The Cultural and Natural Nexus on Sacred Mountains:

A Case Study of Sagarmatha National Park and UNESCO's Categorization

Lindsay Scott, University College London, United Kingdom, lindsparis@gmail.com

Kalliopi Fouseki, University College London, United Kingdom, kalliopi.fouseki@ucl.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper explores sacred mountains and their categorization as cultural landscapes with a focus on Sagarmatha National Park (SNP), one of the first mountain sites inscribed on the World Heritage List (WHL). Inscribed under natural heritage criteria (criterion vii), SNP is identified with superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.

Given that SNP was inscribed to the WHL prior to the emergence of UNESCO's cultural landscape category, this paper argues that the classificatory systems and categorization adopted by governments and organizations - such as UNESCO - can threaten the holistic, tangible/intangible, cultural/natural essence of sites.

The paper unpacks through a combined semiotic and textual analysis of images, text, and impressions of visitors and residents, the cultural features of SNP, and advocates for its re-nomination as a cultural landscape. Re-nomination is critical due to the implications that the narrow interpretation of SNP as a natural site have for inhabitants, visitors and long-term sustainability. UNESCO's re-nomination process and categories are questioned as an overlap between mixed sites and cultural landscapes becomes evident. The paper ultimately examines whether categorization of heritage prohibits or facilitates a sustainable feature of cultural landscapes as living sacred mountains.

INTRODUCTION

After being recognized as a type of World Heritage in 1992, despite many expert meetings on the topic, it was asserted in 2005 that the field of cultural landscapes was still considered "vastly under-theorized" (The Smithsonian, 2005, cited by, Taylor and Lennon, 2012; pxvi). It is likely that today, a residual research deficiency remains, and potentially suggests a neglect that actual properties are facing; policy takes time to respond to research.

The value attributed to a site is a determinant of a site's conservation; it affects how and what threats are perceived, and consequently, the measures put in place to combat them. This raises an important question: what are the implications of their value assessment? In this study, Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) is chosen as a representative case with the research objective being to analyze UNESCO's framework for site categorization, and subsequently reveal the consequences that categorization policies have on site interpretation and heritage conservation. This study investigates how it is possible that SNP is still categorized as a natural World Heritage site, while ample evidence points toward a mixed site or cultural landscape categorization. Renomination of the site is necessary to ensure its sustainability. Indeed, SNP is frequently referenced as a cultural landscape. However, there has been no clear inquiry into the reasons why SNP is not categorized as such.

This research was initially triggered from a personal trip taken to SNP. In April 2012, Lindsay Scott took part in the mountaineering trek from Lhukla to Everest Base camp and a one-month stint at base camp. The research was further carried out in 2013-2014 as part of the MSc Sustainable Heritage at the University College London. Personal unobtrusive observations, image analysis, semi-structured interviews and self-administered questionnaires were implemented in order to explore perceptions of mountaineers towards the site.

UNESCO

States parties are responsible for nominating heritage sites from within their territory to be inscribed on the WHL. These fit into either a cultural, natural, or mixed category. Additionally, there are three expert advisory bodies involved in assessing a nominated site and determining its relevance: The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM). The World Heritage Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (henceforth Operational Guidelines) is a reference guide that includes the definition of cultural, natural and mixed properties, and the exact nomination criteria that sites must meet in order to be considered for the WHL. The Property definitions in the most recent Operational Guidelines (2015) are given below (Table 1)

CULTURAL HERITAGE (Article1 of the Convention)
- *monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science;*
- *groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science;*
- *sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view*

NATURAL HERITAGE (Article 2 of the Convention)
- *natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view; geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation;*
- *natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.*

MIXED CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE (Paragraph 46 Convention)
Properties shall be considered as "mixed cultural and natural heritage" if they satisfy a part or the whole of the definitions of both cultural and natural heritage laid out in Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention 15 Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention

UNESCO, 2015

Filling a Gap: Cultural Landscapes

Eventually, UNESCO realized that there was a global imbalance of sites, and that the WHL was Eurocentric (Steiner and Frey, 2012). This led to the implementation of the *Global Strategy for a Balanced, Representative and Credible World Heritage List*. The introduction of cultural landscapes was seen as a correction to the Eurocentric global imbalance of world heritage that focused on monuments and a step toward admitting that other cultures had sites of universal value that did not fit within the categorical limitations. Many cultures with outstanding relationships often had landscapes with less monumental heritage, and yet were far from being vacant landscapes. Cultural landscapes

> **CULTURAL LANDSCAPES**
> "...*cultural properties [that] represent the combined works of nature and of man" designated in Article 1 of the Convention. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal.*" (UNESCO, 2015;p15)

Table 2 Cultural Landscape Definition

are included in the Operational Guidelines as:

"Between 1992 and 2001, a total of fourteen expert meetings on cultural landscapes were organized" (Fowler, 2003(b);p13) (Fig. 1). Peter Fowler's "*World Heritage Cultural Landscapes 1992-2002*" offers a ten-year review. In 2002, there were 30 cultural landscapes inscribed on the WHL. Fowler suggested that there were in fact another 100 already inscribed, but inappropriately categorized. He predicted that 100 more would be added to the list by 2012. As of 2013, one year past his predicted deadline, 82 had been added. Two of the properties were previously inscribed on the list under another category, and were re-nominated as cultural landscapes. Therefore, it turns out that Fowler's forecast for the number of newly inscribed cultural landscapes that would be on the WHL was 80% correct but only 2% accurate for renominations. His analysis of the former was excellent, giving merit to the claim that 100 deserved re-nomination. Unfortunately though, *only two* of the suggested hundred have been re-nominated, not because Fowler's work was lacking, but because of structural stagnancy in the re-nomination system, leaving some properties to face what are potentially insufficient categorization and conservation measures.

Cultural Landscape Expert Meetings 1992–2001

- Desert Landscapes and Oasis Systems in the Arab Region (Egypt, September 2001)
- Sacred Mountains of Asia (Japan, September 2001)
- Vineyard Cultural Landscapes (Hungary, July 2001)
- Cultural Landscapes in Central America (Costa Rica, September 2000)
- Cultural Landscapes in Eastern Europe (Poland, October 1999)
- Cultural Landscapes in Africa (Kenya, March 1999)
- Cultural Landscapes in the Andes (Peru, May 1998)
- European Cultural Landscapes of Outstanding Universal Value (Austria, April 1996)
- Asia-Pacific Workshop on Associative Cultural Landscapes (Australia, April 1995)
- Asian Rice Culture and its Terraced Landscapes (Philippines, March/April 1995)
- Routes as Part of the Cultural Heritage (Spain, November 1994)
- Heritage Canals (Canada, September 1994)
- Cultural Landscapes of Outstanding Universal Value

Figure 1 Cultural Landscape Meetings (Fowler, 2003)

Sitting Still

Although reasons vary for the low rate of re-nomination, one is arguably ambiguity (Fowler, 2003;p45). "The Convention makes clear in articles 3,4 and 5 that States Parties are responsible for selecting, nominating and ultimately conserving World Heritage sites" (UNESCO, 1972, cited by, Labadi, 2013; p29). Responsibility of the States Parties may be the issue as it can depend on government's interest, awareness, or understanding of the categorical terms. Léon Pressouyre refers to the issue of defining cultural landscapes apart from mixed sites as "the Convention's stumbling block… (Pressouyre, 1996;p28). Fowler suggests that mixed sites should be re-evaluated as cultural landscapes. In a separate study, Shackley states that the, "term [cultural landscape] came to prominence…to *replace* a former category of 'mixed sites'" (Shackley, 2001; p124, emphasis added). Shackley's statement cannot be the case, because replacement, by definition, implies that the mixed site category would cease to exist. UNESCO has stated that cultural landscapes are an "addition to, rather than a replacement of, mixed properties" (Centre, 1993). But this confuses the issue even further, as cultural landscapes were evaluated by only cultural criteria rather than natural or both (Cleere 1995a;p65, cited by, Labadi, 2013;p42). Although not primarily a mixed subcategory, they are mixed in character. UNESCO's statement, compared with the conflicting academic perspectives shows that even among experts there are inconsistent understandings as to what constitutes a cultural landscape vs. a mixed site. How then can we expect State Parties to determine a definition? Too much is left up to the States Parties. There is surely room for UNESCO to be more engaged in the name of assistance (Fowler, 2003(a);p23, Kishore, 2010). Rao cites Bolla in cautioning that "the various criteria and guidelines governing the evaluation of cultural properties must not render the operation so opaque that it escapes the comprehension of cultivated audiences and is only understood by a small international bureaucracy". (Bolla 2005;p93, cited by, RAO, 2010).

Sacred Mountains

Mountains play a vital role in maintaining diversity worldwide. Out of all existing types of topography, mountains are home to one-tenth of the world's population, particularly "minority ethnic groups" (Australia ICOMOS, 2003;p5), who hold keys to unstudied languages and sustainable land-use. At UNESCO's Asia-Pacific meeting for Sacred Mountains in 2001 it was stated that cultural landscapes were the most appropriate category for sacred mountains.

Addressing gaps in 2001, Mechtild Rossler specified that, "the problem [was] that some of the most sacred mountains of this earth [were] not considered by governments to be nominated for the World Heritage list at the present time" Rossler's statement reflects UNESCO's stance: these are properties deserving of WHL status, UNESCO desires them to be included, but UNESCO is depending on states to act. This applies to original nominations, and re-nominations, a problem that might be alleviated with stronger encouragement, and less ambiguous terminology.

Figure 2 SNP Entrance (Scott, 2012)

SAGARMATHA NATIONAL PARK

SNP (Figure 2) was established in 1976, and in 1979, became the 47th property to be inscribed on the WHL Located in the Himalayas, it is the highest and youngest mountain range in the world, and is unquestionably a stunning natural property, suitable for criteria (vii). In 1973, Nepal's Prince Gyanendra supported the idea for a national park and specifically stated that it was of "major significance…to the world as an ecological *cultural*, and geographical treasure" (Brower 1991; p74, citing L.N. Sherpa, 1979;p32 emphasis added). However, the cultural element was overlooked when, in the haste of favoring environmental protection, the State Party opted to nominate it purely under natural criteria. At the time of its inscription, cultural elements of the property were noted, but natural categorization proceeded.

The original IUCN evaluation, states that SNP represents "superlative natural phenomena of exceptional natural beauty" (IUCN, n.d;p2) and satisfies "…criteria where natural and cultural elements are found in exceptional combinations." It states that the Sherpa culture is "of great cultural interest" (IUCN, n.d;p5). The **conservation value** of the park is listed as being of "*major cultural and religious significance*" (IUCN, n.d;p7, emphasis added). No steps were taken to address this cultural acknowledgement on a categorical level. The document's **conservation management plan** considers the Sherpa culture and mentions that the SNP management plan is unique in its efforts to accommodate the people. In fact the park was thought to be pioneering for its alternative management of a natural park making room for the culture (Stevens,2003), but the Sherpa had been situated there for centuries. Evidently, beneath the layers, attention was being paid to the Sherpa culture, but the categorical identity ascribed to the site muddled the meaning.

SNP is rarely discussed without mention of cultural elements (Brower 1991;p172). By 1995 ,the site was included as an exemplary property in one of UNESCO's cardinal publications on cultural landscapes (Caspary, 1995), yet was never inscribed as such. Each party involved has admitted cultural value (UNESCO, IUCN, Prince Gyanendra).

Cultural Elements of SNP
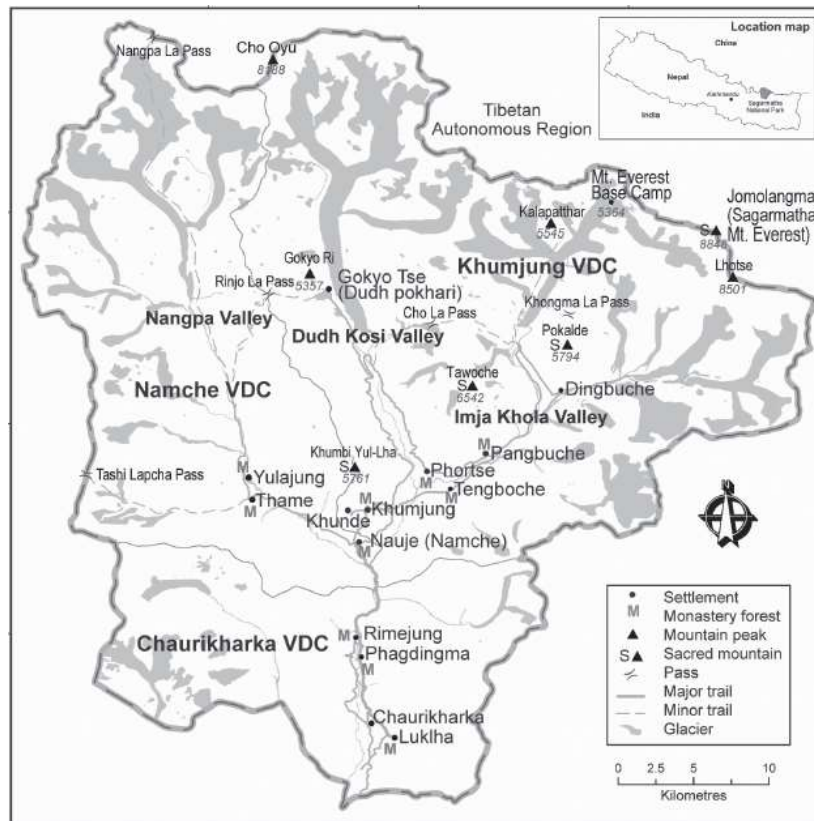
Figure 3
Sacred Map of SNP (International Center for Integrated Mountain Development,
cited by, Spoon, 2011)

The government created the name Sagarmatha for the establishment of the park. Its meaning is "Forehead of the Sky", a reference to Everest being the world's highest peak (Bernbaum, 1990;p7). Here there is a value difference. Westerners saw Mount Everest and the first thing that came to mind was a desire to summit, to conquer. Meanwhile, there was no translation of "summit" in Tibetan; and the Sherpa porters, did not identify with the western motivations. Place naming is a "powerful vehicle for changing and challenging lines of identity" (Alderman, 2008;p11). With values of the land shifted in renaming the park, the Sherpa cultural identity was already affected

Spiritual value	Description	Environmental benefit
Beyul (Sacred Hidden Valleys)	Sacred hidden valleys set aside by the progenitor of Tibetan Buddhism Guru Rinpoche in the 8th century as places of refuge	Code of conduct makes humans and the physical landscape interconnected. Taboo on the harming or killing of sentient beings from botanicals to animals to humans
Yul Lha (Mountain Protector Deities)	Deities subdued by Guru Rinpoche to be protectors of Buddhism. Central protector deity in Khumbu is Khumbu Yul-Lha; other mountains are important to different settlements and clans	Taboo on climbing mountains with protector deities in them; worship protects against a host of environmental disasters, such as glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF), landslides, and avalanches; protector deities also have various khor or associates in the form of wildlife protected because of their association with the deity
Chaam and Nyingje (Principles of Kindness and Compassion)	Principles that underscore behavior inside a beyul between humans and the physical landscape and each other	Taboo on harming or killing sentient beings from botanicals to animals to humans
Gompa (Monastery) Forests	Forests set aside around monasteries as offering to monastery deities	Taboo on cutting timber and lopping live branches
Other Protected Forests	Forest sanctified by a spiritual leader and/or set aside as offerings or as a reserve of resources	Taboo on cutting timber and lopping live branches
Lu (Water and Tree Spirits)	Individual trees, rocks, and water sources housing spirits that cause positive and negative impacts on the household level; worshipped and stewarded by women	Taboo on pollution in any Lu area
Gokyo Tse (Lake)	Large glacial lake that houses a Lu spirit who provides fertility to barren women, wealth, and long life	Taboo on pollution in the Lake

The Sherpa people belong to Nyingmapa Tibetan Buddhism, which has "a rich tradition of respecting natural sites such as mountains, trees, springs and rocks" (Sherpa, L.N., 2006;p69). Khumbu is considered a *beyul*: a sacred hidden valley, where local spiritual beliefs ascribe deities to the land who dictate codes of conduct and behavior (Sherpa, LN., 2006;p69). The belief that invisible spirits reside in mountains and the surrounding area to protect and punish has historically had a strong impact on the local cultural relationship with nature. Table 4 illustrates beyul's beneficial land practices. Inside of *beyul*, *ahimsa* (non-violence) is adhered to; killing of wildlife is forbidden, and cutting live wood is a sin.

Dr. Lhakpa Sherpa recommends promotion of *beyul* in order to encourage continued cultural support of ecosystem conservation (Sherpa, L.N., 2006;p72). Promotion is important because today, there is evidence that some attitudes toward resource conservation are no longer based on *beyul* principles (Stanley 1996;p270).

Culturally, schools choose to teach in a non-local Nepali language, which is concerning because the Sherpa language is not a written language (Brower, 1991: xvii), and serious grammatical studies remain to be undertaken (Driem, 2001:p865).

Art and Architecture

In 1978, UNESCO published *Sherpa Architecture*, a study on Khumbu architecture. This publication was meant to record for posterity the cultural formations of the area and "preserve the harmonious relationship between man and his environment...the hallmark of [Khumbu's] architectural heritage" (Sestini and Somigli, 1978;p10). In it, UNESCO states that it is "mobilizing the support of the international community, to aid it in carrying out a programme of conservation" (Sestini and Somigli, 1978; preface). However, these efforts waned with the OUV designated as natural.

The Tyangboche monastery is the best known in the region, with art dating to the fourteenth century. (Bernier,1997;p80). Inside, a mural depicts Miyolangsangma, goddess of Everest (Bernbaum, 1990;p7). Sherpa "believe [the] constructed heritage such as *chorten, mani* walls, *gompas* and rock paintings are integral parts of the landscape" (Shackley 2001;p129). The peaked architectural themes in the region have been said to be derivative of the surrounding mountainous area (Bernier, 1997;p34) (Figs. 6-11). Stupas enhance and mirror the mountain views, often with the eyes of Bodnath overlooking passersby (Figs. 14-15). The prayer Om Mani Padme Hum is found on painted rocks, engraved stones, and prayer wheels. M*ani*-walls, line the village paths (Figs. 8-11). Prayer rocks are circumambulated in a consistent direction to please the gods (Fig. 12), and with each turn of a prayer wheel, a prayer is sent to heaven (Bernier, 1997;p34) (Fig. 13). These elements (except Tyangboche's interior) are all outdoors. An IUCN guiding criteria for cultural landscapes is, "the existence of outstanding beauty arising from the contrast between natural and artificial elements in the landscape" (Fowler, 2003;p33). SNP derives aesthetic value from these combinatory elements, which mutually highlight one another. These connections are as much a part of art as of nature (Berleant, 1992;p172).

Figure 5 Miyolangsangma (Flars.net, 2013)

Figure 7 Pyangboche Monastery (Scott, 2012)

Figure 8 Pyramids of *Mani* Stones
(Scott, 2012)

F...   ...es
in Foreground
(Scott, 2012)

Figure 10 *Mani*-wall (a) (Scott, 2012)

Figure 11 *Mani*-wall and Stupa (a) (Scott, 2012)

Figure 12 Prayers Painted on a Rock (prayer flags in background) (Gamperle, 2012)

Figure 13 Prayer Wheels (Scott, 2012)

Figure 14 Bodnath Eyes (a) (Scott, 2012)

Figure 15 Bodnath Eyes (b) (Scott, 2012)

Indigenous Culture

"The overwhelming power and wildness of the mountains in [SNP] obscure the fact that this is a human landscape" (Brower, 1991;p151). SNP was "established in spite of the strong objections of resident indigenous peoples" (Stevens, 2013;p33). Ken Taylor brought to light that "in Southeast and East Asian countries, some WH properties are included under [only] natural criteria 'where local community associations with their landscapes are omitted or worse, even obliterated' denying the traditional associations with the natural features as part of both cultural beliefs and biodiversity management" (Taylor 2009, cited by, Taylor and Lennon 2012;p51). This description is attributable to SNP, where there were serious discussions about evacuating residents (Ives, 2004; p146). But instead, the village settlements were excluded from the protected areas (Spoon and Sherpa, 2008; p69) with Sherpas given rights to use land resources. Naming the park natural meant that the indigenous population was *categorically* disregarded.

The Sherpa have adapted and prospered in one of the most challenging living environments on earth (Stevens, 1996, NPR, 2013). For centuries, the Sherpa have made the landscape their home and survived with a "ritual regulation of resources'" (Brower, 1991;p8). Local land-use involves a combination of demarcating sacred natural sites, trail carving, fires, livestock, and village settlements, (Brower, 1991) across six altitudinal microenvironments (Stevens, 1996; p29). Spiritual values affect the physical environment; forest protection of sacred groves is "a part of the traditional Sherpa heritage" (Haimendorf, 1964, cited by, Brower, 1991;p153). With these practices, the Sherpa culture physically shapes the Khumbu landscape (Brower, 1991;p151).

Figure 16 Village Map of SNP (Stevens, 2003)

To understand firsthand perspectives of people familiar with the site we created a questionnaire. A total of 57 people responded from 19 different countries including some Nepalese. Participants were asked to list ten words that came to mind when thinking of the site. Responses were coded and counted according to frequency of themes. Because SNP is officially valued for natural aesthetics, the goal was to discover what visitors perceived aesthetically. 71% of
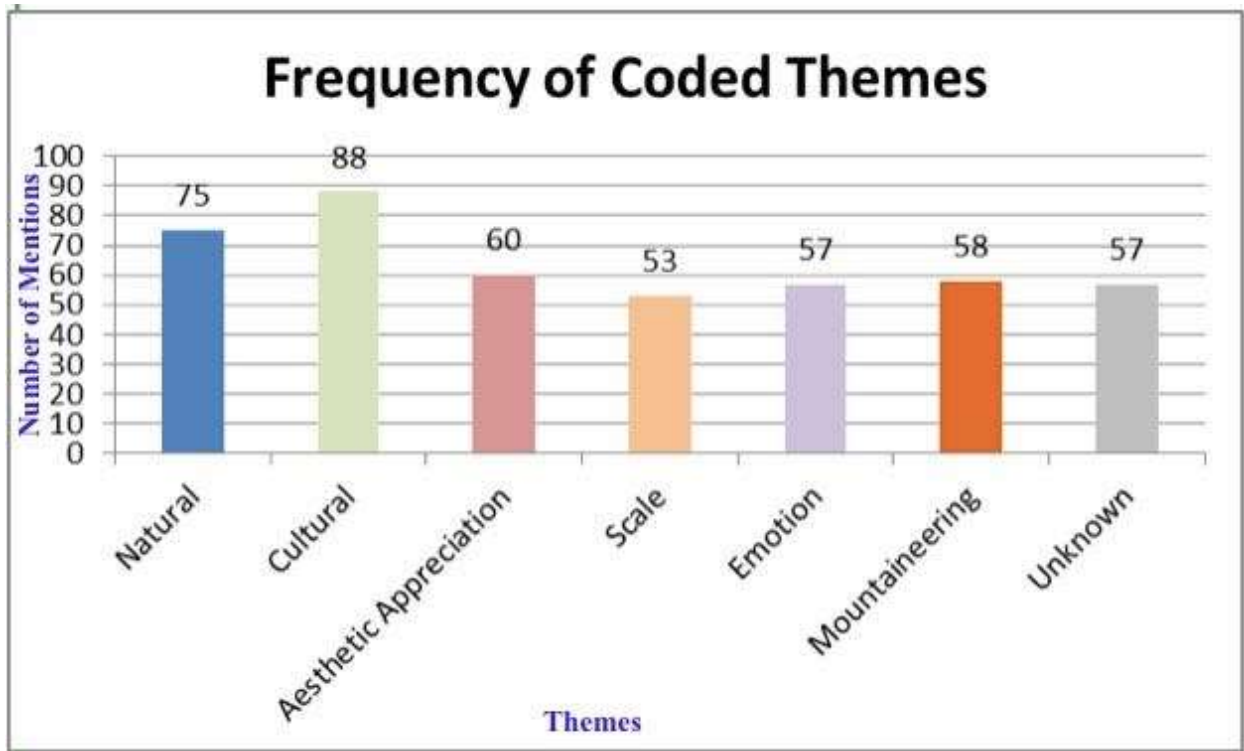

Figure 17 "List Ten Words That Come To Mind When Thinking Of SNP"

respondents included cultural elements in their discussions of the site's aesthetic value.
When given the choice of defining the site in relation to nature or culture, participant definitions of the site are summarized in this chart, showing that most believe it is "equal parts nature and culture".
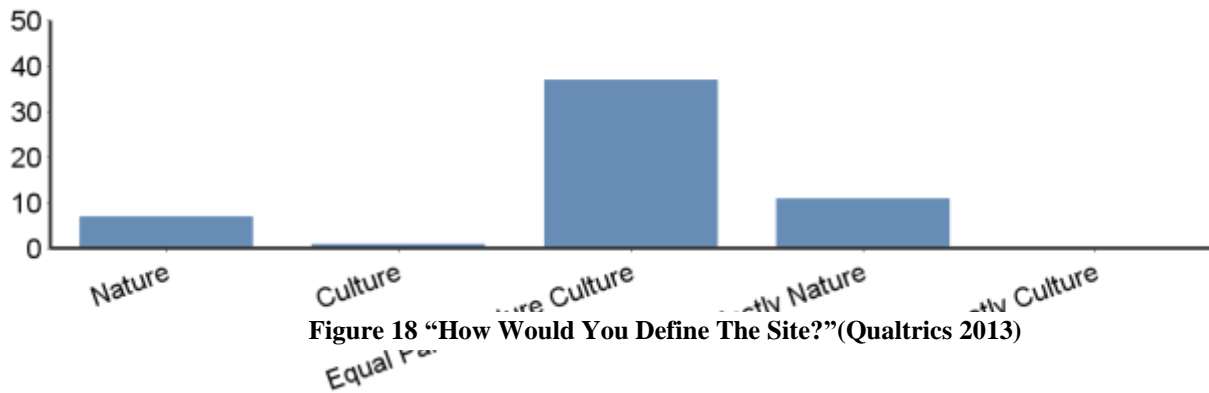

Figure 18 "How Would You Define The Site?"(Qualtrics 2013)

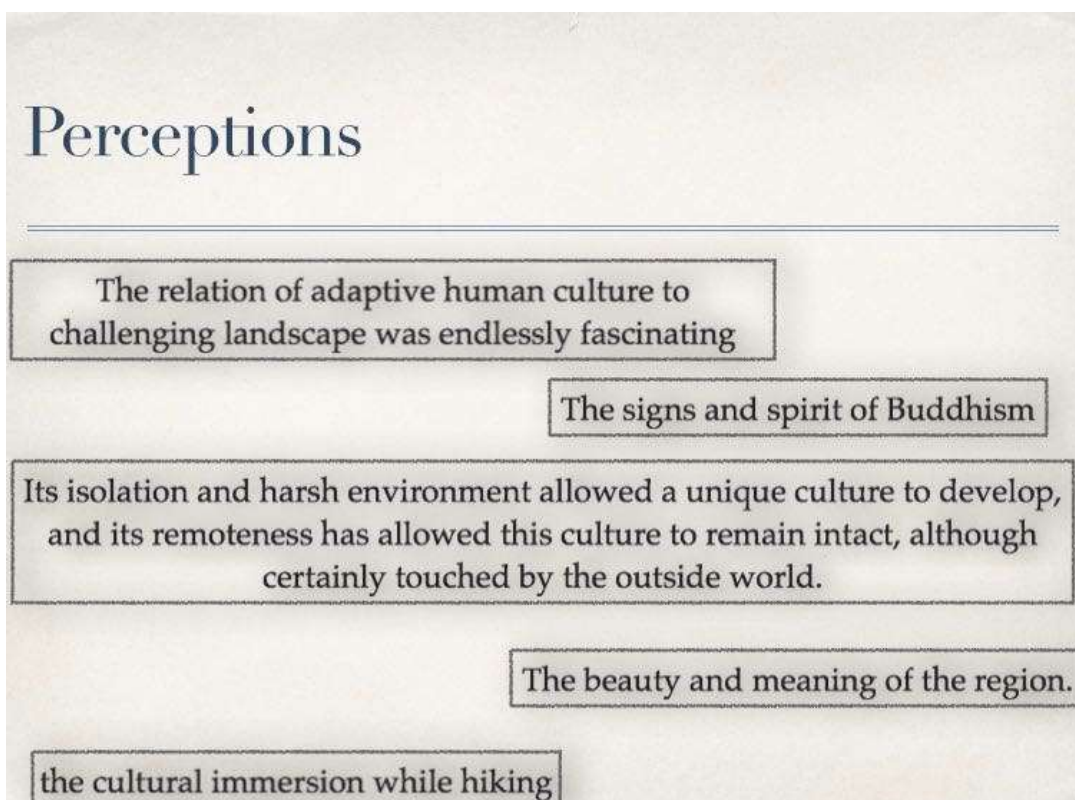Finally, Figure 19 shows examples of quotes outlining the cultural character of SNP when respondents were asked

Perceptions

The relation of adaptive human culture to challenging landscape was endlessly fascinating

The signs and spirit of Buddhism

Its isolation and harsh environment allowed a unique culture to develop, and its remoteness has allowed this culture to remain intact, although certainly touched by the outside world.

The beauty and meaning of the region.

the cultural immersion while hiking

Figure 19 Examples of visitors quotes outlining the cultural character of SNP (Qualtrics, 2013)

"In your opinion what makes SNP unique?"
Conservation

What difference does a title, or naming, make to conservation of a world heritage property, if any? A review of UNESCO's "State of Conservation" reports and "Periodic Reporting helps us to see.

A content analysis was done with the available annual conservation reports, where each mention of the Sherpa culture was extracted to illustrate how the Sherpa community has been dealt with in terms of conservation. This analysis shows that although the value of the Sherpa community is recognized, any threats listed are measured against how they will affect the natural beauty of the park, and never against how they may be contributing to the deterioration of the Sherpa culture; loss of language, and loss of *beyul* values are not mentioned as threats to the park because the OUV only admits natural beauty. The SOC tendency is to focus on local economic welfare rather than conservation of traditional values, language, and customs. This raises the question: if the park were categorized differently, and recognized for an OUV that included cultural criteria, then would the threats of tourism, development and climate change also be seen as threats to the Sherpa culture, and not only to the natural elements? The inscription of SNP occurred over thirty years ago, meaning that all threats listed over the years in the SOCs have already had time to impact the site. While the SOCs do not acknowledge the cultural implications of the threats, all threats mentioned were and still are affecting the local culture. While UNESCO categories have evolved, the reporting confirms that categorization indeed matters, and in this case, there is a lag in efforts to re-nominate.

The main threats to the site are climate change, loss of diversity and rapid development (Figs. 20 -23). Since the 1970's, the Himalayas have experienced rising temperatures at *twice the rate of the global average* (UNESCO, 2007;p19). Visitors have increased from 20 in 1964 (Brower, 1991;p67) to 35,000 in 2012 (Government of Nepal,

2013;p52) (What is not commonly discussed is that the warming temperatures may actually provide a more habitable environment for humans, increasing the likelihood of migration. "Population growth, settlement expansion and encroachment are likely to become a major management challenge. And the integrity of the indigenous Sherpa People's culture will erode further under growing external influences" (UNESCO, 2007(a);p21).

Figure 20 Visual Evidence of Climate Change and Loss of Rongbuk Glacier (years: 1921 and 2009) (Wheeler and Breashears, 1921 and 2009

Figure 21 Lhukla Airport (Dirt) October 1998 (Werdberg, 1988)

Figure 22 Lhukla Airport (Paved) March 2008 (Werdberg, 2008)

Figure 23 Everest Traffic Jam (Thakuri, 2012)

If culture were included in SNP's OUV, then Sherpa cultural survival would be considered when determining both threats to the property and resultant protective measures. It has already been suggested that all natural properties inscribed prior to the creation of the cultural landscape category deserve re-evaluation (Motonaka, 2002;p127,Taylor 2010;p35). This is a site that expresses its sacred beliefs both tangibly and intangibly in spaces that connect with wind, mountains, forests, valleys, and deities, and whose built environment comes from a core of environmental inspiration. It is inhabited by a people that has genetically adapted to the physical constraints of its challenging environment in addition to having learned to subsist comfortably within it.

CONCLUSION

Fowler recommends a global study of cultures to ensure that the WHL represents one cultural landscape for each unique culture and that cultural landscapes should be chosen "on the basis both of [OUV] and of their representativity in terms of a clearly defined geographical region, and also for their capacity to illustrate the essential and distinct cultural elements of such regions" (Fowler, 2003;p22). The relationship of the Solo-Khumbu Sherpa culture to the land should be evaluated from a global perspective.

Categorization itself is questioned here. Are the boundaries we have created too rigid to ensure sustainability of the holistic tangible/intangible and cultural/natural essences of sites? It is likely that the current framework of classification and evaluation hinders national governments to think holistically and reflect critically on values. The requirement for criteria to be categorized has become a game of "fitting into the boxes that are provided for you". This is problematic for a system that is based on highlighting outstanding uniqueness.

In the 1990's it was realized that policy had separated man from environment, and had inadvertently been excluding one from the other. The SNP categorization is an example of this. The interpenetration of mind, body and place, illustrated in its cultural expressions was disregarded. Compartmentalization is applicable to heritage discussions of value interpretation; cultural landscapes are a step towards an integrative view. To call SNP a natural site is to speak in abstractions and neglect the deeply held local values of the site. The OUV states that nature gives the site its aesthetic appeal, but clearly there are cultural elements which enhance the site's aesthetic. Applying a phenomenological perspective, Norberg-Schulz uses the term *genius loci* in reference to the holistic essence of a place. Taking this view, the local Sherpa culture not only offers visitors a dimension of the site beyond natural phenomena, but their spiritual, artistic, and ecological traditions are what have given physical and symbolic shape to SNP's *whole character*.

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