The role of cultural heritage for the sustainable development of the Danube Region

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INTRODUCTION

This paper elucidates the role of the rich and variegated cultural heritage of the Danube countries for the sustainable development of the region. After briefly introducing the history and meaning of the notion of cultural heritage and a critical discussion of the concept of sustainable development, the link between sustainability and culture is explored. The Danube region presents a special case due to its unique history and the legacies this history has left. The final part of the paper is dedicated to sketching the potential of cultural heritage for the sustainable development of the region.

CULTURAL HERITAGE: THE CAREER OF A CONCEPT

In a recent publication, Marilena Vecco traced the expansion of the meaning of the notion of cultural heritage. The earliest use of the French notion 'patrimoine' for the artistic heritage is documented for 1931, when Euripide Foundoukidis (1894-1968), a Greek lawyer and art historian active in interna-

tional exchange on cultural matters used it at a conference in Athens. From then on, it was commonly used in the documents of international organisations (Vecco, 2010: 321). The adoption of the expression of patrimoine culturel (cultural heritage) by André Malraux in a legal document in 1959 marked a turning point. From this period on, the term patrimoine became increasingly common in political and administrative circles. Figure 1 gives an overview of this process. Vecco draws attention to an important change in the late 20th century. "Starting in the mid 1970s, international documents were drawn up in an attempt to define the general criteria, with the aim of codifying in all the documents, tangible or intangible expressions of human action which, having acquired a value, need to be protected." (Vecco, 2010: 323). The Burra Charter (ICOMOS, 1979ff) is an important document in this process of acknowledging the cultural heritage also of those peoples whose cultural expressions are not of a durable material nature. "It proposes to protect the conservation of the cultural significance of a site, due to its aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value. According to this approach, tangible and intangible heritage that stimulate the recognition of certain values in man are to be protected." (Vecco, 2010: 324). According to UNESCO the notion "includes traditions or
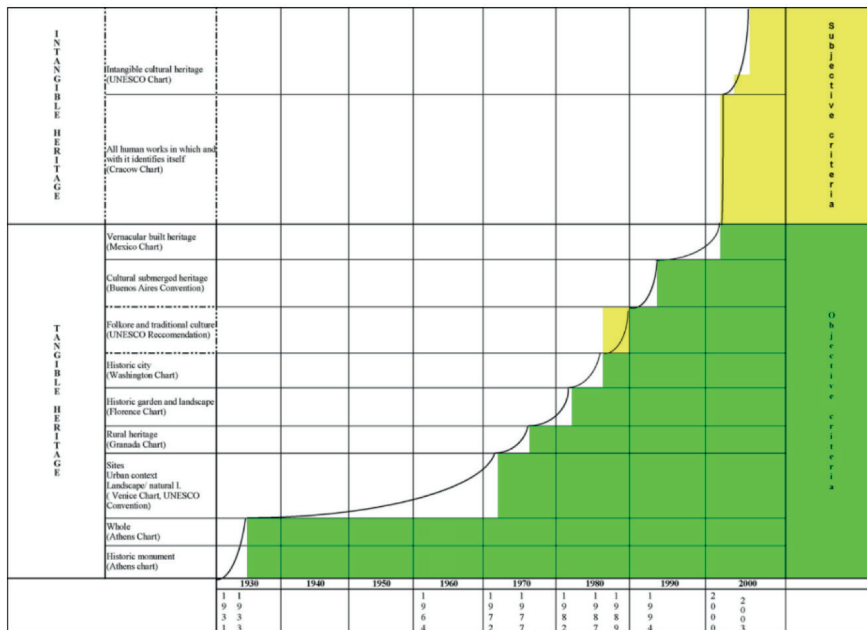

FIGURE 1 – The growing reach of the notion of cultural heritage since the 1930s (from Vecco, 2010, 323)

living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts."

Intangible cultural heritage is lost during societal upheavals, when traditional lifestyles disintegrate in conflict-caused migration or due to pollution and environmental degradation making them impossible. This has surely happened in the Danube River Basin, although there are no comprehensive multinational, comparative studies. A major reason for this loss is the character of intangible cultural heritage, especially in dealing with nature, as it is based on tacit knowledge, a notion which has been coined by Karl Polanyi, and recently been much advanced by Harry Collins (Collins, 2010). Yet, tacit knowledge plays a major role in sustainable tourism, one of the many ways that heritage is involved in sustainable development. Tacit knowledge transfer in tourism has recently been discussed by Buckley and Oldenbourg (2013). It is also important to realize that cultural heritage is lost with the loss of language, even particular dialects, and of course, with the assimilation of minorities into a majority culture.

WHAT IS (CULTURAL) HERITAGE?

To start the exploration of the combined notion with the multi-faceted meaning of culture, let me suggest to base it on a broad definition of culture which links it to action, as suggested by Soini and Dessin: "Culture in a broader sense is a condition and premise for action, meaning and communication. The notion refers to the symbolic patterns norms, and rules of human communities." (Soini & Dessein, 1) It is important to realize that heritage is not a fixed thing, but rather a process, so its preservation has to be based on preserving the conditions of the possibility to engage in these processes rather than fixing something. "Heritage is a common, dynamic and socially contextualised cultural process involving the use of the past in the present" (Smith, 2006, quoted after Giblin, 2014: 402).

The concept of heritage does also have a political dimension. "Heritage can be explored as a common human undertaking with a deeper history." (Giblin 2014: 502). It is this deeper history of heritage, which makes it attractive for groups to identify their heritage in claims of legitimacy and even in territorial claims. The discussion of heritage in the Danube River Basin should therefore always include a reflexive, critical element, asking for whose benefit and against whose interests a particular claim is advanced.

WORLD HERITAGE AS UNIVERSAL CULTURAL ORDER

World heritage designation is based on the UNESCO Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage adopted by the General conference at its seventeenth session, Paris, 16 November 1972 (Unesco 1972). It is important to understand the selection criteria, as they are by now the most universally acknowledged basis for designations also on a national or regional level. Among the selection criteria, the following seem of prime importance to me: World Cultural Heritage must (i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; (ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design; (iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; (iv) be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; *(v) be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;* (vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance.

With regard to criterion (iv), the committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria. Further criteria include more requirements. World cultural heritage needs to (vii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance; (viii) be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features; (ix) be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals; (x) contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Lists of the cultural heritage are maintained on national and international levels, with UNESCO's list being the most prominent, universal such collection. The critics of such universal lists hold that a universal cultural order is created by such listings, and a difference in significance is created by the exclusion

or inclusion into such lists. World heritage designation has been criticized as it is used as a means of self-promotion by nation states, and also because the „heritage industry" that co-evolved with the definition and the need to manage the heritage, has ideological and commercial interests. The designation of World Cultural Heritage rests on the claim of outstanding universal value. Therefore, it leads to universalization of the particular based on the key criteria of cultural authenticity and distinctiveness. While world cultural heritage on the surface is a promotion of diversity, it inevitably leads to a weakening of ontological primacy of particularized identities, because it inevitably is an act of decontextualizing (Elliott & Schmutz, 2010).

The fifth criterion, highlighted above, offers a concrete and direct link to issues of sustainable development, therefore the World Heritage Definition, the critique notwithstanding, is an important tool for promoting sustainability. The frustrating fact this list has in common with list of endangered species is the simple fact that heritage becomes more valuable as it becomes increasingly rare and threatened. Heritage designation after article (v) is a last-resort-strategy that might better be replaced by more foresight-driven reasoning.

CHALLENGES FOR MANAGING CULTURAL HERITAGE: HERITAGE CHAIN MANAGEMENT

When it comes to the practical requirements of managing cultural heritage, several important issues need attention. Among them, the first is that management of heritage means to bridge different organizational rationalities. For instance, most of archaeological excavations take place in form of projects, while museums connected to excavations are permanent organizations with mostly permanent displays ill-fitted with the transitory character of excavation projects. Heritage is more often than not immobile or at least very expensive and rather dangerous and therefore costly to move. It represents a complex of materials (collections, buildings, sites) and knowledge and meanings that have to stay in place in order to be meaningful. This is obvious for buildings and sites (the Coliseum is unthinkable outside Rome). However, it is also true in softer terms. All over the world, at least in recent years, laws that tend to limit export of movable heritage have been issued. The protection from illegal export is now in itself an important element of the first macro-activities in the heritage management chain (Zan & Bonini Baraldi, 2013: 213).

What is considered as heritage tends to differ from country to country for many reasons: One is the specific role played by the individual country in the past in various periods. Periods of glory are more important than those of

doom in the presentation of a country's history, as they lead to different rates and types of constructions in the past and different attitudes in preserving it, but also to differences in destruction. Even a preliminary characterization of the heritage chain of an individual country in the Danube Region, even in mere "objective" ways would help in addressing major issues and main characterization of that specific set of remains and associated knowledge (Zan & Bonini Baraldi, 2013: 217). Such a characterization would be an important research topic in itself.

SUSTAINING CULTURAL HERITAGE AS AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As this essay is dedicated to exploring the connection between cultural heritage and sustainable development, it needs an effort to clarify both central notions of the conjunction. Hence, the next step in the argument is a discussion of sustainability or sustainable development.

The most popular definition is that of the Brundtland report, so called after Gro Harlem Brundtland, Chairperson of the Commission that issued it: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Brundtland Commission 1987: 8). In this definition, sustainable development is about international (intra-generational) and intergenerational justice, assuming that such justice can be reached by 'development', so basically, by processes of change. In the almost 30 years that have passed since this definition was published, entire forests have been cut and processed into paper printed with discussions of the meaning, the role and function and the measurement of sustainable development. This paper makes no attempt to review this discussion. Readers are referred to Jeffrey D. Sachs' comprehensive treatment in his recent publication on the subject. (Sachs, 2015).

For the link to cultural heritage, it is important to recognize that sustainable development is conceptualized both in *normative and empirical terms*. Sustainability can be understood as a goal to achieve, a norm, an ethical imperative of intergenerational equity, basically asking us to emphatically relate not only to neighbours, but to strangers in space and time. It can likewise be understood as a testable hypothesis about the exchange between society and nature. In the latter case, one needs indicators to measure the interaction.

Figure 2 shows a conceptualization of the main requirements for ecological sustainability. The concept suggests that resource extraction should not be higher than availability, that emissions and wastes should not overtax the

biosphere's ability to absorb them and that the way we manage ecosystems for production should not degrade their ability to produce (Fischer-Kowalski et al, 1997: 24). Two important issues should be highlighted here: One is the primacy of ecological sustainability over social and economic. Overtaxing the biosphere cannot be sustainable, even if social and economic sustainability are reached. As the Vienna Social Ecology group and many Industrial Ecologists see the three facets of sustainability more as a magic triangle than as a set of three pillars, we would argue that the three are inextricably linked, but political primacy should be given to the ecological side (Von Hauff & Wilderer, 2008).

The second important issue is the recognition that sustainability can only be a dynamic equilibrium, as the biosphere and human society are evolving. This brings up the next important issue, the question of evolution and its role in the sustainability-oriented management of cultural heritage.

Let us, for the moment, recall a few basic facts from secondary-school-level-biology. Life exists far from thermodynamic equilibrium, because an inflow of energy necessary to maintain itself. Death marks the end of energy consumption. Therefore, any system involving humans will not be in thermodynamic equilibrium. Living organisms are autopoetic, they are centred on re-creating (reproducing) themselves, which means that they extract useful material (in-
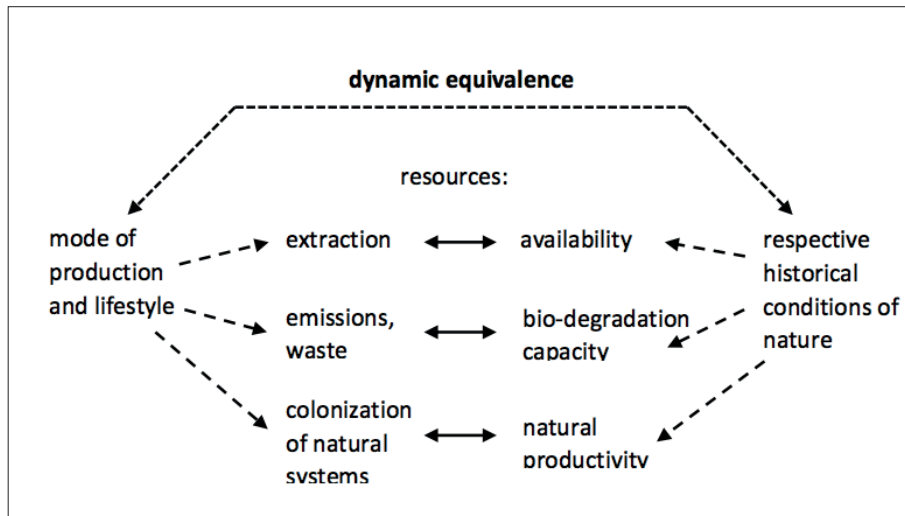

Figure 2 – Adapted from Fischer-Kowalski et al, 1997

cluding energy carriers) from their environs and can overtax availability. The universe, by contrast, shows a long-term trend towards equilibrium, meaning a situation with an equal distribution of matter and energy. To rephrase this in terms more compatible with physical laws, we should acknowledge that energy in the universe cannot get lost, it is constant and that it is more precise to talk about exergy. We need energy differences to harvest energy, and harvestable energy is called exergy (Winiwarter et al, 2013).

While most sustainability researchers would probably nod knowingly when it comes to describing evolution and evoke Darwinian images, it is important to call attention to its most basic feature. Evolution is the heteronomic result of two unrelated and initially independent processes. A process to create changes (mutation) and a process to discriminate between the results of change (selection) combine as basis for a multitude of living organisms with a tendency to greater complexity. It is important that the process of evolution has no direction. Bacteria, archeae, fungi, plants, animals, viruses, all are in permanent evolution, some faster, some slower. Lewis Carroll in his children's novel 'Behind the Looking Glass', relates a story which has subsequently been picked up by evolutionary biologists, the story of the Red Queen. After meeting the Red queen, Alice has to run with her to be able to conduct a conversation, as the Queen is running. After some running, to Alice's exhaustion, they stop and the girl notices that they are still in the same spot. She voices her bewilderment: "Well, in our country," said Alice, still panting a little, "you'd generally get to somewhere else — if you run very fast for a long time, as we've been doing." The Queen responds: "A slow sort of country! Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!" (Caroll, 1871: 16) This story has inspired evolutionary biologists, which are following Van Valen's 1973 proposition, that for an evolutionary system, continuing development is needed just in order to maintain its fitness relative to the systems it is co-evolving with (Van Valen, 1973).

While this is by no means the only interpretation of evolutionary principles, it holds a powerful lesson for all concerned with preservation of heritage. A group of environmental historians has suggested to view the world as a series of nested nexuses of arrangements and practices, called socio-natural sites. These socio-natural sites are subject to evolutionary and thermodynamic principles (Winiwarter et al, 2013). To sum the argument up: Human beings create, via their practices, arrangements from the material world to harvest exergy. These arrangements deteriorate due to wear and tear. All arrangements are part of the evolutionary setting of humankind, either because of (evolving) humans taking part in them, or because of other living beings which evolve

and are part of them. Autopoetic change in arrangements is the norm, not the exception. We exist as islands of thermodynamic anomaly in a universe governed by both directional and stochastic change. If one now connects these insights with the prior discussion on sustainability, the point of sustainability as a dynamic equilibrium becomes even more prominent. Seeking sustainability means to seek a dynamic equilibrium with our surroundings because we need to maintain a flow of energy and material to withstand the trend of the universe to level all differences and also because we need to keep up with co-evolutionary demands. In a changing universe, with evolving life, sustainability means to counter change with change in order to maintain relative stability. Material Heritage therefore must be conceptualized in a processual way, its maintenance requirements have to be taken into account.

We shall turn to the geographer Marc Antrop to analyse what the maintenance of heritage requires. As he points out, landscapes evolve continuously in a more or less chaotic way and reflect social and economic needs of a particular society at a given moment (Antrop, 2006: 187). This is an important framework condition for cultural heritage, which is often landscape bound. As Antrop points out, the preservation of inherent landscape qualities and values is one important issue. Natural resources, such as biodiversity, habitats and water, and cultural heritage consisting of material objects in their landscape context and immaterial values such as the sense of place, the genius loci are connected and in their interaction form this inherent quality. Antrop emphasizes the connection to human practices: "A sustainable preservation of these qualities demands maintaining traditional practices and functions, and keeping the necessary knowledge to do so." In order to achieve this goal, one also needs to think about sustaining rural economies by using ad hoc combinations of natural and human capital, as he points out (Antrop, 2006: 193). To preserve cultural and natural heritage, a key to what Antrop (following Ecotrust) calls "A Conservation Economy", social capital, natural capital and economic capital are needed. Equity is a requirement, but also a good ecological endowment is necessary. Economic success, be it growth-oriented or not, is also a precondition. This brings the issue of valorization of heritage centre stage. Valorization of cultural heritage means to create the conditions for its preservation by sustaining rural communities.

THE BROADER CONTEXT: THE SUSTAINABILITY PARADIGM AND HUMAN NEEDS

Cultural heritage, cultural landscapes of specific value are part of a larger question, that of sustainable society. While it is important to notice that Italy is currently pioneering the preservation of cultural landscapes, (Agnoletti, 2012) the broader context of sustainability needs to be understood, too. Sustainability concerns all spheres of human life. While the field of consumption is evident, one might see the issue of livelihoods more broadly as important. Soini and Dessein list these two as well as landscape, artistic and other practices, recreation, aesthetic preferences and heritage as issues with a bearing on sustainability (Soini & Dessein, 3).

The issue of well-being of humans has been put into the context of community sustainability, with environmental social, economic and cultural issues intersecting to create well-being.[1]

Well-being has long been conceptualized as an issue of fulfilled needs. The pyramid of needs as first suggested by Maslow in 1943 and subsequently detailed, refined and discussed, contains security, adventure, freedom, exchange, power, expansion, acceptance, community, and expression. It is important to notice that these needs are to some extent contradictory, such as security and adventure, but this means only that a balance has to be sought by each individual. Most often, a hierarchical approach is used to visualize the needs. Such a depiction is presented in Figure 3.

Sustainability comes into play when we reflect upon the fact that these needs can be fulfilled very differently, with more or less environmental impact. One can also think of cultural heritage as a precipitate of the ways and means a society has found to fulfil its needs, connecting the notions directly.

How the needs are fulfilled in more or less sustainable ways can be exemplified by using acceptance, a person's desire to gain esteem in the eyes of others. Consumer society functions on the basis of 'conspicuous consumption', a notion coined by sociologist Thorstein Veblen in 1899. Patterns of economic consumption (of goods and services) are motivated by the desire for prestige, the public display of social status, rather than by the intrinsic, practical utility of the goods and the services proper. A sustainability transition will involve finding other options for creating acceptance and fulfilling our needs differently.
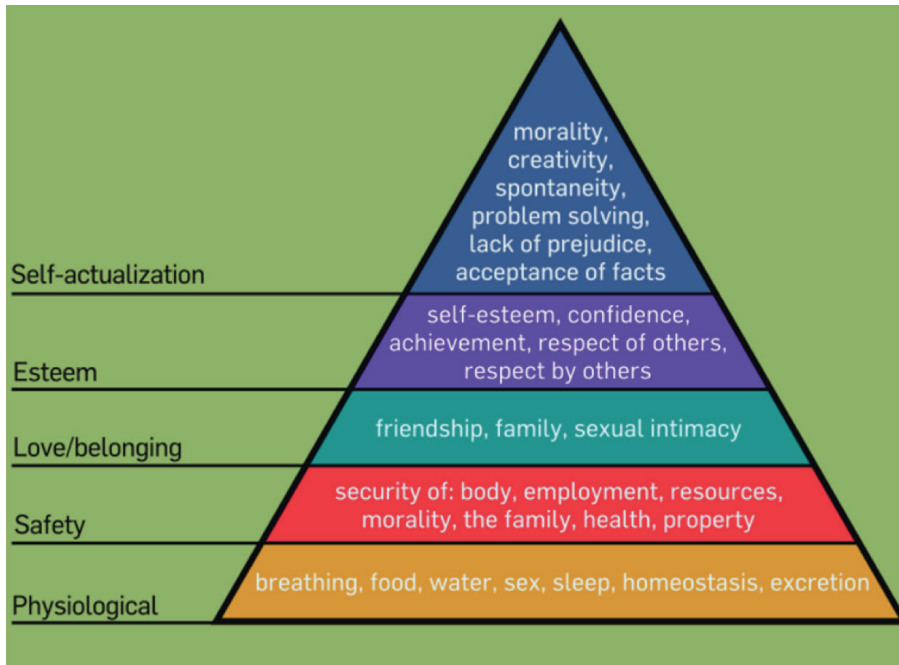
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1   see for an image at http://computingforsustainability.com/2009/03/15/visualising-sustainability=

Figure 3 – Maslow's pyramid of needs in an expanded version

SUSTAINABILITY AND HERITAGE

While we have now explored some important social issues in the context of sustainable development, an understanding of the role of cultural heritage for sustainable development has to combine the ecological issues raised in Figure 2 with the social and psychological questions raised above and depicted in Figure 3. Figure 4 is the depiction of a Chinese proverb. I will use it to disentangle the elements of both natural and intangible as well as material cultural heritage, which link nature and culture in many ways. The proverb is translated as: "When the wind blows, barrel makers get rich". The explanation of the proverb in the Wikipedia version details the chain of events: "When the wind blows, dust will be blown into people's eyes. If dust is blown into people's eyes, some people will go blind. The traditional employment for blind people in Japan was itinerant shamisen-playing story-tellers. The blind people would therefore be predicted to purchase shamisen. The skin of the shamisen is made of dog or more often cat. So if the number of blind people increase, then cats will be killed for their skin. If cats are killed then there will be more

Figure 4 – A Chinese proverb as a means to illustrate the entangled cultural and natural issues resulting in an economic effect ultimately caused by blowing wind. Yellow arrows depict cultural causation; blue arrows depict natural causation. Mixed arrows denote combined causation

mice. And if there are more mice, people will need to make sure that their rice is kept in barrels. So they will order barrels. And barrel makers will get rich."[2]

The proverb can be read as having an even closer connection to environmental issues than the story contains at first glance, if we include the question of why the dust is blowing into the story. The dust-blowing wind might be the result of changes in land-use resulting in enhanced erosion. And the chain could be constructed further back, including more and more elements: The enhanced erosion might be due to wood-cutting as a result of natural forces impacting on cultural heritage – an earthquake destroying wooden buildings, perhaps even temples. The enhanced erosion might be due to wood-cutting for building war ships or a merchant fleet, it might be due to a new crop sown that provides less ground cover than traditional crops, which might be given up due to changes in taste or due to climate change calling for diversification or change in crops. Wherever one stops, the entanglement of cultural and natural spheres of causation is doubtlessly clear.

Sustainable development is intimately tied to the choices made in the cultural sphere. Its preservation and valorization is only a part of the story. The Chinese proverb allows us to see that all our choices will have impacts on

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2   http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shamisen.jpg

the biosphere, often indirect results over many steps back and forth between the spheres, including the economic and social sphere. Hence, to evaluate cultural choices for their potential for doing good or harm in our relation to nature (ecological sustainability) becomes central to sustainable development, calling for a much more prominent role for the humanities than they have hitherto had.

HERITAGE IN THE DANUBE REGION – A STORY OF CONFLICT AND DESTRUCTION

Having established the causal relationship chains that involve culture and nature alike, the final section of this paper explores one more entanglement between sustainability and heritage. This entanglement is of particular importance for the Danube region. I refer to the role of the wilful destruction of cultural heritage as a means of destroying the identity of peoples in conflict and war.

The city of Dubrovnik has put a series of maps on display in its centre to inform visitors of the amount and exact place of destruction wrought by the Yugoslav army, the Serbs and Montenegrinians in the years 1991 and 1992, as the caption says.[3]

The maps detail directly damaged roofs, buildings destroyed by fire, and indirect destruction. The discussion brings us back to the beginning of this article. As Vecco rightly points out, the Hague Convention of 1954, reacting to the damage of WWII, was an important stepping stone in the societal embrace of cultural property or heritage. "The Convention states that it is necessary to protect the cultural heritage of all humanity" (Vecco, 2010, 322), It is discussed in detail by Kevin Chamberlain (Chamberlain, 2004).

A recent edited collection of the same title, but with a different subtitle, is the result of an international comparative project focussing on restoration (Sørensen & Rose, 2015). It is accompanied by YouTube Videos.[4] The book explores "how cultural heritage is both affected and generated by conflict, and how such heritage is subsequently interpreted, responded to, and used." (Sørensen & Rose, 2015: 1) The project on which the book is based explored the uses of cultural heritage in post-conflict reconstruction processes in five countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, France, Germany, and Spain. Case studies from Denmark and Serbia were added. The book has a strong focus on

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3   http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Dubrovnik#/media/File:Dubrovnik_shelling.jpg
4   http://www.youtube.com/user/CRICResearchProject

place, as the authors wish to show that place itself, just like people and institutions can exercise agency, a dimension of post-conflict heritage construction they claim has been little explored. For a material-oriented environmental history place can be seen as analogue to the socio-natural sites we wish to explore. The book ties nature and culture together and thus is useful for the study of the role of cultural heritage in sustainability.

The Istanbul-based research institute for Islamic history and Culture, founded in 1976 and opened in 1982 as a part of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation, has a program devoted to the History and Culture of Bosnia-Hercegovina.[5] A series of publications has been produced, among them one on the restoration of mosques, which were restored after the Yugoslav war with the help of foreign donations (Eren et al, 2013). The destruction of mosques was an integral part of the war and can be seen as a strategy of identity erasure. Such action has been called 'identicide' and is defined as the intentional killing of the relatedness between people and place that eliminates the bond, which underpins individual, community, and national identity (Meharg, 1999).

The hostile attitude towards cultural representations of other cultures has not ended with the end of the war. As late as November 2012, the global heritage fund reported that the Kosovo Government was planning to set up an (ethnically) Serbian police unit to protect some of the most important Serbian heritage in the country, such as four Serbian Orthodox Christian churches and monasteries that comprise the Medieval Monuments in Kosovo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.[6] War legacies in the form of destroyed or damaged cultural heritage sites have an important effect on the options and priorities for sustainable development (Winiwarter, 2015) and hence, need to be considered as an important topic linking sustainability and heritage.

WHAT ROLE(S) COULD CULTURAL HERITAGE PLAY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGION?

But war has a bearing on sustainability not only with regard to destruction; it can also be explored for its potential to foster peace after or even instead of conflict. The Council of Europe has spelled this possibility out in a 2011 resolution (Council of Europe, 2011). The council argues that heritage provides a channel for knowledge and the mutual recognition of diversity and can thus stimulate dialogue between people and communities (Council of Europe, 2011: 5). This echoes a UNESCO report on the issue in which UNESCO emphasizes

5   http://www.ircica.org/the-history-and-culture-of-bosnia-and-hercegovina/irc441.aspx
6   http://globalheritagefund.org/onthewire/blog/serbian_religious_and_cultural_sites

"the preservation of cultural heritage and its effects on development, social cohesion and peace integrated into national and local policies" (UNESCO 2008: 29). In this report, UNESCO also declares its own role to develop a culture of peace. "UNESCO will continue to monitor [...] highlighting the role that can be played by culture in situations of conflict or post-conflict as a 'vehicle' for reconciliation through cultural heritage" (UNESCO 2008: 27).

Cultural heritage should not be seen naively as a cure for conflict, but rather as multi-faceted and ambiguous, which allows for communication about it between different groups: "[...] post-conflict healing from psychological and cultural perspectives should not be assessed based on simplistic linear and universal values. Instead, it is better understood as an intensified, but ambiguous, form of renewal based on the use of emotive symbols, as part of a larger anthropological undertaking of continuous individual or cultural (re)production." (Giblin, 2014, 514)

Several principles should be followed when dealing with cultural heritage. A group from the Netherlands has summarized their experiences calling for participatory planning (Vervloet et al, 2005: 156f). The authors suggest to involve agencies, inhabitants and enterprises in a process of negotiation. Experts need to be prepared to find locally accepted compromises rather than coming with a one-size-fits-all approach. When participatory planning is involved in the creation or re-creation of cultural heritage, developing heritage can trigger processes of empowerment and is therefore a field of experimental democracy, which in itself is a prerequisite for sustainability. Vervloet and colleagues also point out that radical imagined futures can open a space for negotiation about more mundane and practical solutions by widening the vision of the people involved.

Developing heritage can be a laboratory for negotiation and help develop democracy at the same time as promoting a sense of belonging and identity.

CONCLUSION

The Danube Declaration of April, 25th, 2010 was signed by Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. It emphasizes "that the Danube Region Strategy will serve the goal of increasing prosperity, security and peace for the peoples living there, especially through enhancing cross-border, trans-regional and trans-national cooperation and coordination" and considers "the strategic policy areas of energy, environmental and nature protection, transport and infrastructure, professional training and innovation, arts and cultural activities, as well as sustainable eco-

nomic activity and tourism, food security/safety, economy, SME cooperation, R+D, migration, governance, sport, education and culture, labour, health and social affairs as key elements of the future EU Strategy for the Danube region." (Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary, 2010)

The evidence presented in this paper has shown how central the development, preservation and valorisation of cultural heritage are for the goals of the Danube Strategy. The contested creation of identities via cultural heritage is ongoing in the region, as the debate about the resolution of the Balkan conflicts has not reached closure. The area of former Yugoslavia is in a post-conflict state, and will take decades to recover from a history of genozide and wilful destruction. The politics of memory are played out on the fields of natural and cultural heritage. Researchers must be aware that linking sustainability and heritage in such a region is not without dangers. Arguments of sustainability might be used as camouflage for political interests.

In such a contested terrain, all research has to make norms and values of the researchers explicit. All research needs to make its ethical ramifications transparent and justify them and all research must be aware that it is embedded in a political and economic context and needs to watch out for misuse. But while these caveats should be taken seriously, the potential of creating a sustainable Danube River Basin by dealing successfully with the cultural and natural heritage of the basin is great and merits exploration particularly in the form of long-term socio-ecological case studies as a basis for comparative approaches. Only through long-term studies can the multiple layers of meaning often present at one site be made visible. Many sites have a multi-ethnic or multi-national history and could become focal points of a joint effort to preserve and develop them into nodes of sustainable development.

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