

Social and Economic Integration of Cultural Heritage: State of the Art

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What do we mean by “cultural heritage”? When used in a national context, the phrase arguably refers to the material monuments of culture, their conservation and preservation in museum, heritage parks, etc. In a European context, “cultural heritage” arguably implies propagation of national cultural traditions and achievements in other European countries, as well as preservation of cultural specificity / identity in the process of building a (new) European identity.

I think this raises the following questions:

- Isn't there a danger that this process of focusing on (national) historical monuments and their propagation, as well of building a (new) European identity, might ultimately ignore local and minority traditions and specificities in a new way? So far the nation state as such has inevitably focused on the cultural specificities and historical monuments of the dominant ethnic majority, which are presumed to be the respective country 's cultural heritage. This is the concept of cultural heritage perpetuated by textbooks of history and literature. At the secondary level, the joint construction of a new European identity, combined with study of the traditions and specificities of “the other” national cultures, displaces local and minority cultural specificities as insignificant (in this case, in a European context). This “displacement” is *de facto* supported and intensified by the direct involvement of the state/state institutions in both the preservation of cultural monuments and propagation of national cultural specificity. Is this regarded as a “danger” in a national and European context, or as a normal effect of the policy of European integrations, just as it was a normal effect of the policy of national integration? What resources are available to neutralize this “danger” (if it is thought as such) at the national and European level?
- Isn't there a “danger” that this “discrepancy” in the concept of cultural heritage might lead, in the longer term, to “conservation” of differences in cultural traditions, to their transformation into monuments of culture, to their thinking and experience as historical against the background of the jointly developed (new) European identity? Is this a “danger”, or a more or less rationally pursued objective? How is “European identity” thought: as tending to distinguish Europe from the rest of the world, or as tending to homogenize the European cultural space? How is the process of building European identity thought: at the European or at the national level? What is the role of education in this process?
- Isn't there a “danger” that the knowledge about Europe – oriented towards future integration – might replace the study of one's own cultural tradition, if and when the latter is thought as “cultural heritage”? Isn't there a danger that education might again overestimate the requisite knowledge (this time about the European Union, about the instruments and institutions of integration) to the detriment of developing abilities of identifying and rationalizing the constantly emerging problems in human relations and of coping with them? In other words, of having an education strategy that is (again) aimed at homogenizing the European (formerly, the national) space and, at the same time, of having an educational content that (again) tends to be self – contained knowledge about the world and the others rather than problemized cognition.
- Isn't there a danger that a Europe – oriented educational (and, in more general terms, cultural) strategy – recommended by European Union structures and/or

adopted as a strategy of national education policies – might be countered by the rise of a “cultural nationalism” which is preoccupied with national cultural history and specificity, and is against the establishment of a European cultural identity and a single European cultural space?

In the various countries, there are already indications of all those “danger” – and, probably, of others too. Here are several examples from Bulgaria:

- The common reaction of ethnic Bulgarians against the option of studying Turkish as a mother tongue in Bulgarian schools: from “Why should there be Turkish language tuition in Bulgarian schools?” or “What sort of Turks are they to study Turkish” or “Considering that they’re living in Bulgaria, they must learn Bulgarian!” to “Studying Turkish when we’re headed for Europe?! Ridiculous!”.
- The due cuts in classes in the humanities and respective increase in classes in natural sciences at secondary school.
- The continuing absence from the curriculum of the literature and history of the existing cultural diversity within the national cultural realm.
- The continuing attitude to cultural heritage as monuments of Bulgarian culture – archeological, architectural, literary - about which certain knowledge is acquired.
- By rule, Bulgaria’s cultural heritage is thought as ethnic Bulgarian.

Is it possible to combine “cultural heritage” from the perspective of the nation state’s historical tradition with: cultural heritage” from the perspective of the emerging European identity?

Is it possible to combine those two perspectives with preservation of the (still) existing specificity of local and minority communities?

Is it possible to formulate a new type of education strategy that will not posit (more or less consciously) the principle of cultural homogenization and that will create – by problemizing the cognition of human and cultural differences – opportunities for a new type of interactions in the European context?