

THE INTERPRETATION AND UTILIZATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ITS VALUES BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN SLOVENIA

Is Heritage Really Boring and Uninteresting?

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This paper analyses approaches to involving young people in the processes of valuation, interpretation and utilization of local heritage to meet contemporary development challenges. The starting point is the finding that European development strategies highlight the various potentials of cultural heritage, but young people from western Slovenia hardly see any of these potentials. Moreover, the presented ethnographic research results show that young people are not very interested in heritage practices undertaken in their cities or villages. This paper's results demonstrate how heritage may be introduced to young generations, how youth understand local heritage and its values, and what they think about voluntary activities in cultural fields.

Keywords: heritage values, young people, educational curriculum, voluntary activities, neoliberal society, Slovenia

Introduction

The meaning, roles, and ways of renovating, presenting and utilizing cultural heritage are changing all the time. They depend on global, transnational and national social, political and technological developments, and scientific findings as well as the involvement of different actors who interpret what heritage is, how it is made, what it embraces, and what its function in a concrete place or society should be. According to current European and Slovenian programmes of culture and socio-economic development,¹ cultural heritage is recognized as a means of building, negotiating and asserting social identity as well as “a powerful factor in social and economic development through the activities it generates and the policies which underpin it” (European Cultural Heritage Strategy 2018: 7). In this context, heritage practices constitute an invaluable resource in the fields of education, employment, tourism and sustainable development (ibid.). Moreover, the function of cultural heritage in the contemporary world is also seen as an enabler for challenges, such as economic

¹ A New European Agenda for Culture (2018), European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century (2018), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), the Development Strategy of Slovenia 2030 (2017), the Slovenian National Program for Culture 2018–2025 (2017).

inequalities, conflict resolution, social cohesion, human rights, democracy, global warming, hunger and poverty etc. (Winter 2013: 533, 542; Interpret Europe 2016: 4; Starr 2010: 156). The protection, interpretation and social construction of heritage have therefore become an important issue in many research projects, as well as in applied and development projects (e.g. INTERREG projects), where European partners from different sectors and countries follow the European strategies and recommendations stating that local heritage has a great potential for stimulating the sustainable growth of communities and a fortified common, European heritage and transnational identity. In order to foster this mission, the European Parliament proclaimed the year 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage with the aim of involving more people in discovering and engaging with Europe's cultural heritage, therein reinforcing a sense of belonging to a common European space.² Some approaches have focused on encouraging young people as well to “better understand and appreciate their cultural heritage, and through this appreciation, to participate and contribute meaningfully to society” (Youth for Heritage 2018: 1). Supporting the creativity and talent of the youth, young people should be encouraged to participate in projects, “where their skills can make a difference in protecting, safeguarding and promoting heritage” (ibid.). By sustainably preserving and utilizing their predecessors' achievements, young people could be aided in better thinking, planning and acting in their environment and consequently more able to actively participate in local decision-making processes (Yazıcıoğlu Halu and Gülçin Küçükaya 2016).

Considering the above, two questions arise: how can teenagers aged 15 to 20 be involved in heritage activities, since these are very sensitive years and teenagers are interested in many things and activities? And how can teenagers be encouraged and shown that heritage is not just an important source used to strengthen and represent the world, European and national identity, and to establish and preserve intercultural dialogue and tolerance as is written in the Slovenian curriculum programmes for history and geography in grammar schools (*gimnazija*) (2008)? The latter is important as heritage also has the potential to realize youth creativity, boldness, curiosity, re-establish friendly relations with other generations, obtain new knowledge for future professions, and to find a place for reflections on human rights and youth-related problems connected with growing up.

The European document launched by the European Commission named *Youth for Heritage: Young People Bringing New Life to Heritage* (2018) notes that possible activities for young people in the framework of using heritage are volunteering, i.e. where young people act as guides at heritage sites and museums or support professionals in conservation works. Other possible volunteering activities include conducting digital training or survey works or becoming social media assistants in cultural heritage institutions (Youth for Heritage 2018: 1). However, in order to reflect

² <https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/about> (accessed 10. 9. 2018). The goal of the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions is “to increase cultural participation, and bring Europeans together to experience what connects us rather than what divides us” (A New European Agenda for Culture 2018: 1).

on and negotiate the European missions, the standpoint of each national or local action should be as follows: to recognize how young people in one community (village, city, region or country) understand the concept of heritage in the 2010s; to understand how heritage is presented to them through current school programmes, how heritage is important to them, and how they understand the process of valuing the past's resources; and to uncover which values are essential to them. Finally, important findings should also include finding out what young people think about volunteering in cultural events and whether they see themselves as volunteers in heritage activities.

This paper presents ethnographic research findings, from fieldwork completed in the west part of Slovenia (Primorska region) in order to find out how the concept of cultural heritage is discussed and reflected on in secondary schools in Slovenia, and what young people think about heritage practices in their local communities and about the interpretation of heritage in public institutions. Interviews with young people also raised an important issue relating to heritage, concerning the values that the past's achievements trigger in current public debates and the commodification of culture in the contemporary, commercially oriented society.

Methodological background

The presented and analysed findings were obtained as part of two projects. One is the national research programme named "Historical Interpretations of the 20th Century", carried out by the Institute of Culture and Memory Studies (ZRC SAZU), where researchers focus on the relationship between historiography and other discourses about the past (e.g. the "affective turn", politics of memory, revisionism, digital media, the interpretation of heritage).³ The second project is an applied European INTERREG project named "NewPilgrimAge: 21st Century Reinterpretation of the St. Martin Related Shared Values and Cultural Heritage As a New Driver for Community-Sourced Hospitality" (NPA),⁴ where two of the main targeted groups are young people and small-scale entrepreneurs. The partners in the NPA project, working together from June 2017 till May 2020, and coming from Hungary, Croatia, Italy and Slovenia, have so far opened up many challenges connected with the implementation of the new concept of cultural heritage; especially challenges relating to contemporary social, economic, environmental and cultural problems. Among the following objectives, partners have actively developed new ways, methods and ICT tools for involving the young generation in the heritage process and different social activities, which could better contribute to the wellbeing, good health and establishment of coherent local communities.

³ The research programme (P6-0347) is financed by the Slovenian Research Agency from the state budget.

⁴ More about the NewPilgrimAge project: <https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/NewPilgrimAge.html> (accessed 13. 6. 2019). The project is financed by the European regional development fund.

In the context of St. Martin's heritage and its interpretation within the European cultural route "Via Sancti Martini", the important social values ascribed to St. Martin's heritage are: mutual support, humanity, faith, sharing resources and knowledge. These values were defined by the Council of Europe who proclaimed St. Martin's Way a European cultural route in 2005. The national cultural centres of St. Martin were established in different nations, which are part of the transnational cultural route. They form a network of cities with St. Martin's heritage and take care of the national component to St. Martin's Way.⁵ This paper thus outlines some of the issues – also discussed among the project's partners – and deals with the challenge of how the process of the past's valuation is formed by different actors involved in the practices of heritage making and its implementation in the concrete local community. The paper also discusses how the local residents (also young people) understand the process of the construction of heritage values.⁶ Moreover, at the first project meeting, where partners talked about innovative cultural heritage valorization fields, a young project member from MindSpace (an NGO from Budapest) with many experiences of community engagement, explicitly asked a rhetorical question: how did partners think to involve teenagers in heritage practices connected with St. Martin in order that they become active stakeholders in its presentation, interpretation and utilization. The question posed a challenge to all partners and encouraged us to deeply reflect on teenagers' needs, wishes, abilities etc.

In order to hear the voices of young people and to grasp what they think about heritage activities, twenty students, aged 17–18 years, from three secondary schools (a secondary school for economics, a general grammar school, a grammar school for drama) in the west part of Slovenia were involved in the qualitative research. Students, who took an active role in the semi-structured interviews, were selected according to the snowball sampling method, which means I came into contact with one student from each school and the students invited their classmates and friends to the meetings. The interviewed students were thus divided into three groups, formed with respect to the type of grammar or comprehensive school. The interviews took place in May 2018. Students firstly spoke about culture and heritage in a more general way. Later the conversation shed light on the values and social roles of heritage practices, voluntary activities in the heritage field, and youth roles in heritage practices conducted in their local environments.

Some of the presented thoughts were obtained in three workshops as well, which I organized in two secondary schools. One workshop was completed with the third year of the secondary school for economics as part of the subject *entrepreneurship* in

⁵ According to the Council's interpretation, the social values of St. Martin (316/335–97) are symbolized by the Saint's charitable act in Amiens in the year 337 (Kovač 2008: 12) when he cut his cloak in half to share with a poor man who was dying of cold in the heart of winter (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/cultural-routes/the-saint-martin-of-tours-route>, accessed 22. 2. 2018).

⁶ It should be mentioned that the paper does not refer to the presentation of St. Martin's life and its cultural artefacts (see Bratož 2006; Kovač 2008; Šerbelj 2006; Zaradija Kiš 2004, etc.) but in this context the saint's heritage and social values were used as an example through which to discuss with young people how the saint's way of life was interpreted and utilized by different actors (e.g. the European Council, the Cultural Centres of St. Martin, priests, European politicians etc.) to face up to and to alleviate contemporary social, cultural and economic challenges.

May 2018. The second was carried out in the grammar school in an English lesson in December 2018 and the third was undertaken in February 2019 in the secondary school for economics during the subject *robotics*. The workshops aimed to discuss new concepts and understandings of heritage with the students and their teachers within the context of sustainable policy and developing new ICT tools, tools which can interpret heritage items in innovative ways. Various interactive methods were implemented in the workshops, such as brainstorming, debate, a ProAction Café⁷ and essay writing. Two teachers from the secondary school for economics, one teacher from the grammar school and a member of the local heritage association (a journalist and organizer of different cultural and heritage events) also gave interviews. Due to personal data protection concerns and the sensitivity of some information provided, the interviewees' names and places of residence are not given in the paper, but just their gender, type of school or the teachers' professions.

The first section describes the wider context in which heritage is understood in the neoliberal period and what young people think about volunteering activities and the commodification of culture for profit making.⁸ Following this, the attitude of young people towards heritage in general is discussed and analysed. The last chapter gives some ideas as to how the interviewed youth would make heritage more attractive, interesting and adapted to contemporary needs, and how they would use new ICT tools for its interpretation. In the conclusion some recommendations for heritage experts, teachers and other heritage practitioners are proposed and outlined.

The economic and development roles of cultural heritage in the contemporary world

In an interview regarding understandings, meanings and significances of cultural heritage in the contemporary world, a young male from a general grammar school (age 17) stated:

Over the past decade there has been increasingly less interest in cultural heritage among young people. Young people are under intense pressure to grow up as quickly as possible and start thinking about the education they want and how to plan for the future – life, school, grades. Exploration and a greater

⁷ <https://www.plays-in-business.com/proaction-cafe/> (accessed 12. 11. 2019).

⁸ The process of making heritage in local communities (villages, cities, municipalities) or in national and transnational public institutions opens up many research questions (connected with understanding heritage as a social practice, introducing integrative approaches to heritage practices, defining local communities in the heritage field, processes of inscription heritage items on UNESCO's lists, introducing heritage in sustainable development policies, fostering the integrative management of built heritage, practicing and developing intangible cultural heritage, making heritage in urban environments etc.). One such research question also concerns the commodification and abuses of culture and its heritage for economic growth and the development of tourism, creative industry, social entrepreneurship etc. Students began to reflect on this problem and, surprisingly, had a very critical attitude towards capitalist thinking in contemporary society. The paper just outlines the economic discourse in the heritage fields and problems connected with the process of forming values that the past's elements trigger in public discourses.

knowledge of the world are pushed into the background [...] People are trying to connect heritage with tourism, which is a very promising sector in Slovenia and within this framework trying to develop economic potential, but as far as other aspects of culture are concerned, ones that don't bring immediate profit, these are being neglected.

This statement raises many questions, for both professors and parents, who prepare young people for new challenges in their life, as well as for experts on heritage and scholars who deal with new perspectives, understandings, roles and interpretations of cultural heritage in the sustainable development of our communities. Influenced by capitalist thinking, market behaviour, and neoliberal logic, contemporary roles and interpretations of heritage are unfortunately connected with economic growth, making profits and its sustainability in the economic market as well (Fakin Bajec 2016; Coombe and Weiss 2015; Aplin 2007). Although the politicians, municipal officials or secondary school teachers are theoretically aware that heritage could be “a key factor for the refocusing of our societies on the basis of dialogue between cultures, respect for identities and diversity, and a feeling of belonging to a community of values” (European Cultural Heritage Strategy 2018: 7), there are usually not enough funds provided by states or municipalities for preserving and safeguarding material items, crafts, arts and other traditional practices to meet the above mentioned challenges. Thus the NGOs and schools, which perform or practice heritage activities in many local communities, are not supported enough. The critics of the modern neoliberal system thus constantly highlight how politicians would surely be more interested in culture if it brought big profits, while the cultural sector only receives crumbs from the state budget.⁹

In Slovenia, the funds for culture have been drastically cut by the Ministry of Culture since the economic and social crisis of 2008 and have still not started to increase significantly.¹⁰ The ministry and many local municipalities are not able to acquire enough resources for the renovation and conservation of many cultural monuments. Although they are looking for new ways of funding, such as the public-private

⁹ The president of the executive board for the most prestigious prize in the field of culture in Slovenia, the Prešeren Awards, in both 2017 and 2018 publicly criticized the political leadership and noted that “politicians should be cultural. As it is, all governments in succession have thrown money into the laps of tycoons, banks, bad investments [...] while only giving crumbs from the large tables of capitalist greed to culture, and even these crumbs are becoming more insultingly meagre each year” (<https://www.rtvsl.si/kultura/drugo/moederndorfer-politiki-z-velike-mize-kapitalisticne-pozrtije-kulturi-namenjajo-drobtinice/414418>, accessed 18. 6. 2018).

¹⁰ According to an interview with the Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, which I completed in 2016 (in the context of the RESTAURA project, <https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/RESTAURA.html>, accessed 5. 9. 2019), prior to the economic and social crisis of 2008 and related 2012 reforms (Fiscal Balance Act), the ministry had intended to provide 7 million euros, plus some funds from the European structural funds, for the protection and restoration of cultural heritage. In 2016, the ministry received only 1.6 million for the investments, and moreover the Ministry of Finance decided that culture and its heritage were not on a priority list for resources from the European structural funds during the period 2014–2020. Until the crisis, the ministry also had special funds from the Cultural Act from the years 1998–2013. This was called the Cultural Tolar / Cultural Euro, which among other tasks, provided additional money for the restoration and presentation of the most important and most endangered monuments (<http://socialnidemokrati.si/blog/2017/10/23/samo-bevk-zakon-o-kulturnem-evru-temelj-za-nov-razmah-kulturne-dejavnosti/>, accessed 22. 8. 2018). In addition to reducing money available for the renovation of cultural monuments, funding for NGOs working in the field of culture has also decreased.

partnership model, there are very few projects in the field of culture that try to implement this approach (Makuc 2018). There are many problems with achieving new ways of financing cultural monuments and other intangible activities performed by NGOs. One of the problems is the lack of private partners willing to start on a project with the public sector, or to financially support cultural activities.

Heritage experts have different opinions on the commodification of cultural practices for profit-making activities, the abuses of heritage monuments and stories for marketing purposes (Starr 2010), the evaluation of heritage activities through economic criteria (Labadi and Gould 2015) and on involving the public-private concept in heritage renovation projects. However, it should be recognized that in the context of a shortage of funding for heritage, its safeguarding, preservation and transmission to younger generations should be reflected on and understood by scholars, experts and other heritage practitioners, with regard to the needs of local communities and the current financial situation. Major questions preoccupying some professionals therefore include the following: how should the private sector and economic discourse interact with cultural heritage? And how can heritage be responsibly, fairly and ethically used for commercial purposes in order to keep alive many tangible and intangible treasures (Starr 2010; Mason 2008; Coombe 2012) and respect human and cultural rights (Coombe and Weiss 2015)? Some studies also deal with the benefits and advantages of interpreting heritage through interactive games and phone applications, techniques of virtual and augmented reality, social media etc. (Tudorache et al. 2019; Schaper, Santos and Pares 2018; Tom Dieck and Jung 2017).

In the context of developing and implementing a sustainable development policy and the economic growth of the local community, UNESCO and the Council of Europe have made huge efforts to prove that without understanding the culture of communities, analysing local people's way of life and the process of their valuing the past, experiences, memories and ideas for the future, etc., community development (both social and economic) cannot have a fruitful impact.¹¹ At the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 (Labadi and Gould 2015: 200) and at the World Public Meeting on Culture in Porto Alegre in 2002 (where *Agenda 21 for Culture* was adopted),¹² culture was proclaimed the fourth pillar of sustainable development. Nevertheless, this was not especially highlighted in the new *Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015), even though the agenda placed people, poverty and hunger in the foreground.¹³

A new understanding of cultural heritage has come about not only due to the economic and development pressures of a rapidly changing world, but also because of the development of new postmodern paradigms and the influence of a theory of practice (Bourdieu 2002 [1972]), which have been intensively highlighted in the

¹¹ This was reflected on by many scholars, such as Fairclough 2008, 2009; Bandarin, Hosagrahar and Albernaz 2011; Long and Smith 2010; Clark 2008; Low 2008; Nurse 2006, etc.

¹² The strategic document *Agenda 21 for Culture* was intended for local governments regarding the significance of culture for the sustainable development of a local region, based on respect for cultural diversity, human rights, intercultural dialogue, participatory democracy, sustainability, and peace (Culture 21. Actions 2015).

¹³ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld> (accessed 10. 6. 2019).

heritage field from the beginning of the 21st century. This new understanding points out that doing research on the past and the process of making heritage lies less in investigating the materiality or immateriality of heritage elements, and more in understanding social practices and the construction of meanings, significances and values which a particular heritage element embodies (Geertz 1973; Byrne 2008, Smith 2006). This means that when researchers talk about tangible and intangible cultural elements, the focus is not only on the element itself, but more on the attitude that local people have towards the past: which reflections, attitudes, memories, emotions and other stories these elements trigger among individuals or the community, and how visiting heritage sites or researching past events can change knowledge, behaviour and attitudes toward the past, present and future (Lowenthal 1985; Smith 2006). In this context, researchers have started to highlight and examine the values that people, experts and other heritage makers are connecting with the past, the processes of its construction, and the consequences that heritage practices have on people's ways of life (Bold and Pickard 2018) as well as how heritage practices foster a sense of cultural identity and diversity, community building and wellbeing (Adell et al. 2015; Onciul, Stefano and Hawke 2017). Here the most important notion is the following statement, also argued by Fairclough (2008: 299): "what 'ordinary' people value might be different from what experts value, or they might value the same things but for quite different reasons, such as for reasons of association, memory, or locality". Here an important role is played precisely by social and individual values and the meanings of elements labelled as heritage. The different attitudes of local residents towards heritage elements are the result of various circumstances, experiences and wider social and economic situations. If some of these elements embody positive values, they are worth using for development purposes. For this reason, it is necessary to research the history of the way of life and thereby become familiar with the meanings and values of past cultural elements and practices that are to be developed in the contemporary period (Fakin Bajec 2014).

In recent years many studies in heritage theory have therefore centred on the issues of how to include local residents in the process of valuation, interpretation, safeguarding, or even managing cultural heritage in the local community. The new methodological approach that heritage experts try to implement in heritage practices focuses on an integrative approach based on the theory of active participation. This integrative approach demands the integration of components from top-down and bottom-up approaches (Sesana et al. 2019: 2). Referring to the document *An Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage: The Council of Europe's Technical Co-Operation and Consultancy Programme*, the decision-making professionals should involve those actors who are most directly affected by cultural heritage – the owners, inhabitants, local communities and local authorities – who recognize the specific value of heritage for society. Indeed, national-level cultural heritage protection policies and practices must not be removed from these stakeholders (Bold and Pickard 2018: 7). Moreover, stakeholders from different sectors ought to be involved from the very beginning of such heritage activities (Bold and Pickard 2018; Court and Wijesuriya 2015; Adell et

al. 2015; Cahill and Dadvand 2018). However, in practice this is not an easy approach to achieve and many practical questions among stakeholders are raised. One of them concerns which values predominate in heritage discourse, who is the main protagonist of its domination, and how the voices of local residents or heritage practitioners are heard and understood by politicians and experts (Adell et al. 2015).

William Lipe, who was among the first scholars to explicitly state the definition of value, argued that

value is not inherent in any cultural items or properties received from the past, at least not in the same sense as, say, size or colour or hardness. Value is learned about or discovered by humans, and thus depends on the particular cultural, intellectual, historical, and psychological frames of references held by the particular individuals and groups involved. (Lipe in Schofield 2008: 23)

According to Lipe, the main characteristic values recognized in heritage items are associative/symbolic, informational, aesthetic and economic values, which have also become the cornerstone of evaluation systems globally (ibid.). The notion of value triggers feelings and emotions and provides the basis for emotional commitment to the past. Such standards are commonly but not universally held, they are constantly being renegotiated and changed among many actors (Byrne 2008: 150), depending on many social, cultural, political as well as economic situations.

In relation to the topic discussed in this paper, the relevant question for many communities who practice or are involved in integrative approaches to reflect on, is that of whether young people take an active role in the valuation of the local past, its preservation or safeguarding. According to studies dealing with perceptions of young local residents towards heritage, the youth as future leaders in their communities should play a crucial role in the sustainability of any future heritage programmes (Jaafar, Noor and Rasoolimanesh 2015; Cahill and Dadvand 2018). However, their involvement usually varies, depending on the members of communities, leaders of communities and other situations. One important issue is also that of recognition if young people have a positive perception of their involvement in the community development process (Jaafar, Noor and Rasoolimanesh 2015). Following the theory of active participation, which demands the involvement of stakeholders from the very beginning of the project or activity (Cahill and Dadvand 2018), the crucial reflection should be that of how to encourage and empower the youth to actively participate in the process of the past's selection and in making local heritage come to life in its different cultural, social and economic aspects. According to the Europe initiative in the European Year of Cultural Heritage:

Young people are the best ambassadors of European values. [...] Mobility allows them to discover and enjoy Europe's cultural heritage. The Year [...] will also be the opportunity for them to engage more frequently as volunteers in activities that aim at protecting, safeguarding and promoting heritage.¹⁴

¹⁴ http://www.ecco-eu.org/fileadmin/user_upload/3_Youth_for_heritage_for_NC.pdf (accessed 12. 11. 2019).

Young people, heritage values and the interpretation of the past

According to my field experiences, local people who are not experts in the heritage field, or who do not reflect on the process of heritage making, find it difficult to understand, express or define the notion of value. It is very abstract concept for them and they rarely connect it with heritage. Moreover, people also have problems in expressing why a chosen heritage element has significance and was proclaimed a national or local monument instead of another element, one which is even more important to them (Fakin Bajec 2011). In the context of the NPA project study, young people had big problems in linking values with heritage too. For them, values relate to families, friends, love, freedom – and not to heritage. Research conducted in Indonesia by Wan Ismail and Nadarajah gave similar results: youth were lacking in exposure to terms highlighted by the World Heritage List, some may not even understand or might have misinterpreted the meaning of heritage (Wan Ismail and Nadarajah 2016: 474). Only after hearing a short explanation of what is generally known about heritage and about St. Martin's heritage, his legend and why his path has become the European cultural route, did the Slovenian students start to argue about values and say that today St. Martin's social values of sharing and hospitality could be interpreted in the context of charity and the ability to put themselves in someone else's position. In their words:

that you don't put yourself first [...] What you do in this life is not intended to benefit you alone, you don't work just to benefit yourself, but part of your life is involved in giving something to the community, giving something to someone else. (male student, general grammar school, third year)

Students in the workshops were more reflective and recognized the social values in heritage practices, but before thinking about these issues they received a short lecture about the new roles of heritage practices in achieving sustainable development: especially about the social benefits in strengthening social and cultural identities, good relationships in villages, intergenerational ties, and preserving cultural diversity. In response to the question of what they do to promote greater community solidarity, e.g. volunteer work or other forms of assistance to others, and whether they see their role as voluntarist in heritage practices, they responded that they did not, due to a lack of free time. In primary school they participated in firefighters or scouting organizations, helped children with learning problems, visited homes for the elderly, wrote seminar papers about local heritage and so on and they liked this work, but now they do not have time. For this reason, they would like to see volunteer work included as part of school time, not their free time, since they need time for themselves. As they reflected on volunteer work, a female student in the fourth year of the secondary school for economics commented:

I'm not a volunteer. But even so it seems a nice thing to me and important nowadays. In any sort of area. So that people understand that one can help and work for something and not just for money. That you actually have the desire to help someone. I'm from [...] and when migrants were here, when they housed those young boys in the student dormitory, you were able to get involved in that. And you can go and help them learn. That seems like a nice thing to me. It spreads solidarity, help among young people and all people. It teaches us that it's not all about money. (female student, secondary school for economics, fourth year)

Students noted that they have some volunteering activities at their schools as well, but they depend on schools and teachers, and on how they encourage students to be socially active in their community. However, the researched schools do not offer voluntary activities in the field of culture or cultural heritage (e.g. voluntary work in local museums, libraries, archives, tourist information centres, heritage associations). All students agreed that people should talk more about these challenges. In the spirit of the values of help and hospitality, they also reflected on today's society and how it is changing.

It's very difficult to change society, since the foundations have already been built. It's always been on the basis that people should look after their own interests. You should put yourself first, ahead of others. It's true that sometimes individuals come along who show more concern for others, but that's rare, they are the exceptions. We've always been taught that; look after yourself. (female student, general grammar school, third year)

Moreover, one female student also complained that Slovenians are egoists, no one looks after others, we lack a sense of social solidarity and there is no trust in society (female student, secondary school for economics, fourth year). She was angry because of corruption in many companies and a situation whereby people in positions (bosses) steal and then the whole company goes bankrupt and all workers end up with nothing. However, at the same time the students also expressed that they do not have the free time and/or will, or courage to do something for their wellbeing and a better life. Moreover, they do not even have any idea of how to change the current situation, because "in our society if you express your opinion too freely and people in influential positions don't agree with it, you are quickly shut down" (female student, general grammar school, third year). Helen Cahill and Babak Dadvand from Australia also warned of such thinking in pointing out that "despite acknowledgement of the significant role of youth participation, policy discourses [...] remain somewhat contradictory often constructing young people simultaneously as both 'risk' to social cohesion and democracy and a solution to wicked problems" (Cahill and Dadvand 2018: 243–244).

Some students from the secondary schools for economics participating in the workshop complained that they would like to more actively participate in cultural

activities in their small villages, where residents are very active in discovering the past and constructing local heritage. However, as older people have had more experiences, these older people do not take them seriously. They also do not trust them. Students also complained that old people strive to renovate heritage objects according to old fashions. Young people would like to make some changes, but these changes are not permitted by the old people. At the end of the conversation they agreed that there is not enough of a conversation between generations and that old people do not listen to young people, while young people also do not take advice from older persons. But, according to the students, it is sad that young people from villages do not know anything about traditional knowledge and skills. Because of a disagreement in community and different views on preserving and developing its local culture, Janet Blake (2009) proposed to introduce a so-called cultural mediator or facilitator role in local communities. This could be assumed by community representatives, cultural custodians, technical and administrative personnel of government institutions, independent experts and political activists involved in institutional practices, or entrepreneurs seeking to develop business opportunities related to cultural resources (Blake 2009: 64). This person's competences include entering into a dialogue with involved stakeholders, and motivating the community enough to ensure continued engagement. An important starting point for a respectful and constructive dialogue among generations would be achieving an equal relationship among community members, as well as trust and responsibility for accepted agreements. The members (including young people) feel that only mutual collaboration and friendly relationships will bring fruitful results.

How will the youth modify and upgrade the interpretation of heritage?

A respectful attitude towards the achievements of ancestors, historical sites, old objects, dialects, old recipes, and the elderly should start in the family, as a former student from the grammar school pointed out, a woman who is now a member of a local heritage association, a journalist and organizer of many cultural events. Her statement was underpinned by the interviewed teachers as well. She also highlighted that "heritage is what your parents instil in you, like honesty, modesty, sincerity, hard work, punctuality". Young people connected heritage with property, or "the land our parents leave to us", or in a broader social sense the "legacy and property that is preserved and passed from one generation to another" (female student, grammar school for drama, third year). Heritage can also be understood as "wealth" and "history" as a male student in one workshop pointed out.

Based on young people's reflections

Slovenes are insufficiently aware of the meaning of our culture, and few people go on trips to look at heritage such as churches... We go more to amusement

parks and other interactive things. (female student, secondary school for economics, fourth year)

Young people, interestingly, only connected heritage with tourism and since cultural tourism in Slovenia is only now starting to be developed (Strategy for Sustainable Growth of Slovenian Tourism 2017: 9, 31),¹⁵ an attitude towards heritage is lacking.

In Slovenia people's mentality is a problem [...]. We don't have well-developed tourism, since this is not promoted or advertised, and then people also lose interest in heritage, and then the children lose interest as well, since they're not educated about it. [...] I talk a lot with my friends and nobody actually knows Slovenia. [...] We're more interested in visiting other countries, yet in Slovenia we have ten-times-better things, more beautiful and valuable than in other countries. (female student, secondary school for economics, fourth year)

Interviewees first talked about heritage as part of the subject *learning about the environment* in the first years of primary school. They understood heritage as a changing concept, which is shifting according to people's mentality, contemporary times and trends. They also pointed out that "the interpretation of heritage and some historical period shows what society is like today" (female student, general grammar school, third year). They were acquainted with the division between tangible and intangible heritage, but they had very limited knowledge of the UNESCO's lists. Although Slovenia has several elements listed on the UNESCO's World Heritage List and the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the students mostly only mentioned the Škocjan Caves – a heritage site in the west part of Slovenia.

In primary school they had also learned about heritage through research assignments in the subject *tourist education*.¹⁶ Based on their comments, they enjoyed working in the field, reading different literatures, and talking with people in the tourist industry – since they learned about their environment from a different perspective. According to their words:

you put yourselves in the role of a foreigner or someone from somewhere else who would perhaps be interested in it. You try to draw attention to some things from your area that you think would be interesting to the outside world. Things which are important for heritage, culture, customs, local crafts. (male student, general grammar school, third year)

Others enjoyed conducting interviews, talking with the elderly, and filming, since they were exploring heritage in a different and more experiential way. A completely

¹⁵ For this reasons, the Slovenian Tourist Organization prepared and published in 2017 the *Operative Plan of Marketing Slovenian Cultural Tourism 2018–2020* (*Operativni načrt trženja kulturnega turizma Slovenije 2018–2020*, https://www.slovenia.info/uploads/dokumenti/turisticni-produkti/onkult_2018-2020_web.pdf, accessed 14. 6. 2019).

¹⁶ This is an elective subject (such as sport, foreign languages, computer science etc.). Additional subjects are learnt in the upper-year classes of primary school.

different picture emerged in the grammar schools where students learned about heritage and UNESCO in geography and history, but in a very classic way, since “culture in school is not presented as something that has an influence on our lives. That’s the part that teachers have to lecture on” (female student, general grammar school, third year). They noted that if they did a research assignment as part of a lesson, heritage would perhaps attract them more, since “it’s very interesting to visit older residents and listen to their personal stories: they affect you more than if a teacher lectures about it” (female student, grammar school for drama, third year). They stressed that they would feel much more productive and useful doing their own research, since they would invest effort and free time in the research while also receiving a grade for it.

Based on what the students reported there are very few research assignments at grammar school since students are more focused on preparing for their end-of-school examinations (the *matura*) whereas there are more such opportunities for this kind of work at technical secondary schools. These include the programmes for economists, woodwork, tourist organizers, kindergarten educators etc. Teachers who teach the subject *entrepreneurship* at the economics school, as part of which students must write a seminar paper for the *matura* exam, stressed:

Young people should be encouraged to think about making use of heritage. And then actually do it. Just an idea is not enough. You need three years to really bring a product to fruition. This is extra work for teachers, to be sure. Students are difficult to motivate to see that this can bring them new knowledge. It’s not obvious that heritage can bring long-term profit. You really need to get them excited about this kind of more creative way of thinking.

An analysis of the national curriculum programmes for history, geography and Slovene in grammar schools demonstrated that in history classes, students have to assess the importance of safeguarding national, European and world heritage; develop a responsible and positive attitude towards the protection of the landscape and preservation of cultural heritage and identity; respect cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and tolerance (Curriculum Programme for History in Grammar Schools 2008). The educational programme for geography highlights developing positive emotions towards the homeland, feelings of belonging to their nation and state, and a love of natural and cultural heritage (Curriculum Programme for Geography in Grammar Schools 2008). However, the Curriculum Programme for Slovene in Grammar Schools (2008) did not mention heritage at all. Therefore, the journalist and member of a heritage society who organized a primary school competition with the theme “*Zrij rejpo!*”¹⁷ in 2017 stressed that such a competition would not be organized in a secondary school because

¹⁷ The cooking competition named “*Zrij rejpo!*” (“Dig up a turnip!”) was designed for primary school children in the Primorska region. Turnips are typical produce from this region and an indispensable ingredient that local people use regularly. Children had to prepare dishes from turnips in a traditional or novel way, using local ingredients. In addition, they had to improve their theoretical knowledge (e.g. history, biological characteristics, proverbs, etc.).

there is no one at the school to lead the students. In primary school, it was simply assumed that there were teachers who would prepare the students, but I didn't even consider it for secondary school. I can't think of a teacher at my old grammar school who would gather together content from so many different fields and then prepare students.

At the same time, she remarked that her family was responsible for her involvement and interest in heritage:

If my family had not introduced me to heritage I probably would not have gotten involved in these things. Now I see that I acquired a lot of acquaintances; even with highly educated people you go back to basics and I feel the heritage association has given me a lot in this respect.

The teachers from the economics programme pointed out that since the national curriculum does not include "discovering the potential of heritage to boost creativity and new products" as an objective, they started to work with heritage through projects, such as, for example, one called "More knowledge, more tourism", in which secondary schools participate. Each year the project is publicly announced by the Tourist Association of Slovenia, with the aim that students prepare a tourism product and ideas for its promotion. At the same time, they stressed that the economics programme allows time for research and assignments, but this is in no way possible in a grammar school, where students' learning is solely focused on the *matura*.

The same statement was also given by a professor who teaches English language in the secondary school where the grammar school programme and the kindergarten training programme take place. While the teachers following the kindergarten training programme have enough time to introduce students to research on local culture, there is very little time to complete such tasks in the grammar school. However, the professor stressed that

the English lesson curriculum enables me to debate different themes, because the aim of the curriculum is to obtain knowledge of the language. This could be obtained by discussing different contemporary challenges, like heritage, identity, intercultural dialogue, culture, sustainable development, values etc. The problem is that there is no time for creativity in the grammar school. Therefore, students are very good in theory, but they have problems with the implementation of theory in practice. They like thinking and discussing, but not being creative. Here teachers have to be more courageous and introduce creativity into the lessons. But we are very burdened with the curriculum and *matura* exams.

This is why the students in the grammar school programmes had very great difficulties in linking heritage with the creative industries, advertising, fashion and other

Everything was judged by three nationally recognized experts. The competition was organized by the local heritage association for the first time at the end of 2017.

new activities where heritage is to be used in a sustainable and creative way. Heritage was exclusively linked to tourism, which is to some extent understandable, since until recently the economic potential of heritage was connected exclusively with the tourism industry and it was presented as such to the students too. They are aware, however, that they do not even think about or discuss the new potential of heritage within the framework of sustainable development. Furthermore, the grammar school students only linked sustainable development with the preservation of nature and natural resources, and not with society, with promoting good relationships among people nor with encouraging people to be more active in decision-making processes. They did not see any connections between heritage and sustainable development. For them, heritage was just something boring and uninteresting. This is why many researchers who work with young people and heritage activities (Wan Ismail and Nadarajah 2016; Tudorache et al. 2019; Aplin 2007) stressed that in the era of new technology, new ways of life and trends, we have to find a balance between renovating or safeguarding old buildings and intangible cultural heritage, while at the same time finding new ways to modify and use them.

As the discussion was continued, when the interviewed students relaxed and deepened their thinking, they presented very original ideas on how to make heritage more meaningful. Students in the economics programme, who have experience in marketing heritage via the creation of new tourist products, pointed out that heritage would be more interesting for young people if:

There were some workshops organized and we were actively included in them. Not just going to a museum and some curator coming and explaining it, and talking on and on. [...] It should be an activity. Not just inviting people to go there and see a place, but including some kind of activity. (female student, secondary school for economics, fourth year)

Students from the grammar school for drama noted an example in which the curator, in presenting the life of a well-known Slovene cultural figure, acted out the figure's life. This made it much easier for listeners to remember than classic ways of presenting heritage. Other interviewees included new communication tools such as phones, social networks (e.g. Instagram, Facebook) and even Snapchat, since through these media "temporary experiences, impressions, location are emphasized...". In their opinion local heritage can be linked to heritage from other places using social networks.

If you're only in contact with local heritage it may start to seem boring and pointless to you, but if you learn about what other places have, what's similar and what's different... [you see] how the cultural heritage of your environment makes you different and you compare it with the cultural heritage of another [place]. It's important that young people see these differences in culture, how they are enhanced and given something new, then this stimulates interest. To build on local things through practices from the global world and empha-

size the local and the global more. (male student, general grammar school, third year)

Great emphasis should be placed on promotion. "We should be more vocal and promote things more". This student also pointed out an example from her region, where the renovated castle is used for events such as

cinema under the stars. At the villa [...] a film will be projected, people will come. There is a lot of interest among people. In this way the villa became more prominent. They also had a concert there, choral events. (female student, grammar school for drama, third year)

One focus group articulated interesting and praiseworthy thoughts, whereby students opposed the idea of having parties for young people in historic places and areas, because this would destroy the material heritage.¹⁸

However, according to young people, in many schools and also in cultural institutions, heritage is not interpreted in innovative ways. Students also want more research approaches, since classical ways of learning (lecturing, reading books, etc.) are no longer interesting. At the same time, the classical method of testing limits them and only encourages learning for grades.

Not just classical learning for assessment. Then we just learn to get a grade, and we don't remember what we learned. In this way we would do something creative. In order to actively include heritage in class, we should also try out customs from other regions around Slovenia. Not just listen to lectures, it's better if you experience it to see what it's like. (female student, general grammar school, third year)

The students were also interested in the preparation of applications in the field of informatics or the elective subject of robotics at the secondary school for economics. However, as the journalist and heritage society member emphasized, the problem with the Slovenian school system is that it does not encourage lots of discussion, reflections and conversation; in some cases, students have no opportunity to freely express their opinions, fearing the wrong response. She therefore agreed with the students that projects related to the preparation of video and other advertisements should certainly stimulate creative thinking, while at the same time "if you want to make a good video, you need to investigate the history, ethnology, biology of the subject".

¹⁸ This is also pointed out by Starr, who warned that using the Colosseum in Rome as the location for concerts by the likes of Paul McCartney (2003), Elton John (2005) and the MTV Europe music awards (2004), raised ethical issues, since "giving heritage sites such a function [...] keeps them alive" (Starr 2010: 151) but on the other hand the managers of cultural heritage (from private or public institutions) should be careful that such heritage does not lose its beauty.

Conclusion

Understanding the new roles of cultural heritage in the contemporary world triggers many reflections among scholars on why we need heritage, how heritage can contribute to a better, more peaceful, and higher quality life, and how heritage can alleviate contemporary social, economic and environmental challenges. One important challenge is that of how to bring heritage new life through young people's new interpretations and creative approaches. Because of the capitalist era we live in, many heritage objects are under pressure to make profits, or are neglected due to a shortage of funding for culture. Moreover, the potential of heritage in developing new products in industries such as the design, fashion, fine art, food industries etc., are not being harnessed enough.

This research, carried out among young people, has shown that heritage in Slovenian secondary schools and some public institutions is interpreted in a boring and uninteresting way. Assuming responsibility for these findings lies partly in the hand of heritage's curators (museum workers, teachers, tourism workers, researchers) since we continue to present heritage in a classical and unappealing way. Since we live in a world of new technological and communication changes and achievements, we urgently need to think about how to include teenagers in the construction and interpretation of their heritage from the very beginning by using new ICT tools (e.g. making contents for augmented reality in heritage sites, games, tourist applications etc.). According to the interviews conducted, young people would especially like to do more research work, interview the elderly, prepare videos, applications, games and advertisements associated with heritage. With research work, they would certainly encourage intergenerational ties between different generations with different backgrounds (not only between older and younger generations but also among children and students), experiences and visions, empower active participants and encourage people of different ages to socialize. Moreover, the interviews or ethnographic research also provides an opportunity to exchange knowledge from both sides and search for a common solution to properly safeguard, utilize or modify cultural heritage. Younger people from secondary schools do not want to convey their knowledge in a classical way, by reciting to teachers what they have memorized, but would rather learn through experiential assignments. This approach is in line with new tourist guidelines as well, where the necessity of making different experiences and senses available to tourists are highlighted (Jelinčič and Senkić 2017). As concerns young people, Slovenia should do more in talking about and promoting the social, cultural, and economic potentials of culture, more on the work of UNESCO and its international instruments, as well as new creative industries in which knowledge about heritage (crafts) could be presented as an idea for new products and services. Young people were surprisingly critical of modern, neoliberal society and the pressure placed on them to find an occupation that would only bring them a profit. They would like more freedom in planning their lives as well as to live in a more ethical society with greater solidarity.

Moreover, research has also shown that young people have a positive attitude to volunteering activities and these could be included in heritage practices as European documents highlighted, but grammar school students do not have enough time to engage in such activities. If volunteering will be part of a school curriculum programme, maybe they will be encouraged to undertake volunteer tasks relating to heritage practices. Furthermore, although the youth understand heritage as a non-static and contested category, the majority of them do not connect it with values. This is understandable in a sense, since scholars have only started to highlight heritage as social action in which the significance, importance and values are constructed, in recent years (Byrne 2008; Smith 2006; Fakin Bajec 2011). These findings are not widespread enough in wider society or in school curriculum programmes at all. Therefore, the burden is on scholars and experts to spread this thinking to local people in communities and to raise the awareness of teachers and other educational staff (through organizing interactive workshops, round table discussions, debate evenings for teachers and professors) about the new roles and potentials that heritage practices can contribute to constructive debates over wellbeing, social cohesion, local economy, sustainable development, intercultural dialogues, cultural diversities etc. Secondary school teachers, especially in grammar schools, should become more aware that the concept and role of cultural heritage has changed and heritage is not just a symbol of national, European and world identity, but its mission has become much wider. Through better understanding heritage, its values and significance, many contemporary youth problems connecting with growing up, inquiring into life, developing their thinking, and so forth, can be reflected upon and consequently solved.

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Kako mladi u Sloveniji interpretiraju i koriste kulturnu baštinu i njezine vrijednosti. Je li baština uistinu dosadna i nezanimljiva?

U radu se analiziraju pristupi uključivanja mladih u procese vrednovanja, interpretacije i korištenja lokalne baštine ususret suvremenim izazovima razvoja. Polazi se od toga da europske razvojne strategije naglašavaju različite potencijale kulturne baštine, no mladi iz zapadne Slovenije teško uviđaju te potencijale. Nadalje, rezultati etnografskog istraživanja pokazuju da mladi nisu značajnije zainteresirani za prakse vezane uz baštinu koje se provode u njihovim gradovima i selima. Rezultati ovog rada pokazuju na koji se način baština može predstaviti mladim generacijama, kako mladi razumiju lokalnu baštinu i njezine vrijednosti te što misle o volonterskim aktivnostima u području kulture.

Ključne riječi: baštinske vrijednosti, mladi, obrazovni kurikulum, volonterske aktivnosti, neoliberalno društvo, Slovenija