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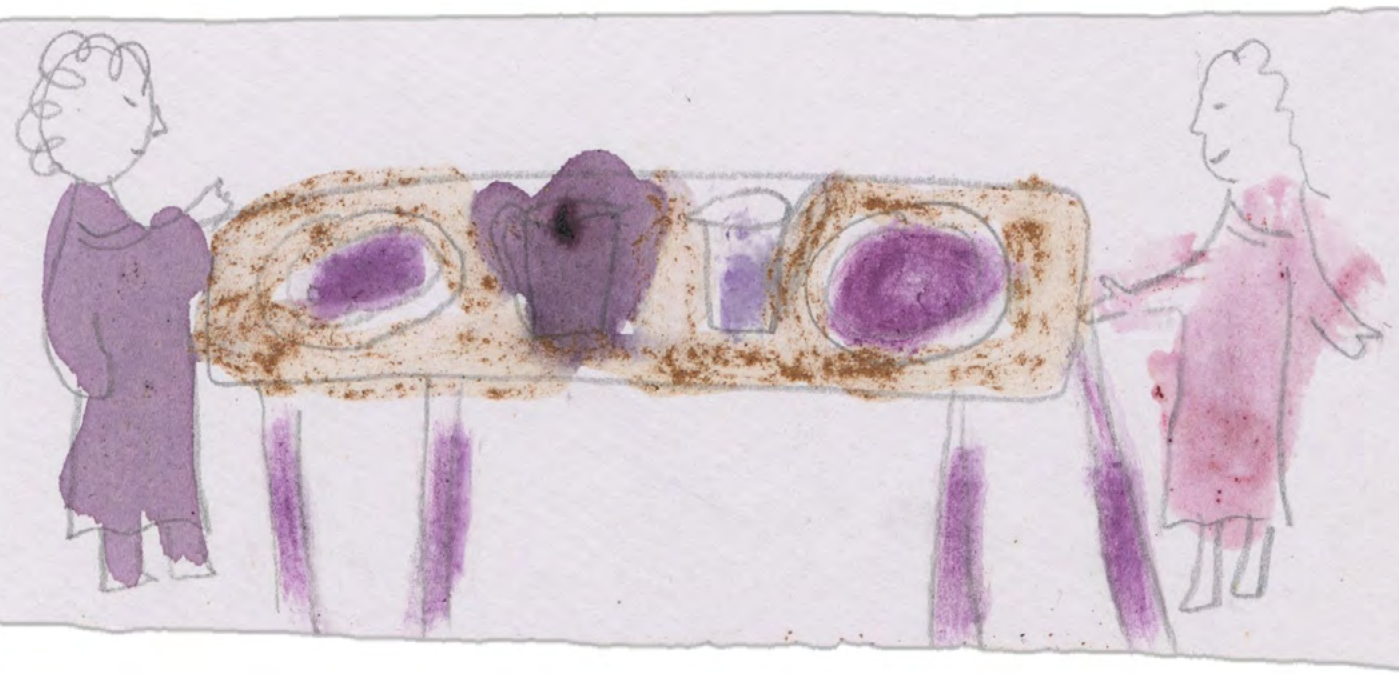

Two Introductions

Creative Traditions and Ecology of Heritage[1]

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ABSTRACT

Eric Hobsbawm used a distinction between "customs" (collective representations of the past experienced as present) and "tradition" (as "imagined past", a product of modernity), while at the same time introducing the concept of "invented traditions" into the theoretical terminology of the social sciences. He thus opened the way for a nuanced analysis of the concepts that come into discussion in the analysis of the relation between the past and the present that re-uses it. Starting from this methodological distinction, the article presents a discussion of past and present by analysing such concepts as tradition, patrimony, legacy, succession, and preservation. These are the concepts that govern the relation between and regarding the cultural-identitary politics that correspond to them, and this can be richly exemplified in the case of Romania.

KEYWORDS

Tradition, invented traditions, heritage, patrimony, creative traditions.

1. My grateful thanks are due to Filippo Zerilli, Claudia Ortu and Peter Kelly for their comments on an earlier version of this text.

"*What is being performed here is experimenting with something old.*
– Andrei Pleșu[*]

* At the opening of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, 5th of February 1990.

How can "traditions" be "creative"? For most people anywhere, "creative traditions" sounds like a straight contradiction, an oxymoron. But is this really the case? In addressing this inaugural question, we need to start by asking what "traditions" actually are.

Imagining the Past: Customs, traditions and invented traditions

Introducing his celebrated concept of "invented traditions", Eric Hobsbawm reminds us right at the outset that "'tradition' in this sense must be distinguished clearly from 'custom' which dominates so-called 'traditional' societies" (Hobsbawm 1983: 2). And he further explains: "The object and characteristic of 'traditions', including invented ones, is invariance. The past, real or invented, to which they refer, imposes fixed (normally formalized) practices, such as repetition. 'Custom' in traditional societies has the double function of motor and fly-wheel. It does not preclude innovation and change up to a point, though evidently the requirement that it must appear compatible

or even identical with precedent imposes substantial limitations on it. What it does is to give any desired change (or resistance to innovation) the sanction of precedent, social continuity and natural law as expressed in history." But "'custom' cannot afford to be invariant, because even in 'traditional' societies life is not so." "Students of peasant movements know that a village's claim to some common land or right 'by custom from time immemorial' often expresses not a historical fact, but the balance of forces in the constant struggle of village against lords or against other villages" (Hobsbawm 1983: 2). On the other hand, for Hobsbawm "'invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past" (Hobsbawm 1983: 1).

Traditions, in the sense acknowledged here, thus have to be distinguished both from "customs" and from "invented traditions." What, then, do we mean by "traditions"?

First of all, traditions are, in fact, a by-product of modernity. But is this not another oxymoron? How can (old) historical "traditions" be (recent) "social facts" of "modern" times? In order to address this further puzzling question we have to go even further and ask what we then mean by "modernity."

Modernity and pre-modernity

In *How Institutions Think* Mary Douglas (1986) implicitly provides a striking conceptual frame for this question too. At first sight, "conventions", originating in "transactions" and framing social expectations, are sufficient to guarantee a functional state of order and make institutions work. But, as she further argues, institutions are "legitimized social grouping" and conventions alone cannot guarantee such a legitimation: "for a convention to turn into a legitimate social institution it needs a parallel cognitive convention to sustain it" (Douglas 1986: 47). "Before it can perform its entropy-reducing work, the incipient institution needs some stabilizing principle to stop its premature demise. That stabilizing principle is the naturalization of classification" that Durkheim drew attention to many years ago (Douglas 1986: 48). "It is assumed that most established institutions, if challenged, are able to rest their claims to legitimacy on their fit with the nature of the universe. A convention is institutionalized when, in reply to the question, 'Why do you do it like this?', although the first answer may be framed in terms of mutual convenience, in response to further questioning the final answer refers to the way the planets are fixed in the sky or the way that plants or humans or animals naturally behave" (Douglas 1986: 46-47). The conclusion is that "there needs to be an analogy by which the formal structure of a crucial set of social relations is found in the physical world, or in the supernatural world, or in eternity, anywhere, so long as it is not seen as a socially contrived arrangement. When the analogy is applied back and forth from one set of social relations to another and from these back to nature, its recurring formal structure becomes easily recognized and endowed with self-validation truth" (Douglas 1986: 48). For social order to exist and institutions to function, (transactional) *conventions* have to be backed by (cognitive) *convictions*; there always has to be what André Petitat calls the "transcendence of the conventional" (Petitat 1998), a final source of legitimation, a kind of meta-ideology we could also term *Rationality*.

We have given this long introduction in order to say that modernity is in the final analysis an essential shift in "Rationality." With modernity, "there is any longer an expectation of society receiving the Law

from God and it seems impossible (…) that such a Law might be restored according to an anthropomorphic cosmic order. (…) A modern society must be born, meaning a society which is no longer looking for its ideal image in the past, but in a deep splitting of it, in a future built only on rational and utilitarian bases" (Caillé 2000: 21-22). Order is no longer expected to be initiated by an external (supra)natural force of one kind or another. Man now claims to be his own Law and to be what he becomes according to this inner Law. He no longer looks backwards to the past for the legitimizing principles of his actions, but rather to the future of his becoming, embedded as it is some kind of universal principle of "evolution." In the first case, becoming is origin-oriented, needing only *to accomplish* Man's original – and thus true – nature; in the second case, Man's true nature has to *be created* by and through his very becoming. Collectively bound in pre-modern times by an original cosmic-sacred *order,* Man now strives for non-binding, free (individual) choices of *ordering*; and believes in them. Accordingly, "rationality" is no longer *retrospective*, but *prospective*. Man is convinced that he is his own origin and thus in control of his becoming; and individuals are starting to download this belief for themselves…

This is not to imply that pre-modern times, with their dominant retrospective rationality, are "unhistorical" in one way or another, but simply that changes have to find their legitimation as far as possible in an inaugural past "not seen as a socially contrived arrangement." Let us recall here only the classic example given by Jack Goody and Ian Watt regarding the change in the mythical legitimation of the state of Gonja. Records drawn up by the British administration in Ghana in the early 1900s show that Ndewura Jakpa, the seventeenth-century founder of the state of Gonja, had seven sons, each of whom ruled a territorial division within the state. Six decades later, for various reasons, two of the divisions had disappeared. The "reason" for this was provided by altering the founder's family details: Jakpa had now had only five sons, and so only five divisions had been created (Goody and Watt 1968). Change happened, but to be accepted it had to be inscribed in a shared order of the past: it is (symbolic) disorder that is avoided rather than (social) change. The same holds true in Romania in the case of the so-called "villages that walk on ancestors" (*sate umblătoare pe moși*). In order to decide the share of the community's land to be held by certain leading families, transactions take place between kin groups and end in the establishment of a number of descent groups (*neamuri)* that are entitled to hold hereditary landed property. It is only after these transactions have been resolved that a legend of the eponymous hero will emerge in each village and legitimize them by claiming that at the point when the village was founded there were exactly the same number of ancestors as the number of currently entitled kin groups (Stahl 1959).

We may now sketch the dichotomy of pre-modernity and modernity as follows:

PRE-MODERNITY	MODERNITY
Cosmo/theo-centrism	Anthropocentrism
Heteronomy	Autonomy
Holism	Individualism
Binding customs	Non-binding choices
Retrospective rationality	Prospective rationality

This rough polarity represents rather modernity's core "conviction", its ideological belief, than the factual course of history: there is neither a complete and decisive shift from one side to the other, nor a total irreversibility of this shift.

Traditions and customs

In this respect, modernity can be considered as being "parricide" by definition: "The desire of parricide, regicide or deicide, meaning the negation of one's origin, is at the core of modern culture" (Hiyama 1994: 281). Correspondingly,

traditions are what is kept or recovered after "killing the Father", a free and negotiated reconciliation with the rejected past. In a way, traditions are "free-binding choices", an elective commitment to items and/or representations of the past claimed to be the expressions of one's universal, national or local *identity*. Products of a free social choice, they nevertheless bind society to a past representative of this very choice. Shorn of its quasi-religious power as *origin*, the past is thus undergoing a selective process of re-sacralization as human or historical *value*.

This is true even in the case of a "radical parricide" such as the French Revolution and the building of the French nation. While advocating the free choice of nationhood by a "plébiscite de tous les jours", Ernest Renan, for example, drew attention to the fact that a nation still cannot construct itself without a set of memories and amnesias of a shared past (Renan 1887) – i.e. without re-embracing in one way or another its earlier contested past. The (re)construction of "lieux de mémoire" (Nora 1997) and the patrimonialization of (some) heritages of the past generally thus involve a kind of religious fervour/sentiment a present-day public performs when it enters the modern temples of its own (or others') "authentic" (authenticated…) past. It is relevant that MacCannell was already in the early 1970s emphasising the fact that "sightseeing is a form of ritual respect for society and that tourism absorbs some of the social functions of religion in the modern world. (…) The concern of moderns for the shallowness of their lives and inauthenticity of their experiences parallels concerns for the sacred in primitive society" (MacCannell 1973: 589-590). Decoupled from the lived past that they have killed off, moderns thus need to re-attach themselves to its "authentic" traces put on display by modern societies precisely to satisfy this need.

To cut this long story short, we will appeal to Pouillon's imaginative description: "in order to define a tradition one has to go from the present to the past and not the other way around, and has to figure it not as a *vis a targo* whose effects we merely experience, but as a point of view we undertake in our days in order to approach what preceded us. I definitely am not implying by this that accepting a tradition means to invent it. The past must persist in order to allow us to extract our goods – and we cannot do with it whatever we please; the past imposes only the limits, but our interpretations of it depend only on our present. (…) In fact, tradition is a *reversed filiation*: in this case, it is the son that gives birth to the father, so that he can afford more!" (Pouillon 1975: 160; emphasis mine). Traditions are thus "imagined pasts" in the way nations are "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991).

We can now better understand what constitutes the difference between traditions and customs. One easy way to suggest it is simply to think about the difference between Southern Italy's possession ritual of tarantism and the Italian popular dance *tarantella*; or, in the case of Romania, the comparable difference between the healing ritual of the *Căluș* and the modern "folk" dance of the *Călușari*. The first thing that stands out is the fact that the ancient rituals of both tarantism and Căluș were performed by and in the community, while both derived dances are performed for the public or in public and have become identity icons: customs are self-performed (and sometime secret), while traditions are always staged – "staged authenticity", to borrow MacCannell's term (1973). On closer inspection, it is not difficult to discover that both dances, while rooted in the earlier rituals, went through a complex process of separation (starting around the 15th century in the Italian case, and the late 19th century in the Romanian one) and finally developed a kind of stage autonomy. What was initially just a part of the whole custom is now a tradition in itself: traditions are always selective and/or fragmented. Finally,

if anyone has even a minimal experience of peasant life, they will know that, if questioned about the rules and meaning of such customs, country people will give an answer of the following kind: "'We do this because we've always done it' or 'because it must be so, otherwise it would not be proper' or 'because the ancestors told us to do so'" (Boyer 1990: 11). Customs have always to be legitimated in a past and believed to reproduce the same pattern of performing over time: a custom, people will explain, has to be performed in this way because it always has been performed in this way – which can never be true! Nevertheless, even if it has been changed, a ritual will be still regarded as conforming to the "original": there is a "retrospective rationality" at work in the background, drawing on the past to confirm and buttress the rationality of the present ritual behaviour. By contrast, in the case of traditions, the reason for performing them resides in the present, in being proud of or simply enjoying them *hic et nunc* – or even in handing them down to the future: behind this practice of traditions we find the "rational choice" ideology and the "prospective rationality" of our days.

Last but not least, Boyer points to the fact that "a notable feature of traditional discourse is the emphasis on specific situations instead of theoretical inferences, on salient examples rather than general principles" (Boyer 1990: 42). Without asking why this is so, we may limit ourselves to accepting that customs are mainly a repetition of an event, while traditions imply rather the conservation of a model.

Finally, in this sense, so-called "traditional societies" have no "traditions" at all; they have "customs." And customs may or may not survive during the shift to modernity, they may be passed on and turned into elective "traditions" or they may not. But once turned into "traditions", they *represent* the past; they are worshipped as being the past.

We may now schematise the dichotomy of customs and traditions as follows:

Custom	*Tradition*
Repetition (of an event)	Conservation (of a model)
Organic unity	Selective/fragmented
Filiation with the past	Affinity with the present
Performing (by, in, and for the community)	Staging (for a public)

Of course, one cannot usually find such a categorical split between customs and traditions in real life: some customs find their way through modern times by adopting new features and adapting to new needs; some traditions are closer to their source in custom than others; and, sometimes, vanished customs may be regenerated from the ashes as uninterrupted traditions. Radu Răutu reports such a case. In the early 80s, the ritual of *Drăgaica* had been almost abandoned for decades in the village of Băleni. Then, in competition with a neighbouring community of Bulgarians who were still practising a very similar ritual of their own, the Romanian teachers in Băleni decided to bring the Drăgaică back to life in the Romanian community. They therefore consulted a description of the ritual in an 18th century book and asked their pupils to learn it by heart. The next year, they performed it at a folk contest and won a regional prize. When Răutu visited the village almost twenty years later, he was struck by the archaic aspect of the Drăgaica ritual practised by the villagers. When asked about it, they explained in all seriousness that they "had always done it this way" (Răutu 1998).

Nevertheless, traditions remain a modern and free way of imagining and dealing with the past.

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These distinctions between pre-modern and modern or custom and tradition imply a particular kind of philosophy of history. In the present text we have preferred to leave this implicit and to ask instead a much more grassroots question: what do we usually do with the Past and with the traces/vestiges of it we have inherited?

Handling the past

The vocabulary currently used when dealing with the past may be an insightful means of unfolding social classifications that have the effect of shaping patrimony policies.

Looking at this vocabulary in regular Romanian parlance, two ideas stand out: *patrimony* and *traditions*. The distinction between the two is similar to the UNESCO one between material and immaterial / tangible and intangible cultural heritage, but is, in fact, more deeply rooted in the German tradition of distinguishing between Ethnography (focused on material culture) and Folklore (concerned with oral literature, mythology and rituals). *Grosso modo*, patrimony actually refers to the material (built) heritage, while traditions concern inherited practices and knowhow (approached mainly in a folklore-style way). "Heritage" (*moștenire*) is a rather generic and rhetorical term, while "legacy" has no precise equivalent in Romanian. While "patrimony" may be both rural and urban (but usually not "industrial"), "traditions" are viewed as only the rural/peasant heritage. Last but not least, "patrimonialization", as referring to a process, has only recently been introduced into the Romanian academic vocabulary by younger generations of social scientists (chiefly anthropologists)[2]. Generally, the term most people use is simply "patrimony", to indicate something that is "out there", a given object evidencing identity-laden value: patrimony has no becoming, it is patrimony!

2. For an overview see Andreea Lazea (2012).

A conceptual frame

The current international vocabulary is more complex and nuanced. For the needs of the present argumentation we will nevertheless simplify it in a somewhat heterodox way in order to pinpoint only the strategic lines along which "heritage" is usually approached and used.

"Heritage" is the starting point. It should be regarded as being just what it seems to be, our available past, the reservoir of material and non-material traces/vestiges we are still able to refer to. In this respect, traces are inherited "facts." We may then turn this heritage into a "legacy": what from the past is (electively) regarded as worth being re-presented in present times and consequently requires to be preserved in a "factish" way (from Latour's terminological coinage: fact + fetish – Latour 2010). Traditions, in this sense, are simply another name for legacy. Or we can expand this into a "patrimony": what is (selectively) promoted from the past into the present as "resources" for a better life and future. Heritage is thus considered to be relevant for just two fundamental reasons: *being* (legacy dimension) and/or *wellbeing* (patrimony dimension). Very roughly speaking, legacy is about preserving the past, while patrimony is about promoting it.

Preserving the Past? Legacy and the patrimony crusade

In 1985 David Lowenthal used a famous statement as the title of his book on heritage, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*. "We are no longer intimate enough with [our] historical legacy to rework it creatively" he complains (Lowenthal 1985: XXIV). We should no longer regard the past as a "foreign country" but rather do our best to "assimilate (it) in ourselves, and resurrect (it) into an ever-changing present" (Lowenthal 1985: 412); intimacy with the past should be regained. A decade later, he was amazed – if not scared – by the "heritage crusade" that was proclaiming, all over the world, a kind of holy war in the name of patrimony. "All at once heritage is everywhere – in the news, in the movies, in the marketplace – in everything from galaxies to genes. It is the chief focus of patriotism and a prime lure of tourism. One can barely move

without bumping into a heritage site. Every legacy is cherished. From ethnic roots to history theme parks, Hollywood to the Holocaust, the whole world is busy lauding – or lamenting – some past, be it fact or fiction." But "why this rash of backward-looking concern?" – he wonders. "What makes heritage so crucial in a world beset by poverty and hunger, enmity and strife?" One possible answer would be that "we seek comfort in past bequest partly to allay these griefs. In reconciling from grievous loss or fending off a fearsome future, people the world over revert to ancestral legacies. As hope of progress fades, heritage consoles us with tradition" (Lowenthal 1996: xiii). But this kind of "heritage crusade", he warns us, is "subverting our will and thwarting our ability to care for common global legacies" (Lowenthal 1996: xiv). "Benign and baneful consequences are alike manifold, and heritage vice is inseparable from heritage virtue. This is little understood, though; because few realize how heritage actually functions, most are content either to admire or traduce it. Devotees ignore or slight its threats, while detractors deny its virtues and suppose that simply cursing heritage can exorcise its ills" (Lowenthal 1996: 2).

What was Lowenthal afraid of, in fact? He was accepting that "heritage, no less than history, is essential to knowing and acting" (Lowenthal 1996: xi). This kind of personalized past that he was pleading for in his first book does indeed fulfil a fundamental *psychological* need. But it is also because of this that emotional – sometimes egoistic and revanchist – values come in to fuel our perceptions of and attitudes toward the past. "Heritage the world over not only tolerates but thrives on and even requires historical error" (Lowenthal 1996: 128): it thus subverts "history" or even tries to replace it in its striving for a reasonable past. But above all, Lowenthal is sceptical about this emerging "heritage crusade" because the fragmentation and trivialization it produces prevent us from caring for "common global *legacies*."

As we have seen, Lowenthal was cautious about both heritage "devotees" and heritage "detractors." Christoph Brumann goes a step further in this direction by refining the meanings and implications of these two categories of approach and suggesting a third possibility. On the one hand there are what he calls "heritage believers", "explicitly committed to cultural heritage in general or to specific heritage items of whose intrinsic value they are convinced and whose conservation they endorse" (Brumann 2014: 173-174). With post-colonial and post-modern critics, a deconstructivist trend has emerged, unmasking various instances of patrimonial fictions and other kinds of invented (old) traditions. This "heritage atheism", as it is labelled by Brumann, "is even clearer when (…) heritage adulation is seen as a general societal ill", as in the case of "the church of high nationalism" (Brumann 2014: 175). Brumann's "third way" is "heritage agnosticism." By analogy with religious agnosticism, "an 'agnostic' study of heritage does not posit a priori that heritage is an empty signifier, an entirely arbitrary and socially determined ascription, but takes people's heritage experience and beliefs seriously" (Brumann 2014: 180). To this kind of dialectics I would add, keeping with the same religious terminology, two more (sub)categories: a) "heritage profaners", for whom the past is just a dead body that has to be cleared away in order to leave room for the development of the future and b) "heritage paganism", that is, people such as local peasants, who usually were – and may still be – ascribed as the very subjects of customs-cum-traditions, but for whom the God of "universal heritage" is simply an alien one (Mihăilescu 2015).

In the early 90s, this kind of criticism was just emerging; nowadays, it is closer to being the standard approach. We therefore need to go to the source of this "heritage crusade" and ask for its rationale Why preserve the past, after all? And preserve what?

Many years ago, I happened upon an intriguing phrase in a book on the

Crusades that I have totally forgotten since then: *Of course we are all Christians! But it is more important to ask against whom we are Christians! Mutatis mutandis*, we may also question ourselves: of course we have a heritage, but against whom (or what) are we protecting it? The first answer that will probably come to our minds would be that we are protecting this heritage against oblivion and because we feel that we are losing our past and that something is therefore missing from our lives: "legacies at risk are cherished for their very fragility" – as Lowenthal (1996: 23) has it. We thus have to *protect* and *preserve* this heritage. But the second, less obvious answer would be that we need to prevent the past from repeating itself and bad memories from haunting our present lives: never again this past! The very idea of Man emerged in the early seventeenth century *against* the bad memories of slaughtering the aboriginals of the New World. Reason became a means for Enlightenment people in the eighteenth century to overcome bad memories of religious wars: never again this past! In a way, too, UNESCO was born in the second part of the twentieth century against the bad memories of the two world wars, with its universal patrimony policies aiming to restore global peace. And development too! The past was no longer to be merely *preserved*, but also to be *promoted* as a resource for a better future.

Promoting the past? Patrimony and development

Although heritage was a constant concern of UNESCO, which launched its World Heritage Convention in 1972, culture and the economy began to be partners only in the 1990s. The post-Second World War intuitions enshrined in the UNESCO Constitution matured in the course of the nation-building and decolonization processes that have given way to today's context of advanced globalization (Bandarin et al. 2011). The growing awareness of limited energy resources, of concerns with the "green economy", "recycling" and even "degrowth economy" and the promotion of a "sustainable development" credo was slowly turning culture in general and heritage in particular into a "resource for development." UNESCO now claims on its home page that it is "convinced that no development can be sustainable without a strong culture component. (…) Yet until recently, culture has been missing from the development equation." The UN is renewing its appeal to "all Member States, intergovernmental bodies, organizations of the United Nations system and relevant non-governmental organizations […] to ensure a more visible and effective integration and mainstreaming of culture in development policies and strategies at all levels." Even the World Bank has changed its approach and has decided to support heritage and culture as a major component of its development policies. In the late 1990s, its president, James D. Wolfensohn, asserted loudly and clearly that "We simply cannot conceive of development without cultural continuity. It must be acknowledged and must form the basis for the future. Serious attention to culture is basic to improving development effectiveness in education, health, the production of goods and services, the management of cities. It is at the very heart of poverty reduction as well as the quality of life. (…) The challenge is to draw on traditions, values, knowledge and strengths that can make development more effective" (Wolfensohn 1999: 1). Two years later, a complex report on "Cultural heritage and development: a framework for action in the Middle East and North Africa" was published under the coordination of Michael Cernea. This Romanian sociologist underlined that "the models of development formerly used were the expression of a narrow vision which did not integrate the cultural dimension (…) and which undervalued the driving force that the cultural sector may play in economic development. The World Bank, like many

national governments, was not interested in these issues. (…) We need to make good these deficiencies now if we want to integrate these socio-cultural dimensions in national strategies and in the World Bank's programs of development." And he later explained: "Supporting development does not concern only economic growth, but also ambitions to ensure general social development. Culture and cultural patrimony cannot be kept apart from programs that support development" (Cernea 2003: 3-4). The *Zeitgeist* was changing to match the new millennium. But it was changing chiefly by revisiting economic ideas in order to make space for culture and heritage within the more inclusive marketplace of "sustainable development."

This ideological turn also means a shift of focus from the more culture-based inherited *patrimony* toward a more and more socio-economically focused concern with *patrimonialization*. But this apparently trivial change in terminology in fact conceals a number of ideological assumptions. In this respect, "patrimonialization" obviously needs a subject: who is patrimonializing, and *why*? National and international institutions usually answer with a piece of fine-sounding discourse: "by the people and for the people." Even if well meant, such discourse leaves aside the deeper nature of patrimonialization: like any other act of social categorization, patrimonialization is a power game and its real subject is the person who has the power (and the interest…) to promote it. Economically and politically supporting patrimonialization may thus fuel patrimonial clashes and grassroots tensions between rival "heirs." UNESCO's policies, in spite of their well-intentioned nature, have produced numerous problems and conflicts "on the ground" (see e.g. Brumann and Berliner 2016). Claiming, as UNESCO does, that "our patrimony is our legacy" is noble, but still leaves open a question about "us": whose heritage? Mankind's, of course – UNESCO maintains. What then about "our" heritage? – some dissatisfied people ask. Between universal, national and local heritage there are many unresolved conflicts. Sometimes humanity's – or even national – heritage simply has no meaning for local people and the regulations that come with its recognition go against their "traditional" way of life. Even worse, the protection of *your* heritage may be an offence to *my* identity-laden heritage.

In more economic terms, strategic patrimonialization is supposed to be empowering development and reducing poverty – which indeed it frequently does. But this is not always so for the poor and/or locals, who may instead become the victims of a kind of "gentrification of the landscape" of or around their patrimonial space. Cultural tourism also brings money, but "touristification", especially low-cost tourism, may destroy patrimonial spaces and their local populations' way of life. Promoting patrimony is certainly good, but it is not always a win-win game…

But patrimonialization may also be a means of fighting back against the government or part of a wider "struggle for recognition" (Honneth 1996). In this sense, patrimonialization implies the pride of a shared past fuelling the recognition of a dignifying present – and this is not only an act of self-promotion, but also a reaction against non-recognition (*Misachtung*) by a significant Other. In other cases, UNESCO recognition of a universal value may actually save a local patrimony, as in the case of Roșia Montană in Romania; this site has (for the moment…) been saved from destruction by a powerful international gold mining corporation by its being added to UNESCO's list of protected areas. Patrimonialization may also go hand in hand with political/liberation movements, as in the Palestinian case reported by Chiara De Cesari, where a number of patrimony NGOs managed to bridge heritage, the arts, and liberation politics (De Cesari 2010). Last but (for sure!) not least, supporting heritage may indeed deliver what it promises: a better life for (some) people.

On the other hand, rejecting *patrimonialization* and sticking to atemporal images of inherited *patrimony* means turning this into a fetish, a sacred object you do not have – and are not allowed – to question. And this may be the other side of the coin: faced with the excesses and traps of globalized *patrimonialization*, fetishizing local/national *patrimony* may fight back by fuelling nationalism and xenophobia.

As we can see, promoting the past by turning heritage into a resource for development has its "believers" and "atheists" too; "believers" may be suspected of "neo-liberalism", while "atheists" may be treated as "leftists." What then would an "agnostic" position on this issue look like? It is hard to say, but, as already suggested by Brumann, "agnosticism" must refrain from believing *a priori* that "patrimonialization" is an "empty signifier" and simply pursue an honest path towards it, from intentions to outcomes, both cultural and economic.

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A prospect

Back to the Future: Experimenting with the Past

At the end of the 1800s, the biologist Grigore Antipa, a student of Ernst Haeckel, started to study the Black Sea and the Danube Delta from a twofold point of view: understanding this ecosystem and the afferent biotopes, and imaging their optimal management. From a theoretical point of view, in a speech delivered to the Geographical Society and subsequently in 1909 in his book on ichthyology, he launched the holistic concept of "geonomy"[3], which he further developed in 1933 by proposing two complementary disciplines, "bio-sociology" and "bio-economy." The former is based on the finding that "sociability is a primordial quality, inherent to all living beings" and, as such, has to be the subject of a distinct discipline that makes possible an understanding of "the social structure of the world of living beings and their utility on earth" (Antipa 1933: 6). The latter starts from the assumption that "the vital activity of every organism may also be regarded as a kind of economic activity. One may also speak about a production, circulation, distribution and consumption of products of this activity. Raw materials are the resources that each organism has to use as best it can" (Antipa 1933: 8). The same "associations of beings" thus have to be studied from both a social and an economic point of view, at the individual, local (biotope) and general (ecosystem) levels. From a practical point of view, Antipa proposed a new "Law on Fishing" in 1896 and published in 1916 his monumental opus on "Fisheries and Fishing in Romania", which has remained a model of fishing management up to the present day.

Antipa used the approach of the social sciences to better understand natural life in order to imagine an integrated and – as we would now call it – "sustainable" management of living systems. Over a long period, Nicolae Georgescu-Roegen approached the issue from the opposite direction and used biological processes and mechanisms to understand socio-economic life. He started by studying Romanian peasant economy in the 1930s and on this basis distinguishing agrarian economies from industrial ones. Both Marxist and "standard" economists were mistaken in this respect, he argues, and the insights of the Agrarians should be revisited from a more careful and general theoretical point of view. "In a nutshell," – he summarises – the main tenets of the Agrarian doctrine are: 1. Because of their geographical situation some communities will always rely on agriculture as a main economic activity. And since agriculture is an intrinsically different activity from industry, such communities cannot develop along identical lines with the industrial economies. 2. For the countries with an agricultural overpopulation, individual

3. This approach was later used chiefly in France, where it was introduced by Emanuel de Martonne, who knew Romania well, and developed by the geographer Albert Demangeon (1942) and the urbanist Maurice-François Rouge (1947). Although the subject later split into a number of more specific (sub)disciplines, the term "geonomy" is still sometimes used as such by geographers and ecologists (e.g. Pinchemel 1997). In Anglo-Saxon literature, "geonomy" is rarely used and normally has different historical and conceptual roots.

peasant holdings and cottage industry constitute the best economic policy" (Georgescu-Roegen 1960: 33-34). Beyond these basic statements, Georgescu-Roegen reminds us that "a complete description of how individual distribution in a peasant community is regulated must include the institutional patterns prevailing in that particular community. That is why a mechanistic schema of peasant behaviour, like the schema of Standard theory, proved to be an impossible project for all who thought of it. And that is not all. If one finally decides to study the peasant institutions so as to construct a *homo oeconomicus* to represent the peasant, one soon discovers that these institutions are almost infinitely variable, a fact that precludes any relevant classification. It is natural that such a baffling and elusive problem as the conduct of the peasant should have attracted few students and resisted being caught within a simple formula" (Georgescu-Roegen 1960: 28). Upstream, he believes, "the basis of this difference [between agrarian economies and industrial ones] is undoubtedly the fact that the living Nature imposes a different type of restriction upon homo agricola than the inert matter *upon homo faber*" (Georgescu-Roegen 1960: 5). Several essential parameters of the production flow are thus different here from how they appear in classical econometrics. In a complementary way, in order to include institutional patterns prevailing in particular peasant communities, he resorted to the concept of *hysteresis* and in 1950 proposed the "hereditary postulate", in which utility is dependent on past experience – the duration and intensity of past experience and the amount of time that has elapsed since the relevant experience took place – i.e. a *sui generis* kind of "path dependence" later used in evolutionary economics. In the case of agrarian economics, the past is decisive for the way present economic systems function. Along the same lines, he further anticipated that "we should not be surprised at all if the fight of the Communist regimes against the 'bourgeois spirit' in reality aims at creating a 'socialist man' with a peasant type of conduct" (Georgescu-Roegen 1960: 38). This did indeed happen, the real product of the "proletarization" of the peasants in most of Eastern Europe being in fact what was later to be called the "peasant-worker" (e.g. Szelenyi 1988).

It is already in these earlier works that we see Georgescu-Roegen's views on development starting to change. In his 1960 paper on peasant economy, for instance, he stated that "economic development does not mean only pure growth; in the first place it means a growth-inducing process (…) The power to sustain growth, then, is the only valid criterion of investment in undeveloped countries" (Georgescu-Roegen 1960: 39). In 1971 he gave a fully-fleshed version of his theory in *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*. Later on, in the foreword to his celebrated work on *Energy and Economic* Myths, he acknowledged that "the idea that the economic process is not a mechanical analogue, but an entropic, unidirectional transformation began to turn over in my mind long ago, as I witnessed the oil wells of the Ploesti field of both World Wars' fame becoming dry one by one and as I grew aware of the Romanian peasants' struggle against the deterioration of their farming soil by continuous use and by rains as well. However, it was the new representation of a process that enabled me to crystallize my thoughts in describing for the first time the economic process as the entropic transformation of valuable natural resources (low entropy) into valueless waste (high entropy). I may hasten to add that this is only the material side of the process. The true product of the economic process is an immaterial flux, the *enjoyment* of life, whose relation with the entropic transformation of matter-energy is still wrapped in mystery" (Georgescu-Roegen 1976: xiv – emphasis mine). He thus concluded that "undoubtedly, the current growth must cease, maybe reverse" (Georgescu-Roegen 1976: 25). It is due to this early and fully

argued warning that Georgescu-Roegen is retrospectively considered to be "the father of a new and rapidly growing school of economic thought, ecological economics" (Mayumi 2001: 1) and "incontestably one of the main fathers of degrowth economy" (Latouche 2016: 111).

He coined the heterodox approach known as "bioeconomics." "The term" – he explains – "is intended to make us bear in mind continuously the biological origin of the economic process and thus spotlights the problem of mankind's existence with a limited store of accessible resources, unevenly located and unequally appropriated" (Georgescu-Roegen 1977: 361). For Georgescu-Roegen this is also a different moral credo one should become aware of and be committed to: "in the past we went from 'Thou shalt not kill' to 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'. The time calls for a new commandment: 'Thou shalt love thy species as thyself'" (Georgescu-Roegen 1977: 374).

In a paper on growth versus development, Alain Alcouffe and Sylvie Ferrari consider that "Georgescu-Roegen's analysis in this respect has some major implications: on the one hand, it is impossible to consider the evolution of the production process as being independent, and on the other, environmental entropy must irrevocably increase as a result of depletion/emissions. The economic dynamic, seated in the act of production, is inherently related to the laws of physics. To isolate any process of production by means of an analytical boundary is just formal. In actual fact, because it is rooted in the material environment it cannot be released from the laws of physics" (Alcouffe and Ferrari 2008: 16). Finally, the two commentators highlight the fact that "Georgescu-Roegen demonstrates that the only plausible course to follow is negative growth. The stationary state is a 'myth' rather than a solution" (Alcouffe and Ferrari 2008: 11).

In their turn, John Gowdy and Susan Mesner note that "though Georgescu-Roegen's two articles on agrarian economics (Georgescu-Roegen 1960; 1965) laid the foundation for the emerging field of bioeconomics and ecological economics, his lucid and profound insights into developing agrarian economies have been sadly relegated to the dusty shelves of historical curiosity" (Gowdy and Mesner 1998: 143). They further comment that "at the core of the bioeconomic approach is a call for a change in values, where decisions are made based on the idea that the earth's supply of available matter and energy is humankind's dowry and should be conserved to the greatest extent possible for future generations. The implications are biological, economic, and political. Georgescu-Roegen called for the principle of discounting and maximizing utility to be abandoned in favour of the more sensible principle of minimizing regrets" (Gowdy and Mesner 199: 152).

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In recent decades, such "forewarnings" have become a more and more widely embraced credo. One may even wonder if this is not – or will not become – a new "conviction" in Douglas' sense. To give just one example from a mushrooming literature on this theme, this "conviction" could be described, for instance, as what Michel Serres calls "the natural contract." "By natural contract" – he explains – "I mean first of all the recognition, metaphysical indeed, by every community, that it is living and working in the same global world as all the others; not only every political community associated as it is by a social contract, but also whatever other kind of communities, military, commercial, religious, industrial… are associated by a legal contract, and more, the expert community associated by the scientific contract. I consider this natural contract as metaphysical because it goes far beyond the usual limits of the different local disciplines, and especially beyond those of physics. It is

as global as the social contract and allows the latter, in a way, to enter the world, and it is as worldwide as the scientific contract and allows that too to become part of history" (Serres 1990: 78). Behind this "natural contract", Michel Serres symbolically places Sisyphus. Sisyphus, he says, is Sisyphus and the boulder: "there is no human community without objects" (Serres 1990: 77). This relation between subject and object now binds humankind to the global object, the Earth. Heritage too is not out-there, it is part of us being everywhere.

Ecology of heritage?

In what way and to what extent (if at all) does this *Zeitgeist* affect and inform approaches to and policies regarding heritage? I believe it does and should. It is in this context that I will briefly suggest, in the following pages, a possible approach I have labelled "ecology of heritage."

In 1995, Singh Rana introduced a very similar term, *heritage ecology* "as the line of thought which involves multi-disciplinary and multi-code research, and is also deeply conditioned by belief about our built nature and destiny and the ways to follow the path of sustainable development. Heritage Ecology, as yoga of place, is close to geomancy, and linked to the Gaia theory and connectedness of human psyche to the earth-spirit" (Rana 1995: 195). While some of his insights and suggestions need to be borne in mind, the general approach is essentially different from ours, which is inspired, to some extent, by Bateson's "ecology of mind."

In 1972, Gregory Bateson published a collection of essays entitled "Steps to an Ecology of Mind." The concept of "ecology of mind" was an intriguing one, so he needed to explain it right at the outset. Ecology of mind, he said, is "a new way of thinking about ideas and about those aggregates of ideas which I call 'minds'. This way of thinking I call the 'ecology of mind', or the ecology of ideas. (…) The questions which the book raises are ecological: How do ideas interact? Is there some sort of natural selection which determines the survival of some ideas and the extinction or death of others? What sort of economics limits the multiplicity of ideas in a given region of mind? What are the necessary conditions for stability (or survival) of such a system or subsystem?" (Bateson 1972: 1). He was thus expanding the initial biological field of the term, extending the meaning of ecology from nature to culture, from material to spiritual. Later on, general ecology was more and more fragmented into regional sub-systems, from urban, economic or political ecology to, say, ecology of fishing, nutrition, pollution etc. The idea of "ecology of heritage" is not inspired by Bateson's thinking as such but may be enriched by this broader understanding of ecology. Nor is it a distinct sub-field of classical, nature-focused ecology, but rather an approach to living systems under a "natural contract." It is ecology insofar as heritage is not a foreign country but part of a living system we may or may not call *Anthropocene*. Ecology of heritage may thus be further described as the interactions and integration of heritage facts (natural or cultural, material or immaterial) in a presently functioning social system in order to support its sustainable and meaningful functioning. What happens to be considered *legacy* or *patrimony* at a particular place and time in history are such interactions and integrations as "make system" and are part of a currently functioning social system. In this respect, ecology of heritage is just one "institution", further legitimated by a broader (and new?) entropy-reducing "conviction" of social "order." In practical terms, ecology of heritage is (or should be) both knowledge and management.

Ecology of heritage is methodologically holistic and morally ecumenical.

It is an integrative approach, not a subtractive one that merely takes over,

preserves and/or exploits selected items inherited from the past; legacies and/or patrimonies are not objects in themselves, but living experience in time. Ecology of heritage also implies a spatial approach (in the sense of the recent "spatial turn" in the humanities prophesied by Michel Foucault as early as 1984); it involves acknowledging and tracking the distribution and circulation of heritage items across multi-scale spaces, from general "ecosystems" to local "biotopes", with all the subsequent interactions, selections and adaptations that make system.

In so doing, it has to be ecumenical too. This means that heritage policies should not be practised simply as a hierarchical decision, but rather as a reasonably shared "cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld 1997). In order to pursue this ideal, ecology of heritage has to face some inevitable challenges. On the one hand, it has to cope with and manage the "dissonant heritage", i.e. the temporal conflicts and disharmonies that inevitably occur as a result of the relationship between the past and its contemporary users (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1995); in doing this, it supports trans-generational ecological "filiation." On the other hand, it has to face up to spatial conflicts too, given the fact that patrimonial spaces are, *de facto*, divided along political, religious, and/or economic boundaries; it thus has to maintain a kind of cross-border ecological "ecumenism."

To put it briefly, ecology of heritage has to be holistic not only for methodological reasons, but mainly because – like it or not – we are living in a global world and under the pressure of a "natural contract" that we all need: this "globality" demands such a holistic approach. Correspondingly, managing it requires an ecumenical approach that can overcome (as far as possible) inherent global-cum-local conflicts and tensions. If culture (heritage included) has to be linked with development, and development has to be sustainable, holism and ecumenism are two of the chief prerequisites.

Creative traditions

For the time being, it seems that an "ecology of heritage" raises more questions than it can answer. It may nevertheless offer a guiding frame of reference for patrimonial understanding and practices. It is in this sense that "creative traditions" should be considered.

We started by making a binary distinction between customs and traditions, regarding the latter as a product of modernity. As such, traditions are an elective heritage of modern times, not now *reproducing* (or claiming to reproduce) the same event over and over again as customs do, but rather *preserving* an original model (or what is assumed to be such a model) for further public performances. By doing this, traditions are a *sui generis* link between past and present, governed by a kind of hybrid retro-prospective Rationality of a still nostalgic Modernity: parricide as it were, Modernity gives itself, via traditions, nostalgic performances of time past, which re-bind it to a past it was supposed to have rid itself of. These are what we usually call "traditions", what we have included in the category of "legacy", and what we have now to differentiate and re-define as "binding traditions": conserving them binds us back to the past, even if this is only a selective one and even if it is only limited to the time and space frame of their performance; worshipping them further binds our identity to some modern kind of cult of the ancestors. A product of modernity indeed, "binding traditions" are nevertheless on the edge of pre- (or even anti-) modernity. Politically, they may fuel both patriotism and nationalism, self-pride and xenophobia.

"Creative traditions" are different. They do not set out to preserve a model but instead aim at its transfiguration. They are truly "modern" inasmuch as they are a species of "non-binding choices": they are what we should now call "non-binding traditions." Modern artists have frequently proceeded in this way, picking up inherited

items from "archaic" societies (their own or "exotic" ones) and transfiguring them into "creative" works of art. From this point of view, "creative traditions" are not something totally new; what is truly new is their coupling with development – and thus with the market.

Let me now illustrate the two sub-species of "traditions."

Vasile Alecsandri's ballad *Miorița* may stand for the first, binding type of traditions. A poet and an important figure in Romanian nation-building, Alecsandri was also among the first to make folklore collections in the *Volksgeist* tradition of Herder. It is in this capacity that he discovered a pastoral folk theme, found in different forms and under different names all over Romania (and in fact throughout the Balkans), which he published in 1850 under the name of *Miorița*, shortened, rewritten and now promoted as the apogee of Romanian cultural consciousness. More than a hundred years later, in 1964, Adrian Fochi brought together in one volume a huge number of popular versions that folklorists had managed to collect in the interim. But it is Alecsandri's cult version of Miorița that has remained in the Romanian national consciousness as our genuine "traditional" folk masterpiece that all Romanians learn in school and that many Romanian intellectuals have made the subject of veneration and exegesis.

On the other hand, Constantin Brâncuși's "endless column" may stand for the category of "non-binding" traditions. The popular source of its inspiration is evident and explicit. But Brâncuși's intention was by no means to preserve an original model; on the contrary, he was striving to "unbind" and liberate inherited forms from their customary usages.

What we more specifically call "creative traditions" is thus an updated version of "non-binding traditions" – meaning a relatively recent pattern of "unbinding" inherited items, something being done not only by creative individuals and for aesthetic reasons, but in the global context of patrimony policies that link culture to development and both of them to nature, as described above. In this way, "creative traditions" are trespassing/transgressing classical boundaries of culture and/or heritage and are open to development and the market. In fact, this is precisely their (disputed) aim and novelty.

The schema below offers an outline of all these conceptual articulations and suggests the social dynamics behind them (see Figure 1).

In this respect, "creative traditions" are not a field in its own right but rather

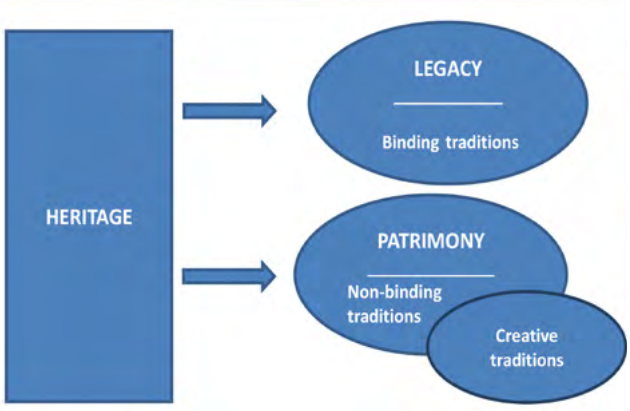

Figure 1

a means towards an emerging ecology of heritage. They are a pragmatic means of linking past and present into a sustainable and meaningful development. In practical terms, this is (or could be) the creative outcome of artisans meeting designers and patrimony organisations interacting with creative industries: neither one-way inspiration nor cut-and-paste fusion, but the shared building of a field of ideas and practices devoted to such a sustainable and meaningful development.

As such, the phrase "creative traditions" is an oxymoron. Not (yet) a concept, it is nevertheless the most comprehensive way to describe some already existing practices. "Arts & Crafts" initiatives and

organisations, for instance, have been mushrooming all over the world in the last few decades, and bridging "creative industries" and "traditions" is wishful thinking shared by many individuals and institutions. Architecture and fashion alike are reviving "traditional" materialities, from adobe to hemp. Even more complex forms of putting heritage to work through what Chiara De Cesari calls "creative heritage" (beyond the "binary vision" of national or trans-national hegemonic memories and governmentality and counter-memories of counter-governmentality – De Cesari 2010) are no longer a surprise to anyone.

Let me give just one empirical example in this regard. Some years ago, Ivan Patzaichin – a highly renowned many-time world canoeing champion and a man with deep roots in the Danube Delta region – and the architect Teodor Frolu started an "ecological" association, explicitly inspired by Antipa's vision, aimed at bringing about a revival of local "traditions." One such heritage item was the old wooden fishing boat (*lotca*) that no one but the very poor were still using: most people had moved to motor boats years before. From a strictly ecological point of view, this meant pollution and many other intrusions into the ecosystem of the Delta For local people it just meant modernity and efficiency. In order to adopt and adapt the old wooden boat to present-day technology and needs, the two started to conceive, with the help of one of the last "marangozs" of the Delta, an old-cum-new craft, the "canotca" (*lotca plus canoe*), a light, easy to handle and "fashionable" wooden boat that nevertheless looked very similar to the old one. In order to make people in the area adopt the new craft, Patzaichin and Frolu organized a competition for local children, but initially none of them wanted to participate: it was embarrassing to take to the water in such an old-fashioned vessel! As in many other cases, "traditions" had lost their meaning for locals, and continuing to preserve them would have made you seem just a ridiculous "loser"… It took years of negotiation with both local people and the local authorities, many years of regional and international paddle boat competitions, of raising interest from tourists etc., to promote the "neo-traditional" *canotca*. It also involved a much larger project, including a revival of traditional food and traditional architecture, the promotion of eco-tourism and even turning the old local prison into a Norwegian-inspired "ecological" one. But it was only after the first householders in the Danube Delta started to become aware of the potential financial and prestige benefits that "traditions" regained a meaning for them and that the local authorities decided to back up the initiative. And all these initiatives had to be brought together to "make system" in order for them to work. For the development-poor locals of the Danube Delta, this project was also a

Lotca, the traditional boat from Danube Delta.
Photo credit: The Association Ivan Patzaichin – Mila 23.

Canotca, a „creative tradition product".
Photo credit: Oana Radu Turcu.

genuine kind of social economy.

The canotca, a typical "creative tradition" product, became the flagship of the revival project, but it was only the symbol of a much broader and self-regulating process of adopting and adapting the past and turning it into a functioning resource for sustainable development.

Of course, such "creative traditions" do not come without their compromises and side effects. They may or may not be backed up by national and/or local administrations that have convergent or divergent interests in accordance with which they will impose conditions of one kind or another. They may be – but more often are not – equally helpful to craftsmen and designers in arts & crafts projects; these are usually more productive for the designers, who have access to the market, than for the craftsmen, whose "traditional skills" may remain as anonymous as before. Eco/agro-tourism may bring much more healthy recreation to the tourists than financial benefit to the locals. Income and development generated by the marketization of such creative traditions may also be preferential and/or unequally distributed, and so on.

We may conclude that "good practice" in "creative traditions" also has its price and that this price is not always fair, people on the "creative" side usually having more to gain than those on the "traditional" side. Even if they involve a kind of symbolic empowerment of the artisan, when he competes with designers with higher educational qualifications and superior economic status, he will usually lose out… Nevertheless, especially in countries with population surpluses living in conditions of underdevelopment, "creative traditions" may be "a way to help people towards 'making a life'", as suggested by Peter Kelly in a public debate on a first version of this text. They may offer a paradoxical "sustainable subsistence" that can function as a kind of (temporary) "third way" between abandoning rural people to their fate and trying to transform them all overnight into "entrepreneurs." Or, at least, they may produce a kind of buffer zone of social economy and security for some of them – which is at any rate more than none… On the other hand, when embedded in a broader ecological strategy of heritage as suggested above, "creative traditions" hold promise for all of us.

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Living with traditions in Romania

With about half of its population living in the countryside and one third of the working population involved in agriculture, Romania is still Europe's most rural and agrarian society. This being so, nation-building had from its very beginning to promote the Peasant as the national icon; on the other hand, with 2.6 million subsistence-farming households possessing less than 1 hectare apiece and 55% of the rural population living at risk of poverty (compared with 28% of people in large cities), the rural space of this same peasant is today underdeveloped, a kind of second-class Romania (the "two Romania" is a common stereotype of public discourse).

One consequence is that (peasant) customs are still very much alive, co-existing and intermingling with (post) modern behaviours and values. Perceived by most people as part of the national identity, "traditions" (i.e. peasant ones) are accordingly venerated.

Looking at Romania through the reading grid of the categories mentioned above, one can easily spot a present paradox: the most frequently-held positions nowadays are those of "heritage believers" *and* "heritage profaners." We proudly praise our untouchable heritage while observing with indifference its spoliation, indirectly facilitated by the lack of clear and respected rules in this field. "Heritage atheists" are few in number and "heritage

agnostics" almost non-existent. Instead, we have numerous unknown "heritage pagans": the majority of country people, ascribed bearers of "traditions", for whom these things are no longer their heritage but rather their burden. For them, heritage

From fairs with "traditional products" to Supermarket „Romanian tastes".
Photo credit: Anamaria Iuga; logo source: www.megaimage.ro.

means an obstacle to present-day life; it represents neither pride in the past, nor a promise of a bright future. The city God of patrimonialization is indeed an alien one to them and they show no enthusiasm to enrol in a "patrimony crusade" in His name.

However, in the last few years many changes have become visible. To name just a few, one can start with the most obvious one: the promotion of so-called traditional/ local food products, mainly as a reaction to the sense of alienation from eating supermarket food that has also encouraged the emergence of small local producers and the unprecedented alternative market of "traditional fairs" at which local gastro-heritages are proudly showcased: old recipes are being rediscovered, previously unknown ones are being brought or inspired from abroad and domesticated, and all are combined in creative "fusion" ways. (Mihăilescu and Iancu 2009; Stroe and Iancu 2012; Stroe 2016). Supermarkets are fighting back and devising their own "traditional brands" (e.g. Mega Image's "Romanian tastes"), many promoted by the smiling face of a cute granny (Dumitrescu 2015). Authenticity, fake and fusion are hard to distinguish, but "traditions" are selling again.

The same is true for artisan products sold at the same fairs. Fashion too is starting to seek inspiration in "folk costumes", the case of "la blouse roumaine"[4] being only the best-known example in this regard. In a sui generis way, Romanian popular music is beginning to be combined with other styles and turned into ethno-jazz or all-encompassing "world music." More recently, with the Subcarpați Band for instance, it is folk music itself that is informing postmodern tonalities. In the appreciative words of the critic Paul Breazu, "it is a first recent and decent attempt to assimilate folklore, not just to cut-paste two distinct forms of sound experience for

4. *la*, the traditional Romanian peasant blouse, was painted by Matisse and became world-famous as "la blouse roumaine". More recently, it was revisited by Romanian fashion designers and has become highly successful in the national and international fashion market.

From „pride houses" to the „rustic turn".
Photo credits: Anamaria Iuga, and Vintilă Mihăilescu.

the sake of a miraculous marketing effect" (Breazu 2010).

We may observe a similar trend in the shift in homebuilding from the huge, bright and highly eclectic "pride houses" built by work migrants to the new wave of "rustic houses" erected by the same migrants in the last five years or so, which are a simulacrum of earlier peasant homes. In combination with extremely state-of-the-art modern

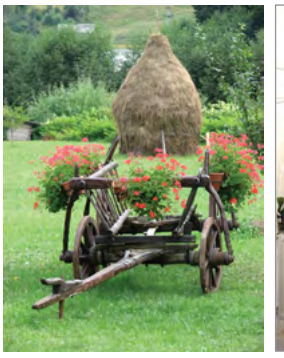
„Traditional" and „creative" shingle houses.
Photo credits: Anamaria Iuga, and arh. Mihai Nuță.

items, traditional materials (chiefly wood) are thus making their comeback (Mihăilescu 2011; 2014).

Architects and designers are also developing much more sophisticated "revivals" of past materialities and shapes.

Tourism is also benefiting to some extent from this "neo-traditionalist" trend. After a period during which rural "agro-tourism" tried to impress (mainly foreign) tourists with copycat Western-style facilities, a genuine "household tourism" has started to flourish in the Romanian countryside, trying to capitalise on real existing local resources and traditions, while when necessary adapting them to current needs and tastes.

Last but not least, "big business" is also starting to be interested in "past resources." To take one example, the eco/bio movement is pushing the pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries to hunt for old ethno-medicine practices and fill new medicine bottles with traditional herbal remedies. Traditional practices of haymaking, which have preserved one of the richest examples of pastoral biodiversity in Europe, are also starting to be reconsidered in their own right and on their own terms, inspiring appropriate agro-policies (see, for example, the special issue of *Martor*, issue 21/2016: "A Place for Hay. Flexibility and Continuity in Hay Meadow Management"). Decades ago,



From peasant household simulacrum to more genuine rural tourist accommodation.
Photo credits: Vintilă Mihăilescu, and Anamaria Iuga.

Romania was Europe's leading exporter of hemp; this resource and the associated know-how are now being revived in Salonta, currently the only place in Europe where hemp oil and by-products are being produced, and the domestic hemp economy

From hemp domestic industry to fashion design and industrial production.
Photo credit: Anamaria Iuga; poster of Victoria Zidaru's exhibition; image source: www.canah.com.

is stimulating local associations and designers as well.

And other initiatives, small-scale and scattered though they may be, could be added to the list.

What we are witnessing in all these cases seems to be a process that is moving from simple revival to fusion and beyond that, potentially, to a creative taking over of past resources and know-how. The past is no longer simply being *conserved* or used as a source of inspiration, but is starting to be attractively *promoted* as a resource for creation.

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"Legacy", in the sense defined above, is part of the common political discourse, recently talked up by certain populist trends. It is also exhibited, as is normal practice, in museums and at festivals, while the material (mainly architectural) heritage is protected under Romanian law – though the regulations are frequently flouted by developers. Heritage, which borders on "patrimony", is beginning to gain "market value", as we have mentioned above. A first step consists in simply showcasing traditions at identity and entertainment events. More importantly, an increasing marketing of tradition is seeing items selected from the national heritage being introduced on to the market as commodified traditions: handicrafts, traditional foods, plants for making herbal remedies, etc. The Astra ethnographic museum in Sibiu is even selling plans of "traditional houses" to middle class enthusiasts for neo-traditional homes. A guarantee of inherited "authenticity" now conveys added value. Additionally, touristification is distributing patrimonial items all over rural Romania as assets of a developing "economy of experience" (Pine and Gilmore 1998) in the exotic land of the past. On the other hand, the movement for the ecologisation of heritage is attempting to conserve the natural patrimony and newly defined "cultural landscapes" (witness the Cioloș government's 2016 project for a "Law of Cultural Landscape") by setting up nature reserves and protected areas. In doing this, state regulations frequently protect nature *against* man, ruling out the very "traditional" practices of the rural population. Sometimes, too, these newly-created protected areas conceal the hidden agenda of private business interests that take the opportunity to despoil the natural patrimony under a cloak of legal management. A few civic initiatives, most of them led by architects, are trying to fight back by suggesting much more limited but reasonably consensual local patrimonial projects. The patrimonial space is thus becoming more and more dynamic, but remains fragmented and even contradictory.

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The "intellectual heritage" of pioneers such as Antipa and Georgescu-Roegen is largely forgotten in Romania, but there is still a chance for it to be revisited and transformed, in its turn, into a "national patrimony." Not in order to proudly celebrate it as "our own", but because, being rooted in Romania's historical and socio-economic context, these now globally embraced worldviews may offer Romanian society some supplementary local-specific "clues" and help it to better find its own

route to what everyone is now looking for: *sustainable development*. In this respect, Romania's (rural) underdevelopment may even prove to be an asset for "good" development insofar as "Earth's dowry" is still less spoiled here than in developed countries, and the "hereditary postulate" still offers us some useful know-how for managing it.

Conclusion

As already suggested, heritage is essentially about being (the identity-laden dimension of *legacy*, which has been somewhat peripheral in this text) and/or *wellbeing* (what we have here referred to and focused on as *patrimony*). Heritage can also be viewed as a valuable resource (which it indeed is), but not if it means no more than the commodification of patrimony criticised by Tunbridge and Ashworth (1995) and pursues only economic growth: in that case heritage will be exploited like any other economically profitable resource and will bring benefit mainly to entrepreneurial outsiders or, possibly, some nouveau riche insiders. This is the reason why heritage, though it may be a valuable resource, can be rightly turned into patrimony only when perceived as a *means* to *wellbeing*, to a more satisfying life, not mere to profit. This being so, patrimony must also have a reasonably shared meaning and bring sustainable *development* to (the majority of) its stakeholders.

In order for it to achieve this status, inherited patrimony has to be approached as an "ecological" system, i.e. a multiplicity of living experiences that "make system." In this respect, an ecology of this patrimonial system also needs a grounding in "patrimonial literacy", similar to or part of the "ecological literacy" Leslie Rush pleads for (Rush 2002), in order to make people and state alike aware of and sensitive to this reality and able to extract meaning from it. As well as this, patrimonial literacy would help states to formulate integrative patrimonial policies that "make system" and "make sense" as well.

If this were to be done, "dissonant heritage" risks could be diminished and the past would be more easily "assimilated in ourselves, and resurrected into an ever-changing present" as urged by Lowenthal. At the same time, people would be less unsettled by the different traditions of others, allowing them to be more ecumenical and peaceable, as idealistically aspired to by UNESCO patrimonial ideology.

In pragmatic terms, traditions that are creative enough to also bring a better quality of life ("enjoyment of life", as poetically expressed by Georgescu-Roegen) will be better re-produced by their actors simply in order to give themselves this better life, as I have tried to illustrate above. Legacies of the past and their identity meanings may disappear when people are confronted with more congenial present options. Traditions cannot be an obligation, they have to make sense; but, for most of their ascribed rural protagonists, they actually do not. But they can be revived as a means to wellbeing, to a more satisfying life. This is the reason for not starting "heritage and development" projects from the "legacy of tradition" but with the prospect of "creative traditions" becoming a means towards patrimony-building; legacy and its accompanying pride may then be easier to highlight, share and celebrate along the way.

It is in this way that "creative traditions" make sense as tactical means for experimenting with the past, diffusing patrimonial literacy and inspiring the strategic aim of the broader and systematic understanding and governance of heritage herein labelled "ecology of patrimony."

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