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From Folk Culture to Cultural Heritage: Some General Conclusions by Way of Transylvanian Examples¹

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Cultural heritage as a concept and as a practice is increasingly substituting the concept of culture, including folk culture, and it seems to determine also our practices related to these concepts (Erdősi–Sonkoly 2005: 89). The inherent spontaneity, naturalness, and matter-of-fact character of folk culture also seem to change increasingly.² The study of cultural heritage presupposes the existence of a reflexive behaviour through which we select certain cultural products and phenomena – it is worth mentioning here that sometimes at the expense of other cultural products and phenomena (Hafstein 2009) –, elaborating the strategies of their protection and transmission. In this context, we – or, more exactly, the individual groups and sometimes even the individuals themselves – are inclined to view ourselves as if from the outside, and to subject our own lives to a certain kind of objectification and, why not, even commodification. Naturally, this process is characterised by a high level of tension, since it presupposes certain formulae that seem strange from the perspective of folk culture, such as the continuous meeting of culture and politics and of culture and the market, or, symbolically speaking, their forced marriage. The meeting of politics, the market, and culture leads to changes in meaning that question our basic meaning-conferring activities related to our cultural practices. Let us suppose, for instance, that a community upholding a certain custom that also fulfils a function within the community is radically reorganised. Thus, the community function becomes obsolete as well, or in other words, the custom itself is being questioned. The community, however, had its custom included on a certain cultural heritage list. The custom in its original meaning is not needed anymore, but the production of cultural heritage nevertheless preserves it.

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2 I am, of course, not so naïve as to consider culture completely lacking in various intentions. This view is adopted here for the sake of the argument.

This short study problematises these tensions using a double perspective. Cultural heritage is similar to the great modernist ideas (Scott 1998), to nationalism and even to socialism, in the sense that these are global ideologies, but their implementation takes place on a national or local level (Löfgren 1989: 14, Verdery 1996: 19). This phenomenon is tagged as „do-it-yourself” nationalism by Orvar Löfgren (Löfgren idem). Thus, based on the duality of global and national/local perspectives, my study problematises the concept of cultural heritage as a global ideology with specific national and local practices. This is precisely why the study does not focus on definitions but rather on practices and contexts: the interesting point about cultural heritage – as also about culture itself (Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn referred to by Wright 1998: 7) – is not how many definitions we can associate with it, but the temporal and spatial distribution of these definitions, and the practices and contexts of their occurrence.

The theoretical background of my study may seem eclectic at first, since it attempts to simultaneously make use of certain theses from the literature on nationalism and ethnicity, political anthropology, economic anthropology, regional research, and the anthropology of tourism, while it also endeavours to make use of the growing literature on cultural heritage. My specific examples are from Transylvania. During my researches conducted along the Kis-Küküllő river (Romanian: Târnava Mică) and in the village of Bonyha (Romanian: Bahnea) and its region, I have also investigated the ethnic relations that brought within the horizon of my investigations the management of cultural heritage, while in the Szilágyság (Romanian: Sălaj) region, in Szilágynagyfalu (Romanian: Nuşfalău) and its surroundings, we specifically asked questions about cultural heritage and the process of heritagisation as well.

On the Sites and the Fieldwork

Bonyha is an ethnically mixed village with almost 2000 inhabitants from the south of Transylvania. It lies along the Kis-Küküllő (Romanian: Târnava Mică), halfway between Balavásár (Romanian: Bălauşeri) and Dicsőszentmárton (Romanian: Târnăveni). According to the 2011 census the village is inhabited by Romanians (533 / 27%), Hungarians (606 / 31%), and Roma (829 / 42%), which reflects the ethnic structure of the surrounding areas. Until the 1960s and '70s, the surrounding villages were also inhabited by significant Saxon communities, and locals still preserve the memory of Armenian and Jewish merchants. Economic and political positions are dominated by Romanians and Hungarians, while they also continuously voice their fears that the Roma, on their turn, influence the life of the village through demographic resources. One also must emphasise that this village served as the centre for a branch of the Bethlens, one of Transylvania's most important aristocratic families. The manor house of the Bethlens is still standing in the village today. The village is a fair centre still recognised today especially for its national-level fairs organised four times a year. There is a significant amount of



wine production in the surrounding area, although not in Bonyha specifically, and artisanal winery largely defines the symbolic positioning of the local farmers. I conducted anthropological fieldwork between 2009 and 2014 in this village and its surroundings.³

Szilágynagyfalu lies in the south-western part of the Szilágyság region. It is the central settlement of the Upper Berettyó (Romanian: Barcău) valley. The village has 3207 inhabitants, 2147 (67%) of whom declared themselves Hungarians, 591 (18%) Roma, 448 (14%) Romanians, and 13 (0.4%) Slovaks at the latest (2011) population and housing census.⁴ Thus, the village is inhabited by an important Roma minority and the region has a number of smaller and larger villages dominantly inhabited by Slovaks. The village reflects the ethnic relations of the general area. Economic and political positions are primarily held by Romanians and Hungarians. It is also worth mentioning that the mayor of this village inhabited by a significant Hungarian majority is an ethnic Romanian, who nevertheless speaks Hungarian very well. Several branches of the Bánffy family lived in the village, with many of their manor houses still standing today. The most important of these is a two-storey building constructed in a classicising baroque style, located in the centre of the village. Grape and wine culture is a determining factor for the village – as for the entire area –, also characterised by the strong presence of the cellar holes carved into the loessial, sometimes almost vertical hillsides. We have been conducting fieldwork since 2015 in the village. Our interdisciplinary research team is focused upon the natural and cultural heritage of the area.⁵

Politics, the Market, and Other Tensions Within the Practices of Cultural Heritage

It is hardly a surprise for anyone that politics and culture have already interfered before the appearance of the concept of cultural heritage. Culture has a politics in itself, and culture itself is ideological. It cannot be viewed as a neutral territory that is independent from the intentions of the human agent (Wright 1998: 9–10). Culture transmits a system, a hierarchy of values, and a world view. It imposes norm compliance; it establishes authority, and the ways in which authority can be questioned etc. On a further level, the different approaches to culture could also be considered as basically political stances, as the discussions surrounding evolutionism, relativism, and functionalism in anthropology or the ones regarding colonialism and neo-colonialism have shown so clearly (see Wright 2004: 8). Most significantly, the development and regional policies also proceed from the assumption that there are

3 On the village, the surrounding area and the field work conducted here see also Szabó 2013a.

4 Nuşfalău (Hungarian: Szilágynagyfalu) Municipality Mayor's Office, 2011 population and housing census sheets. A number of people declared themselves Germans, Ukrainians and of other ethnicities, and there were also some people who did not include themselves in any category.

5 On the research and on the scientific material based on it, see also the homepage of the project: cultureandnature.ro. I would like to thank Maria Birtocian, Ákos Nagy, and Tímea Pap, who helped with the data collection.

more and less developed regions and cultures (cf. Edelman and Haugerud 2004: 86), which thus have to be preserved or, on the contrary, changed. Developmental strategies and colonialism explicitly manifest political contents (cf. Edelman and Haugerud 2004, Mbembe 2001, especially chapters 1 and 2) that – as we will see – can become relevant even in the context of cultural heritage. One can observe latent political attitudes also in the manner in which the media presents certain aspects of folk culture, how it transforms and renders traditions consumable (see Vilmos Keszeg's study in the present volume). Perhaps these examples will already suffice for the illustration of the relationship between politics and culture.⁶

Coming more closely to our subject, we could also discuss the intricate entanglements of the cultural politics involved in political ideologies – from the Jacobins through the understanding of culture and nation-building efforts of Romanticism and up to the concepts and cultural politics of Socialism, this relationship is very real and effective.

At the same time, we also have to emphasise that the establishment of the global political institutional system, along with its local ramifications, based on (folk) culture, or more exactly, on the objectification and commodification of (folk) culture, can nevertheless be considered an individual fact in the temporal sense, since it is unprecedented for state institutions and civil society organisations, including bureaucrats with unconditional respect for the letter of the law and/or enthusiastic specialists of heritage, to be involved in such great numbers in this area so much debated even today. This particular character manifests itself also in the fact that the institutional hypertrophy is supplemented with a hidden – or sometimes less hidden – political programme termed as multiculturalism, or from a somewhat different perspective, cosmopolitanism (Kymlicka and Straehle 1999), that is supplemented with the liberal discourse of peace and the respect for diversity (Taylor 2009: 43). For the time being, let us set aside the minor question regarding the chances of cosmopolitanism in the context of the undiminished popularity of national ideas and nation-states. The important point here is that a global political ideology is interwoven with a global cultural political endeavour and institutional background. Thus, the concept of cultural heritage possesses a globally widespread and relatively well-defined ideology, which could best be described with the cosmopolitan ideas of supranationality, and there is also an institutional system that maintains it.

Although cultural heritage, politics and the market inevitably belong together in spite of the fact that the economic aspect is present within the politics of cultural heritage as a shameful detail, here I will separate politics and the market for the sake of the analysis, and I will immediately return to the idea that the economic aspects are included as incidental evil in this formula (Taylor 2009: 43). As Regina Bendix stated: “much as if economic considerations might besmirch or spoil the purity of heritage” (Bendix 2009: 258). While we avoid this aspect at the level of the official ideologies, we should not forget either that the components of cultural

6 Moreover, we did not even touch here upon the issue of the culture of political behaviour.



heritage can become organic parts of recreation, as well as of foreign and domestic tourism (Hafstein 2009: 106, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 151). In fact, they do become such components in most cases (Bendix 2009: 258), immediately attaching themselves to consumption in the wider sense, and it would be, of course, superfluous to elaborate on the idea of the importance of consumption for economy (cf. Appadurai 1996: 66–85, Colloredo-Mansfeld 2005).

In this context, (folk) culture is considered to be above economic mechanisms from a certain kind of moral perspective, since we would like to believe that market mechanisms have not yet entered all areas of our lives. However, we have to face the fact that in spite of all intellectual, or more exactly, academic reluctance and criticism, global capitalism has become an important structuring factor of (folk) culture's organisational modes, and the phenomenon appropriately termed by Orvar Löfgren as "limelight economy" (Löfgren 2001: 9), the perpetual splendour of shopping malls and other now fashionable market sites have also entered this area.

This global nature is worth being emphasised also in the context of market and economy: similarly to the politics of cultural heritage, as veiled as the economics of cultural heritage may be, this economy is inevitably embedded into a global model, organically complemented by another, almost fetishist component of contemporary economy, i.e. growth. Global market economy, as it is also shown by the recent crises, is under the spell of unceasing growth. Evidently, only critical academic voices call attention to the inherent dangers of growth and to the global inequalities resulting from it (Graeber 2011). Here we arrive again at the tensions of the forced marriage mentioned in the introduction: through contemporary concepts and practices of cultural heritage, (folk) culture makes bedfellows with partners for whom inequality, unequal development, the necessity of development and the hidden power politics connected to them are associated – in spite of the putative democratism of cosmopolitan views and market economy – with the very essence of their functioning.

Furthermore, competition is also closely connected to market economy that becomes a part of the cultural heritage practices through this forced marriage. Evidently, as the present study does not want to deny, competition as the manifestation of individual qualities and intergroup rivalry, is also a part of folk/everyday culture on many levels, and it encompasses a wide scale, from rhymed mockeries through dances and the potlatch to symbolic and less symbolic fights. However, these encounters of rivalry are always local in their original sense and not part of the global struggle for the integration into the cultural market.

I would not like to enter here into Polanyian reflections. Nevertheless, as the conclusion of this short chapter, I would like to observe that, according to the substantivist argumentation, before the advent of market economy and outside Europe, human economic behaviour was directed by cultural and social motivations. Then, with the dominance of the modern capitalist market, the autonomy of the economy reached an extent that had never been seen before, and economy separated itself, as it were, from culture. This process was termed as "disembedding" (Barry 2005:

15–16). However, it seems that their renewed interweaving is inevitable, but in this case in the reverse direction: culture will become embedded into the framework of the capitalist market through heritagisation.

In the above, I attempted to identify two types of tensions related to cultural heritage. One of these tensions is the almost natural one that appears between global ideologies and local practices, which I will discuss in more detail hereinafter. It is natural, since global structures are inevitably constructed from local processes; then they become (somewhat) independent and feed back upon local processes and groups that can react on them through actions situated on a scale reaching from acceptance to resistance (Appadurai 1996: 27–28). The other type of tension is represented by the stresses created in the space between politics, the market, and culture, which is also quite natural in a certain sense, since these domains are structured according to basically different operational and organisational principles.

The series of tensions do not stop here, however. Although they are also intertwined, three spheres and their corresponding discourses can be separated regarding cultural heritage. The sphere of the institutions, the academia, and everyday life are, as I said, interrelated, but also quite well separated from each other. The tension stems, on the one hand, from the fact that these spheres approach the subject of cultural heritage with very different premises, and on the other hand, they are in a relationship of rivalry with each other as well. Nevertheless, they are also linked by the fact that politics is markedly present in each sphere, although only in a hidden form.

The politics of the institutions and the institutional system is permeated by a certain kind of humanistic and utopian idea, which simultaneously talks about humanity as a community and is based upon national committees and delegations. Multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism are, needless to say, also important parts of this discourse. The academic sphere and its discourse – although in many cases the representatives of the academia participate in the institutional systems as consultants and delegates –, while it builds upon the hidden political programme of multiculturalism and the equality of cultures, represents a certain critical perspective and thus a (political) resistance, since it continuously calls attention to the anomalies related to the construction of the cultural heritage concept and to the operation of its related practices (Hafstein 2009). Finally, the sphere of everyday life – at least in the cases we have studied and presented more extensively below – offers a layman's interpretation of these humanistic and utopian approaches, and most often quite harshly adapts the concept as well as the practice to the local political and economic environment.

Thus far, I have not mentioned the legal aspect of the issue, although it is considered quite important also in literature (Hafstein 2009). Nevertheless, the concept of heritage carries significant legal aspects as well (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 53), and its introduction involves the issue of ownership, which is mostly alien to folk culture. To put it quite bluntly, in this context, one has to determine the owners of certain cultural elements, since these are the sole entities that can act as agents of



reflected preservation. Here, it is again a global ideology, the Western legal concept and practice, or more specifically, the historically and spatially limited (Hann 2005) concept of the private property, that is emphasised against local practices, for which one has to point out that intangible cultural heritage rather exists in different versions and variations than in a single, original and authoritative form (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 53).

This leads us to a further question. Hungarian ethnography speaks of so-called “folk experts”: outstanding story-tellers, dancers, singers, healers, etc., who have attained quite extraordinary knowledge within their own community and sometimes also provide services to the community through telling stories, dancing, hexing and healing, casting or averting spells (Keszeg 2010). They are important representatives of local culture, since customs, rituals, and healing practices cannot be complete without them. However, one must also call attention to a double process. On the one hand, attention shifts from the cultural products to these people, to their knowledge and skills (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 53). In this sense, these people are objectified and even commodified, while their autonomous agency is questioned. On the other hand, the capacity to act is taken over by the experts who appear in the field of politics, the market, and cultural heritage. It is worth mentioning that the ideological usage of folk culture always produces a group of experts (Mihăilescu 2008) who have to be knowledgeable not only about folk culture – this is not even their most important field and duty –, but also well-versed within the world of institutional organisations (politics) and the allocation of resources (the market). They are – to use a fashionable term – the cultural managers, who are simultaneously politicians, economic specialists, and legal practitioners, the new actors of cultural brokerage. Their appearance points to the wider political context that calls the local communities and, ultimately, the representatives of folk culture into question in the sense that they are not able to maintain their own culture. This is somewhat similar to the world of the development projects and grants: local communities have become unable to allocate resources even to local purposes, thus relying upon external resources.

The Local Practices of Cultural Heritagisation: Ethno-Politics, Tourism Discourses, and Agents⁷

The discovery of cultural heritage as a global concept and a potential local resource by the local communities and/or institutions is a natural part of the communication between the global and the local. The background of this phenomenon is most often represented by the changing conceptions of rurality (cf. Boscoboinik–Horáková 2012): the rural area does not, either in a global or in a local sense, simply represent a site of agricultural production, responsible for providing the country’s population with food (cf. Szabó 2013b). Lately, the rural area itself has become diversified

⁷ This part of my study extensively relies on my paper published in Hungarian in 2016. See Szabó 2016.

along with its functions. Thus, the concepts of leisure, recreation, retreat, culture and authenticity, nature, land use and maintenance and of the traditional economic systems are all organically related to the contemporary notions of rurality.

Each one of these manifests itself somehow in that which I have termed here as the totality of discourses established around tourism (cf. Szabó 2016). Beyond doubt, tourism becomes one of the most important frameworks for the production and consumption of culture, and it may even be considered the most significant one on the level of the amateur and professional representations of one's own and alien cultures. No wonder that anthropology, ethnography, and social sciences in general often discuss various phenomena related to tourism both in an international and in a national context (for an international outlook and the local investigation of the issue, see Szabó 2012). The almost celebratory tone adopted regarding tourism has led to another organic aspect of the structural change of rurality, i.e. that one can currently find a tourist information centre in almost every Transylvanian settlement, irrespective of the touristic potential of the region. These centres often rather reflect external expectations than local potentials, and were almost exclusively created on the basis of external resources.

This point is worth emphasising because my researches conducted in two Transylvanian regions have convinced me that the local agents think of the concept and the practices of cultural heritage and tourism as organically intertwined. Thus, when discussing the local selection criteria, I consider it important to call attention to this aspect. Tourism and heritagisation cannot be separated in the regions under consideration: the local elites and stakeholders consider the two practically equivalent. Moreover, their only relevant criterion in the selection of cultural heritage elements seems to be their saleability: whether the cultural product can or cannot be sold within the framework of tourism. That is to say, the above-discussed tension between the market and culture is in these cases not so much a tension as a kind of mutually supportive relationship, and this is part of the reason why I said that the local adaptations of global, humanistic, and cosmopolitan ideas can be very specific.

In the region of Bonyha, one of the most important heritage elements consists in the castles and the culture, but primarily the former, of the one-time Hungarian nobility. Another important element could be identified in the former presence of the Saxon population, while the third is related to viticulture and wine tourism. In Szilágynagyfalu, the erstwhile presence of the aristocracy and viticulture are also part of the virtual local list.⁸ The similarities of the two regions and the enumerations would naturally lead to the inclusion of the Slovak culture – similarly to Saxon culture in the case of Bonyha and its surroundings –, but this is not, or is only partially, the case. Regarding Szilágynagyfalu and its surroundings, the unceasing interest for musealisation and local collections is also worth mentioning. Several

8 Actual local lists have not been prepared either here or in Bonyha, and no steps were made for the inclusion of local values on country-level/national lists. During my research, I used my interviews conducted with employees of the local administration, teachers, as well as priests and pastors, in order to arrive at these statements.



local museums and collections can be found in this area, some of them established in the 2000s.

Cultural heritage includes the principle of selection and thus a kind of hierarchy on the global level (Hafstein 2009: 104). The same applies locally, as well. Items not included on a list are considered to be somehow less important. The question, however, is always: “What were the selection criteria?” The cosmopolitan perspective can always lead these selection criteria back to aesthetical, ethical, and administrative perspectives, respectively to their specific combinations (idem), but local practices can ignore these in the same way in which they can also forget about the cosmopolitan, humanistic and utopian ideologies, since the selection is embedded, on the one hand, into economic potentials of tourism – as I already stated above –, and on the other hand, into the structures of the local ethnic relations. Additionally, I also have to emphasise that local practices are characterised by a certain measure of confusion (which otherwise generally applies to the ideologies of cultural heritage, cf. Kearney 2009: 210), and they strongly prefer the material, tangible elements of cultural heritage, since these do not require any special efforts and can be demonstrated without any cultural programmes. These are, most often, buildings, which, in turn, lie outside the interest area of intangible cultural heritage. However, these, too, point to the selection processes through manifesting the local politics behind the selection.

Both regions under investigation are ethnically diverse, and although this diversity is viewed as a kind of value in the spirit of the multicultural discourses that have trickled down to the local levels, or at least this is the attitude that is conveyed to the researcher, the diversity appears in a very particular manner within the actual practices. Similarly to the way in which cultural heritage, in spite of all sorts of cosmopolitan foundations, can fuel competition in an international context⁹, the local practices of cultural heritage most often become parts of the local ethnic competition¹⁰ in a double sense.

On the one hand, the Romanian and the Hungarian party have to come to an agreement regarding these elements, or they can completely circumvent each other's ideas. In Bonyha, we can see examples for mutual agreement, while the case of Szilágynagyfalu rather illustrates the circumvention of each other. In Bonyha, both the erstwhile nobility and, especially, the Saxons are viewed as entities standing above local ethnic conflicts, thus carrying identification potential for both Romanians and Hungarians. In contrast with this situation, the cultivation of the Hungarian nobility's heritage and the establishment of local collections are situated within the ethnic field in the case of Szilágynagyfalu.

On the other hand, heritagisation becomes part of the ethnic rivalry also in the sense that the local Roma population is almost completely left out of these processes. This evidently stems from the inequalities in the redistribution of the local

9 “They celebrate the virtues of particular populations while fuelling a cultural contest among them” (Hafstein 2009: 104).

10 It would be too idealistic to envisage cultural heritage only from the perspective of openness and democracy. This is rather a race track or even a battlefield (Erdősi–Sónkoly 2005: 77–78).

political and economic positions, but also from the fact that the selection criteria emphasise the elements considered as more important by the locals – and the Roma population is only peripherally present in these conceptions. Thus, it hardly comes as a surprise that the Roma are treated as completely non-existent within the heritagisation discourses. A 2014 survey, directed at the characteristics of local Roma culture, found that both the Roma and the non-Roma elite is inclined to formulate their accounts on Roma culture in terms of acculturation and to present this community as one that has left its former occupations (bricklaying and musicianship) as well as their specific cultural traits, their music and dances, completely behind. Moreover, no spectacular material elements (such as buildings evoking the historical context) of the type preferred by the locally dominant heritage discourses can be associated with this group.

Consequently, heritagisation as a process creates boundaries not only in the sense that it separates certain elements of culture from the rest with its lists (Hafstein 2009: 104, referencing Jack Goody), but also through the fact that it reproduces and simultaneously confirms local ethnic boundaries in the projection of the selection principles. At the same time, this calls attention to the specific features of the creation and maintenance of boundaries and to the functions played in local ethno-politics by the ethnic communities. As I have already mentioned, the Saxons are part of the ideas formed about heritage in Bonyha and its surroundings, while the Slovaks are only partially included in the case of the Szilágynagyfalu region. The Saxons had the role of modernisers in Transylvanian culture, and were viewed with respect by other ethnic groups. Additionally, they played an important part in the recent rediscovery of Transylvania, as well as in establishing its touristic offer and routes (cf. Szabó 2015), a process in which the Saxon built heritage enjoyed a particularly privileged position. All these circumstances had their consequences in Bonyha and its region. However, since the local Saxon community has vanished, this kind of heritagisation does not influence the local ethnic establishment and the allocation of the resources anymore. It is worth noting that, as a result of this context, the few remaining local Saxons cannot actively participate in the shaping of these processes: they are still part, or more precisely, objects of cultural politics, but not its actors anymore (cf. Szabó 2015). On the other side, the Slovaks of Szilágynagyfalu and its surroundings have largely been left out from this heritagisation process, since the elements enumerated with respect to the Saxons are mostly lacking in their case.

Finally, the example of the local grape and wine culture illustrates very well the country-wide and local ethno-politics, as well as their interconnections, market and economic behaviours, ideas about tourism, and even the local natural heritage. Wine culture has significant historical traditions in both regions under consideration. Additionally, however, the winemaking of Bonyha and its surroundings somehow manages to incorporate the bygone Hungarian aristocratic culture. Several manor houses have become integral parts of the local oenological traditions, while the viticulture of Szilágynagyfalu represents natural heritage in a powerful manner, since the cellar holes carved into the loose, loessial soil, and



sometimes into the almost vertical hillsides play a prominent role in the context of local wine-making. Thus, the two factors, history and nature become here the basis for social constructions, render themselves unquestionable precisely through the representation of their structures as given, as opposed to the changing nature of sociality. Nature and history are, in this sense, unalterable facts, as opposed to the ever-changing structures of society (cf. Ulin 1995).

It is not incidental either that wine-making represents a Hungarian ethnic activity in the sense that it is practiced mostly by the Hungarian farmers. Moreover, it is artisanal, small-scale winemaking: mostly, the vineyards cover only a couple of hectares or less, even if the most important owners are members of the former agrarian elite that managed to maintain itself, as well as the representatives of the current elite. Consequently, it rather furthers the accumulation of local symbolic capital that is built up in an exclusively Hungarian ethnic framework (wine knighthoods, wine competitions, etc. have patronage and participants from Hungary, and the direction of knowledge transfer is also the same) and is less a part of an actual non-local, market-based presence that is otherwise dominated by Romanian- or foreign-owned companies in both regions. Their wines are sold within the local networks in the traditional manner, mostly without labelling and branding, in large quantities, as bulk wine for various family occasions.

Nevertheless – following the inspiration of the successful examples provided by Hungarian wine regions –, the winemaking traditions and cellars are embedded into the tourism discourses, and these elements are mentioned as factors that vastly influence touristic potential. The way of the wine, wine tastings, wine tours, vineyard and cellar visits, along with the folklore shows sometimes associated with them, are all part of these ideas. Viticulture thus represents a practical, as well as a symbolic battleground of natural, cultural, and ethnic values, in which ethnic affiliation, membership in the elite group, the successful reevaluation of the transition and the cultivation and creation of tradition can be reformulated.

The local practices of cultural heritage also have a more hidden politics that controls the relations between the most important agents who are active in this field, respectively emerges from these relationships. Of course, this is not separate from the tensions arising from the relationship between global and cosmopolitan vs. local politics considered from a wider perspective, and the specific interrelations between the three spheres (institutional systems, academia, and local worlds) can be sharply highlighted from this angle. For the sake of the argument and transparency, let us abstract from the fact that each of the spheres can be, and in fact is divided in itself. Previously, I presented relatively in detail how divided the local world can be, for instance along the boundaries of ethnic groups. However, I did not talk about the naturally existing religious differences (although these roughly coincide with the ethnic boundaries), the often diverging interests of church and state institutions, and the divergent aspirations of the elite groups, including the local administration, educational elites, entrepreneurs and farmers.

This internal division, or similar ones, evidently characterise all three spheres. Nevertheless, I will consider them here to be unified through selecting one of

the subinstitutions, namely the supporting institutions, from the institutional sphere and the researchers interested in studying cultural heritage from the academic sphere.

Thus, I suppose that local practices are primarily shaped by the interactions between the locals, the supporting institutions, and the researchers. In this interactional field, the question regarding the owner of the tradition, the entity who has the right to point out certain elements as essential constituents of local culture, who selects, includes and omits, is raised even more emphatically. Similarly, it is important to have someone who can assemble the tender dossier and draft the application texts according to the increasingly hermetic logic and language of administration and bureaucracy. These are all significant issues, particularly in view of the fact that, on the one hand, scientific research in ethnography and/or anthropology in Transylvania can often be conducted only within the framework of cultural preservation projects (or, to put it differently, the politics and the market of scientific researches has changed), and on the other hand, the representatives of the three spheres all assume somehow the role of the experts presented above with unconcealed criticism.

Nothing demonstrates the contradictory character of the expert role more clearly than the different attitudes of each sphere to the topic. The representatives of each sphere approach the problems with their own specific preconceptions. The administrative sphere of the supporting institutions is interested in concrete and quantifiable results according to its bureaucratic logic. Although it is backed by global and multicultural politics, ultimately it reduces the entire process to the language of bare numbers, indicators and deliverables. This is well illustrated by the differences in approaching the visual material in the case of our research conducted in the Szilágyság, during which we paid special attention to the visual anthropological perspective, but the supporting institutions viewed this primarily as a quantifiable and commodifiable material (how many film recordings were made and uploaded to the public website), while for us it represented an element of the research methodology (how does the presence of camera influence or aid the research process).

These tensions also manifested themselves in the relations between the researchers and the locals, since their discourses were often parallel to each other. Based on cosmopolitan and multicultural ideologies, the researchers were basically interested in everything, although the ethnographic research was influenced by the fact that the data sheet employed for surveying the local cultural heritage was developed on the basis of prior knowledge, which included ideas of ethnographic authenticity: the researchers were interested in everything they considered to be authentic and original.¹¹ This is already an important preconception or, if you like, prejudice that they subsequently had to dismantle, as the locals, in their own wise way, tacitly disregarded this rigid academic mentality, and, when presenting the local folklore tradition, proudly referred to the popular folk-style art songs and

11 It is clear, of course, that the issue of authenticity is at least doubtful (Bausinger 1989: 27), and thus we should rather speak about a kind of staged authenticity (MacCannell 1973).



their singers who regularly appear on the television channels playing folkish songs (the so-called Hungarian *nóta*). Nevertheless, the locals had their own prejudices, too, e.g. regarding the (un)crossability of ethnic borders, thus practically disregarding the multiculturalism of the cosmopolitan level. One could also mention here the touristic and thus, directly or indirectly, economically relevant aspects, treated as almost exclusively important by the locals themselves, which ultimately could not be refused by the researchers either, as this chapter was featured with its own indicators and deliverables within the completion of the project.

I would like to present three examples for the milder and stronger differences between the approaches and discourses of the locals and the researchers. In the vicinity of Szilágynagyfalu, there is a centre offering religious services, built on a hill named Szentháromság Hegye (“Holy Trinity Mountain”) by its founders, where – according to the claims of the founders – miraculous healings take place due to the wondrous well-spring and to the blessed nature of the place. This place is more closely associated with Catholicism and with Hungarians; it views itself as a kind of a pilgrimage centre, where people looking for change, irrespective of religious affiliation and ethnic background, gather on the first weekend of every month. From the researcher’s perspective, it is doubtlessly an important site for the local forms of religious practice. Thus, we had the obvious option to present it as part of the local cultural heritage, but had to face the extremely strong rejection of the local community and especially at the level of the religious leaders. Notwithstanding the ethnic boundaries, the Eastern Orthodox and Greek Catholic (Romanian) priests knew full well that the Catholic Church expressly rejects the official approval of the site.

My next example comes from the border area between natural and cultural heritage. It illustrates the issue of the wood-pastures¹², an important topic in the entire Carpathian Basin and thus also in Transylvania. The wood-pasture in itself is certainly part of the natural heritage, but the various forms of knowledge related to its establishment and maintenance bring it within the remit of intangible cultural heritage (cf. Berkes 1999). We had our difficulties with wood-pastures also because they almost naturally represent an element of the local natural landscape – although it is worth emphasising that they are among the typical elements of the cultural landscape that would quickly transform without continuous human intervention. In other words, their maintenance needs the community and the unaltered survival of the traditional forms of land use. However, due to the structural change of agriculture, this has become quite an acute issue. At the same time, the discussions about wood-pastures did not simply reveal the differences between the ideas of the researchers and the locals, but also the oddity of the refined academic discourse and the perspective of the researchers in a medium to which wooden pastures belong in the most natural way in the world.

Finally, the third example is related to the local fairs. The fair centre of both regions under consideration lies in the studied villages, Bonyha and

12 See the articles of the Hartel–Plieninger (2014) volume about Hungarian and Transylvanian cases.

Szilágynagyfalu. These fairs are traditionally of great importance to the locals who buy and sell here or just simply keep themselves informed from this source. At the same time, these fairs represent examples for the way in which the images and discourses of heritagisation can influence the local ideas about it: compared to the customs, religious holidays, folk dances, songs and traditional costumes, buildings, etc., the fairs do not seem spectacular and outstanding enough to the locals in order to be discussed in the context of heritagisation. Notwithstanding the fact that the fairs are simultaneously the sites of traditionality and also events manifesting the variety of local economic life, as well as locations of ethnic self-representation and of ethnic mimicry (cf. Szabó 2013a: 221–227), they are difficult to be imagined in this context for the locals, precisely because the main elements of heritagisation (spectacle, ethnic associations, touristic criteria) are far removed from the fairs in their interpretation. Heritage lists decontextualise and separate cultural elements from their medium, recontextualising them within a new environment (Hafstein 2009: 104) – while the locals are apparently not prepared for the fairs to become involved in this process of decontextualisation and recontextualisation.

Summary and Conclusions

The study presented the concept and practice of cultural heritage as a factor that determines the institutional, academic, and local views and practices related to folk culture. Additionally, the study was also aimed at formulating certain critical remarks against the recent, but rapidly spreading concept that is increasingly important from the perspective of the production, reproduction and even redistribution of culture. Cultural heritage is a global, cosmopolitan, and multicultural concept, but its practices are equally related to the national and local levels (Sonkoly 2000). National contexts, centre-periphery relations, and the criteria of development and economic performance influence even the most globally-oriented world heritage conceptions (ibid.). These processes are certainly at a more advanced stage in the developed countries of the world, thus a certain colonial character of the politics and practice of cultural heritage manifests itself due to this circumstance, too (cf. Taylor 2009: 46).

Additionally, the idea of cultural heritage is often integrated into a new kind of nation-building process, and although, even in the recent past, scientific discourse was inclined to discuss the end of nations and nationalism, their background ideology, we can witness in Europe the extraordinary success of the national idea and re-territorialisation. Of course, it may also be the case that the concept of cultural heritage is, in itself, in constant change, as its genesis is to be traced back, after all, to the creation of national cultural heritage in the French context (Sonkoly 2000: 46). The interesting aspect is, however, the manner in which this idea has become simultaneously cosmopolitan and multicultural, while it preserved its capacity for serving both nationalism and regional ambitions. As we have seen, on this local level the practices of cultural heritage are not in service of mutual rapprochement,



but only serve the maintenance of ethnic boundaries and in certain cases explicitly point toward the ethnic community's reinforcement, especially in the Transylvanian context of the double and competing nation-building processes of the Romanian and the Hungarian side.

Besides the politics of cultural heritage, its economy also sheds a peculiar light on the tensions between the global concept and the local practice. In the spirit of a certain kind of modern humanism, the global concept considers the pure cultural values of primary importance, but local practices shift the focus in the direction of the economic aspects – especially in the Transylvanian context, where rural regions very often struggle with the lack of resources –, with tourism as their most important framework. Rurality and tourism are today almost naturally related in Romania, and more specifically, in Transylvania. One of the recurring clichés of the Romanian media is that tourists can find the real Romania in the countryside. Rurality, i.e. the Romanian village and its associated values are an important element of Romania's official touristic image. Practically, tourism and rurality meet and become synonymous within a positive and almost emotionally heightened discursive space. Thus, the researcher should not be surprised that the elites of almost every village – and often even the regular people – speak, dream and make plans about tourism as the bearer of the great potential for improvement and development, also constantly looking for the elements that could be included in this tourism discourse. As various elements of cultural heritage fit into these plans, the global market integrates cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage represents, within the examined framework, an instrument of ethnic rivalry on the one hand, and of accessing financial resources on the other. At the same time, it is also important to point out how the concept of cultural heritage, with its all-encompassing tendencies, changes the modalities of cultural organisation and reproduction. Against the holistic perspective on culture and the principle of the equality of cultures, it introduces and consolidates value hierarchies, preferences, and rivalry. The less representative and presentable elements of culture are in danger of ceasing to exist – at least as viewed from the imperatives of visibility that are characteristic for the cultural heritage perspective. In other words, the practice is selective, restrictive, and temporally rigid: cultural sciences have always been sensitive to the analysis of diachronic changes and have continually called attention to their importance. By contrast, the practice of cultural heritage freezes its selected elements in an atemporal state.

The main paradigm of the 19th century national ethnographies consisted in representativity and aesthetic value. Today, the element of financial buoyancy is added, and all these aspects are integrated within consumption, or more specifically, tourism. In conclusion, in the Transylvanian context, the discourses established around heritagisation and tourism fit into the relationship system that reproduces subaltern rurality. In this framework, the post-socialist village is looking for its place within the urban-rural opposition/continuum, while it cedes the possibility of discourse formation to the centres (cf. Szabó 2013b). Cultural heritage can also become an element in creating the autonomy of the regions, but most often it grants

the capitals (both in the geopolitical and the financial sense of the word) the undisturbed opportunity of exploiting the peripheries (Bausinger 1989: 34). Ultimately, cultural heritage is one among those modernist ideas that discretely or explicitly manifest the elements of utilitarian concepts (e.g. the transformation of nature into natural resource), the legibility and simplifications, as well as the mapping of local worlds (Scott 1998: 13). All these do not only influence the general perspective on culture, but also the manner in which new actors emerge in this field and new roles are formed for them, while the relationships of the actors and their roles, the cultural brokerage is also reorganised in the context of politics and the market.

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