heritage listing.

[46] In nomination dossiers, state parties to the UNESCO World Heritage Convention must prove the sufficiency of management and legal protection requirements of their nominated properties.

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At the international scale, since "cultural routes" departed from site-based and monument-centered schemes to encompass landscapes and broader cultural dynamics, it legitimized the recognition of everyday communities with different relations to declared heritage. Although the pre-colonial narrative was dominant in the first decade of the Qhapaq Ñan's policymaking, the preparation of the nomination dossier prompted the recognition of the intangible dimension of contemporary Andean communities, which became a crucial concept in the nomination rhetoric.[47]

In addition, as the World Heritage's criteria (vi)[48] justifying the outstanding universal value of the Qhapaq Ñan was being pursued, discourses on the immaterial culture related to the ancestral uses, practices, and memories of the ancient roads became central. Intangible heritage debates strengthened the perspective of local communities as stewards of *their* ancestral knowledge, practices, and traditions. However, given the extension and geographic variability of the Qhapaq Ñan, the role of local communities in heritage protection could not be solely justified by the presence or absence of ancestral immaterial culture, but by any kind of spatial, social, or economic relationship with pre-colonial remains.

The applicability of community participation at the national level is grounded in a venue where a set of heritage practice concerns were put forward. In Peru, in the face of social conflicts emerging from excesses of institutional authority in archaeological heritage management, the place that a participatory approach would give to communities was promising.[49] Because of prior experience in archaeological heritage survey, research, monitoring, or executive management, some interviewed archaeologists working as public officers expressed concerns about unethical outcomes on the livelihoods of local communities that could possibly be brought by the highly technical heritage protection framework. With a World Heritage designation on the way, heritage impacts could furthermore escalate to complex and irreversible critical scenarios, especially in the light of Peruvian experiences with restrictive regulations of land use, violent evictions, or physical displacement,[50] or even unforeseen local transformations as reported by other cases of World Heritage listing in the region (for example, Quebrada de Humahuaca).[51]

This preoccupation was further justified by an absence of Peruvian legal and normative frameworks supporting participatory practices in heritage preservation. Interviewed specialists, who were influential in decision-making processes, mentioned the adoption of two principles by 2009. First, heritage must not negatively impact local livelihoods, but, in turn, make locals the main beneficiaries; second, Article 6 from the ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (1989) would inspire procedural aspects to implement community participation.

The viability of a participatory framework also demanded a sufficient understanding of the diverse territories and their socioeconomic, political, and cultural realities addressed by the Qhapaq Ñan Project. The "local communities" lived in both rural and urban areas, although a great percentage of the roads fall within rural territories of Andean peasant communities (*comunidades campesinas*).[52] In most rural areas, territories are governed under

[47] Republic of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. (2014). Nomination of Qhapaq Ñan Andean Road System for inclusion on the World Heritage List. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1459/documents/.

[48] Criterion (vi) refers: to being directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. Retrieved from: https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/

[49] Asensio 2013.

[50] Alexandrino 2023a, Uribe 2022.

[51] See Salleras 2018.

[52] *Comunidades campesinas* refer to Andean peasant communities, a traditional communal system of political and social organization of indigenous and mestizo communities based on collective land tenure. This denomination was

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specific legislation that recognizes communal land rights, and governance is based on a traditional sociopolitical organization and decision-making systems.[53] Heritage governance passes through these structures and is not immune to social tensions, especially because it recalls former authoritative incursions of the state's policy. Historical trajectories of political organization in each territory are usually influential factors in the community's cohesion, proactiveness, postures, and even receptivity towards the presence of the state and, therefore, to heritage public policies. Moreover, not all communities claim ancestral links to pre-colonial remains nor do all of them have their immaterial culture associated with the roads. Understanding local contexts requires sufficient time often outside of bureaucratic schedules.

The assembly of the participatory framework at the national level took various stages, but based on interviews, two major moments could be identified with a clear gap occurring around the 2010s. One of them started in the early 2000s, with the ethnographic reports and documentation resulting from the multidisciplinary campaigns of heritage recording in the four macro-regions of the program.[54] From the 2010s onwards, a more reflexive view towards contemporary communities became sedimented through multidisciplinary teams of professionals directly involved in the management of public-funded projects. These professionals, either specializing in archaeology or, broadly, in the social sciences, often had relevant knowledge, a personal understanding of the local territorial dynamics, and sustained relations with local communities due to their long-term archaeological fieldwork. In addition, a major systematization and consolidation of the participatory approach came with the formalization of a Community Participation unit within the Qhapaq Ñan Project between 2011 and 2013. This unit was tasked with fostering relationships with local communities and promoting community-based and collaborative schemes that were integrated into a new concept for heritage management: "social use."[55]

Participatory practices were accommodated progressively and through an evaluation of realistic possibilities within the Peruvian heritage regime. The Qhapaq Ñan Project had to comply with institutional agendas, bureaucracies, and norms within the public sector. While policy guidelines on participatory processes were set up in the World Heritage nomination file and management plans, policymaking also crucially depended on a sustained drive from public heritage specialists. As shared by some interlocutors, such a drive was nurtured by a set of ethical premises towards local communities, based on cumulative experiences of noticing a prioritization of archaeological preservation over disadvantaged or marginalized local populations. Some archaeologists of the project particularly acknowledged the lack of sufficient disciplinary or professional training to address the relationship with local communities and to deal with consequent heritage management issues. Imbued in technical or managerial procedures to protect pre-colonial remains, archaeologists in the public sector more than often rely on intuitions and moral values to confront conflictive situations with local communities. Conversely, anthropologists working in the program assertively integrated ethnographic methodologies to work with heritage and social relations.

The experiences shared by interlocutors evidenced an often-unrecognized strategic role of heritage specialists directing projects or working as specialists in the field, especially

given during the agrarian reform in the late 1960s, which also legally recognized the communal rights to land tenure and traditional authorities. These definitions are stipulated in Law 24656 (1992).

[53] *Comunidades campesinas* governance is based on traditional authorities and decision-making systems. Most decisions are taken during a collective deliberation in community assemblies.

[54] Instituto Nacional de Cultura 2004, 2005, and 2006.

[55] Marcone and Ruiz 2014 (p. 119) define "social use" as "a dialogic and democratic process that seeks to protect, conserve, and promote tangible and intangible cultural assets in a participatory manner, aiming for their reconstitution as a transcendent element for the sustainable development of communities."

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during the World Heritage nomination process: their familiarity with all governance scales and the resulting cumulative practical knowledge, capabilities, and relations that make them functional mediators between diverse actors interacting within heritage policy. Also, their position enabled them as active actors in solving tensions, obstacles, or creating opportunities in each of the governance scenarios or in their interfaces. In short, factors ranging from values, experiences, and practices towards the social context of archaeological heritage management started to shape the implementation of a participatory approach.

At the juncture of pragmatism and ethics

The Peruvian heritage regime initially appeared incompatible with the participatory approach of the Qhapaq Ñan Project. Both legal and practical parameters centered on material protection, while a consistently reinforced bureaucracy constrained structural changes.[56] Additionally, conventional ethics enshrined in the national heritage regime follow a deontological approach, emphasizing responsibilities for the material past through scientific scrutiny and expert authority. While Peruvian legislation acknowledges civil society's role in protecting national cultural heritage, it lacks clear specifications regarding legitimate forms of civil participation. Consequently, this institutional vision diverges from the actual avenues for participation due to conservative interpretations of the law. For instance, restrictive regulations frequently hinder civil groups from accessing and utilizing pre-colonial monuments for activities beyond expert oversight, reinforcing an institutional ethos focused on preservation and strict compliance with the existing normative.

The Qhapaq Ñan's policymaking relied on criteria set forth by agreements to craft the World Heritage nomination file, general policy, management guidelines, and the Community Participation unit's proposals, but also initiatives by technical teams within the program's governance framework, which primarily consists of localized pre-colonial site-based or road-based projects. Throughout the World Heritage nomination process, pragmatism and ethical considerations guided the implementation of participatory practices by specialists.

Given the diverse fields of expertise and perspectives, there was no singular translation of the general guidelines into practices in the field. As seen in the interviews, the project's numerous specialists differed in their views about communities. However, while a more rigid polarization between those who categorize them as either essentialized users or negative factors existed in the early 2000s, specialists' views arrived at a more nuanced understanding of local communities after a decade: that of actors intersected by power imbalances inherent in the implementation of heritage policies, which often excluded them from any decision-making process. Thus, a prevailing premise was to leverage the participatory approach to reconcile underlying social structural issues, which are mostly reported in cases of social conflicts related to development projects and extractivism within the territories of Indigenous or peasant communities. As mentioned in interviews, prior and informed consultation processes fostered in the mining and environmental public sectors served as inspiration for *consultation* processes in decision-making about heritage zoning in the context of World Heritage nomination.

In the systematization of the participatory approach, the program's office and on-site specialists responded to a series of shared premises built upon a conscious evaluation of institutional attitudes towards communities. Notably, this entailed the recognition of local communities' knowledge, interests, and desire to share their opinions, alongside the complexities inherent to internal power dynamics. Heritage management projects must

[56] Alexandrino 2023a.

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address the diverse socioeconomic, educational, and accessibility needs while acknowledging the contextual variability in the reception of heritage. For this reason, the projects ascribed to the Qhapaq Ñan's policy formally integrated a sociocultural component based on multidisciplinary teams of anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, psychologists, educators, and cultural managers. Building on experiences in fieldwork and project management, the involved professionals gradually mainstreamed practices towards mutual respect, receptivity to dialogue, and conflict prevention. As such, the process was marked by iterative experimentation since participatory practices adhered to established regulations but at the same time transcended them. A close view of the experiences underlying the implementation of participatory practices unveils the "informal" dimension of policy workings.

In and through the language of development: A question of benefits

For a long time, heritage has been translated into a valuable "resource" capable of bringing benefits to local populations. This ideal became a pillar in policymaking as most territories ascribed to the Qhapaq Ñan's nominated property are rural areas, frequently utilized as illustrative examples within socio-economic studies pertaining to indices of poverty. Heritage often generates substantial expectations, but its presentation by the state also unveils tensions with localized contexts. Some specialists assumed a conversation on heritage's benefit would lead to a constructive first dialogue with local communities amidst prevalent distrust towards state agencies. While historical trajectories of rural areas greatly vary, some localities share a perception of an absent state incapable of addressing their necessities, defending their rights, or even recognizing their vulnerability amid land conflict. Without a proper negotiation and consensus, heritage was not devoid of potential disputes. In light of these accounts, some specialists looked for a middle point between the benefits envisioned by the project and the needs reported by communities.

No regulation contains specific statements about material or immaterial benefits. As a matter of pragmatism, specialists made decisions regarding the allocation of benefits to local communities as the project unfolded in the field. Yet, there was a prevalent concern about the management of local community expectations. One potential strategy involved the provision of economic benefits through temporary employment opportunities. Engaging local residents as field assistants in archaeological research or conservation projects has been a common practice in Peru for decades.[57] Nevertheless, this regime hardly guarantees equal benefits among community members; instead, it faces limitations and potential for conflicts since projects are executed seasonally with a limited budget. In response, some specialists implemented a rotational system for seasonal contracts, aiming to increase community participation.

Along the same lines, some project managers advocated for the creation of temporary employment opportunities through entrepreneurship within cultural tourism dynamics. This initiative was driven by both specialists and locals' expectations of increased tourism influx following the designation of the Qhapaq Ñan as a World Heritage site. Festivals, fairs, and cultural events were agreed as instrumental for community engagement in income-generating activities. Local residents, notably women, participated in training programs and workshops aimed at cultivating skills relevant to the provision of cultural tourism services. Notably, at archaeological monuments such as Aypate (Piura) and Huaycan de Cieneguilla (Lima), women entrepreneurs drew upon ancestral knowledge to produce a variety of artisanal goods, including handmade textiles, crafts, and fur accessories.

[57] See Pacifico and Vogel 2012.

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Other initiatives resulting from a collaboration between specialists in monument-based projects and local representatives involved the development of guided tour services. At Huanuco Pampa (Huanuco), the project facilitated the creation of a community-based tourism agency, where an association of locals managed the administration, organization, and logistics of tours connecting the nearest town with the archaeological complex. Similarly, in Huaycan de Cieneguilla, over fifty residents from local neighborhoods composed of adult and young women and men participated in capacity-building programs designed to equip them with tour guides' essential skills, but most, especially, encouraged them to offer personalized interpretations of local heritage. In most cases, this activity represented a second source of income. As initiatives escalated following the official World Heritage designation of the Qhapaq Ñan in 2014, they progressively attained support from the local government and private businesses. By 2019, the number of visitors tripled, and three cohorts of tour guides had completed the training program to address these demands.

Spaces of consultation and consensus

Pre-colonial monuments are subject to stringent regulations and restrictions on land use and access, often exacerbating the vulnerability of marginalized local communities. This is particularly evident as archaeological practices within public policy prioritize technical requirements and impose limited execution timelines for national heritage delimitation, often without proper consideration for local communities. Once national heritage sites are delimited, local residents living within these boundaries may find their possibilities to claim land ownership and access essential services such as water and electricity are hindered. Addressing this issue became imperative during the definition of areas – including monuments and roads – which were prioritized for national heritage delimitation under World Heritage zoning guidelines.

In response to this precedent, the adoption of mechanisms for information and consultation emerged as crucial strategies to prevent conflict and foster consensus with local communities. The public sector experienced a growth in practices of prior and informed consent to legally recognized Indigenous communities in the face of extractive projects and in the light of the approval of Law N° 29785 in 2011.[58] However, this law did not apply to peasant or local communities with no Indigenous legal identity or origin. Within the culture sector, the establishment of the MINCUL spurred advocacy efforts aimed at formalizing internal procedures to institutionalize prior and informed consent within public projects related to heritage management. Despite the absence of formal frameworks, certain projects implemented processes of information-sharing and consultation with local communities amid World Heritage zoning of roads and archaeological sites. Project managers used methods that deviated from bureaucratic mandates, emphasizing the premise of unrushed dialogue, the cultivation of mutual trust, and the adaptation to local decision-making systems and contexts.

The process officially known as *participatory zoning* facilitated the integration of heritage decision-making processes into local governance structures.[59] In cases of peasant communities specifically, communal assemblies gather traditional authorities and community members to collectively make decisions on matters pertaining to their territory. During these assemblies, specialists engaged with local communities to discuss the declaration and delimitation of national heritage sites, including the establishment of boundaries for World Heritage listing. Physical verification of heritage boundaries occurred on-site, with both

[58] El Peruano 2011, Schilling-Vacaflor and Flemmer 2015, Flemmer and Schilling-Vacaflor 2016.
[59] Chirinos et al. 2020.

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heritage specialists and community representatives collaboratively assessing areas to ensure minimal impact on local properties. As a result, a technical plot of the designated area was presented to community members for deliberation and approval. While the policy framework governing the Qhapaq Ñan allowed for flexibility in navigating bureaucratic processes, challenges such as budgetary constraints and fluctuating support from MINCUL authorities were encountered. Consequently, not all anticipated sections of roads underwent participatory delimitation as national heritage sites. Nonetheless, these experiences have contributed to the establishment of new standards of "best practices" within the cultural heritage sector.[60]

Sense of shared heritage stewardship

The conventional understanding of heritage stewardship primarily involves specialists and government authorities, often overlooking the potential contributions of non-experts due to the strict regulatory environment surrounding heritage utilization. However, the Qhapaq Ñan policy allowed the emergence of specific avenues for community involvement in heritage management processes, particularly in the realms of conservation, interpretation, dissemination, and planning. Despite the diverse and context-specific nature of these initiatives, they emerged from deliberate attempts to devise effective strategies that yield mutual benefits and align with the bureaucratic structures of the cultural heritage sector. Many of these initiatives evolved from sustained partnerships between project managers and local communities, rooted in the identification of shared interests and opportunities for collaboration.

In the context of the preparation of the World Heritage management plan, the project focusing on the Huanuco Pampa-Huamachuco segment between the regions of Ancash and Huanuco established collaborative agreements with local communities to facilitate heritage conservation efforts. Notably, certain segments of the roads within this area engaged local peasant communities in activities such as road cleaning and maintenance as part of ancestral practices embedded in social identity and organization.[61] In contrast to conventional heritage conservation approaches that prioritize material preservation, communal work prioritizes the upkeep of roads due to their significance for the community's cultural and social bonds. As part of a collaborative effort, heritage specialists involved in the Qhapaq Ñan Project agreed to relinquish the experts' authority and refrain from intervening in sections of roads where ancestral practices were actively maintained. The Qhapaq Ñan's conservation interventions would only address the portions of roads in locations with difficult access.

Following the inclusion of the Qhapaq Ñan in the World Heritage list, there emerged a notable shift towards fostering community involvement in the planning and implementation of local heritage management initiatives. Typically, the development of management plans falls within the purview of specialists, with limited provisions for non-expert participation within the existing normative frameworks. However, within the context of the Xauxa-Pachacamac project, which spans the regions of Lima and Junin, managers and specialists embarked on pioneering efforts to explore participatory decision-making processes following the site's World Heritage designation. The efficacy of these strategies was bolstered by several key factors, including the robust political organization of local communities, a palpable and sustained interest in the Qhapaq Ñan, and the collaborative support of local governmental authorities and private actors. Leveraging long-standing

[60] Qhapaq Ñan Perú – Sede Nacional 2017, Ministry of Culture 2017a and 2017b.
[61] See Chirinos et al. 2020.

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relationships and alliances cultivated by committed project managers and locals, the segment-based project initiated two pilot programs aimed at establishing local boards to facilitate collaborative deliberations on heritage management plans alongside community representatives. These initiatives yielded tangible outcomes, including the collaborative development of a biannual management plan and the enactment of municipal ordinances designed to safeguard and promote the Qhapaq Ñan as a World Heritage site.

The Qhapaq Ñan's policy framework further supported initiatives aimed at fostering the active participation of diverse local stakeholders in the dissemination and promotion of regional heritage. A compelling illustration of this collaborative approach is evident in the management project centered on the pre-colonial monument of Huaycan de Cieneguilla in Lima. This endeavor, defined by sustained collaborative efforts spanning over a decade, largely stems from the convergence of specialists advocating for community engagement to enhance local quality of life, alongside the proactive involvement of self-organized local communities. In recent years, notable strides were made, including the establishment of an interpretation center through a collaborative endeavor, as documented by Tellez and her colleagues.[62] Furthermore, the institutionalization of a cultural festival aimed at celebrating local heritage was not only another significant milestone in this ongoing collaborative scheme but a legitimate bottom-up initiative. This festival serves as a vibrant platform for local leaders, governmental authorities, and private actors to cooperate in the revitalization of the cultural fabric of the locality. The proximity of Huaycan de Cieneguilla to Lima, the capital city, and the central office of the Qhapaq Ñan Project played a pivotal role in facilitating these endeavors. However, this factor underscores both possibilities and limitations due to geographic institutional centralism in advancing community-driven heritage initiatives nationwide.

Negotiating a new ethos

Following the Qhapaq Ñan's World Heritage listing over a decade ago, cultural heritage has undergone significant evolution in its operational methodologies. While the implementation of participatory practices has demonstrated notable flexibility, it has also revealed inherent challenges within existing normative frameworks. The impetus for adopting participatory practices often originates from the proactive initiatives of self-driven specialists involved in the project. However, despite the anticipation that these initiatives would catalyze substantial changes in archaeological heritage legislation to prioritize community involvement, progress has been constrained. Efforts to advocate for the integration of participatory zoning and collaborative processes into legal frameworks have encountered obstacles. The relative autonomy enjoyed by the Qhapaq Ñan Project and the agency, demonstrated by individual specialists in driving initiatives beyond established institutional structures, has proven insufficient to achieve significant legislative reforms. Ultimately, the enactment of new legislation rests within the purview of the cultural heritage sector's authorities. However, the dynamic nature of these authorities, characterized by fluctuating priorities and divergent stances, has recurrently disrupted the continuity of proposed legal amendments.

While not all legal proposals could escalate, select decrees and formal directives at both local and national governance have been officialized. Among notable instances is the formalization of guidelines that recognize heritage social factors in the evaluation of the potentiality of archaeological assets.[63] These guidelines, developed within the framework of

[62] Tellez 2023.
[63] Ministry of Culture 2017.

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the Qhapaq Ñan Project, represent a methodological synthesis informed by anthropological perspectives for the systematic collection and assessment of data. The successful approval of such directives within the MINCUL frequently necessitates sustained advocacy efforts and negotiation strategies employed by specialists occupying influential positions. Moreover, the endorsement of higher authorities, notably the Minister of Culture, serves as a decisive factor in facilitating the progression of these initiatives.

The perception of limitations on the continuity and innovation of participatory practices has heightened within the MINCUL due to increasing demands to address diverse priorities and meet policy objectives. The inherently "informal" nature of participatory practices implemented by self-driven specialists demonstrates both functionality and limitations. While such approaches supported the emergence of novel ethical perspectives regarding community engagement, entrenched ideological and bureaucratic norms within the dominant heritage management pose challenges to the sustainability of non-institutionalized practices. Concerns have been raised by specialists regarding the potential relegation of these initiatives to mere anecdotal mentions in public discourse on heritage. In addition, there is apprehension about the implications for relationships with locals if expectations on the expansion and continuity of community-based and bottom-up initiatives are not met. Despite the potential for participatory processes to engender local empowerment and motivation, bureaucratic obstacles impede further progress made by communities themselves. As mentioned by an interviewed specialist: "*no matter how much you empower citizens, then they most probably will eventually face a tough bureaucratic wall.*" This disjunction between the imperative of participation and the capacity of the public sector to deal with its consequences highlights a critical tension within current heritage management.

The institutionalization of a participatory approach precipitated the emergence of a novel concept in heritage management labeled as heritage "social use" (*puesta en uso social*). This paradigm represented a divergence from traditional "enhancement projects," which have historically been characterized by top-down frameworks primarily focused on income generation and heritage education. Instead, the social use concept emphasizes the process of imbuing heritage sites with societal significance and functionality, thereby facilitating the sustainable development of communities.[64] The impact of this conceptual shift is underscored by its formal incorporation into policy documents and guidelines issued by the MINCUL, indicative of its burgeoning influence in the institutional ethos of the cultural heritage sector. By the conclusion of the procedures for the Qhapaq Ñan's World Heritage listing, the notion of heritage social use had permeated mainstream discourse. While both the participatory paradigm and the concept of social use have engendered novel ethical perspectives and pragmatic approaches to archaeological heritage management, their full materialization remains somewhat aspirational. This is due, in part, to their reliance on the goodwill and personal motivations of specialists, whose sustained presence and political sway are not guaranteed.

Conclusion

Policymaking in the Qhapaq Ñan Project, despite discontinuities and peaks of effervescence, engendered a new era in the cultural heritage sector of Peru, traditionally ruled by ethical principles focused on archaeological preservation. Driven by the confluence of political agendas of the Peruvian government and active technical support from the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, its heritagization and management was a *sui generis* case. The conditions of its policymaking were unusual: many concepts and practices could be set forth, negotiated,

[64] Marcone and Ruiz 2014, 119.

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and become legitimate due to political imperatives to achieve a successful transnational World Heritage listing. The scale of work demanded by the preparation of the nomination dossier would not regularly succeed in the Peruvian heritage regime, normally constrained by time, budgetary allocations, logistics, or even power dynamics within the archaeological practice and the cultural heritage sector. Moreover, the accelerated pace of procedures to protect pre-colonial remains within the nomination process may not find easiness amidst normal bureaucratic or administrative retentions.

The construction of a participatory paradigm in the Qhapaq Ñan Project demanded instrumentsthat were unfamiliar for the Peruvian public heritage policy. Therefore, it unfolded processes leading to a reflexive turn. Since the concept of participation of local communities is engrained in the language of intergovernmental policy frameworks but no definition exists, its translation into the Peruvian context depended on the Qhapaq Ñan Project policymakers and specialists' interpretation and conceptual homologation to make it logical, functional and contextualized for the national heritage regime. While the notion of participation was initially shaped by general guidelines used to craft the Wold Heritage nomination dossier of the Qhapaq Ñan, its implementation later acquired nuances. Heritage specialists' disciplinary, technical, and practical knowledge, alongside individual values derived from experiences in public heritage governance, contributed to the practical side of this implementation.

Applying the concept of participation within the context of the nomination dossier in the Peruvian cultural heritage sector revealed two critical dimensions: the flaws of prioritized interventions in public heritage management and the amalgamation of ethical concerns of heritage specialists. Issues of power dynamics responding to the predominance of site-based and monument-centered interventions were revealed in this process, explaining the lack of consideration of local communities. Here, heritage specialists, mostly archaeologists, reimagined their ethical framework in the governance of pre-colonial remains, crystallizing views that deviated from orthodox paradigms—such as the need to relinquish absolute authority in the enforcement of laws protecting archaeological monuments and the inclusion of voices of local and non-expert communities. As an interlocutor mentioned: "*the World Heritage status was an excuse to foster people-centered practices in heritage management*."

Despite the inherent challenges of advocating for new ethical premises within regulations that inadequately address the role of local communities in heritage protection, the rationale for community participation was founded on pragmatic considerations of mutual benefit, consultation, and collaboration. Many implemented practices operated within a middle ground, accommodating both prioritized technical interventions and the acknowledgement of local community concerns. The role of specialists in heritage management projects proved pivotal in establishing arenas for dialogue and negotiation with local communities. Their ethical convictions, proactive initiatives, advocacy efforts, and mediation skills necessitated a delicate equilibrium at the interface of heritage bureaucracy and local expectations.

Implementing a participatory policy in the Qhapaq Ñan Project hardly precipitated structural transformations; however, it infused the cultural heritage sector with a novel ethos. Innovative endeavors in archaeological heritage management were hindered by entrenched legal constraints and conservative ideologies perpetuated within bureaucratic structures. The development of participatory practices within the Qhapaq Ñan Project and the Ministry of Culture embraced a pragmatic perspective, seeking to reconcile competing professional values and ethical imperatives within bureaucratic frameworks. Consequently, these pragmatic criteria and resultant procedures were institutionalized as standards within the Peruvian public heritage governance.

The evolution of the institutional ethos is not defined by a widespread adoption or scaling up of uniform participatory practices; rather, it manifests as a mosaic of initiatives that have

evolved while sharing some common principles. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the inherent limitations in proclaiming the unequivocal success of participatory approaches in the Peruvian context. The prevailing heritage management model still adheres to top-down approaches, wherein the notion of "participation" may belie the persistence of exclusionary dynamics within local communities. Moreover, not all contexts are equally receptive to participatory interventions. In light of these considerations, the participatory framework should be regarded not as a concluded chapter but rather as an enduring ideal. Its ongoing relevance lies in its capacity to sustain critical discourse on the protection of archaeological heritage.

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