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Pandora's Box or The Holy Grail? On Managing Cultural Heritage

Abstract: The problem of cultural heritage is a relatively new field in science. Not only did the notion of 'cultural heritage' begin to crystallize itself in the 1970's, but it also became multidimensional and multidisciplinary. This phenomenon, new in social and cultural space, developing in a dynamic way and gaining in importance (e.g. with reference to the development of regions), requires developing new effective tools of management. In the following text an opinion is presented, according to which we should not aim at the excessive economization of cultural heritage, and treat it mainly as a medium which serves building the cultural capital, improving human relations and elaborating social profit, which exceeds economic calculations (e.g. by constructing cultural identity).

Key words: cultural heritage, heritage management, national and regional heritage

1. Since time immemorial...

The all-pervading cultural heritage, which surrounds us from the time we are born, determines our attitude to the world, unvaryingly producing delight, affirmation, pride, hatred or lament¹. In this sense, cultural heritage is both an immanent constituent of our inner universe and an element bonding us to an ethnic group, local community or the nation we belong to. It is an open and forever under-defined set. As Peter Howard says, "Heritage has been de-

¹ The publication is based on the article: Ł. Gawel, "Zarządzanie dziedzictwem kulturowym – w stronę nowej metodologii," *Problemy Zarządzania* 2013, Vol. 11, No. 4(44), p. 87–100.

scribed as ‘anything you want,’”² so what we wish to consider to be our heritage is only our own autonomous decision.

Cultural heritage permeates us at the moment of birth or, to be more specific, at this special time we become a part of a distinctive cultural heritage. Growing up and making our own history, we can reject it or refuse to accept it, but it will never leave us entirely free; in fact, the lack of any cultural point of reference would mean denying one’s own humanity. Even if the foundation myth of your personality is based on a total rejection of the heritage you were presented with at birth (not unlike the genetic pool you became part of) and grew up in, it will still remain your foundation manifesting the denial of the heritage you do not wish to be yours.

This means that it is hard to overestimate the significance of heritage for any human activity, both in its individual and social aspect. This distinction seems particularly important. Private heritage bears no tension, as every person decides what they wish to identify themselves with, and what they think relevant to their own personal history. Other people can either accept your choices, show interest in them, and be intrigued by them or not. Problems arise, however, when we try to define heritage on a larger scale, especially when tackling the issue of national heritage.

2. What is heritage?

By reaching to various resources, we can identify certain *a priori* features of heritage.

First of all, as already mentioned, heritage is always a matter of an autonomous choice, of reaching for specific elements within the surrounding cultural space. This is why we need to make a vital distinction at this point between the resources known as cultural goods and a more limited body known as a cultural heritage. Cultural goods belong to an

apolitical and ideological concept comprising all “goods” produced by human talent of an objectively historic and artistic value. It is, quite simply, the cultural and artistic heritage of humanity, subject only to aesthetic valuation based on the established criteria in specific historical circumstances. Cultural heritage (...) is a matter of choice. It is not the entire artistic and cultural legacy left to us by past generations, but anything we wish to accept and make our own. No one can force you to accept the inheritance, especially if you have to pay a handsome inheritance tax.³

² P. Howard, *Heritage. Management, Interpretation, Identity*, London–New York 2003, p. 6.

³ A. Tomaszewski, “Dziedzictwo i zarządzanie,” in: K. Gutowska (ed.), *Problemy zarządzania dziedzictwem kulturowym*, Warszawa 2000, p. 9.

The above-mentioned distinction is fundamental to problems of heritage management, though certain definitions need to be made more accurate. The term "cultural and artistic legacy" will make sense in the contemporary world only when referring to modern definitions of culture, described as a very wide-ranging phenomenon.

Another issue related to the very essence of heritage is its perishability. No matter how well we look after it, how well we protect and manage it, we do tend to run out of both tangible and intangible heritage. Time is its biggest enemy and we are capable of working against its flow only to a very limited degree. We cannot preserve disappearing professions without the craftsmen who practice them, just as we cannot preserve religion without its followers. What we can do is to uphold the memory of them. The situation is no different in the case of material, tangible heritage. How far does our imagination take us? We hardly think every day of how long will a historic city temple or residence last? Will it be 100 or 1,000 years? Less than 10,000 years, since the pyramids are only a little over 4,500 years old. In an ideal world, we would do everything we could to keep historic sites in the best shape possible, to help them last. History, however, teaches us that we possess limited possibilities, which is why the ability to preserve the memory of cultural heritage, its continued cultural processing and re-writing is an important issue in heritage management. Paradoxically, the increasing technological resources at our disposal are hardly a guarantee of success; let us just say that it is still paper, which continuously remains the most durable carrier of human thought.

Finally, the last and perhaps the most important issue. The national or state approach to heritage is subject to continuous change. It is constantly redefined, perfected over and over again, and the changes implemented are usually thorough. Heritage can serve higher purposes or become a real Pandora's Box. This fluctuating image is a result of the decision concerning its character, which may be political (ideological, religious, moral or social, etc.) in the *par excellence* meaning of the word. Heritage is often exploited for short-term goals, misrepresented without reflecting on its authentic meaning. The main problem is that the range of possible choices is often ideologically manipulated; there are always people ready to glorify what is "ours" and eliminate all things "foreign". Guardians of the nation's purity have difficulties in countries like Poland, with its history of multiculturalism and coexistence of various national and ethnic groups. Investigating this lead one can wonder whether the premiere of *Daniel* by Stanisław Wyspiański, which took place on 15 January 1927 in the Yiddish language at Kraków's Krokewer Jidysz Teater at Bocheńska Street⁴ is in fact a part of "our" cultural heritage. Or perhaps, we

⁴ Stanisław Wyspiański one of the most renowned Polish artists, poets, playwrights, producers, visual artists; his works, especially *The Wedding*, are considered to be masterpieces of

should disregard as “foreign” the work of a painter who was bullied at school for misusing the Polish language, whose father was Czech and whose mother came from a Protestant family which had lived in Krakow for a couple of generations, yet originally came from Saxony? The above mentioned artist was the icon of Polish art – Jan Matejko...⁵ Earlier examples might present even more difficulties, with Wawel having been mostly reconstructed by Italians (even the Sigismund Chapel) or the altar in Krakow’s St. Mary’s Church created by Wit Stwosz, who had a local sound to his name, but who actually was called Veit Stoss, an artist born near Stuttgart, who came from Nuremberg to settle in Krakow.

Selfish attitude to cultural heritage can easily turn into a mindless force of destruction, which is why it is important, however troublesome, to develop a certain universal definition that would function independently of political fluctuations. Otherwise, it is hard to speak about any consistent international policy towards heritage.

3. National heritage – problems with the definition

The great importance of cultural heritage as far as the mental structure of a state, nation or society are concerned is indisputable. Regardless of how we choose to define these concepts, it would be impossible to talk about them without referring to the past. Preserving the memory of the past, in its tangible and intangible dimensions, is therefore a question of vital public interest.⁶ Its implementation, however, must be preceded by a reflection on what should be protected (safeguarded), regardless of current political trends. Meanwhile, a definition of national heritage is still absent from the Polish legal system.

The main legal act in which we could expect to find such a definition is the *Act on the Protection and Guardianship of Monuments* of 23 July 2003.⁷ The phrase “the minister in charge of culture and protection of a national heritage” appears in the document almost 40 times, yet the precise definition of the latter is simply missing.

Polish literature (cf. R. Węgrzyniak, “Dramaty Wyspiańskiego w Krokewer Jidysh Teater,” in: J. Michalik, E. Prokop-Janiec (eds.), *Teatr żydowski w Krakowie. Studia i materiały*, Kraków 1995).

⁵ Jan Matejko is the most famous “patriotic painter” in the history of Polish art, associated more than anything with large-format historical paintings (see: H.M. Słoczyński, *Matejko*, Wrocław 2000).

⁶ M. Drela, *Własność zabytków*, Warszawa 2006, p. 6.

⁷ Electronic document: http://www.unesco.org/culture/natlaws/media/pdf/poland/poland_act2302003_entof.pdf [accessed on: 15 January 2013].

The next step is then to refer to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland,⁸ which even in its preamble includes a statement significant to our discussion: “the Polish Nation – all citizens of the Republic (...) are obliged to bequeath to future generations all that is valuable from our over one thousand years’ heritage.” Unfortunately, this general statement in no way specifies what is considered to be “valuable.” However, the legislator has decided to introduce the following security measures to make sure that the conditions for the implementation of the duty specified in this way are met:

- Article 5 which says that the Republic of Poland shall safeguard the national heritage and ensure the protection of the natural environment pursuant to the principles of sustainable development.
- Article 6 which provides that the Republic of Poland shall provide conditions for the people’s equal access to the products of culture which are the source of the Nation’s identity, continuity and development (par. 1), and that it shall provide assistance to Poles living abroad to maintain their links with the national cultural heritage (par. 2).
- Article 73 *in fine* which provides that “the freedom to (...) enjoy the products of culture, shall be ensured to everyone.”⁹

The quoted provisions undoubtedly create an important mental space necessary for the concept of a cultural heritage to function at all, but they hardly get anywhere near defining it.

However, it is worth having a closer look at one of the terms that appears in the text: the principle of sustainable development. The notion is not new. It was commonly used in the 19th century in reference to forestry. What it meant was that forest management should be conducted in such a way that a number of trees cut down should be equal to those that would grow to replace them, and thus long-term continuity of the forest should be assured. As a doctrine in political economy, the concept of sustainable development was first used in 1987 in the report called *Our Common Future*, signed by the World Commission on Environment and Development (on the rational management of earth’s natural resources).¹⁰ The main idea of this document was centred on a belief that our civilization could meet its needs in such a way that the chances of future generations for having their needs met would not be jeopardised.

⁸ Electronic document: <http://www.sejm.gov.pl/prawo/konst/angielski/kon1.htm> [accessed on: 15 January 2013].

⁹ P. Antoniak, M. Cherka, F.M. Elżanowski, K.A. Wąsowski, *Ustawa o ochronie zabytków i opiece nad zabytkami. Komentarz*, Warszawa 2010, p. 16.

¹⁰ Electronic document: <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf> [accessed on: 10 January 2013].

Over successive years, the concept of sustainable development has been extended to various other areas of human activity, cultural heritage among them. The analogy to the natural environment seems particularly appropriate, as cultural heritage is as vulnerable as natural resources. What is more, it is non-renewable: once lost, it can never be retrieved in its original form, which is another reason why it should be managed with special caution.

Despite all these general descriptions, the concept of “national heritage” has not so far been precisely defined. As lawyers have it, in the current legal situation in Poland, the notion of national heritage has no “legal definition” as such.¹¹ This seems to be a very serious omission, particularly in terms of having to manage a resource which is not clearly defined.

4. Heritage management – a critical view

The absence of a satisfying definition of cultural heritage, and consequently national heritage, stems from the fact that the entire concept was born out of a combination of experience in different areas of study and practice. The concept of heritage was built with elements drawn from art history, anthropology, ethnography, archaeology, history (and its auxiliary sciences), architecture (including landscape architecture), broadly understood restoration studies and conservation practice, and the list is, obviously, by no means exhaustive. This heterogeneous structure means that depending on the approach (dominant idea), heritage has usually been exploited for short-term needs and defined in various ways. Yet, no concept has been worked out that would link all the ideas and go beyond them to create an autonomous entity. We can venture a statement that the emerging definitions (more or less complex) of heritage mainly depend on the roots of their coiners.

This is probably why it is well worth considering some ideas from professionals involved in management practice rather than from those solely engaged in the academic dispute. Let us, for example, consider an interesting list compiled by Zbigniew Kobyliński:¹²

What are the most important principles of cultural heritage management? It is of course impossible to summarise the entire experience gathered throughout the history of cul-

¹¹ See: P. Antoniuk, M. Cherka, F.M. Elżanowski, K.A. Wąsowski, *op. cit.*

¹² Zbigniew Kobyliński is an archeologist and chairman of the Academic Association of Polish Archeologists; also director of the Institute of Archeology at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, associated with the Institute of Archeology and Ethnology of Polish Academy of Sciences; in 1995–1999 he was Deputy Inspector of Monuments and General Archeologist of Poland.

tural heritage conservation, both in theory and practice. I think, however, that the following principles can be considered as most relevant to present-day cultural heritage management:

1. the need to treat cultural heritage as public property, to which all members of the public must have access; of which they are entitled to be informed fully and comprehensively, and for which they are all equally responsible;
2. the »*primum non nocere*« principle – the need to preserve heritage for future generations, with a postulate to limit destructive testing techniques and interventions into the historic substance to an absolute minimum, and move towards non-destructive techniques of exploring the heritage and preventive conservation works;
3. move away from the concept of protecting individual monuments towards the protection of entire fragments of the historic cultural landscape;
4. the need to link the protection of cultural goods with environmental protection and the concept of integrated protection of the human environment;
5. the need to closely link the protection of a cultural heritage with zoning plans;
6. the need to consider the social perception of a monument and the associated intangible cultural values in planning any activities relating to cultural heritage;
7. emphasis on non-legal measures of protecting the cultural environment, especially on education and its sensible popularisation.¹³

The classification proposed by Kobyliński can be considered the first step in changing the philosophy of heritage management. Yet, in real terms, it is about a new approach to the subject of this process, which is the idea of moving away from the objectively treated monument towards subjectively treated cultural heritage that followed in the second half of the 20th century. The next step must be the change in management itself. Courage and perhaps also adequate competences in this area have so far been missing, which has resulted in less active searching for new tools of heritage management, whereas these could essentially contribute to a different view of heritage itself. In other words, the lack of modern definition of cultural heritage can be a result of devoting an insufficient amount of reflection to the process of management. Critical analysis of this process will perhaps allow us to create a more complete and more accurate definition of cultural heritage.

What, therefore, given the specific nature of today's reality, are the principles of heritage management that should be at the forefront of our attention?

First of all, the most common mistake made today is an attempt to define heritage exclusively in economic terms. This is an obvious paradox – after years of inability to see heritage in these terms, demonstrated also by the inability to find new, socially desirable functions for historic sites – today “the hegemony of the economics of heritage” is clearly transparent. There are many examples of this phenomenon; one of its manifestations is that an essential criterion for valuation of projects co-financed with EU funds (also

¹³ Z. Kobyliński, “Zarządzanie dziedzictwem kulturowym a koncepcja ekorozwoju,” in: K. Gutowska (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 18–19.

in the sphere of creating culture or managing historic sites) is an “economic impact of the project on the development of the region,” whereas a profit of non-financial nature (incalculable, *ergo* suspicious) is very often a more important benefit that results from the implementation of these projects. How can you calculate the financial ratios of an investment involving the renovation of a historic manor house in order to house a municipal library? You can of course, give a quote for the investment based on the actual cost estimate. These figures will also tell you by how much the turnover of local distributors of building materials will increase; you can also multiply the number of full time jobs by salaries and number of months in the year, which added to fixed costs (e.g. utilities and new book purchases) will produce the annual costs of this facility. However, what will this data mean to us? Is the expenditure of PLN 250,000 per annum a lot to maintain a library? How can you correlate this amount with the fact that the library is a new medium within the social space which will contribute to building cultural competences of local residents, increase their cultural identity, feelings of pride for living around a historic site, identification with the “land of our fathers” through building a bridge between a well looked-after historic site and the future? How do you calculate the profits for the municipality resulting from the fact that perhaps due to the cultural investment the value of this area will increase for potential investors and future residents?

Another example is museums, which in pursuance with the law are “non-profit organisations,”¹⁴ yet they must (similarly to theatres or cultural centres) show their income for the previous year and the demands for it are growing. Museum directors, clearly pushed up against the wall, seek any method possible to earn money. A result of this curious policy is, for example, renting the rooms of the main building of the National Museum in Kraków to prom dance organisers. In this way, such values as the uniqueness, prestige, exclusivity, or the market brand of this place are lost in the race for short-term profit.

One can also quote examples from the area of an intangible heritage. The unprecedented decision of the Polish Radio authorities to reduce the broadcast of St. Mary’s Church bugle call, which is part of the daily schedule of Radio 1, was economically motivated. The bugle call from St. Mary’s Church in Kraków had been broadcast in an unchanged form since 1927. Played four times to the four corners of the world, it is interrupted by the characteristic sound of the footsteps of a fire-fighter who plays it, and passes from one window to another on creaking floorboards. The 4-minute broadcast became one of the essential elements of national heritage, especially for Poles living

¹⁴ The Act on Museums of 21 November 1996, Chapter 1, Art. 1.

abroad. In 2013, it was decided that the bugle call would be heard only once, which meant that the 80-year old tradition was lost in favour of the need to change the broadcast schedule and upgrade the programme as part of the competition for new audiences and advertisers, i.e., economy par excellence.

This purely business-like approach to heritage (or culture as such) results in many state or local government officials thinking of it as an expensive luxury. Such attitude also stems from the fact that the significance of culture and cultural heritage is not clearly laid out in the central government policy. In fact, it is hard to talk of prudent heritage management if it is not an essential component of a general vision for national development. It is as if imprinted on the whole mechanism of the state's operation, being correlated with many areas seemingly unrelated to culture.

A good example of this is the widespread discussion on building the civil society. In the document called: *The Strategy of Support for Civil Society, 2009–2015*, we find the following passage:

The formula of a civil society, independent of the varied doctrinal context of its description and explanation of its essence, involves universal principles and values, without which any attempt to create its real foundations or conditions for development is doomed to fail. In the democratic system, at the individual, social group, community, local, or global society level, according to the nature of social phenomena and processes, the particularly important elements are the fundamental principles and values that influence social attitudes and behaviour, the functioning of public institutions, activities of players in the economy and diverse forms of civic activity, including non-governmental organisations. These should primarily include: freedom and responsibility, sovereignty and partnership, subsidiarity and participation, solidarity and social justice.¹⁵

Can you imagine citizens who are fully aware of their responsibility towards society and the state, ready to serve the local community without attributing their approach to the heritage that has assisted in their development? Without being fully aware of one's own heritage, and either accepting or rejecting it, is it possible to raise generations with respect for fundamental principles and values that affect social attitudes and behaviour? Besides, how can we reconcile the will to build a civil society, as declared by the government, with so many reports on closing down community centres, which are often the only institutions that help forming cultural competences of people who live far away from large cities and are therefore detached from cultural life? How can we relate it to the terrible condition of many historic sites, especially those located in smaller towns? Isn't building your own cultural identity and finding your place within the surrounding multicultural world always about finding the fixed points of reference inherent in the heritage?

¹⁵ *The Strategy of Support for Civil Society, 2009–2015*, Appendix to Resolution of the Cabinet of Poland No. 240/2008 of 4 November 2008.

For these reasons, the issue of safeguarding the heritage cannot be considered less important than building sewerage systems or broadband networks. In the meantime, the authors of *The Report on the System of Cultural Heritage Protection in Poland after 1989* demonstrate its various dysfunctions, from the crisis of area development and planning through poor organization of conservation services to the inefficiency of financing the conservation of historic monuments.¹⁶ The practical aspects of such inefficiency are hard to imagine; suffice it to say that we are not able to provide adequate protection even to sites entered into the UNESCO World Heritage List. During the great flood of 1997 in Lipnica Murowana, the raging waters of Uszwica, a small river, were close to washing away the historic wooden church of St. Leonard. It took several years to renovate this unique site, yet to date it has not been protected against similar disasters.

The extent to which cultural heritage management is dependent on the management of other spheres of the state is well demonstrated by the amendments introduced to the *Act on Tax on Goods and Services* of 7 December 2012, which stipulates that from 1 April 2013 all artefacts of folk art and artistic craft are taxed at 23% VAT. Until then, folk artists could be taxed with the preferential rate of 8% VAT, provided that they obtained a certificate issued by the National Artistic and Ethnographic Commission operating independently on the basis of the regulation issued by the Management Board of the Cepelia Polish Arts and Crafts. This thoughtless fiscal policy is the result of a lack of foresight by the state, which should link national development to giving support to culture and protecting cultural heritage. In fact, the absence of vision translates into taking actions that are simply contradictory. The VAT rate increase can hardly be reconciled with the UNESCO *Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* of 2003, which Poland ratified in 2011. Chapter III of the Convention entitled *Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at the National Level* states:

To ensure the safeguarding, development, and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, each State Party shall endeavour to:

- a) adopt a general policy aimed at promoting the function of the intangible cultural heritage in society, and at integrating the safeguarding of such heritage into planning programmes;
- b) designate or establish one or more competent bodies for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory;
- c) foster scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies, with a view to effective safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular, the intangible cultural heritage that is imperilled;
- d) adopt appropriate legal, technical, administrative and financial measures aimed at:

¹⁶ J. Purchla (ed.), *Raport o systemie ochrony dziedzictwa kulturowego w Polsce po roku 1989*, Warszawa 2009.

- (i) fostering the creation or strengthening of institutions for training in the management of the intangible cultural heritage and the transmission of such heritage through forums and spaces intended for the performance or expression thereof;
- (ii) ensuring access to the intangible cultural heritage while respecting customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage;
- (iii) establishing documenting institutions for the intangible cultural heritage and facilitating access to them.¹⁷

It is truly difficult to reconcile the fiscal policy discussed above with these provisions.

An obvious consequence of rejecting the exclusively economic perception of heritage must be in rendering it a distinct significance in the public sphere. Unfortunately, the legislator missed to see this, and the *Act on the Protection and Guardianship of Monuments* of 2003 exposes the issue of responsibility for heritage primarily as a relationship between its owners and the public administration, as provided for in these two articles:

Article 4.

In particular, the protection of monuments consists in undertaking activities, by public administration bodies, with the aim of:

- 1) ensuring legal, organisational, and financial conditions that enable permanent preservation of monuments as well as their development and maintenance;
- 2) preventing threats that may diminish the value of monuments;
- 3) foiling the devastation or improper use of monuments;
- 4) counteracting theft, loss, or illegal export of monuments;
- 5) checking the state of preservation and use of a monument;
- 6) planning and developing the space, as well as shaping the environment including protection tasks.

Article 5.

The guardianship of a monument by its owner or its proprietor consists, in particular, in ensuring conditions for:

- 1) scientific research and documentation of a monument;
- 2) carrying out conservation, restoration, and construction works at a monument;
- 3) protecting and maintaining a monument and its surroundings, as well as keeping them in the best possible state;
- 4) using a monument in a way that ensures permanent preservation of its value;
- 5) popularising and disseminating knowledge on a monument, and its historical and cultural significance.¹⁸

It is only a slight exaggeration to say that these provisions hardly inform us of what is the purpose of preserving historic monuments; neither do they mention the social perspective or social participation in the effort to safe-

¹⁷ The UNESCO Convention on Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage..., Journal of Laws No. 172, item 1018, p. 10057.

¹⁸ Act on Protection and Guardianship of Monuments of 23 July 2003.

guard our heritage. It is only in Chapter 10, Art. 102–107 that social guardians of historic monuments are mentioned at all, which is linked to a highly formalised procedure (application is submitted by the Provincial Monument Conservator, however, the decision is made by local authorities, who also issue special identification card). This document, proclaimed as presenting very modern approach to the problem, does not feature any public participation in the process of heritage protection.¹⁹ Paradoxically, the *Act on Safeguarding Cultural Goods* of 15 February 1962 was much more up-to-date (it is, however, important to be aware of the specific approach the Communist state displayed towards cultural heritage and the selective treatment that was applied to fit the ideology of the time). Article 1 of this legal act included three subsections:

1. Cultural goods are national wealth and should be protected by all citizens.
2. The government and local authorities are obliged to provide legal, organisational, and financial resources for the protection of cultural goods.
3. It is the responsibility of the owners and users of cultural goods to keep them in good condition.²⁰

Article 3 began with the following sentence:

The purpose in protection of cultural goods is their preservation, proper maintenance, and use by the community, as well as the use for scientific, educational, and teaching purposes, so as by serving education, dissemination of knowledge and art, they constituted a permanent part in the development of culture and were an active ingredient of life in the modern society.²¹

It is this continuous reflection about the purpose, sense, and importance of the protection of cultural or national heritage that should be the next step in the process of heritage management. The phrase “for future generations” is frequently used, although safeguarding heritage only in reference to the future does not make much sense. It is the “here” and “now” of this dimension that matter most of all; heritage is as genuinely needed now as it will continue to be needed in the future. It is time to stop treating it as a resource and begin seeing it as a multidimensional, multifarious structure of vital social importance. Owing to our cultural heritage (national, regional), we can build a relationship with the outside world, define our cultural identity and find self-confidence and a balanced position in a dynamically changing world. Heritage is also one of the most important media that may protect us

¹⁹ The awareness of modern heritage management processes is equally low – the term ‘management’ appears only once in the Act, in reference to cultural parks.

²⁰ Act on Safeguarding of Cultural Goods of 15 February 1962, Art. 1, Journal of Laws 1962, No. 10, item 48.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Art. 3.

from the negative effects of globalisation. Authentic culture, local heritage, cultivating our own traditions, customs and ceremonies might become an effective barrier against progressive unification and pauperisation of culture.

The main dimension, crucial from the point of view of cultural heritage use and prolongation, should be authenticity, which should not be confused with the 'museumification' of heritage. We should continually be looking for new, socially useful functions for our heritage, while preserving the sensitivity to its very essence, making sure it is not trivialised or falsified, and therefore stripped of value. The condition of building societies with a strong cultural identity, aware of the value of their own heritage, is indispensable for reaching the state of authentic cultural flow, based on equal rights and full respect for all cultures. Interpreted in this way, heritage must be seen as a medium of genuinely equal opportunities, opposing exclusion and discrimination, inequality, and cultural domination.

5. Conclusions

The approach to heritage discussed in this paper requires one more change: a far-reaching step to profoundly transform institutions that are supposed to protect, manage and form cultural heritage. The ongoing reconstructions of cultural institutions afford hope, yet the absence of systemic transformation programmes leads to a situation in which disproportions are growing between, for example, large museums and smaller institutions. The process of heritage management must include, to a much larger extent, "soft" interdisciplinary projects, reaching far beyond the operative efficiency of administration, which is why it is so important to include non-governmental organisations, distinguished by intellectual mobility and readiness to take non-standard actions, authentically investing in building strong social relations in a common search for cultural identity.

The proposed changes to cultural heritage management discussed in this paper are far from exhaustive. They are, in fact, more of a proposal of subjects needed to be discussed, which would certainly uncover new threats and pose new questions. As mentioned before, one could risk the statement that the absence of a satisfying definition of cultural heritage (national heritage) is the result of being closed to new concepts in managing it. This change must occur, otherwise it might turn out that the legacy we leave to future generations will be poor and flawed in many ways.

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