Respect for Past Diversity

With heritage for peaceful diachronic coexistence

The issue of heritage has in the past few years enjoyed increasing recognition and reinforced status in Europe, to be crowned by the designation of 2018 as the *European Year of Cultural Heritage*. With the main emphasis on **communality**, the aim of the Year is in the first place to promote "the role of European cultural heritage as a pivotal component of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue".[1]

In the actual practice, however, heritage is most often celebrated in a mono-cultural fashion: see and respect your roots! Cultural heritage serves to legitimize a common ethnic lineage and political coherence. For partisans of a *Europe of the nations* (at the expense of an *ever closer union*) the European Year's objective can be best and fully met by each nation focusing on one's very own past. Such an isolationist attitude does not contradict the slogan of *Unity in Diversity*, as diversity can be realised by a mosaic of juxtaposed cultures.

Indeed, even the often cited first sentence of Article 167 of the basic legal document of the EU[2] – *"The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity…"* – allows for an interpretation whereby the cultural diversity of the Union can be based on stable distinct identities, which need not even be similar. Diversity and difference are related ideas anyway. The sentence as it is, does not imply interaction or convergence, a static mosaic of very diverse cultures fully satisfies its claim. Cultural diversity is in fact celebrated more often between countries and not necessarily inside of them. Perhaps if the text would read *the flowering of the cultures __in__ the Member States*, or even *__in Europe__*…

Reading the second half of the sentence does not basically change the case: "…*and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore".* Finding and displaying common roots does not necessarily lead to interaction (intercultural dialogue), and they do not necessarily imply substantial communality of values, aims and interests. Common roots nevertheless certainly add to the feeling of cohesion and belonging.

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True, within the frame of the European Year and beyond, heritage is often capitalised upon to enhance cohesion between nations by focusing on features that bind. Diversity encapsulated in heritage is, however, usually celebrated in the present and little attention is paid to **past diversity**.

This paper argues that in order to better exploit the potential in cultural heritage to enforce intercultural bonds, more conscientious attention should be paid to the historic dimension of cultural

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[1] Decision (EU) 2017/864 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on a European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018), Article 2 Objectives, 1. (a)

[2] The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as amended by the Treaty of Lisbon, 2007

diversity.[3] Next to contemporaneous, synchronic diversity, historical, diachronic diversity should also be exposed and valued.

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Why care more about past diversity?

Recalling the many colours of the past is a familiar food for nostalgia. There are places where it is more than that. Past diversity is a particularly sensitive matter wherever tens of millions are living where tens of millions have been **displaced, expelled or killed** in the course of the past hundred years. Voluntary, natural demographic movements also swell these numbers. The greater part of the former Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires are such places, as well as the defunct Third Reich.

Most of these actions do not represent cases of ethnic swapping, the replacement of one homogeneity with another. Today's homogeneities reside on the grounds of former multiculturalism.

In spite of wars, persecutions, acts of intolerance over the earlier centuries, up till the early 1900s cultural diversity, or, to use a modern expression: multiculturalism prevailed in Bratislava, Istanbul, Lviv, Saloniki, Timișoara, Vilnius, Wroclaw, and many other places, finding expression in the variety in languages, flavours, customs, beliefs, in short: cultures.[4] Sunken (extirpated) cultures and the communities to whom that heritage once meant the frame to their lives deserve to be paid explicit tribute beyond dreamy nostalgia – even if none of their descendants lives there any longer.

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Lately, more and more facets of cultural heritage have been identified and named in complement of the traditional positive associations of awe, attraction, nostalgia, the "feeling of home and belonging". The terms of difficult, uncomfortable, alienating, divisive, and most often **dissonant heritage** have been in use for the past twenty years or so.[5] Apart from aesthetic aspects (e.g. in case of industrial heritage), these terms usually refer to the dark sides of history and their cultural legacy, most often in the form of built heritage.

When cultural diversity is involved, dissonant heritage is usually connected to **post-conflict** zones and situations.[6] In other cases the source of dissonance lies deeper in the past. Sometimes a couple of decades, like in case of the post-communist, and earlier post-fascist countries; in other instances a century or more, going back to former empires and colonial powers. There is a growing number of initiatives as well as literature on treatment of this kind of dissonant heritage.

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And there are those situations where there is little or no live conflict (at least not on the surface), and the heritage is not necessarily dissonant: on the contrary, sometimes it is in excellent care and esteem. We have heirless, orphan or **shared heritage** in mind. Tangible and intangible[7] patrimony that is to a smaller of greater extent connected to a vanished community of people. In a spiritual,

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[3] An earlier version of this plea was written in 2011: Respect for Past Diversity. Key added value of the European Heritage Label. http://www.budobs.org/other-projects/bo-documents/366-diachronic-diversity.html

[4] Demonstrated also in the variety of names – e.g. Lviv, Lvov, Lemberg, Lwów, Leopolis…

[5] One of the earliest and most often cited works is by Tunbridge and Ashworth: Dissonant heritage: the management of the past as a resource in conflict (John Wiley and Sons, 1995).

[6] The ex-Yugoslav region has generated a number of relevant studies like Ploner – Naef: Tourism, Conflict and Contested Heritage in Former Yugoslavia (Routledge, 2017); Kisić: Governing Heritage Dissonance Promises and Realities of Selected Cultural Policies (European Cultural Foundation, 2013); Wollentz: Making a home in Mostar: heritage and the temporalities of belonging (International Journal of Heritage Studies, 2017); Dragićević Šešić - Rogač Mijatović: Balkan Dissonant Heritage Narratives (and Their Attractiveness) for Tourism (American Journal of Tourism Management, 2014)

[7] Although indeed built heritage is in focus, revealing multicultural legacies can also help the feeling of communality. Gastronomy is an obvious field, constituting invisible but palatable bonds between nations that used to belong to the same empire.

symbolic sense this involves shared ownership over the legacy. It is above all in these cases that the principle of diachronic diversity is called upon: fair, generous and just memory practices that acknowledge the contributions of former inhabitants.

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Reasons that lead to neglect and amnesia of past credits range from pious ignorance to conscious distortion.

At the innocent end we find mainstream agents of heritage policies. The core European countries that are setting trends also about the treatment of European heritage are increasingly open to the many sides of their heritage, including its dissonant aspects. Nevertheless having known much less of genocide and forced migrations on their soils, mainstream heritage policies are less receptive to the diachronic dimension of cultural diversity.

Putting excessive emphasis on the technical aspects of the protection over heritage is one symptom of **innocuous negligence** and missed opportunities about respecting past diversity. Also the joy over the current functions and about the devotion of the current stakeholders leaves little room for ruminating over the vanished stakeholders in the past.

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Militant nationalism, fuelled by ethnogenetic myths and populist memory policies is the main enemy of a generous, inclusive treatment of heritage. **Memory cleansing** can take extreme forms which all aim at disowning former stakeholders from the heritage as it stands today. Most often current homogeneity is praised over the diversity that used to prevail.

While these tendencies are on the rise across Europe, an explicit appreciation of diversity in retrospect should be practiced by those who still believe in the principles of European integration.

The risk of triggering revanchism is nevertheless real. If taken seriously, this challenge can be handled when the merits of previous "owners" or stakeholders to the heritage are being acknowledged.

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An anthology of **best practices** about the recognition of past diversity would do great service to the issue. It is a pity this does not figure among the deliverables of the European Year of Cultural Heritage – but later is better than never.

Somewhat ironically, present-day homogenous Poland appears to be a particularly rich hunting ground with regard to exploring and crediting the multicultural past. This takes forms of a wide range of scholarly studies, civic projects as well as official programmes.[8] Another important terrain is Turkey, where the impressive number of Europa Nostra awards includes examples of care about Christian heritage sites.[9] A proposal for a prize for cities that excel in respecting past diversity is in course in Hungary.[10]

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We shall check now how respect for past diversity is **identified**, and whether it is explicitly **promoted** in current policies.

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[8] Next to the iconic POLIN Museum in Warsaw, and the growing number of civic projects about the Jewish legacy relevant research is conducted – among others – by Murzyn-Kupisz and Działek on the symbolic values of heritage sites, by Sabina Owsianowska on the "heirless" heritage in South-East Poland, by Ewa Gładkowska on the East-Prussian legacy. Brave was the decision to put an important accent on the German cultural legacy in the concept of Wroclaw, European Capital of Culture in 2016.

[9] 2006 – a Byzantine church in Cappadocia, 2015 – an Armenian Church in Diyarbakir, 2018 – a Greek Primary School in Istanbul.

[10] Submitted by the Association of Hungarian Jewish Culture to the National Commission for Unesco.

Diversity in general, and past diversity in particular, have gained increasing recognition in international heritage documents in the past few decades. The same progression can be observed about the prescriptions towards interpreting and presenting cultural heritage, which has received sufficient attention lately only.

The most important relevant international documents are the Venice Charter from 1964, and the World Heritage Convention from 1972, both under the aegis of Unesco.

The **Venice Charter** defines the main principles of heritage protection and restoration to this day. It has, however, very little to say about presentation, and nothing indeed about the social, historical and ethical aspects of cultural heritage.[11]

The **World Heritage Programme** – established by the Convention of the same name – has had an extraordinary successful career. It is run very professionally. Criteria of selection, management and communication are carefully elaborated and also monitored. These, too, however, lack the explicit command of fair treatment of past stakeholders of the items on the World Heritage list.[12]

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ICCROM and ICOMOS also belong to the early structures among heritage agencies.

ICCROM stands for the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, founded in Rome in 1959. The *Values and Ethics* professed on the website of this intergovernmental body include the principles of neutrality (*"*objectives and activities will transcend agendas and partiality"), inclusivity ("ensures that all stakeholders are identified and included") and diversity ("appreciation for the diversity of people and culture").[13] These tenets suggest sensitiveness towards the issue of respect for cultural pluralism in the past – which has not turned into explicit precepts.

ICCROM has issued a guidelines note entitled *People-Centred Approaches to the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*. It is a pragmatic call for the successful engagement of communities into the management of heritage, exempt from the moral message of diachronic peaceful coexistence.

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ICOMOS, established in 1965, the International Council on Monuments and Sites is the global international organisation of heritage professionals. Wars, zealous search for identity, iconic or heritage cleansing in east Europe, followed by the soaring need for reconciliation made an impact on the philosophy and performance of the organisation. As early as 1994, in the Japanese city of **Nara** an ICOMOS document was adopted on authenticity in conservation of cultural heritage. *"Cultural heritage diversity exists in time and space, and demands respect for other cultures"* – the text is adamant, especially about the right conduct in situations of conflict.[14]

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[11] International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter), 1964
Article 16*.* In all works of preservation, restoration or excavation, there should always be precise documentation in the form of analytical and *critical reports*, illustrated with drawings and photographs. Every stage of the work of clearing, consolidation, rearrangement and integration, as well as technical and formal features identified during the course of the work, should be included. This record should be placed in the archives of a public institution and made available to research workers. *It is recommended that the report should be published.* (*My italics – P.I.*)

[12] World Heritage Convention, 1972. Here are the words that come closest to our issue:
Article 5 (each State Party to this Convention shall endeavour) „to adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes;."

[13] https://www.iccrom.org/about/overview/values-and-ethics

[14] The most relevant extracts from the Nara Document:
(4) In a world that is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and homogenization, and in a world in which the search for cultural identity is sometimes pursued through aggressive nationalism and the suppression of the cultures of minorities, the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity

The ICOMOS ethical principles adopted in 2014 in Florence reminds about respecting the different attitudes to heritage and points at the issue of language.[15]

The ICOMOS charter for the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites is more direct about the issue. (Adopted in 2008, this document is often called the Ename charter after the name of a Flemish village.) The fourth out of seven stated objectives of the charter suggests – in an implicit manner – the issue of past diversity: "*Respect the authenticity of cultural heritage sites, by communicating the significance of their historic fabric and cultural values and protecting them from the adverse impact of intrusive interpretive infrastructure, visitor pressure, inaccurate or inappropriate interpretation*." Point 3 in Principle 3 is fully explicit: "*Interpretation should also take into account all groups that have contributed to the historical and cultural significance of the site*."

Principle 1 picks up the issue of **language**: "*The diversity of language among visitors and associated communities connected with a heritage site should be taken into account in the interpretive infrastructure*". This reminder assumedly involves the generous inclusion of the former stakeholders' language in addition to the visitors' linguistic composition.[16]

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One of the global bodies that operate in the frame of ICOMOS is ICIP, the Committee for the **Interpretation and Presentation** of Cultural Heritage Sites.[17] Its current work programme includes, among others, the examination of the role of interpretation in highlighting ethnic and cultural diversity as well as "additional research and discussion on the concept of *authenticity* in order to define its nature and role in heritage interpretation".

Absolutely pertinent is the role of another ICOMOS body is SBH: International Scientific Committee of **Shared Built Heritage.**[18] The mission of this group is to focus on the shared or mutual built heritage. „*Even when a people have left, there remains a rich built heritage to continue to 'tell the story' of their former habitation, administrations, management regimes and various aspects of daily life.... Unfortunately sometimes the 'shared' parts of history and heritage may not receive the necessary appreciation by its current population*."

Europe, and most regrettably, Eastern Europe is poorly represented in both ICIP and SBH: the regional membership in the SBH committee is vacant. Preceding other regions in the world, terms like historical fairness, equity or generosity, fair treatment etc. entered the discourse on heritage policies in the context of Hispanic heritage in the USA, the spiritual legacy of Australian aborigines and American Indians, as well as the tackling of colonial past in India. It is in the preparatory papers to one of the latest SBH gatherings in West-Bengal that these questions are posed: "Whose heritage is this anyway? When the custodians are not the creators of the heritage, do we look to the glory of the past or move towards the future? What approach is appropriate for the treatment of shared built heritage?"[19]

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(6) Cultural heritage diversity exists in time and space, and demands respect for other cultures and all aspects of their belief systems. In cases where cultural values appear to be in conflict, respect for cultural diversity demands acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the cultural values of all parties.

(8) ...Balancing their own requirements with those of other cultural communities is, for each community, highly desirable, provided achieving this balance does not undermine their fundamental cultural values.

[15] Point d) in Article 2) stipulates that "ICOMOS members acknowledge and respect the diverse tangible and intangible values of cultural heritage that enrich human culture and that may hold different meanings for different groups and communities."
Point c) in Article 1) affirms that "ICOMOS members are respectful of cultural and linguistic diversity".

[16] Languages probably best implied in this connection would be Armenian, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, German, Greek, Hungarian, Polish, Turkish, as well as Hebrew-Ladino-Yiddish.

[17] http://icip.icomos.org/

[18] http://sbh.icomos.org/

[19] http://www.icomos-uk.org/uploads/sidebar/PDF/NEWSLETTER_Jun_2017.pdf

Where SBH differs from the concept advocated in this paper is their exclusive focus on dissonance: "*Sometimes the built environment is a reminder of eras many seek to forget, erase or acts as a reminder of periods of sorrow or foreign administration*." No room is left for cases where respect for past diversity is driven by moral fairness and objectivity rather than reconciliation, post-conflict management or other political aims.

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In Europe, the **Faro Convention** has famously shifted the focus of attention from the technical to the social aspects of cultural heritage. The Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society was adopted in the Portuguese city of Faro in 2005, after years of preparation.[20]

The sensitive nature of heritage is touched upon in Article 4 of the Convention: *"everyone, alone or collectively, has the responsibility to respect the cultural heritage of others as much as their own heritage"*.

Also in Article 7 by encouraging *"reflection on the ethics and methods of presentation of the cultural heritage, as well as respect for diversity of interpretations";* and by calling for the establishment of „*processes for conciliation to deal equitably with situations where contradictory values are placed on the same cultural heritage by different communities".*

One important new concept of the Faro Convention is that of the heritage community, which suggests special (symbolic) significance of cultural heritage for certain people. Article 12 stipulates that *"the value attached by each heritage community to the cultural heritage with which it identifies"* must be taken into consideration. (To relate back to Article 167 above: this appeal of the Convention can ironically also lead to isolationism: each community should have its own heritage to respect and expected to be respected by others.)

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The Faro Convention is being followed up through a scale of actions that include an action plan, promotion publications, a network and a string of meetings.[21] A recently certified item in the particularly successful delivery of the Council of Europe, the **European Cultural Routes** is related to the Convention, too: Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes in Europe's Urban Memory (ATRIUM).[22]

On the whole the activities connected to the Faro Convention reflect the general feeling of this paper's author about the process: the Convention has shifted the focus away from the academic and technical, but primarily towards the **technocratic**. Pragmatic issues connected to the sustainability of heritage are in focus, where community involvement is a tool for the goal.

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Europa Nostra, the prestigious pan-European federation for cultural heritage acts as a powerful and successful lobby organisation for the broader heritage community. „*Europa Nostra contributes to the development of heritage-related policies at EU level with the aim of mainstreaming heritage in EU policies and actions, and securing adequate funding for heritage*."

The organisation – in conjunction with European Heritage Alliance 3.3, an informal European sectoral platform engineered by Europa Nostra – managed the important project *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe*.[23] The extensive surveying of studies and projects on the value of heritage could nevertheless

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[20] https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/199

[21] A recent milestone of this movement was a meeting held in Vilnius in December 2017 on the Faro Convention Approach and Urban Regeneration. One slide of the contribution of an official of the Council of Europe includes a relevant formula: "Commitment to human rights principles in local development processes (respect for dignity and multiple identities)".

[22] http://www.atriumroute.eu/about-us/chi-siamo

[23] https://issuu.com/europanostra/docs/chcfe_full-report

identify little that affects the appreciation of past heritage.[24] Terms that implicate reconciliation, retrospect justice, diachronic cohesion etc. are missing from the detailed taxonomies of heritage values and impacts explored in Tables 2.1 and 2.2.

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The Open Method of Cooperation (**OMC**) working group on participatory governance completed its three year activity in spring 2008. The hundred-page report suggests complete resistance to the challenges of difficult or dissonant heritage, or to multiculturalism in the past.[25]

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There exists an international association with a membership who wish to "*give cultural heritage a deeper meaning*": **Interpret Europe** – European Network for Heritage Interpretation. The main ambition of the organisation is to improve skills about presenting and marketing heritage sites and objects. It would be an important addition of the activities of this dynamic network if the dimension of celebrating past diversity was explicitly added to their principles and actions.[26]

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The European Institutions, to arrive back to the first paragraph of this paper, pay outstanding attention to cultural heritage, with sporadic references to past diversity. A recent study prepared for the committee in charge of culture at the **European Parliament** advocates for teaching history that "*increases awareness of the diversity of cultures, histories and memories in Europe, and promotes mutual respect*".[27]

The **Council of the European Union** has crowned a successful march by issuing *Conclusions on the need to bring cultural heritage to the fore across policies in the EU*, advocating for further mainstreaming Europe's common cultural heritage "*without prejudging the next Multiannual Financial Framework negotiations*".[28]

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Regardless of the fundamental transformations about the treatment of cultural heritage in the course of the past decades the concern about the respect for previous stakeholders remains largely unexplored. Pragmatic political common sense as well as a desire for moral comfort require more explicit exposition of the manifestations of this issue and the ways of its handling. We believe, that the appreciation of earlier stakeholders, and particularly of the legacy of multiculturalism should be part of the European standard of managing cultural heritage.

Fair, generous and objective reference to former "owners" of cultural heritage should be added to the criteria applied in selecting candidates for various distinctions and benefits. Also, at monitoring heritage management, respect for past diversity should be an expected feature.

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[24] „Heritage sites can emanate symbolic meanings which refer to tolerance, respect for diversity and promoting social inclusion." – one of the seven ways in which cultural heritage can have a beneficial impact on social capital according to the aforecited Murzyn-Kupisz - Działek couple of authors (Cultural heritage in building and enhancing social capital. Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development, 2013) is the quote that comes closest to the issue.

[25] Participatory Governance of Cultural Heritage. Report of the OMC (open method of coordination) working group of Member States' experts, EU Publications Office, 2018

[26] http://www.interpret-europe.net

[27] Prutsch 2017, Research for CULT Committee – European Identity, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels

[28] http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8544-2018-INIT/en/pdf