Heritage, Continuity and Change

Why read this text…

The concept of cultural heritage is used extensively in education to point to a specific history and to the tradition, custom and legacy of particular people, nation, or folk. The concept of heritage is value-laden as it often functions to separate 'us' from 'them´. As such it is important to reflect on how the concept is used both in public discourse and in teaching. What is considered to be 'heritage', how it is framed as important, to whom does it belong and how it is (re)presented to children – as an aspect of their past, present and future.

The following text addresses important question such as:

- To whom does cultural heritage matter and why?
- How is cultural heritage created and maintained?
- How do educators (teachers, parents, grandparents, states) work to bring knowledge of a cultural heritage to new generations?

Historical context

'Heritage' refers to many different things, from landscapes created by human practice and traditions to resources created in digital form (i.e. digital heritage) (UNESCO 2003). The following discussion focuses on *cultural* heritage and how it may be understood in the context of education. Although heritage refers to the past, it also comprises present experiences and future projections. An anthropological perspective on heritage is thus as concerned with the present as it is with the past. UNESCO's definition of heritage includes both tangible and intangible culture. Buildings, monuments, and archives belong to tangible heritage. Representational practices, knowledge, languages and oral traditions, as well as performing arts, and traditional crafts, are defined as intangible heritage.

Scholars study heritage to understand how it is (re)presented and also how it has been constructed through processes of 'inventing tradition' ascribed to 19th century nation-building (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). As such, heritage is never just 'the past'; it is always a particular projection of the past, selected for particular, often political, reasons.

UNESCO conventions have contributed to discussions of the need to preserve all segments of heritage. The most recent convention is "The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" (2003). The goal of this convention is to preserve heritage and raise awareness of the importance of both local and national heritage, to protect cultural diversity and creativity seen as a force of dialogue and creative cooperation. The fact that processes of globalization are rapidly affecting local and regional heritage has contributed to the adoption of the convention and the creation of new approaches to heritage. The Convention more than anything emphasises the living aspect of heritage, living heritage, to show the dynamic and fluidity of heritage defined through the actions of humans. Recent UNESCO policies that affect local and national heritage policies have been criticized by various

scholars, including ethnologists and cultural anthropologists, for imposing a particular framework on heritage.

a) Discussion

Anthropologists discuss heritage in relation to mobility, tourism, and family among others. They use multi-perspective and multidisciplinary approaches, to understand 'heritage' within a broader social, economic, cultural, and historical context. Their basic foundation is that the meanings, which are locally inscribed in heritage, are not simply given but rather socially and culturally conditioned by diverse individuals and groups.

From personal, group to national levels, heritage is always a sensorial stimulus; it involves frictions but can stand as a symbol of community. The Danish anthropologist Karen Fog Olwig (1999) argues that the process of heritage making, and the making of the past is an important, meaningful, and even necessary practice of the present. This perspective raises awareness of how 'the past' is made in the present — and points our attention to how much of the past is forgotten, ignored or destroyed. Many heritage policies implemented by organizations such as UNESCO, ICOM and others are informed by local or national perspectives and discourses, and thus tend to include some and exclude other segments of a population. Policies emanating from these organizations have their origin in Western European contexts and thus tend to promote Western values as universal (Stublić 2019).

Recent publications regarding heritage focus on conflicts and competition surrounding heritage (for example Katic, Gregoric Bon and Eade 2017). Individuals and groups ascribe different positions and values to heritage; what is an acceptable and undeniable heritage to one person or group may be very contentious and burdensome to others. Ashworth and Tunbrige (1997) introduce the notion of the 'dissonant heritage' to discuss how different communities strive to own, disown, forget, put to rest, or reinvent their heritage and thus themselves, according to present attitudes and values. Following generations may do the same. Huse (1997) writes of unwanted or difficult heritage, while Macdonald (2015) discusses the temporality of heritage. Here she discusses how long it takes for difficult heritage to become something else or for some segment of heritage to be questioned as difficult heritage.

From an educational point of view, the issues of heritage diversity may come to focus on a completely different level. The question which culture's heritage is "more" right, or whose culture, language, customs or religion is "dissonant" or "difficult" might also be an issue within the classroom. The heritage and the culture change, and the teachers and students need to be more aware of the constantly changing cultures and heritage making. If only one culture or heritage is being taught without having regards to the other, or other cultures are not adequately or sufficiently represented, one might find himself or herself not fully accepted, or even alienated or disinterested. At the same time we have to keep mind that "the inclusion of certain cultural heritage in formal schooling tends to legitimize power and distinction, as well as exclusion of those who do not have direct access to it" (Okubo 2010: 113).

b) Practical example

The synergy between education and cultural heritage has been much discussed in the last five years within the context of the European Union. Heritage is a resource that is increasingly being "used" for educational purposes. According to official documents published by the EU Council, „education must play a key role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage for future generations" (Kostović-Vranješ 2015:448). Stating that it is never too early or too late to implement protection, the year 2018 was declared the year of European Cultural Heritage.

Reading through school curricula and other literature concerned with heritage and education, one finds several programs already implemented in European schools. These projects address mainly the preservation of customs and crafts and well as the revival of traditional songs, games, dances, etc. Such projects, which often engage children outside of school, involve teaching the history of particular practices and holding practical workshops in which students try their hand at various creative activities. In this way, students learn about the heritage of their area or the wider region and familiarize themselves with the heritage of fellow students. These projects teach heritage through experiential learning, with students working independently, or in groups under the guidance of the teacher. Heritage-based teaching projects aim to acquaint students with the history of their area and the status of local heritage in processes of modernization. Finally, the goal of these projects is to develop potentially employable skills, for example, in lacemaking and carpentry.

The pilot project "Learning with a Living Heritage in European Schools" began with an effort to integrate intangible heritage into curriculums, that is, to enable that the pupils learn from the direct experience. Another program "Schools Adopt a Monument" was designed with children in mind, to give them a different approach to the monuments near their schools, or in the neighbourhood. During the project, with the help of the teachers, the pupils collected material about the monuments, and used the conversation with the locals to upgrade their knowledge of the specific monument, as well as the heritage of their own place. The monuments were additionally cared for, cleaned and maintained by the pupils.

For the purposes of the IO1 project outcome, we have collected a series of projects focusing on heritage, in museums or other cultural institutions (SLO, CRO) intended both for students and the teachers. One example is the Children's Museum - Herman's den, which hosts a range of creative activities, with the aim of bringing to school children's interest local heritage, that is, to make them aware of the need for the preservation and protection of their heritage. Another project organized by the Slovenian School Museum is the project focused on its unique program called "old school." Curators in the museum introduce students to the daily life of their grandparents, with focus on their education at the beginning of the 20th century.

With this approach, children and other visitors gain an insight into their local heritage as well as their personal family stories.

Thinking further:

1. Do you implement ideas about or elements of local heritage in your teaching? Consider how you might raise your students' awareness of local heritage, and engage them in critical thinking about what is considered local heritage and why.

2. Learning crafts may help students develop psychomotorical skills, gain experience of innovative and creative processes, as well as more positive attitudes towards manual work. Reflect on how present-day schooling encourages or discourages students from pursuing trades and other forms of highly skilled labor and why this is.

KEY-WORDS / CROSS-REFERENCES
Digital humanities, cultural heritage, dissonant and difficult heritage

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Authors: Danijela Birt Katić, Jelena Kupsjak (Croatia)