The World Bank, Amartya Sen and Cultural Heritage as Development in Jordan

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The World Bank, Amartya Sen and Cultural Heritage as Development in Jordan

BY

Mark Guarnaccia

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Abstract

Amartya Sen, the World Bank and Heritage as Development in Jordan

By Mark Guarnaccia

Advisor: Alexander Bauer

Starting in the mid 1990’s, the World Bank, in small but nonetheless meaningful amounts, began to fund projects in the Middle East and North Africa with the express purpose of promoting tourism and urban redevelopment through cultural heritage preservation. To date, the World Bank has sponsored projects in Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan. Focusing on the three projects in Jordan, this paper attempts to problematize the World Bank’s heritage preservation activities in the Middle East and North Africa. In order to do this, it examines the thought and work of Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen. It proposes that cultural capabilities may be understood as the ability for individuals within a community to contribute to discourses on history, memory, heritage and tradition. Utilizing this framework, I argue that the World Bank’s projects in the MENA, for a variety of reasons, do not achieve this standard. However, the capabilities approach outlined in this paper may provide an alternative methodology of valuation which will produce better results.
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Introduction

In his book, *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and the Struggle for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization*, Michael Goldman argues that in the aftermath of the Cold War, the World Bank began to turn towards alternative development agendas, most notably environmentalism.\(^1\)

In addition to the environmental turn identified by Goldman, within the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, there is a clearly identifiable cultural turn. Beginning in the early to mid 1990’s, World Bank began to invest small (in comparison to total World Bank expenditures) but meaningful amounts of money in an effort to promote the preservation of cultural heritage sites and activities as a means of promoting economic development.

Ultimately, much as in Goldman’s analysis of the World Bank’s environmental programs, this relatively newfound interest in heritage as development is highly problematic. There are a number of reasons for this. The World Bank is constrained by its need to operate through and with national governments which promotes the propagation of official state narratives and discourses, often at the expense of others, the World Bank’s status as a proponent of neoliberalism and globalization tend to incentivize certain forms of heritage. This often comes at the expense of the discourses and histories of local or minority populations. Heritage preservation, by its very nature, is part and parcel with the production of culture and tradition. Resultantly, one must be extraordinarily careful not to produce historical silences and restrict the ability of minority populations to produce their own histories and traditions. Fundamentally, many of these issues stems from problems with the World Bank’s evaluative framework. Ultimately, the World Bank views development in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per

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capita income, and other strictly data-driven indicators of economic progress. In doing so, it ignores crucial economic, social, and political indicators of development and progress.

The work of India’s Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen provides an alternative methodology for evaluating development progress. Sen has roundly criticized strictly “empirical” data-driven indicators of development and progress. In their place, he has proposed what he refers to as the capabilities approach. The capabilities approach attempts to present a far more comprehensive means of measuring developmental advancement. This stems from the importance the Sen puts on individual agency. For him, what matters most is not that someone is, strictly speaking, better off economically, but rather that each individual in a given society possesses the opportunity to make their own decisions and act as they see fit in a variety of fields. In order for real progress in development, capabilities must exist not only within the economic sphere, but within the political and cultural spheres as well. For Sen, political freedom and the ability to contribute to and consume cultural goods are just as important as the existence of a free market. As it pertains to this paper, it is cultural capabilities which are the most relevant when discussing and evaluating the World Bank’s heritage preservation activities. In this vein, when considering the preservation of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, cultural capabilities are crucially important. In other words, those whose heritage is in question ought to contribute substantially to the preservation and interpretation of their own historical and cultural identities.

By this standard especially, the efficacy of World Bank cultural heritage preservation programs in the Middle East and North Africa are highly questionable. The top-down organization of World Bank projects encourages their development with only minimal input from local groups. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, these projects are necessarily run in
conjunction with national governments who have their own agendas, as well as historical and national narratives which they wish to propagate. Additionally, heritage as development often takes the form of the promotion of tourism which can and does reemphasize power imbalances between (often Western European or American) tourists and local populations. This can be extremely problematic as power relations between native populations and Western tourists, for example, are often reinforced. Additionally, this emphasis on tourism may simultaneously serve to restrict the ability of locals to exhibit agency. When tourism is the only means of economic advancement available, this runs counter to Sen’s emphasis on the role of choice in development.

The first chapter of this paper is devoted to an analysis of the World Bank’s heritage preservation projects in the Middle East and North Africa as well as the book *Cultural Heritage and Development: a Framework for Action in the Middle East and North Africa*, written by Michael Cernea. It is followed by a more in-depth study of three World Bank projects in Jordan. From this point, I pivot to a discussion of Amartya Sen, his intellectual background and theories as well as a discussion of capabilities. In the next section, I will discuss my interpretation of cultural capabilities which I understand to comprise the ability to contribute to discourses and production not only of culture, but also of tradition, memory and history. Finally, I turn to an analysis of the World Bank’s heritage preservation activities in Jordan within the framework of this conception of cultural heritage.
Chapter 1: The World Bank and Cultural Heritage Preservation in the Middle East and North Africa

In this section, I turn my attention to the book, *Cultural Heritage and Development: a Framework for Action in the Middle East and North Africa*, written for the World Bank by Michael Cernea. This book, as its name suggests, provides the framework for the World Bank’s rationale regarding the utilization of Cultural Heritage as a vehicle for economic development. It also includes a brief overview of heritage preservation projects by the World Bank in the Middle East and North Africa. I identify a total of eight projects in five countries throughout the region. After giving a brief overview of projects in each of these countries, I turn my attention to a more comprehensive examination of the three World Bank projects in Jordan. I selected the Bank’s work in Jordan for further analysis because Jordan has received funding off and on for World Bank heritage-related activities since the late 1970’s, and because it serves as an instructive example of the types of programs and objectives favored by the Bank in the heritage sphere. These three Jordanian projects will provide my primary case study upon which I will apply the concept of cultural capabilities.

The World Bank’s interest in heritage preservation is a relatively recent one. Apart from a tourism project in Jordan during the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, the Bank only began financing heritage preservation efforts starting in the late 1990’s. Since that time, heritage preservation efforts have comprised a small but meaningful portion of Bank activities.² The Bank’s rationale is laid out in Cernea’s book, which makes the case for heritage preservation as a

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² All totals with regard to the number, size and total expenditures of all World Bank projects in the Middle East and North Africa are based on my research which is in turn based upon World Bank budgets and project summaries which may be found here. [http://www.worldbank.org/projects/search?lang=en&searchTerm=cultural%20heritage](http://www.worldbank.org/projects/search?lang=en&searchTerm=cultural%20heritage)
viable development strategy, following from the Bank’s, *Culture and Sustainable Development: A Framework for Action.*

Essentially, the World Bank considers heritage preservation a viable development strategy, especially in parts of the world with a rich history and a wealth of monumental heritage. Cernea says that, “The cultural patrimony [of the MENA region] can become a pillar of the region’s overall growth-enhancing strategy, as well as a rich foundation for people’s education. It can evolve into a source of robust employment, contributing to the reduction of poverty and unemployment.”

However, this does not mean that the World Bank is concerned with cultural heritage preservation (CHP) for its own sake. On the contrary, while the preservation of important aspects of cultural patrimony may be a worthwhile endeavor, it is not within the mission of the Bank to blindly fund every effort at heritage preservation. Instead, they intend to focus on those projects that will yield the best results for the bank’s agenda. Cernea emphasized this when he wrote that:

“The selectivity principle, at the country or state level, guides MENA to choose and support CH activities that are germane to the Bank’s core mandate and are apt to yield large development benefits. Neither the importance nor the ubiquity of worthy heritage sites guarantees that every preservation intervention is necessarily priority and will have high development impacts. It is hence imperative to weigh alternative project options and avoid those with peripheral impacts; leverage the Bank’s comparative advantages; understand not only what the Bank could do, but also what it should not do in the cultural sector or where it does not have a comparative advantage; and most important, embed heritage protection within [emphasis in

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original], rather than parallel to, the Bank’s development strategies of poverty reduction, infrastructure financing, and social inclusion.5

This paragraph succinctly sums up the Bank’s overall approach to heritage preservation. Interventions are tied to the Bank’s agenda of development, meaning that preservation for its own sake is an insufficient rationale, and furthermore, the World Bank will only intervene when necessary or where it possesses a comparative advantage. Ultimately, the World Bank’s goal is to promote development and for that reason, and that reason only, it has an interest in heritage preservation.

To date, the World Bank has approved eight projects in five countries in the MENA region. Project expenditures have totaled approximately USD 350 million and the Bank has made almost USD 200 million in loans to date (See Table 1). 6 As of this writing, the World Bank has undertaken projects in Israel and Palestine (1), Morocco (1), Tunisia (1) and Lebanon (2), and Jordan (3). Following are a series of brief introductions to each of these projects.

Israel and Palestine The Bethlehem 2000 project was funded by an initial trust fund credit of USD 25 million. 7 The project was initially proposed with an eye toward promoting tourism during the then upcoming millennial celebrations in the years 2000 and 2001. To that end, three objectives were proposed, to:

“strengthen the economic base and foster sustainable development of the Bethlehem area through tourism promotion; strengthen the infrastructure, financial and managerial base of the Bethlehem area municipalities through a program of investment, reform, and capacity building;

Bethlehem area municipalities through a program of investment, reform, and capacity building;

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5 Cernea, Cultural Heritage and Development, 36.
6 As noted previously, all totals with regard to the number, size and total expenditures of all World Bank projects in the Middle East and North Africa are based on my research which is in turn based upon World Bank budgets and project summaries which may be found here. http://www.worldbank.org/projects/search?lang=en&searchTerm=cultural%20heritage
begin to foster the preservation of cultural assets in Bethlehem (assets of worldwide importance and value) by initiating a process of policy and institutional reform and capacity building, and by physical rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.”

Unfortunately, the implementation of the project coincided with the beginning of the Second Intifada, leading the Bank to revise its original objectives and to add repair and employment generation.

Morocco In Morocco, the World Bank provided funding and assistance for the rehabilitation of the Fes Medina. The project was approved in 1998 and ran until 2005. Total expenditures were estimated by the World Bank at approximately USD 26.7 million and the Bank provided approximately USD 14.3 million in loans. The goal of the project was explained thusly: “Under a comprehensive definition of cultural heritage as the historically built environment and the social structures which support it, the primary objective of the proposed project is to assist in the conservation and rehabilitation of the Fes-Medina, especially the historic housing stock and urban environment. To reach this objective, the project will: (a) expand and accelerate ongoing conservation efforts; (b) consolidate partnerships among the public and private sectors, World Bank, and other donors; and (c) use the rehabilitation process to alleviate poverty.”

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project, part b of its objectives was dropped. Ultimately, the Bank itself rated the Fes Medina project as unsatisfactory.

Tunisia Approved in 2001 and concluded in 2011, the World Bank’s project in Tunisia provided a total of USD 25.33 million to quote, “Assist the Borrower in its efforts to ensure the sustainable management of the country's cultural heritage with a view to developing cultural tourism.” The primary goal of the project was to promote tourism. To that end, the Bank attempted to improve coordination and control of the countries patrimony and their museum system, improve tourism and cultural product marketing, and to improve conditions at six important sites around Tunisia. This included a roughly six million dollar project at the Bardo Museum in Tunis, the site of a terrorist attack on March 18, 2015, that left more than 19 people dead.

Lebanon In Lebanon, the World Bank has overseen two projects which include heritage preservation components. The first, the Community Development Project, ran between 2001 and 2008 and included a loan of USD 20 million to the government of Lebanon. The project appraisal stated the goal as being, “to establish an effective and sustainable instrument to improve the living conditions and the economic status of disadvantaged communities.” Included in this project was an urban redevelopment project which is another major component of CHP in the region. The second Lebanon project, the Cultural Heritage and Urban

Redevelopment Project, received a USD 31 million loan from the World Bank. It was approved in 2003 and, as of this writing is still ongoing. The project has two interrelated objectives, which are, “(a) to create the conditions for increased local economic development and enhanced quality of life in the historic centers of five main secondary cities; and (b) to improve the conservation and management of Lebanon's built cultural heritage.” Additional funding from the Bank in the amount of USD 27 million was sought in 2012.

Jordan The first of three Jordanian projects was approved in 1976 and completed in 1983. In some respects, this first Jordan Tourism Project was the forerunner of the Bank’s CHP activities in the 1990’s and 2000’s. The Jordan Tourism Project was an effort to generate increased tourism at two of Jordan’s most noteworthy heritage sites: Jerash and Petra. The Second Tourism Development Project was approved in 1997, almost 15 years after the completion of the original Tourism Development Project. This project had three primary objectives. The first was infrastructure development in the Petra region, as well as improve management at Petra itself. The second component was aimed at developing infrastructure as well as environmental conservation at Wadi Rum. The third aspect of the project was support for a pair of pilot studies in the cities of Jerash and Karak. The goal of these programs were to simultaneously promote tourism and urban redevelopment. The Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Urban Development Project was approved in 2007 and ended in 2014. It was intended as a follow-up to the pilot

programs in Jerash and Karak included in the Second Tourism Development Project. Consequently, the program was expanded to include the cities of Salt, Madaba and Ajloun in addition to Jerash and Karak.26 Also continuing from Jordan Tourism 2, the project provided funding for the building of a visitors center at Petra.27
<table>
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<th>Project Name</th>
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<th>Location(s)</th>
<th>Project Cost (Millions, USD)</th>
<th>Loan Amount (Millions USD)</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ajloun and Petra</td>
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<td>322.67</td>
<td>197.5</td>
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Table 1. World Bank Cultural Heritage Preservation Projects in the MENA. All data from this table is taken from Budgets and Project Reports found on the World Bank’s website and cited throughout this thesis.
Chapter 2: Heritage, Tourism and the World Bank in Jordan

Having provided a brief overview of World Bank heritage preservation projects in the MENA, I will now engage in a more in-depth analysis the three heritage preservation projects in Jordan and their specific components. The Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Urban Development project represented a new facet of the World Bank’s heritage preservation activities in Jordan. While the first two Tourism Projects were, generally speaking, focused on encouraging tourism at Jordan’s best known heritage sites, such as Petra, the third represented an attempt to draw attention to other, lesser-known urban locales. In doing so, the World Bank combined its concern for urban redevelopment with heritage preservation, an important consideration within the context of preservation activities in the greater Middle East. Many sites throughout the Middle East have essentially been continuously inhabited for millennia. Because of this long history of habitation, many cities throughout the Middle East have been built over repeatedly. Eventually, those individuals with the means to do so moved further and further from historic city centers to escape crowding. Accordingly, the inhabitants of a great many urban centers throughout the region are impoverished which creates an additional layer of difficulty in heritage preservation, but also provides an opportunity to engage in urban redevelopment and the preservation of built heritage simultaneously.

The first and second tourism projects had similar objectives in terms of Petra, which is, by far, the most well known of Jordan’s historical sites. For the most part, the objectives were to increase the attractiveness and availability of the site. The original tourism project included the construction of an 82-room hotel near the site, in an effort to attract more tourists for overnight stays. Infrastructural improvements both in and around Petra were a significant component of the second tourism project. These infrastructural improvements included widening and

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resurfacing the main access road to Petra. Additionally, urban infrastructure work, including landscaping and road improvements, was undertaken in towns surrounding Petra. Waste management and environmental protection improvements were also included in the program. The project also called for the construction of a gateway and visitor center Petra; however, while preliminary planning began on a new visitor center, its construction eventually became a part of the later Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Urban Development project.

The construction at Petra, as mentioned previously, was only a small portion of the overall Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Urban Development Project. The primary objective was urban redevelopment of historic urban environments. In this way, the World Bank hoped to foster job creation and tourism. In Jerash, this included upgrading city streets, landscaping, improvements to building facades along selected streets, rehabilitating a bridge connecting the city of Jerash to the archaeological site, restoring the area around the East Baths Plaza and, the demolition of structures deemed to be, “visually invasive.” Similar objectives were outlined for Karak which included funding for “Road and Drainage improvements,” as well as refurbishing the access point to the Eastern City, cleaning of buildings in selected areas, repairs to the old wall and to the bus terminal, and the construction of a car park. In Madaba, funding was provided for street improvements, landscaping at the Church of the Map, the cleaning and repair of selected buildings, and the adaptive re-use of the Saraya building, transforming it from

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31 Ibid., 76.

32 Ibid., 76.

a government facility into a culture center. In Salt, project objectives were much the same, including the street repairs, cleaning, and adaptive re-use of existing buildings that we have seen in the other cities. Additional funds were allocated for the demolition of three government buildings in the city center and the construction of new government offices at another location. At Ajloun, the basic goals were much the same as in Jerash, Karak, Madaba and Salt. However, at Ajloun, the project was focused primarily on revitalizing and preserving the space around Ajloun Castle.

One additional aspect of the third Cultural Heritage and Tourism Project worthy of mention is the relocation of business and residents in Karak, Jerash, and Salt, and that these relocations were not necessarily voluntary. While being a relatively minor aspect of the overall project, this is, nonetheless noteworthy, especially in the context of this document’s emphasis on capabilities. Occupants of these structures were to be moved based on decisions made by the government of Jordan and the World Bank (albeit with some input from local municipal governments). These decisions were taken on the basis of improving the aesthetic quality and attractiveness to tourists of these sites. As we shall see, I believe that much of what the World Bank has done during these three Jordanian CHP projects is inherently problematic within the capabilities framework. These resettlements represent merely one of the most overtly difficult issues.


35 Ibid., 79.

36 Ibid., 79-80

37 Ibid., 81-83

38 Ibid., 81.


40 Ibid.
It is also noteworthy that the promotion of tourism was a major goal of all three Jordanian CHP projects. However, the third, and to a much lesser extent the second project also had significant urban redevelopment components. This is very much in keeping with the overall tenor of the World Bank’s objectives for CHP in the MENA region as laid out by Cernea. As will be discussed in greater detail later in this section, much of the MENA’s built heritage resides within impoverished urban areas. Furthermore, the overall lack of non fossil-fuel based resources makes them somewhat reliant on tourism as a source of income.

In the Final Project Report on the first Jordan Tourism Project, the authors confirmed this, when they wrote, “Jordan’s paucity of natural resources means that the country’s economic growth is heavily dependent upon development of export-oriented light industry and services. Tourism provides an important potential…”41 Likewise, Cernea argues that, “Tourism Sector Projects [italics in original] can link investments in tourism infrastructure expansion to improvement of patrimony management; promote cross-sectoral linkages between cultural tourism and all related cultural enterprises (primarily handicrafts); increase grassroots communities’ benefits from culture-based tourism in and around these communities; and help build institutional capacity specialized in organizing cultural tourism.”42 Consequently, there is a readily apparent emphasis on improving the general aesthetic quality of the selected sites which is clearly driven by a desire to improve attractiveness to tourists.

The other major component of World Bank CHP and tourism projects was the urban redevelopment aspect. This aim appeared during the pilot programs in Jerash and Karak during Jordan 2, and when Jordan 3 was approved, Salt, Ajloun and Madaba were added as urban redevelopment and tourism sites. Cultural heritage preservation in the Middle East and North

42 Cernea, Cultural Heritage and Development, 80-81.
Africa presents a number of unique challenges. One of the biggest is the nature of cities in the MENA. Many of the urban spaces in the region have been inhabited more or less continuously for centuries or even millennia. For a variety of reasons which are beyond the scope of this paper, many of these historic urban centers are also sites of extreme poverty and deprivation. Preserving heritage, especially built heritage in the urban environment in the MENA, is an enormous and enormously important challenge. It is, then, not surprising that the World Bank would expend CHP resources on urban redevelopment and adaptive reuse.

Many of the specific projects funded during the three Jordanian tourism-related projects were directed at infrastructure development and the promotion of local business. As Cernea indicates in *Cultural Heritage and Development*, the Bank’s role in CHP would be to intervene where it believed itself to have a comparative advantage in the field. Business and infrastructure improvements make up a great deal of the Bank’s activities on a regular basis, so it is not surprising that these are the areas of tourism promotion and heritage preservation where the World Bank believes itself to have a comparative advantage. Rather than expend time and resources in sectors where other actors are better equipped, the Bank displays a certain pragmatism choosing which aspects of a given site to prioritize.
Chapter 3: Economics, Ethics and Capabilities

This next section is devoted to an analysis of the theoretical underpinnings of Amartya Sen’s work. Here Sen’s background as a moral philosopher comes into play, as much of his critique of mainstream economics is derived from his opposition to logical positivism and the so-called fact/value dichotomy. This leads Sen into his great debate within economics. A similar process to that of the fact/value dichotomy is at work in mainline economic thought, starkly dividing the “science” of economics from ethics which are viewed as normative and useless. Sen disagrees with this on a variety of grounds, arguing that both logically and historically speaking, this perspective has little grounding in reality. Furthermore, he argues that this disassociation has, lamentably, also served to sideline welfare economics and prevented it from playing a major role in economic thought. He also takes issue with the various analytical tools that have developed as a result of the decoupling of ethics from economics, such as the Fundamental Theorem of Welfare Economics, utility and, most notably, the principle of self-interest.

Sen’s focus lies heavily on the distinction that has been drawn between economics and the sciences which deal with ‘facts’ as opposed to ethicists and other social scientists who deal with ‘values’ or ‘morals.’ Notably, Sen is also a trained moral philosopher, which is somewhat unusual for an economist. As a result, his perspectives on the role of ethics and the usefulness of capabilities stem from his position on the fact-value dichotomy. The fact-value dichotomy, stemming as it does from Hume’s famous statement that it one cannot derive an *ought* from an *is*, means, that it is not possible to deduce a moral judgment from a statement of fact. This idea is incredibly relevant where ethics are viewed in relation to “fact-based” sciences. Science (and by extension economics) is about facts, what *is*, while the ethics, the *ought*, is ultimately,

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theoretical and lacks verifiability. Hilary Putnam in his book, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy*, quotes Rudolph Carnap as saying, “All statements belonging to Metaphysics, regulative ethics, and (metaphysical) Epistemology have this defect, are in fact unverifiable and, therefore, unscientific.”

The fact/value dichotomy has come under much well justified criticism in philosophical circles from thinkers such as Putnam. Sen also challenges the fact/value dichotomy in general, but more specifically in economics. Instead of viewing economics as a science devoid of ethical inquiry, he argues it would be greatly beneficial to include ethical considerations. As he says in *On Ethics and Economics*: “I would argue that the nature of modern economics has been substantially impoverished by the distance that has grown between economics and ethics.”

In *On Ethics and Economics*, Sen posits that there are two distinct origins of economics. The first is what he calls the “‘engineering’” approach. This approach, in Sen’s words, “is characterized by being concerned with primarily logistic issues rather than with ultimate ends.” The converse is the “ethics-related tradition,” which is concerned simultaneously with seeking wealth but is also interested in related ethical quandaries such as, “how should one live?” Additionally, the “ethics-related tradition,” takes into account, “the judgment of social achievement,” as well as other ethical concerns. Sen further goes on to argue that the exclusion of ethics from economics is a relatively recent development. He notes that, “when Lionel Robbins in his influential book *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science*, argued that ‘it does not seem logically possible to associate the two studies [ethics and

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47 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
economics] in any form but mere juxtaposition,’ he was taking a position that was quite unfashionable then, although it is quite fashionable now.”\textsuperscript{51} In fact, it was Robbins who helped to popularize the separation of economics from ethics.

This is, from Sen’s perspective, both unfortunate and incorrect. He is very much of the opinion that economics has lost a great deal from ignoring ethics. More than that, Sen believes that this is based in part on a fundamentally flawed understanding of some of the earliest economists, most notably Adam Smith. Specifically, he takes exception to Smith’s standing amongst the originators of self-interest maximization theory. The notion that all people seek the maximization of their own well-being is, by and large, one of the foundational principles around which modern economics is built. Sen demurs on both these counts. According to Sen, Adam Smith has been greatly misinterpreted regarding self-interest. He says, “It is certainly true that Smith saw, as indeed anybody would, that many of our actions are, in fact guided by self-interest, and some of them do indeed produce good results.”\textsuperscript{52} He continues, “the fact that Smith noted that mutually advantageous trades are very common does not indicate at all that he thought self-love alone, or indeed prudence broadly construed, could be adequate for a good society. Indeed, he maintained precisely the opposite. He did not rest economic salvation on some unique motivation.”\textsuperscript{53} And that, “there are many other activities inside economics and outside it in which the simple pursuit of self-interest is not the great redeemer, and Smith did not assign a generally superior role to the pursuit of self-interest in any of his writings.”\textsuperscript{54} What he means is that while self-interest plays a role in economic activity, it is not the sole determinant of human behavior; rather, it is one of many.

\textsuperscript{52} Sen, \textit{On Ethics and Economics}, 23.
\textsuperscript{54} Sen, \textit{On Ethics and Economics}, 25.
These passages reveal the central focus of Sen’s criticism of self-interest maximization. Following from his reading of Smith, Sen feels that the notion that any behavior other than the pure maximization of profit and self-interest is illogical flawed. He writes, “Why should it be uniquely rational to pursue one’s own self-interest to the exclusion of everything else? It may not, of course, be at all absurd to claim that maximization of self-interest is not irrational, at least not necessarily so, but to argue that anything other than maximizing self-interest must be irrational seems altogether extraordinary.”\(^{55}\) This both explains Sen’s view on self-interest and reveals a great deal about his general worldview. He is not a wild-eyed radical. Instead, he believes in markets, capitalism and their power to alleviate poverty. However, from his point of view, most traditional methodologies of analysis are inadequate.

According to Sen, the end result is the abandoning of ethics-influenced understandings of utility and function. The upshot is that “interpersonal comparisons of utility’ were rejected as being “ethical’ or ‘normative.”\(^{56}\) This is to say, that in light of Robbins rejection of ethical considerations in economics, comparing economic utility between individuals is utter nonsense. For economists, not being forced to wrestle with ethical dilemmas opens up avenues for them to develop comprehensive theories of human behavior within optimal economic systems. What results is Pareto optimality. A system may be considered to be Pareto optimal when it becomes impossible for any one participant in a system can gain anything without another individual in that system losing something.\(^{57}\) This type of system makes no value judgments and can be quite dystopian. It is more than possible for a Pareto optimal economy to have a small minority of the exceptionally wealthy living a life of luxury and a great many others living in the most miserable, gut-wrenching poverty imaginable. As Sen puts it, “Pareto optimality can, like

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‘Caesar’s spirit,’ come hot from hell,” As a welfare-economic corollary to Pareto optimality, there exists the Fundamental Theorem of Welfare Economics. Sen sums up the Fundamental Theorem, writing that, “It shows that under certain conditions (in particular, no ‘externality,’ i.e. no interdependencies that are external to the market), every perfectly competitive equilibrium is Pareto optimal, and with some other conditions (in particular no economies of large scale), every Pareto optimal social state is also a perfectly competitive equilibrium, with respect to some set of prices.” Essentially, the Fundamental Theorem is predicated on the notion that when a state is Pareto optimal, or when a market exists in a state where supply and demand match (competitive equilibrium, the aggregate “true” price of an item), then the converse will also be true.

From Pareto optimality and the Fundamental Theorem, Sen then pivots to a discussion of the role and limitation of utility as the key measuring tool in welfare economics. He theorizes that because, “utility is regarded as the only thing of intrinsic value, then Pareto optimality would be the natural surviving criterion, since it carries the utilitarian logic as far forward as possible without actually making any interpersonal comparisons of utility” Sen then defines utilitarianism, “as a moral principle,” which “can be seen to be a combination of three more elementary requirements:

1. ‘welfarism,’ requiring that the goodness of a state of affairs be a function only of the utility information regarding that state’

1. ‘sum-ranking,’ requiring that utility information regarding any state be assessed by looking only at the sum-total of all the utilities in that state;

58 Sen, On Ethics and Economics, 32.
59 Sen, On Ethics and Economics, 34.
60 Sen, On Ethics and Economics, 38.
3 ‘consequentialism,’ requiring that every choice, whether of actions, institutions, motivations, rules, etc., be ultimately determined by the goodness of the consequent states of affairs.”

Sen strongly criticizes the utilitarian approach to welfare economics, primarily for its narrow-minded focus on well-being as the sole means of valuation. Instead, he believes that a contrast must be drawn between the ‘agency aspect,’ and the ‘well-being aspect’ of each individual. These can be, and often are, interrelated. After all, doing what we want to do often increases our well-being. However, utilitarianism, from Sen’s point of view, ignores the agency aspect that is so crucial to how Sen understands well-being and individual functioning. There are, as he sees it, two primary issues with the utility approach to well-being. The first is that, “well-being is not the only thing that is valuable,” and secondly, “that utility does not adequately represent well-being.” In Sen’s view, there is a difference between the welfare and standard of living of an individual or community and what is their “value.” Furthermore, economic status is not the sole, or even primary, means by which we assess the status and value of a human being.

Amartya Sen has strongly criticized the manner in which mainstream economic thought understands ethics, and by extension, development. Stemming from his belief in the fundamental inadequacy of the fact/value dichotomy, the essential elements of Sen’s project are predicated upon a critique of the separation of ethical thought from economic questions and the analytical tools, such as Pareto optimality, the Fundamental Theorem of Welfare Economics and utility that were developed as a result.

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61 Sen, On Ethics and Economics, 39.
63 Sen, On Ethics and Economics, 43.
64 Sen, On Ethics and Economics, 47.
Chapter 4: The Capabilities Approach

This brings me now to a discussion of the capabilities approach, a methodology which Sen has argued for forcefully. The capabilities approach represents Sen’s alternative solution to what he considers failings of mainline economics with regard to questions of development. In the following section, I will attempt to outline its key arguments. The first part of the section will introduce the essence of Sen’s argument about why capabilities provide an important alternative means of understanding the root causes of poverty and depravation and further, how they aid us in comprehending the role played by freedom in development. The second part will be devoted to an exploration of the three main typologies of freedoms identified by Sen, namely economic, political and cultural freedoms and the composition of each. Consequently, the capabilities approach serves as an analytical tool by which we may evaluate the behavior and performance of the World Bank in cultural heritage preservation.

Capabilities are, at their essence, a measure of one’s freedom to act as one wishes. As Sen wrote in *Development as Freedom*, “substantive individual freedoms are taken to be critical. The success of a society is to be evaluated, in this view, primarily by the substantive freedoms that the members of that society enjoy.” The existence of individual agency is the critical additive factor. Well being is important, but so is the existence of the freedom to act. He writes that, “The perspective of freedom can be applied to the ‘well-being aspect’ as well as to the ‘agency aspect.’ There are, therefore, *four* (italics his) distinct categories of relevant information regarding a person, involving ‘well-being achievement,’ ‘well-being freedom,’ ‘agency

achievement,’ and ‘agency freedom.’ The capabilities approach entails understanding development not purely in terms of per capita income or GDP, but also within the context of economic, political and cultural opportunities. Sen argues that, “If our attention is shifted from an exclusive concentration on income poverty to the more inclusive idea of capability deprivation, we can better understand the poverty of human lives and freedoms in terms of a different informational base.” It is only possibly to fully understand the root causes of deprivation by considering a broad range of freedoms available to an individual, or the lack there of.”

Capabilities stem from what Sen sees as significant failings in traditional economic analyses to fully comprehend and account for the root causes of poverty and inequality. This stems, as we have seen, in part from Sen’s disagreements with many of his colleagues about the nature of economic motivations and the importance of ethical questions on economics. Rather than hewing solely to economic indicators, Sen views development as a means of enhancing various kinds of freedoms. As he argued in Development as Freedom:

“The expansion of freedom is viewed as both (1) the primary end [italics his] and (2) the principal means [italics his] of development. They can be called, respectively the “constitutive role” and the “instrumental role” of freedom in development. The constitutive role of freedom relates to the importance of substantive freedom in enriching human life. The substantive freedoms include elementary capabilities like being able to avoid such deprivations as starvation, undernourishment, escapable morbidity and premature mortality, as well as the freedoms that are associated with being literate and numerate, enjoying political participation and uncensored

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68 Sen, Development as Freedom, 36.
speech and so on. In this constitutive perspective, development involves expansion of these and other basic freedoms. Development, in this view, is the process of expanding human freedoms, and the assessment of development has to be informed by this consideration.” 69

Simply increasing access to wealth is not in and of itself a sufficient end of development. Rather, it is, at best, a single evaluative element inside this larger framework (and a rather limited one at that). For Sen, what is important is not simply a measurement of how many dollars a person has in his or her pocket, rather what matters are the means by which an individual may acquire wealth. Above all else, Sen is concerned with the question of agency. By this he means, “someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives,” 70 Individual agency is key when considering capabilities. What matters, then, is someone’s ability to act according to one’s own wishes. Wealth without a simultaneous ability to make and spend it how one chooses is still deprivation. To wit, “Even if in both the scenarios (involving, respectively, free choice and compliance to dictatorial order) a person produces the same commodities in the same way and ends up with the same income and buys the same goods, she may still have very good reason to prefer the scenario of free choice over that of submission to order.” 71 In other words, agency is the most important aspect of activity. Although behavior may not change, the ability to engage in that same behavior without coercion or because of absolute economic necessity is the crucial point.

The capabilities approach is, of course, concerned with more than just agency in economic behavior. Capabilities are also relevant when considering the ability to act in a political or cultural context. Take, for example, Sen’s above contrast between a market and a

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command economy. Individual choice matters. The decisions made may be precisely the same in both instances, but the ability, say, to attend a movie of your choosing or to vote in free and fair elections are valued behaviors and serve as a valuable complement to economic analyses.

Capabilities also encourage us to take into account more than absolute standards of deprivation as well. In concentrating on the importance of agency, Sen also encourages us to take into account the ways in which individual desires and wants vary from person to person. What may be a virtual necessity in a household in the United States may be an extraordinary luxury in sub-Saharan Africa for example. Development economics often feels as if it is treated like the study of something distant and far off. This principle serves to illuminate how development economics can impact our understanding of inequality in our own society. For example, Sen uses the example of African-Americans in the United States. He points out that African-Americans suffer from both relative (in terms of income) deprivation when compared to white Americans as well as absolute (in terms of mortality rates) deprivation when compared to Indians living in the Indian province of Kerala and the Chinese.\footnote{Sen, \textit{Development as Freedom}, 21-24.}

As indicated earlier, Sen identifies three primary areas into which capabilities may be grouped. The first are economic capabilities. To a certain extent, economic capability has already been discussed. However, a more comprehensive look at economic capabilities is worthwhile. In following from his criticisms of utilitarianism and the well-being approach to development, he reorients the discussion on poverty from concern over deprivation strictly in terms of income to a more inclusive approach, that of capability deprivation. Sen argues that poverty must be seen as a lack of capability rather than a lack of income.\footnote{Meaning, of course, Sen’s idea of capabilities, rather than in the sense of an inability to do something.} He lays out three
main arguments for the superiority of poverty as capability deprivation approach over the more traditional methodology. They are:

1) Poverty can be sensibly identified in terms of capability deprivation;
2) There are other influences on capability deprivation – and thus on real poverty – other than lowness of income;
3) The instrumental relation between low income and low capability is variable between different communities and even between different families and different individuals.\textsuperscript{74}

Income is then but one of a number of indicators of a lack of capabilities, rather than the primary metric in and of itself.

In a practical sense, for Sen, the existence of free markets is of crucial importance. This is not to say that he is blind to the issues inherent in market economics. However, he views the freedom to act and transact as we choose within the economy as being an absolute necessity under the capabilities framework. He writes that, “the more immediate case for the freedom of market transaction lies in the basic importance of that freedom itself. We have good reasons to buy and sell, to exchange, and to seek lives that can flourish on the basis of transactions.”\textsuperscript{75} We see once again, that the freedom and ability to act in life as one chooses is absolutely critical both for capabilities and for development.

This is much the same when we turn our attention to the second set of capabilities: political capability. Not surprisingly, political capabilities are inescapably tied to freedom and democracy. Much as with the free market, the ability to participate in politics and express one’s opinion freely and without fear of repercussion is a requirement for development. Sen theorizes,

\textsuperscript{74} Sen, Development as Freedom, 87-88.
\textsuperscript{75} Sen, Development as Freedom, 112.
“the intensity of economic needs adds (italics his) to – rather than subtracts from – the urgency of political freedoms.” He continues on to once again identify three arguments for political freedoms in development:

1) their direct importance in human living associated with basic capabilities;
2) their instrumental role in enhancing the hearing that people get in expressing and supporting their claims to political attention;
3) their constructive role in the conceptualization of “needs.”

Sen further ruminates on the possibility that understanding economic needs in and of itself is predicated on political awareness and participation. The true value of political freedoms when it comes to development is that it serves to activate and develop our own systems of valuation. Democratic societies also offer the possibility of a leveling effect serving to bridge economic gaps between different racial, ethnic religious or gender groups within societies.

The third and final category of capabilities is that of cultural capabilities. Simply put, cultural capabilities represent the ability to act as one wishes on cultural matters. It is important to be able to voice political opinions and make choices on economic matters freely. It is likewise important for an individual to be able to decide how to utilize leisure time as well. As Sen notes, “the furtherance of well-being and freedoms that we seek in development cannot but include the enrichment of human lives through literature, music, fine arts, and other forms of cultural expression and practice, which we have reason to value…to have a high GNP per head but little music, arts, literature, etc., would not amount to a major developmental success.” After all, culture, however we define it, matters. It also follows logically that, while political freedoms are

76 Sen, Development as Freedom, 148.
77 Sen, Development as Freedom, 153.
important in developing the values and institutions that enable the propagation of economic freedoms, the freedom to utilize this newfound economic well-being to, say, go to the movie or concert of your choice, is also important.

This is especially relevant when considering the impact of the twin forces of neoliberalism and globalization on culture, as well as the role played by ‘traditional’ guardians of culture, such as religious authorities. All three of these forces must be taken into consideration in any discussion of cultural freedoms, for it is entirely possible for them to play a significant role in restricting the free exercise of cultural capabilities. For Sen, the solution is both individual and societal agency. It is up to societies to decide whether or not to preserve their ‘traditional’ culture or to embrace globalized westernized culture.\(^79\) He also believes that it is important that individuals within society also be able to make their own decisions and have their opinions heard. He states, “different sections of the society should be able to be active in the decisions regarding what to preserve and what to let go… This gives further reason for attaching importance to such elementary capabilities as reading and writing, being well informed and well briefed and having realistic chances of participating freely.”\(^80\)


Chapter 5: Sen and Culture

For the purpose of this paper, the most significant of these capabilities is the cultural. How we understand and define cultural capabilities is of enormous significance to my analysis and critique of the World Bank’s CHP activities. Therefore, I turn my attention to formulating an understanding of cultural capabilities which will then provide the means by which I evaluate the World Bank’s heritage activities in the MENA. Cultural capabilities may be understood as the ability for an individual to contribute to the processes of producing, consuming and remembrance of culture. I argue that one form of cultural capability exists when each individual in a given society regardless of age, gender, or race is able to contribute to discourses of heritage, tradition and history. In line with Sen’s arguments for the importance of equitable participation in the political process, it is equally necessary for the production of culture and heritage to be a universally available discourse rather than an elite or selective one.

It is entirely reasonable to understand the underlying agency of cultural capabilities as the ability to contribute of one’s own volition to the production of history, memory and culture. From this perspective, cultural capabilities are far more than just the ability to decide, for example, whether to go see an American film or attend a traditional local festival. They are, rather, an individual’s ability to make decisions and contribute towards the overarching discourses, narratives and memories of a given society. However, this is not unqualified. Sen writes that, “It will not have escaped the reader that this book is informed by a belief in the ability of different people from different cultures to share many common values and to agree on some common commitments.”81 A certain universalism pervades his writing in the sense that he

81 Sen, Development as Freedom, 244.
believes that, at their core, cultures share certain commonalities and standards of belief and behavior.

I believe that it is necessary to interpret culture generally, and by extension, cultural capabilities into at least three different modes. These are the consumption, production and remembrance/development of culture. The consumption of culture in many ways is the most self-evident mode of cultural activity. Whenever you go to a concert, see a play, or visit a place such as Petra, you are participating in the consumption of culture. This is the most basic mode of cultural expression. The movies you watch, the games you play, the places you eat and where you spend your free time on a daily basis all make up this level of culture. Without the consumption of culture, its production and development would not exist. From a capabilities perspective, having the ability to, of your own accord, choose what elements of culture to consume is the most basic form of cultural capability.

The production of culture both shapes and is in turn enabled by the consumption of culture. This is the other side of the coin. It is undertaken by the artist, actor or writer, but what they produce is driven by the consumption of cultural goods and services. Cultural production is the creation and development of cultural goods and services. The production of culture is a sort of near-term version of the remembrance of culture. The producers of culture in their own temporal and spatial domains respond to societal, cultural and temporal concerns each in their own particular idiom, which is, in turn, impacted by long-term remembrances of cultural standards as well as the wants and desires of their contemporaries.

The development/remembrance of culture is the final mode of culture. It is the culmination of the production and consumption of culture. Much like Koselleck’s notion of the
rewriting of history, the remembrance of culture is a long process of interpreting, modifying and understanding our own culture and cultural heritage. The development of culture is about who and what we believe ourselves to be, where we came from, and where we are going. This is the most critical aspect of culture from a capabilities standpoint. The ability to participate in and contribute to the development of historical and cultural process and memory is an absolutely critical component of cultural capabilities.

All of these various modes of culture are, to borrow a term from Bourdieu, “coproduced.” The consumption of cultural goods requires their production in the first place. Big-budget adaptations of popular comic book movies in recent years have made enormous amounts of money and have been seen by hundreds of millions of people around the globe, further stimulating demand for films in a similar vein. Simultaneously, the interests of cultural consumers influence the type of goods and services produced. If, to continue our example, comic book films were to suffer a sudden, massive decrease in popularity with consumers, studios would likely move on to other, more fertile ground. What is produced and consumed is also influenced greatly by our understanding of culture, tradition, heritage and the past but, ultimately, these too are shaped by the consumption and production of traditional culture. By way of example, jazz, baseball and Hollywood all become transformed in terms of identity and discursively by the natural passage of time, and recollection and narrativization of past events, from something that Americans do to a part of what America is.

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84 Just between the two main comic book publishing houses, DC and Marvel, there are almost 30 superhero movies scheduled for release over the next 5 years. See, the “Complete Superhero Movie Release Calendar,” accessed April 19, 2015. http://www.denofgeek.us/movies/superhero-movies/238072/complete-superhero-movie-release-calendar
This process is often messy, uncoordinated and fraught with peril. Everyone has their own perspectives, interpretations and constructions of culture and the past. They are often shaped by an enormous variety of factors. In this sense, the past and culture are almost living things that simultaneously shape and are shaped by us. Consequently, no one is without an agenda, even of the most benign form. We are all so enormously shaped by the direction of our lived experiences and the environments, milieus and cultures we have encountered. We are constantly interpreting both our personal past as well as our various collective past within these contexts. Different people understand the past in vastly different and often conflicting ways.

This last point is of crucial importance, especially in light of that fact that we in the 20th century are extraordinarily concerned with shepherding the remnants of the past, and also with remembrance and interpretation of previous events. David Lowenthal argues that this is because of, “Dismay at massive change stokes demands for heritage. Market forces swiftly outdate most things now made or built; migration uproots millions from familiar locales; technology transforms familiar scenes at shocking speed.”\(^85\) Whatever the cause of our fascination with the objects and monuments of the past, massive industry has most certainly been brought to bear in the name of preserving the past. There are, not surprisingly, numerous difficulties incumbent in the preservation, recording and remembrance of history. There are enormous practical obstacles to the preservation of historical objects and monuments, however, it goes far beyond mere preservation. The objects of past, as well as, how they are viewed, understood, and remembered can become powerful tools of the present.

The past is a surprisingly malleable object, because as individuals we have only truly experienced what our eyes can see. We cannot ever truly know or understand the past. As a

result, it can be formed and fitted around our own biases, and narratives. In this way, the far from certain expansion of the United States from Atlantic to Pacific becomes a fait accompli. Mehmet Ali Pasha, a servant of the Ottoman Empire, born to Albanian parents in the present-day Greek city of Kevala, becomes the posthumous father of Egyptian nationalism. The past is easily interpreted in such a way as to be approving of a particular viewpoint. This is especially poignant because of how effortlessly the past becomes marshaled into the disputes of the present. Wars fought with weapons are often also contested with words. Dueling discourses and narratives of the past often play a crucial role in supporting, and in some cases causing conflict. Words are weapons, just as much as tanks, aircraft and machine guns. The sixty plus years of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stands in sad testament to this. Academics, politicians, authors, poets and directors have battled not only on battlefields throughout Israel and Palestine but on television, in books and at the United Nations. Ongoing debates rage on over the causes of the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948, and its consequent impact on discourses regarding the right of Palestinians to return to the homes they left (or were forced from).86

These narrative-driven wars are at times waged within national discourses as well, as evidenced, by the experience of the Kurds in Turkey. Governments or elite bodies within a state may suppress individual or minority discourses at the expense of a cohesive national narrative.87 All too often, perspectives and cultures outside of the mainstream are forgotten or ignored. It is impossible to adequately record everything, even in the data-driven 21st century. Because of this, events and points of view will always be left out. At times this is the byproduct of the routine, other times it is because of the marginalization or perceived unimportance of the individual or

86 The Nakba remains a highly volatile site of symbolic and political contestation for Israelis and Palestinians. For a range of perspectives see, amongst many others The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle For Statehood by Rashid Khalidi, 1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War by Benny Morris as well as Fabricating Israeli History: the “new historians” by Efraim Karsh.
87 See, for example Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey by Yael Navaro-Yashin
group in question, and yet other times it is the result of a deliberate attempt to suppress alternative perspectives. Whatever the cause of the production of silences in the historical and cultural record, what we forget and what we remember matters.  

These issues become even thornier when we begin to discuss cultural heritage. After all, culture is much more than physical objects. It is the culmination of all of our various narratives, discourses and tastes. Fundamentally, culture is about who and what we are. The preservation of culture presents a set of unique additional challenges. When restoring an historic building or an object, what previous state (or the approximation thereof) to return it to requires us to examine to what narratives and discourses we are contributing to. In addition we must ask ourselves what moments are we eliminating or silencing?

So what does all of this mean in the context of Sen’s capabilities approach? As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, I believe that we can view cultural capabilities as having the ability to act as one chooses not only within the three mutually constitutive modes of culture already, but also in shaping individual and collective narratives, traditions and heritage. The ability of racial and cultural minorities, women and LGBT communities to participate openly in the shaping of culture and heritage discourses is absolutely critical for an open, fully functioning development agenda predicated upon Sen’s ideas.

Because the remembrance of the past is a crucial element in how we understand the present, it is necessary to ensure that as many voices as possible are heard in shaping our own histories. This is greatly relevant when considering the preservation of heritage. As I have discussed previously and as we will see below, preserving the past is an extraordinarily complex activity which requires serious consideration and exceptional sensitivity. Cultural heritage

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covers an enormously broad field, comprising art, music, structures, everyday objects, patterns of belief and behavior, and a great many other things. As a result, the best way to ensure the preservation of the cultural patrimony of all mankind to the greatest extent possible is to include as many disparate voices as possible and that, furthermore, these voices be able to contribute what they will, when they will, without fear of repercussion or dismissal.
Chapter 6: The World Bank, Jordan and Capabilities

The final section of this paper is devoted to an analysis of the World Bank’s heritage preservation projects in the MENA. I problematize these projects along the lines of the conception of cultural capabilities which have outlined above. I argue that the World Bank fails to achieve the standard set by this conception of cultural capabilities. It is, ultimately, constrained by the necessity of operating within national boundaries, requiring them to interact with national governments who often have specific narratives and discourses about the past which they wish to project through heritage projects. In this way, the agenda and mission of the Bank often privileges certain aspects of history at the expense of the other. Related to these is also the question and problem of tourism which also has the potential to privilege certain aspects of history as well as encourage the reproduction of power imbalances between local and external populations.

The World Bank’s program in Jordan and elsewhere in the MENA region is most certainly impacted by difficulties regarding the production of culture. As I have discussed earlier in this paper, this is something to which I believe that Sen does not pay adequate attention. For him, individual agency in cultural decisions is the critical aspect. I have argued that we can further understand and interpret Sen’s notion of cultural capabilities within the context of the production of history and knowledge. Furthermore, it serves to expand upon some of the complexities inherent both in understanding cultural capability and heritage preservation.

It is in this context that I approach the Bank’s CHP activities. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus primarily on the capability for individuals to contribute to the production of culture and cultural activities rather than its consumption. It is here especially where the World Bank fails to develop individual capabilities and I will outline the reasons why. They fall into
three major areas. The first and most important are the ways in which culture, identity, history and memory are produced. It is, in fact, impossible to understand the other elements without an understanding of this principle. Second, there are also significant structural issues regarding the ways in which the World Bank operates that impede the development of cultural capabilities. This is directly related to the reliance of the World Bank on centrally organized states. It necessarily must operate through and with them. As a result, when the World Bank operates in the cultural field, it often of necessity serves the interests and narratives of central governments. While not explicitly problematic in this instance, it does, however, have troubling potential. The third and final concern is over tourism. Commensurate with questions of memory and history, tourism also raises some concerns. There are serious issues of globalization and Orientalism raised by the notion of tourism as development.

One of the preliminary issues that must be discussed is this: does what the World Bank is doing in the MENA region represent the commoditization of culture? Answering the question of how precisely to define the commoditization of culture and its merits and demerits is well beyond the scope of this paper. On the other hand, it seems prudent to briefly examine two sides of this complex issue.

When it comes to the question of utilizing cultural heritage as a means of development, where the World Bank stands is quite obvious. In *Cultural Heritage in Development*, Cernea concisely laid out the Bank’s perspective, saying that, “The presence of such valuable endowments [cultural patrimony] in all the [MENA] region’s countries opens up a major development opportunity; the cultural patrimony can become a pillar of the region’s overall growth-enhancing strategy.”89 CHP and tourism in the World Bank’s view can readily be

harnessed as a vehicle for achieving development objectives in the Middle East and North Africa. I believe that the World Bank would argue that their CHP activities in the MENA is not strictly commoditization. Instead what they would argue is likely that the Bank is utilizing the resources of a particular region in a manner that simultaneously creates results and enables local populations to preserve and utilize their cultural patrimony to its fullest extent. Furthermore, they might add, even if that amounts to the commoditization of culture, their ultimate objectives are not the unthinking preservation of culture, but rather the alleviation of poverty and human misery.90

The alternative perspective is one that you might hear from many academics or heritage professionals.91 Their point of view might well be instead that any attempt to monetize heritage, especially built heritage, represents a variety of things, all of them bad. First off, the utilization of heritage sites as tourist attractions is potentially a danger to the preservation of the sites themselves. Excessive tourist visits to a site could endanger its very survival. The ultimate goal of heritage preservation is apparent in the name. While making a site or object accessible or viewable to the public at large is worthwhile, when a choice needs to be made, the obligation to preserve an object always comes before any responsibility to the public. Second, heritage is often seen by academics and professionals to be the purview of all mankind. The World Bank must work with state and local governments in order to preserve heritage. As a result, this establishes principles for the implied ownership of cultural heritage, something which many in the heritage industry oppose.92

91 For example, Peter H. Welsh in his article “The Power of Possessions: the Case Against Property” (Museum Anthropology, Volume 21, Number 3, 1997).
92 For example, the UNESCO “Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage” states that, “While fully respecting the sovereignty of the States on whose territory the cultural and national heritage mentioned in Articles 1 and 2 is, situated; and without prejudice to property rights provided by national legislation, the States Parties to this Convention recognize that such heritage constitutes a world heritage for whose protection it is the duty of the international community as a
As I have noted previously, the relative merits of these two lines of reasoning and all of their alternatives are beyond the scope of this paper. However, I will briefly state that, ultimately, I am sympathetic to an intermediate position. Heritage can be a vehicle for development. However, it must be done carefully so as not to potentially destroy any valuable heritage. Additionally, any sort of developmental objectives in CHP must include significant feedback and sensitivity towards local populations. I also believe that in any case where development objectives clash with CHP activities and provided that there are no alternatives, CHP necessarily comes first unless the value to society is so great as to override all other considerations. I believe that cultural capabilities likewise supports this perspective. In this view it is incumbent on local populations and individuals as a group to make these tough choices, rather than having them made by elite groups or individuals.


Chapter 7: Cultural Capabilities and the Production of History and Narrative

The next issue that must be addressed is that of how culture, history and memory are produced. This is, once again, an extraordinarily complex issue, the full scope of which cannot possibly be addressed here. These are issues of heritage that go far beyond any one organization. They are, in many respects the fundamental questions of heritage and heritage preservation. With that said, an overview of some of these issues, and how they may impact our discussion of cultural heritage preservation and the World Bank’s involvement in heritage, is necessary.

Much of the difficulty stems from trying to answer a few fundamental questions about heritage preservation. The questions that most concern us are as follows: 1) what are we preserving and why? Who is able to choose which buildings or items get preserved and restored and why must be taken into serious consideration. Sometimes their motivations are obvious. A ministry of religious affairs would likely be more interested in the reconstruction of an historic mosque than a souk for example, but these motivations are not necessarily obvious on the surface. Understanding these perspectives is important. 2) What moment in history do we remember? When a restorer repairs an historic building or retouches a work of art, a choice is necessary in that repair or restoration. The restorer must choose a moment in time, a state of prior existence to attempt to return the object or monument to. This, by definition, privileges that moment in history to exclude all other moments. If a house in Damascus has existed in one form or another since pre-Roman times, what past moment do we remember? Is it the house during the era of the successors to Alexander? Or will it be the Roman period, the Byzantine, the Umayyad, the Ayyubid, the Mamluk or the Ottoman? This brings us to: 3) what history and what narrative is being presented by this restoration? When restoration is done, it (whether consciously or unconsciously) presents a history and a narrative. Some moments in time are favored, while others are forgotten or ignored. This process and the historical narratives
produced by heritage activity is hugely important in how we understand heritage preservation and its consequences. These questions do not necessarily have readily made answers in any set of circumstances, but they must be kept in mind.

These questions are relevant in the CHP field for an analysis of World Bank CHP in the Middle East and North Africa. As we have seen, the capabilities approach may be applied to the creation of historical narratives and memory in interesting ways. Sen understands agency and the ability to choose from among different outcomes as being of paramount importance. At its most fundamental level, we can understand capabilities as the opportunity for an individual to contribute on an individual level to the development of narrative history and sociohistorical processes.

The World Bank is constrained in this field by the necessity of operating through centralized and formally recognized governments. As we shall see later in this paper, this is an issue partly because it restricts the development of capabilities by operating in a top down manner which limits individual opportunities to exhibit agency. More importantly here, the World Bank, because of this necessity, must operate through and with these governments. As a result, when the World Bank delves into cultural heritage preservation, it is inherently constrained by the agendas and national narratives produced by these states. Although in the case of Jordan, an all-encompassing, hegemonic national narrative and discourse is not readily apparent in these CHP projects, this is a significant concern. This is especially true when one considers that heritage preservation projects may promote narratives that privilege on narrative at the expense of a rival or minority group within a nation. It is not at all difficult to imagine a set of circumstances where this could occur.
Another issue arises when we consider the mission of the World Bank. Simply put, what the World Bank is concerned with at the end of the day are tangible, material improvements in the lives of people in the developing world. The World Bank’s stated objectives are, “Ending Extreme Poverty and Promoting Shared Prosperity.” Making people happier, freer or granting them more choices are simply secondary objectives to the main goal of improving their material well-being.94 The World Bank is in a position where it must produce concrete evidence of success. They cannot, do as the King of Bhutan once did, declare that “Gross National Happiness” was more important than Gross National Product.95 This is all further complicated by the World Bank’s promotion of neoliberal economic policies such as economic decentralization and privatization.96 The Bank’s projects often promote just this sort of agenda and, importantly, none of this serves to unlock the ability for people in the developing world to exercise their cultural capabilities in either of the senses discussed in this paper.

It should be noted that I do not believe that the World Bank has some nefarious agenda that it attempts to achieve. Instead, I am of the opinion that the World Bank is fundamentally limited by certain features inherent in its organization and mission that constrain it from achieving compatibility with the capabilities approach. Despite occasional (such as we have seen with Cernea’s book) incorporation of a Senian perspective, on the whole, when it comes to the everyday operations of World Bank projects, economic advancement above all else is paramount. Additionally, incorporating some of Sen’s ideas, especially in terms of economic and cultural capabilities is extraordinarily difficult in practice. Many of the nations in which the World Bank operates (including, it must be noted, Jordan) are monarchies or otherwise

authoritarian regimes where emphasizing democracy and the freedom to operate in the cultural sphere is difficult at best.
Following from the above critique of the World Bank, I wish now to turn my attention to another problematic issue with the World Bank’s CHP activities throughout the MENA: tourism. I wish to argue that tourism, or at least the tourism as economic development perspective of the World Bank, is inherently problematic. This is the case for two interrelated reasons. First, tourism-as-development in many ways promotes many of the traditional imbalances in power structure between the developed and developing world. Second, working in the cultural heritage field with the objective of promoting tourism has the potential to, and in practice does, limit opportunities to exercise agency within the field of cultural production.

As has been discussed repeatedly in this paper, the World Bank believes that significant development potential exists in the cultural heritage of the Middle East and North Africa. The issue that arises is that in the developing world tourism, has the potential to reinforce historical imbalances and relationships between visitors and the visited. This is partly based ultimately on the simple logic of supply and demand and stems from much the same factors that encourage tourism as development in the first place. Many countries in the MENA have a wealth of noteworthy heritage sites, while visitors from outside of the region have the leisure time and disposable income sufficient to visit these sights. When they arrive, non-local visitors are, generally speaking, served by locals in their hotels, shops and at the sites themselves. This has the potential to promote traditional historical power relationships between “Occidental,” to put it in Edward Said’s terms, guests and their “Oriental” hosts.

By way of example, according to the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, as cited by the World Bank itself, from 1998 to 2004 (the duration of the Second Jordanian Tourism Project) European visitors to Petra alone totaled approximately 1.075 million, or just
over half of all visits. If we include American visitors to that total, the number rises 1.312 million, or almost 62 percent of total visits to Petra. On the other hand, over the same period, there were some 433 thousand Jordanian visitors to Petra comprising a bit over 20 percent of total visitors during the period. An absolute majority of visitors to Petra came from Europe of America. While visiting Petra, they likely were driven to the site, their hotel staffed, and the tour guided by locals. The experience of “Western” tourists at locations such as Petra may exacerbate and reinforce the standard divides between the global North and global South.

This in turn reveals another potential problem with the tourism as development approach. Due to the fact that Petra (or any other similar site) is visited mostly by non-native (and indeed non-Middle Eastern) tourists, this encourages catering to non-locals in terms of the presentation of narratives as well as access to the site. In turn the possibility of the exclusion of the local populace, both figuratively and literally, from the site in question is created.

Tourism can also limit the ability for an individual to exhibit individual agency and decision making, the essential characteristic of the capabilities approach. Cities and inhabited spaces near these heritage sites often become almost wholly dependent on tourism sites for their economic well-being. For example, in the implementation completion report on Jordan 2, the authors wrote that, “In Wadi Musa [near Petra], it was estimated from interviews that about half the families derived significant income from some aspect of tourism, through the related employment of at least one family member.” The issue is that, for the most part, the local populace has very little impact on the decisions being made about alterations to their communities or to the locations upon which they depend.

98 Ibid.
This has potentially devastating consequences. When local populations lose input or control over the tourism or heritage sites that comprise their livelihood, as John Brohman put it, “they and the resources upon which they depend become the targets of top-down decision-making by elitist bodies exogenous to the community. Decisions governing their lives, even those that address local matters, are normally made elsewhere according to the narrow interests of those that control the tourism industry.”

Elements of this situation exist in the Jordanian example. At Wadi Rum, the World Bank survey mentioned earlier uncovered high levels of dissatisfaction with project improvements there. This is despite evidence of economic improvement. The completion report argues that this, “derives mainly from local stakeholder politics,” although the authors were later forced to acknowledge that some of the complaints from residents were legitimate.  It is, however, important to note that these concerns were acknowledged after the completion of the project rather than prior to its implementation.

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102 Ibid.
Conclusion

The primary aim of this paper has been to problematize the heritage preservation activities of the World Bank in the Middle East and North Africa. In doing so, I have endeavored to explore the ways in which Amartya Sen’s capabilities approach to development may be adapted to include embracing agency with regard to the production of discourses on history, tradition, heritage and culture. I have also examined the World Bank’s heritage preservation activities in the Middle East and North Africa, specifically focusing on three projects in Jordan.

As we have seen, Sen offers an approach to development that is rather distinct from most standard methodologies of developmental analysis. Rather than focus exclusively on standard indicators like GDP and per capita income, Sen instead argues that what matters most in development is enhancing the ability for individuals to exhibit agency in economic, political and cultural matters. I further interpret this to incorporate Senian capabilities within a framework of tradition and heritage. In my view, cultural capabilities also include the opportunity for all people within a given society to contribute their own individual perspectives to the creation of national narratives, discourses tradition, and heritage.

Beginning in the late 1990’s, the World Bank began to exhibit an increased interest in utilizing the cultural patrimony of the Middle East and North Africa as a vehicle for economic development. The Bank’s rationale, as laid out by Michael Cernea, was predicated utilizing the rich heritage of the MENA region to encourage urban redevelopment and tourism. The World Bank, to date, has sponsored some eight projects in five countries throughout the region. I argue, however, that from the capabilities perspective, the World Bank’s CHP activities are inherently problematic. This is so for several reasons. First, there are significant questions as to whether or not we should be commoditizing heritage in the first place. Second, the World Bank is
constrained by its organizational structure and the need to operate through national governments. This encourages top-down decision making that limits the agency of local populations in contributing to the creation and preservation of their own heritage. Third, related to the second point, the World Bank is also limited by both its ideology as a bastion of neoliberal economics as well as, once again, by the need to operate through central governments which encourages the production of official, elite historical narratives. Fourth and finally, the Bank’s promotion of tourism is problematic because it often promotes historic power imbalances between tourists and locals and, furthermore, limits economic agency by forcing locals to engage in heritage or tourism-related industry.
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